



Inspecting Creativity: Making the Abstract Visible

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Abstract

Media education has an uneasy relationship with the rhetorics of creativity, which are explored in this article.

In *Learning: Creative Approaches that Raise Standards* (OFSTED, 2010), creativity is operationalised. That is, as Marcuse (1972) tells us, the concept is made synonymous with a corresponding set of operations.

The document takes the form of a 'survey', but its status as an Ofsted publication means that it is unlikely to be read merely as a neutral set of observations. It is more likely that this will be read as a set of guidelines for good practice – practice which, if adopted, is likely to lead to a favourable Ofsted grade in the future. In this sense the document operates, in a Foucaultian sense, as a discursive statement – it is regulatory, administrative and 'limiting'.

Ostensibly drawing upon a version of creativity produced, reified and reinforced by three other education policy documents (*All Our Futures* (1999), *Creativity: Find it, promote it* (QCA, 2004) and *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* (2006)) the Ofsted survey creates an illusion of continuity and coherence. It is, however, determined by the requirement for creativity to be amenable to inspection and, therefore, the concept is rendered unambiguous, unified and *visible*.

By examining the rhetorical strategies employed in this document, and by starting with a rejection of the notion that 'creativity' is a 'thing' with essential qualities, it is possible to identify contradictions and tensions in this particular production of knowledge and 'truth'.

I suggest that such an approach, which borrows a philosophical stance from Foucault and specific tools of analysis from Fairclough, is necessary if we are to understand creativity as a concept that is always, already socially and historically constructed, rather than something which can be identified, implemented and assessed.



Introduction and definitions

I'd like to start this article by suggesting something provocative to / for media educators: that there is no such thing as creativity. This is a statement that is both radical and reactionary; radical because it challenges common sense, and reactionary because it is resistant to the promises that creativity is an enriching force for good. But I suggest that creativity is not a 'thing' that can be discovered, analysed and measured, it is a concept and, as such, it is a product of language and social practice. Creativity is a concept with a history, but it tends to be used in an a-historical way, as if it has the status of something universal and transcendental like 'good', 'evil' and 'love'. It is this implicit disavowal of its dependence upon specific cultural and historical conditions for its meaning(s) that constitutes some of the implicit theorising of creativity. A rejection of the notion of an 'essence' of creativity, therefore, liberates us from its seductions; an endorsement of such a rejection can be found in Foucault's discussion of Nietzsche:

Why does Nietzsche challenge the pursuit of the origin...? First, because it is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities, because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. (Foucault, 1977: 142)

If we, similarly, refuse to take for granted the 'carefully protected identity' of creativity we can develop a sensitivity to the way in which it is always 'produced' and never merely 'registered'.

Historiography rather than historiometry

The methodological approach I am advocating here can be distinguished from much of the vast quantity of creativity research through this opposition: historiography focuses on the processes by which 'knowledge' about creativity is produced, whereas historiometry treats historical instances of 'creativity' as self-evident and as if they possess explanatory power. I suggest that most creativity research is always, already historiometric, even psychological and neuroscientific work, because it is inevitably informed by culturally formed, value-laden notions of how 'creativity' might be manifested. Simonton, an advocate of historiometry, tries to persuade us that:



Historiometric samples contain personalities who have ‘made history’ in an important domain of human achievement. In the particular case of creativity, historiometric researchers will study those individuals who have some claim to the epithet ‘creative genius. (Simonton, 1999: 117)

He concludes that historiometry has unique value in the field of creativity research:

The most obvious of these assets, of course, is the ability to engage in the scientific study of creativity in its most stellar form. The subjects of historiometric inquiries are undoubted exemplars of creative genius. (Simonton, 1999: 125)

The rhetorical insistence on genius and the ‘undoubted’ evidence of creativity in such exemplars may seem crude – especially when placed in this critical context – but this is a persistent starting point for much notionally scientific and pedagogic research in this area; to simplify Simonton’s argument, those who have “made history” in a ‘creative’ field must possess essential qualities of ‘creativity’ and, therefore, by studying such people we can reveal creativity’s secrets. This elides any distinction between history and psychology and has produced explanations of creativity ranging from Storr’s Freudian aetiology (1972) to Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘systems’ theory (1996) (which, although it nods to social practice, is still rooted in the attributes of Nobel Prize winners).

In contrast, historiography in this context means examining the ways in which particular ‘stories’ about creativity have been constructed. Nelson, for example, examining the concept of creativity in the Enlightenment period, argues that:

The emergent discourse also needs to be understood as a product of the new system of the arts arising in the eighteenth century, with its now familiar dualities of art/craft, aesthetic/purpose, genius/talent, creative/mechanical... (Nelson, 2010: 66)

History for the historiographer of creativity is not, therefore, about showing how understanding of creativity became increasingly sophisticated through scientific and philosophical progress, but about showing how the concept of creativity has been produced in particular ways, and has been dependent upon specific historical conditions and social actors.

The analysis offered here, of a particular Ofsted document, is an attempt to show how it tells a particular ‘story’ about creativity, how it models a slippery concept through rhetorical devices and how it authorises certain forms of ‘knowing’ over others. As such, the analysis



constitutes an example of an alternative approach to creativity research, influenced by, for example, Gibson (2005), Banaji et al. (2006) and Neelands and Choe (2010).

The power of policy

In this paper I examine how a recent policy document, explicitly concerned with creativity, activates statements from three previous policy documents, represses other statements and, through its exemplification of good practice, produces a material dimension which consolidates a discourse of creativity. Jeffrey and Troman argue that texts such as this

...are written documents but they also contain values through specific discourses mediated by language and beliefs about the role of education in society and the economy. These discourses bring objects into being...and they construct particular types of social relation through the relative strength of the practices they determine. (Jeffrey and Troman, 2009: 5)

Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, is the government department charged with improving standards in education in England. It does this, primarily, through the regular inspection of schools, colleges and Local Education Authorities. (Ofsted 2010b) As such, it has authority and power through its regulatory, standardising operations of inspecting and grading schools and colleges, and its document *Learning: Creative Approaches that Raise Standards* is an instrument of this. I suggest that the document models a particular version of creativity that is determined by its amenability to inspection. Moreover, the strategies that it uses to maintain this model reveal tensions between it and other models of creativity which, through necessity, it draws upon.

A 'prescriptive survey'

This document takes the form of a 'survey', but its status as an Ofsted document means that it is unlikely to be read merely as a neutral set of observations. It is more likely that this will be read as a set of guidelines for good practice – practice which, if adopted, is likely to lead to a favourable Ofsted grade in the future. In this sense the document operates, in a Foucaultian (2002) sense, as a discursive statement – it is regulatory, administrative and 'limiting'. The link between creativity and 'good inspection grades' is explicit from the outset:

All the schools selected for the survey had been judged good or outstanding in their most recent inspection in terms of their pupils' enjoyment of learning, their



preparation for future economic well-being and the curriculum. (Ofsted, 2010a: 1)

The suggestion is that this document contains good practices that, if adopted, could lead to 'good' and 'outstanding' grades. These good practices have been labelled 'creative approaches'. This equation is reinforced in the contents section where the term becomes 'creative learning':

Design for creative learning: the curriculum
Creative learning: higher standards
Creative learning: personal development
Creative learning: effective teaching
Technical skills to support creative learning
Creative approaches to learning and assessment.
(Ofsted 2010a: 2)

Jeffrey and Troman's research, in a primary education context, suggests that the nexus between 'standards' (they use the term 'performativity discourse' to describe the emphasis on targets and attainment) and creativity is a particularly awkward one in the schools included in their ethnographic research. This has resulted in some teachers negotiating the risks by implementing a 'cautious creativity' – "Teaching creatively was the preferred form over teaching for creativity" (Jeffrey and Troman, 2009: 29). The Ofsted document's production of a creativity discourse in which there is *no* contradiction between standards and creativity is, therefore, significant and attention to the construction of (or effacement of) the boundary in this liminal area is revealing. My reading of this document emphasises the following:

- The tension between 'creative learning' and the National Curriculum;
- The reification of the abstract concept 'creativity' into specific tasks and activities;
- The translation of 'creative' activities into 'standards';
- The way in which a notion of creativity inflects the conception of the relationship between teaching and learning.

It is important, for the purposes of this analysis, not to anticipate or pre-judge a particular version of creativity, but to attempt to identify the discursive influences – the existing concepts and documents, the institutional determinants and the notional social/ pedagogic practice which may result – all of which cause this document to be 'dialogic', despite its overt 'monologism'. The evidence of such dynamics can reveal the tenuous and



contingent nature of the authority that is produced by the document and how creativity, specifically, operates as a problematic term for it. Foucault argues (about 'the book') that:

...its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse. (Foucault, 2002:26)

It is similarly necessary to question the 'unity' of the concept of creativity here and to reveal its dependence upon a field of discourse which includes the authority of policy, the exigencies of inspection and educational rhetoric.

The overt aim of this document is to demonstrate how 'creativity' can complement the National Curriculum and how particular 'creative' teaching and learning activities can improve 'standards', but this is also a work of classification, definition and authorisation, and *these* functions are implicit, rather than explicit. As Fairclough argues in relation to a different document, its "assertions are 'categorical' in the sense that they are not modalized" (Fairclough 2003: 43). In other words, the statements in this document are not qualified by linguistic modifiers, such as 'may' or 'could', but make unqualified assertions. So, for example, we read that

A greater emphasis on pupils' independence as creative learners did not imply any lessening of rigour; challenging topics were explored in creative ways. (Ofsted, 2010a: 14)

The status of the institution, its regulatory power and its rhetorical strategies all contribute to the authority of such statements. The notion of the 'creative learner' is not problematised at all, but a given; there clearly *is* such a thing as a 'creative learner' which can be produced through the facilitation of more independence. But, I would argue, creativity continues to be a problematic term given its polymorphous polysemy and, therefore, represents an ever-present threat to the pedagogic project into which it has been 'press-ganged' in this document.

'Creativity', then, provides us with a loose thread, which enables us to untie this particular text; when particular activities are described in this context they are automatically legitimated as 'creative' and, if adopted by schools and colleges, they will undoubtedly be categorised thus in inspection reports. But the translation into practice is not as coherent or seamless as is implied.



Defining creativity

Inspectors found that the term ‘creativity’ was subject to a variety of interpretations and applications. Teachers were seen to promote creative learning most purposefully and effectively when encouraging pupils to question and challenge, make connections and see relationships, speculate, keep options open while pursuing a line of enquiry, and reflect critically on ideas, actions and results. (Ofsted, 2010a: 5-6)

Here we can observe a strategy which Fairclough has called “producing an impression of consensus through generalising away from specific evaluations or statements in a way which reduces difference” (Fairclough 2003: 51). The ‘variety of interpretations and applications’ are undermined implicitly by the statement in the following sentence that the most purposeful promotion of creative learning is characterised by (defined by, perhaps) the encouragement of a specific set of activities. These activities are not traditionally ‘arts-based’ so the statement simultaneously enlarges the field within which ‘creative learning’ might take place, and narrows it into a set of *observable* operations. The concept of observability is crucial here, and evident in the statement “Teachers were seen to promote creative learning...” (Ofsted, 2010: 5; my italics). Later we read that:

During the survey visit, observations of lessons and scrutiny of the students’ work confirmed that creative styles of learning kept them focused on tasks, interested and eager to succeed in all subjects across the curriculum. (Ofsted, 2010: 17)

Such a confident assertion of cause and effect, despite the absence anywhere in the document of methodological considerations, has the effect of truth. Creativity, then is translated into specific activities which can be observed and then graded. In an earlier document, *Creativity: find it, promote it* (QCA, 2004), there is a similar modelling of creativity which depends upon observable evidence; students can be *observed* to be thinking and behaving creatively and the same presupposition obtains here. But given Ofsted’s role as a regulator of institutions, there is an additional layer of observation involved here – the observation of teachers. So creativity is not merely something that students do, it is something that teachers and schools must demonstrate through the implementation of specific strategies and activities which are amenable to a superior observer in the hierarchy – the inspector.

There is further evidence of this strategy:



The survey found that the term 'creativity' was widely used in the schools surveyed but there were variations in what was meant, ranging from an innate attribute to an approach and set of skills that could be cultivated. All the schools initially offered examples of 'creativity' in subjects commonly thought of as intrinsically creative, such as the visual and performing arts. However, when the inspectors asked about 'creative ways of learning', examples were offered from most subjects across the curriculum. Teachers and senior leaders most confidently identified and evaluated creativity as an aspect of learning when it was translated into specific activities such as those set out by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's publication *Creativity: find it, promote it*, rather than expressed as an abstract idea. Creative learning was widely understood to be characterised by:

- questioning and challenging
- making connections and seeing relationships
- envisaging what might be
- exploring ideas, keeping options open
- reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.

(Ofsted, 2010a: 8)

It is clearer here that the document is performing an act of classification; again we have a reference to a generalised population of educators who seem to express confusion about the nature of creativity, even revealing their (implied) naivety in focusing on 'subjects commonly thought of as intrinsically creative, such as the visual and performing arts.' The turning point in the argument – the 'however' moment' – is based on implied consensus: 'teachers and senior leaders' are able 'confidently' to identify and evaluate creativity when it is 'translated into specific activities'. The activities described (prescribed) here are significantly different from the model of creativity in *All Our Futures* (NACCCE, 1999) and *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* (Roberts, 2006), most obviously in the absence from this definition of a focus on an objective. This is a curious omission, given the reference to the QCA document *Creativity: find it, promote it*, in which the 'What is Creativity?' section begins with an explicit reference to the model in *All Our Futures*, adopting the definition of imaginative, purposeful activity directed to achieving an objective (QCA, 2004: 7). But a closer look at the QCA document reveals that a process of operationalising creativity starts here, particularly in its efforts to relate the whole curriculum to the concept, and, in this extract, to the requirement for 'originality':



But what about work in subjects like science, history and maths? While it would be wonderful for a pupil to be the first person to discover a new scientific principle, this is highly unlikely. Does this mean that pupils can't be creative in these subjects? Not at all. Skilled teachers can help pupils tackle questions, solve problems and have ideas that are new to them. This makes pupils' ideas original, the result of genuinely creative behaviour. (QCA, 2004: 7-8)

We can see here a transition from the abstract to the concrete; the difficult concepts in the NACCCE report, such as 'originality' and 'value' are quickly translated into activities which are demonstrable by pupils and, therefore, more amenable to inspection, if not assessment. The key reference point for the Ofsted document is the QCA document in which the work of translating abstracts into concretes has been done. So it is now possible for Ofsted to draw attention to an authoritative text that has legitimated particular activities and to state that a general population of teachers has embraced and found meaning in these activities, as if they had emerged spontaneously, naturally and inevitably. The legitimacy produced for this knowledge about creativity is effected, we might say, intertextually and through a generalising, unsubstantiated claim about real practices – an assertion via consensus.

The activities described in the Ofsted 'survey' then are not merely illustrative, but prescriptive; by implication they represent not only 'good' practice, but 'creative' practice. Some examples of these will be considered later.

The question of standards

The title of this document indicates that 'creative approaches' are only of value if they lead to an improvement in standards. The standards here are very definitely those enshrined in the National Curriculum and creativity, therefore, becomes something which can be administered in the service of those standards. In a section entitled 'Creative learning: effective teaching', creativity is linked to the *Every Child Matters* agenda; we learn that

The schools that encouraged creative approaches to learning deliberately set out to promote a variety of ways of thinking and problem solving. The survey judged eight of the 24 nursery and primary schools to be outstanding in boosting pupils' achievement and enjoyment of learning, 15 were good, and one was satisfactory. (Ofsted, 2010a: 22)





A statement which indicates that not only can 'creative approaches' be measured and graded, but that they are not legitimate as creative approaches unless they conform to this assessment regime.

Creativity, however, is not a concept that lends itself to easy definition and which carries with it a range of meanings, many of which are about resistance, opposition and subversion. This document manages this problem by using the authority of QCA's *Creativity: find it, promote it* (2004) to model creativity as, essentially, a set of generic skills, but tension between the regulated order of the National Curriculum and the potential wildness of creativity is ever-present. We read, for example that:

Good examples of creative styles of learning were embedded successfully within the National Curriculum, both through the presentation of individual subjects and through cross-curricular approaches. (Ofsted 2010a: 4)

And:

In schools with good teaching, there is not a conflict between the National Curriculum, national standards in core subjects and creative approaches to learning. (Ofsted 2010a: 4)

So the argument is that there is no inherent contradiction, no intrinsic problem with the relationship between the National Curriculum and creativity, in fact it is the index of a good school that creativity has been 'embedded' and pressed into the service of 'core subjects'. The tension here is between the regulated regime of assessment and the absent voice which might propose an alternative model of creativity; it is the tension evident in *All Our Futures* (1999) when dialogue about 'freedom and control' is articulated.

The tension is also clear in the examples of work observed in the survey, which includes 'failures' as well as 'successes'. An example of a failure is described thus:

A number of year groups had inexperienced staff who did not make the most of enjoyable activities to develop pupils' skills in enquiry, decision-making, inventive problem-solving and self-evaluation. Pupils were, for example, clearly enjoying designing a time machine so they could travel back to meet the Egyptians for their topic work. The impact of this potentially very good activity was limited because the teacher failed to promote any higher order thinking. (Ofsted 2010a: 14)





Creativity (or its applications/manifestations as ‘creative learning’ and ‘creative approaches to learning’) is not mentioned here because the absence of the development of ‘skills in enquiry, decision-making, inventive problem solving and self-evaluation’ means that, in the terms of this document, it does not exist. The example goes on to explain that

Pupils were not encouraged to evaluate each other’s ideas and opportunities were missed to make connections with mathematics and science, even though there were clear opportunities to do so. (Ofsted 2010a: 14)

Which suggests that creativity resides in the activity of teachers; that, in order for ‘creative learning’ to occur, it must be driven and *promoted* by teachers in the direction of National Curriculum standards. In this sense Ofsted retains the notion of ‘purpose’ which we first found in *All Our Futures* (NACCCE 1999) and which occurs repeatedly in this document, although not in its ‘working definition’. But purpose is always in tension with pleasure/enjoyment and this is rhetorically resolved by combining them. Here, for example:

The end products were recorded and pupils then evaluated them. They were able to explain the purpose and impact of this activity. It had extended their understanding of pattern and structure, strengthened their recall of multiplication tables and been hugely enjoyable. (Ofsted 2010a: 12)

Assessment versus Inspection

The regulatory work of this document in modelling creativity in such a way that it becomes instrumental in achieving the aims of the National Curriculum is clearest when it assigns validity to particular activities:

In a small number of the schools visited, pupils’ personal development as creative learners was not matched by their progress in core academic skills such as literacy and numeracy. This happened where curriculum planning was not sufficiently well-rooted in the content and skills of the National Curriculum. The acquisition of basic skills remains of fundamental importance. (Ofsted 2010a: 6)

This statement is predicated on the assumptions that

- Personal development as a ‘creative learner’ is measurable



- This measurement is comparable with measurement of development as a 'traditional learner'

The function of the statement is to caution schools and colleges against simply allowing 'creativity' to flourish without ensuring that it is subordinate to the National Curriculum, but by establishing the notion that creativity is measurable it opens up the possibility of assessing it, formalising it and operationalising it.

The cautionary note is struck again here:

Pupils made little progress when the outcomes expected were insufficiently challenging and when they received insufficient guidance. Occasionally, teachers failed to grasp that creative learning was not simply a question of allowing pupils to follow their interests; careful planning was needed for enquiry, debate, speculation, experimentation, review and presentation to be productive. (Ofsted 2010: 6)

However, there is a tension, it seems, between assessment and inspection. As Rowntree (1977) suggests, assessment tends to demand objects which can be quantified, transported and contained. But the activities described by Ofsted, particularly given its detachment from the objective focused model in *All Our Futures* (1999), do not inevitably provide such evidence, rather, they provide evidence of primarily cognitive processes. How might we account for this contradiction? One strategy is to suggest that education is not an ideologically coherent institution, but that it is a site of discursive conflict, and that the recent focus on creativity can be used to reveal something of this conflict. The need for urgent 'change', argued for so passionately in *All Our Futures*, may have been driven by the requirements of the knowledge economy, social justice and educational reform, but any actual changes resulting from it directly (minimal, according to Buckingham and Jones, albeit only two years later in 2001) or indirectly, are not inevitably coherent or demonstrably in the service of powerful interests. These examples of political interventions in creativity in education reveal how resistant 'creativity' is to definition and categorisation and how attempts to do this have necessitated a translation into particular practices which may be at odds with existing educational practices. In other words, the process of attempting to sort out the 'mess' of creativity actually results in more 'mess'.

A movement away from conventional interpretations of creativity

The Ofsted document exhibits a desire to construct a definition of creativity that is different from ones which locate it conventionally within the arts:



Approaches developed successfully in traditionally ‘creative’ subjects, such as the arts and English, were often incorporated into other areas, such as science and mathematics.’ (Ofsted 2010a: 5)

The use of inverted commas here clearly indicates doubt about such a limited conception of creativity and/or a desire to undermine it. No such qualification is implemented when the adjective is used in, for example, ‘creative learning’ and ‘creative approaches’, which has the effect of rendering these terms unproblematic and legitimate. There is a drive here (and in its predecessors) to locate creativity across the curriculum, rather than just in the arts (although as Banaji et al. (2006) point out, this is undermined by their visual rhetoric – their tendency to be decorated with photographs of arts-based activities), but the ‘working definition’ in this document constitutes the most significant move away from anything product-oriented towards a set of cognitive skills:

- questioning and challenging
- making connections and seeing relationships
- envisaging what might be
- exploring ideas, keeping options open
- reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.

(Ofsted, 2010a: 7-8)

Here, some of Banaji et al.’s final questions become most pertinent:

What is the difference between ‘good’ pedagogy and ‘creative’ pedagogy? How is creative teaching and learning different from ‘good or ‘effective’ teaching and ‘engaged’ or ‘enthusiastic’ learning? What is the added value of using the term ‘creativity’ in this context? (Banaji et al, 2006: 60)

The authors do not propose answers to these questions, but their relevance is clear; arguably there is no *applicable* difference in the Ofsted document between ‘creative’ and ‘good’ or ‘effective’. This has implications for real teachers in real circumstances; the modelling of ‘creative learning’ (or the re-framed ‘creative approaches to learning’) as effective pedagogy legitimates further statements about teachers’ competence:

Pupils’ enthusiasm and sense of achievement were shared by almost all staff in the schools visited. In the four primary and four secondary schools where any concern was expressed about creative approaches to learning being a successful preparation





for external assessments or where pupils' achievement was not in fact enhanced, this reflected teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to combine the two effectively or their limited skills in developing pupils' ability to question, speculate, solve problems and evaluate what they had done. (Ofsted, 2010a: 14)

'Concern' here becomes an index of ineptitude; concern about the efficacy of the approaches described in this document is invalid and is the result of either 'lack of confidence' or 'limited skills'. Again, we might refer to the rhetorical devices used here: the use of 'any concern' suggests that it is minimal; the reporting of this concern in the passive voice generalises it, distances it from a locatable voice and renders it merely vaguely negative, whereas a quote from an individual might resonate and be disruptive to the flow of establishing consent. It is also worth noting that 'creative approaches to learning' are here wholly identified with "developing pupils' ability to question, speculate, solve problems and evaluate". The reference to teachers' concerns about assessment is also significant; I mentioned earlier that the focus in this document is on observable activities rather than (externally) assessable activities, but any problem with the lack of fit here has been firmly shifted onto the teachers, rather than acknowledging the imperatives of inspection.

Conclusions

Media educators might speculate about the reasons for the use of 'creativity' in this document; we might propose that 'creativity' offers the opportunity to revitalise the familiar with new terminology, or that the document is achieving the necessary goal of appearing to fall in with the 'knowledge economy' agenda whilst hanging on to 'traditional' pedagogic values and practices. But such speculation about motives and origins is less important than identifying the way in which 'creativity' is modelled and remodelled in relation to pedagogy here. To use the concepts of rhetoric, ideology and discourse, we can see that this document employs rhetorical strategies in order to create a persuasive case for particular pedagogical approaches (such as those frequently heralded in / by media education) that it bears the ideological imprint of a government's 'knowledge economy' agenda, but, most importantly, it operates discursively to produce and legitimate particular activities as valid and particular interpretations as 'knowledge'.

One other example illustrates the way in which creativity can be discursively framed to be subordinate to conventional notions of educational standards; in May 2010 a conference was held called 'Creativity in the curriculum'. The flyer for this conference suggests that creativity is a discrete commodity that can be 'embedded' in order positively to influence





a range of self-evidently important things. The subtitle: “Embedding creativity throughout your school to enhance learning and raise pupil performance” reveals that creativity here is merely one (albeit a currently significant one) of a number of rational technologies that can be employed in the school/’factory’ (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 133) in order to generate particular desirable outcomes.

The problem with the construction of creativity in this context is not that it is a ‘bad thing’ or even a ‘mistake’, but that it is non-acknowledged thing; there is no suggestion that creativity is subject to different interpretations, no possibility of alternative perspectives, but, instead, a mobilisation of the conceptual translation performed by Ofsted and, indeed, endorsed by the presence of Patricia Metham, referred to here as the “author of the report *Learning: creative approaches that raise standards*, to give you an exclusive insight into how creativity will be assessed in the new Ofsted framework so you can prepare for inspection.” (Creativity in the Curriculum, 2010)

‘Creativity’ is constructed by Ofsted as a thing with unity that can be observed and assessed; Ofsted has, therefore, constructed a ‘truth’ about creativity – a fusion of power and knowledge. But if media educators are prepared to acknowledge that ‘creativity’ is not a ‘thing’, but rather a site of conflict where different definitions and interests compete, we are less likely to accept it as a useful assessment term or something that can be measured and rationalised. We might also be resistant to its incorporation and implementation as part of an inspection process, however seductive and authoritative the rhetoric.

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