Creativity: commodification and conceptualisation

Paul Kleiman
Deputy Director, PALATINE
Lancaster University, UK

Creativity is a bit like pornography; it is hard to define, but we think we know it when we see it.

(Mitchell et al, 2003)

Anyone with an interest in education - whether vested or otherwise – cannot but have noticed the way in which creativity has crept up the policy agenda, and not only in education. In recent years the terms ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’ have assumed increasing prominence in the various discourses that permeate higher education in the UK. Whilst the early debates on creativity, in the 1950’s and 1960’s, focused on the areas of personality, cognition and the stimulation of creativity in individuals, more recent research has focused on the influence of environments and social contexts on the creativity of individuals, groups, and organisations (Rhayammar and Brolin, 1999). Thinking about the concept of creativity has changed in recent years and the current creativity discourse also encompasses:

- operating in the economic and political field
- acting as a possible vehicle for individual empowerment in institutions and organizations;
- being used to develop effective learning’.

(Jeffrey and Craft, 2001:3)

The Prime Minister and various education ministers, culture ministers, employment ministers are all on record emphasising the need to nurture and harness the creativity of the nation. The Dept. of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) document Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years (2001) describes creativity as being at the centre of the knowledge economy and the future prosperity of the nation. In the foreword to that document the Prime Minister wrote that culture and creativity ‘matter because creative talent will be crucial to our individual and national economic success in the economy of the future’, adding that ‘above all, at their best, the arts and creativity set us free’. There was the important and influential report of the National Advisory
Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999), and the establishment of the Creative Partnerships initiative in schools. In 2000, following the review of the national curriculum that emphasised creativity as an important aim, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills asked the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to investigate how schools might promote pupils’ creativity through the national curriculum. The QCA now has a website dedicated to creativity in schools under the tagline ‘Creativity: find it, promote it’, containing sections on What is creativity? Why is creativity so important? How can you spot it? How can you teach it? and How can you promote it? In 2003 the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) published Expecting the Unexpected, a report of the inspection of creativity in 42 schools. Amongst its main finding was observation that

\[\text{the creativity observed in children is not associated with a radical new pedagogy – though some teachers feel it might be, if only they can find what it is – but a willingness to observe, listen and work closely with children to help them develop their ideas in a purposeful way.}\]

(OFSTED, 2003)

In higher education, the European Association of Universities now has a major initiative on Creativity in Education funded by the EU; there are an increasing number of academic conferences on creativity; and a UK university recently advertised for PhD studentships in Creativity in Education.

This exponential growth in the interest in creativity – in business as well as education – prompted Christopher Scanlon from RMIT, writing about what he called the ‘cult of creativity’, to comment that talk about creativity had spread at such a pace that,

\[\text{….if it were a plant, it would be tagged a weed and marked for immediate eradication. And like most half-baked ideas picked up by the business community, governments have joined the creativity cult with the enthusiasm of a zealot. Governments now prostrate themselves before the altar of creativity in the hope that if they keep repeating the mantras sooner or later they’ll be blessed with low crime rates, a healthier, more engaged, more learned citizenry, a reinvigorated civic life and a robust economy”}\]

(Scanlon, 2005)

There are two aspects to the commodification of creativity, the first of which is of less concern in the context of this particular paper than the second, though it is of great concern to anyone with an interest in the cultural health and creative outputs of a society. So I will dwell on the first relatively briefly.

Accompanying the growth industry in creativity in general, there is now an increasing number of books, papers, and articles emanating mainly from the legal field but also from the cultural sector, all with the commodification of creativity as their subject. Fiona MacMillan (2003), Professor of Law at Birkbeck College, London is one of a growing number of academics and legal specialists who argue strongly and persuasively that creativity has been commodified through too rigorous application of the laws of copyright. Though the rhetoric of the copyright law associates itself with concepts of genius, creativity and culture, the hard-nosed, market-driven reality is that it fails these concepts time and again. Howard Besser (2001), in the US,
writing from a cultural rather than legal perspective, shows that though many copyright holders view copyright as an "economic right" that protects their ability to make money off content, copyright law was actually established to promote the "public good" by encouraging the production and distribution of content. Besser, who is Professor of Cinema Studies and Director of New York University’s Moving Image Archiving & Preservation Program, as well as Senior Scientist for Digital Library Initiatives for NYU’s Library argues (Besser 2001) that whilst cultural creativity relies heavily on access to and drawing upon extant cultural resources, we are seeing access to that culture being ‘walled-off’ as various segments of what he refers to as the ‘content industry’ use “the courts, the legislative process, technological developments, and downright bullying as part of a broad attempt to turn our cultural heritage into a common commodity (one that is owned, leased, and controlled)”.

The legal mechanisms that permitted access, reinterpretation, and recontextualization of pre-existing works were enshrined in a series of principles: a robust public domain, time limits for any copyright monopoly, fair use, and first sale. In the 1990s, all these legal principles came under an unrelenting attack. All these principles have already been severely curtailed, and all are in danger of being completely eliminated. If changes continue on the same trajectory, we can imagine a future where creators will no longer be able to make free use of pre-existing material. A future where critics cannot use media works to comment on or criticize those very works. A future where the heirs of today’s prolific playwright forbid restaging of interpretations (like turning Romeo and Juliet into West Side Story). A world where anyone sampling music or even singing ballads must first obtain permission from a copyright holder. A world where only a privileged few can write stories about copyrighted planets or races. A world where children must obtain permission for each image they cut out to make a collage. Unfortunately, that future is with us now, with threatened litigation over works like The Wind Done Gone and Pretty Woman, as well as attempts to prevent fans from writing stories about Vulcans or Klingons, and girl scouts from singing songs like Happy Birthday.

(Besser, 2001)

There we have a clear articulation of one aspect of the commodification of creativity that relates specifically to the threat to the creation and protection of creative products. It may be worth noting, in an educational context, the reference to children and collage-making and the implied threat to other school activities. But I wish to focus on another aspect of the commodification of creativity, and in order to so I need to spend a little time going back to the problem of definition. And the fact that although there is no single, hold-all definition of creativity, there seems to be a general coalescing of agreement that creativity involves notions of novelty and originality combined with notions of utility and value. Mayer (1999:449) collected a number of typical attempts at a definition from some leading creativity researchers:

What do we mean by creative work? Like most definitions of creativity, ours involves novelty and value. The product must be new and must be given value according to some external criteria.

(Gruber and Wallace, 1999)
A creative idea is one that is both original and appropriate for the situation in which it occurs.

(Martindale, 1999)

Creativity from a Western perspective can be defined as the ability to produce work that is novel and appropriate.

(Lubart, 1999)

Creativity is the generation of ideas that are both novel and valuable.

(Boden, 1999)

Whilst those definitions are written by established creativity researchers who all share a background in psychology, it is worth noting the following two definitions of creativity written from an educational perspective and with an educational focus.

Creativity is imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value

(NACCCE, 1999)

Creativity constructs new tools and new outcomes – new embodiments of knowledge. It constructs new relationships, rules, communities of practice and new connections – new social practices

(Knight, 2002)

The first of those, from the report of the National Advisory Committee for Cultural and Creativity in Education, usually referred to as the 'Robinson Report' corresponds with those collected by Mayer. The second definition, by Peter Knight in a paper written for the Imaginative Curriculum Network of the Higher Education Academy, utilises the discourse and refers to the practices of education e.g. constructivism (e.g. Vygotsky et al), embodied knowledge (e.g. Blackler), communities of practice e.g. (Lave and Wenger). Those definitions reveal rather different conceptual approaches to creativity.

One of the problems we have is that we have this single word ‘creativity’ that has to serve a whole host of meanings and attitudes, concepts and constructs. What we really need – rather like the Inuit who have several words to describe the many and various types of snow1 - is different words to describe different types of creativity. But the single word we have appears, from the research, intrinsically coupled – tightly or loosely – with notions of utility and value. It is around this link with utility and value that the questions and concerns hover about the adoption and promotion of the creativity agenda, and about the commodification of creativity itself. Scanlon (2003) argues that if you look closely at much of the current talk about creativity, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is not so much about creativity per se but another "C" word - commodification.

1 Although the Inuit do have a number of words to describe snow, the reputed 40 or more words to describe snow is apparently, according to the scientist Steven Pinker, an urban myth.
Increasingly, creativity has become the respectable, progressive-sounding word for describing the process of turning pretty much everything into something that can be bought and sold on the market.

(Scanlon, 2003)

Whilst creativity is largely considered, as Furedi (2004) points out, a ‘feel-good’ term, commodity usually gets an unfavourable press, particularly amongst teachers and academics who tend to resist the importation of the discourse of the market-place into the domain of education. Commodification, essentially, is the transformation of what is normally a non-commodity into a commodity. Commodification takes place, according to classic economic theory, when economic value is assigned to something that traditionally would not be considered in economic terms, for example, an idea, identity, gender. For instance, sex becomes a marketed commodity, something to be bought and sold rather than freely exchanged. Central to the notion of commodification is the concept of use-value, along with the other three central concepts of economics: value, exchange-value, and price. Though Karl Marx, when he wrote in the opening chapter of *Das Kapital* that “the utility of a thing makes it a use-value” was referring to commodities such as iron, corn and diamonds, he also wrote that

A thing can be a use value, without being a value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not mediated through labour.….A thing can be useful, a product of human labour, without being a commodity. He who satisfies his own need with the product of his own labour admittedly creates use-values, but not commodities. In order to produce the latter, he must not only produce use values, but use values for others, social use values. ……..Finally nothing can be a value, without being an object of utility.

(Marx 1976:131)

It is not the intention of this paper to provide a detailed exposition and critique of the theory of use-value in relation to creativity. However, it is clear that creativity can have a use-value without being a commodity, but only when undertaken in private, satisfying a personal need. So my playing of improvised jazz on the piano in the privacy of my own home has immense use-value to me because I (usually) derive great pleasure and relaxation from it, and also use it to assist work-related problem-solving by allowing my unconscious to do some hidden sorting. But it has no value, it has no exchange-value and it has no price. My creativity, and the ephemeral, once only music that is a product of that creativity, is not a commodity. But as soon as I play in front or amongst an audience, my creativity and the product of that creativity creates – to a greater or lesser extent – a use-value for others i.e. a social use-value. As soon as it does that then my creativity, and the fruit of my creative labour either becomes, or is in the process of becoming, a commodity.

Does this matter?

It matters because the current discourses and practices around creativity appear to ignore creativity as an individual use-value, but instead take a rather instrumental view of creativity as a means to a socially and economically useful end. So while Craft (2001) notes the growing recognition by policy-makers and other agenda setters of the importance developing and nurturing learner creativity in education, she acknowledges that the drivers that have raised the
profile and credentials of creativity in education derive from the “economic imperative to foster creativity in business” (Craft 2001:11).

This merging of the national interest with creativity and education not a recent development, though the pace at which the creativity agenda has accelerated is a relatively recent phenomenon. Cropley (2001) suggests that the Soviet Union’s victory over the USA, in the late 1950s, in the race to launch the first artificial space satellite forced a shocked USA to re-evaluate and re-engineer its education system in order to provide the inventiveness and originality that was clearly lacking. Following Guilford’s seminal address to the American Psychological Association in 1950, creativity was already on the educational research agenda. However, the launch of Sputnik One on 4th October 1957 obliged the USA to merge the emphasis on creativity in the classroom with the national security agenda. Cropley (2001) points ironically to the fact that the formal legislation that first promoted creativity in American schools was called the National Defense Education Act.

More recently, creativity or, more precisely, creative people have come to be regarded as a national resource, or ‘human capital’. A typical example of the shift can be found in the manner in which the National Endowment for the Sciences, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), established in 1998 by the UK Government to promote creativity and innovation, describes and presents itself and its mission. Originally NESTA’s tagline used to be “Creativity is vital to any nation”. Now, in 2006, the NESTA logo is accompanied by the line ‘creative investor’. In 1998 the opening paragraph of NESTA’s mission statement read as follows:

NESTA’s three main purposes are to enable:

- **Exploration** – helping talented individuals pursue their creative potential;
- **Exploitation** – helping people turn ideas into products or services; and
- **Explanation** – contributing to public knowledge and appreciation of science, technology and the arts.

(NESTA 1998)

In 2006 that paragraph has now become:

NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, is working to transform the UK’s capacity for innovation. We invest in all stages of the innovation process, backing new ideas and funding new ventures that stimulate entrepreneurship.

(NESTA 2006)

The disappearance of the word creativity from the current mission statement is reflected in the design and presentation of the Annual Reports. The first Annual Report (1999) is consciously ‘creative’: it is full of doodles, drawings, hand-drawn designs, collages, ‘arty’ photographs, and unconventional page layouts. In contrast the report and accounts for 2003-4 is presented very much in a standard, rather conventional corporate style with photographs of and stories about the various recipients of NESTA awards.
NESTA Annual Report 1999 (left) and 2004.

Though NESTA's conception of creativity was always one in which social-use value and commodification played an important role, there was, certainly in its early years, a recognition that the nurturing of creativity – in individuals, groups, organisations, and society as a whole – required a more sanguine, relaxed approach to definitions, expectations and outcomes than might normally be allowed of a body in receipt of public funding (Dust 1999). An example of the sorts of tensions that NESTA had to negotiate were the debates over its Fellowship and Dream Time schemes by which creative individuals were provided with a substantial NESTA grant to ‘be creative’. The problem arose over the obvious expectation that someone in receipt of funding, especially public funding, ought to deliver or produce something. But the research into creativity that NESTA had itself commissioned (Dust 1999) clearly pointed to the fact that those expectations and pressures were precisely the sort of creativity inhibitors or ‘killers’ that had been identified by eminent creativity researchers such as Amabile (1996). So the question was whether NESTA would take the risk and ‘invest’ in creative individuals without insisting that something, or anything, must be produced at the end of the process.

The answer appears to be that NESTA was prepared to take the risk for a while, notwithstanding the fact that recipients of the awards were “required to plan ways of disseminating their findings with their professional community” (NESTA 2003). However, in 2006, both those schemes have ceased to operate, as NESTA ‘re-focuses’ its ‘core activities’ around three key areas: innovation programmes, financial programmes, and policy programmes.
Many of NESTA’s programmes have borne fruit to successful ventures. However, it is now time to refocus NESTA’s core activities, and to do so with a clear sense of vision and mission, underpinned by intellectual rigour and clarity of purpose. NESTA’s programmes and structure will change to reflect the new strategy. We will have simplified direct funding programmes, resulting in an influential and expert organisation acting as a catalyst and leveraging external best practice.

(NESTA, 2006)

It is not the intention of this paper to criticise NESTA or its activities, but to use it as an example of how the complexities and tensions that surround creativity – particularly in the field of public policy and funding, and where accountability is paramount – are such that it is easier to ‘play safe’ and take the commodification turn when it comes to dealing with creativity. In taking such a turn, creativity enters a domain in which value and use-value, exchange and price become important factors.

There is, however, another, far more recent, term that has entered the field of economics, which has some resonance for the debates around creativity. The term is ‘existence-value’, and it is most commonly used in relation to the natural environment and ecology and, in particular, to working out the value of those environments and ecologies when they are damaged in order to work out what financial penalties to impose on those found guilty of damaging those environments. Existence-value is an unusual, controversial and hotly disputed class of value. It is used in respect of the value of the benefit people derive from knowing that a particular thing exists

Existence value is the value someone attaches to the existence of a good independently of any value associated with actual or potential use of the good or the possibility of bequest.

(Weikard, 2002)

Existence value is a prominent example of non-use value, as it does not require that utility be derived from direct use of the thing. In relation to creativity, this sounds very much like Furedi’s (2004) reference to creativity as a ‘feel-good term’. The utility comes from simply knowing that the thing exists, and what is missing from the debates, discussions, reports and policy documents on creativity is the notion or appreciation of the existence-value of creativity. This returns us to creativity’s ‘feel-good’ factor that Furedi (2004) comments on and, though it’s partly intuitive, there is clearly a sense, shared by many, that the mere existence of creativity – both as process and outcome - is something to value. Some of the tensions and confusions in the debates and developments concerning creativity might be understood as a consequence of the way in which it conceptualised and experienced particularly in relation to its purpose and function; its use-value or non-use value.

Though the link between creativity and the contested notion of existence-value may seem tenuous, if not downright implausible, it provides an alternative way to consider and conceptualise creativity. The relatively recent recognition of the role of environmental and societal factors in creativity has resulted in creativity being considered in a much more holistic, multi-factorial manner than previously. Cropley (2002) writes about the need to take account of the full “ecological system” of creativity, with all its multitude of factors, tensions, conflicts and paradoxes. Like many natural ecological systems, creativity eco-systems need to be nurtured and
protected, and in knowing that such systems can and do exist, despite perceived and actual threats, there is a sense of an existence-value of creativity that resists commodification.

**Conceptualising creativity**

From an examination of some research reviews of creativity both generally and in relation specifically to educational and organisational development (King and Anderson 1995, Dust 1999, Craft 2001, Loveless 2002, Mumford 2003) it is clear that there is no one definition of creativity that can be agreed upon. Some years ago, Gotz commented that

> An enormous body of research has accumulated that purports to elucidate aspects of creativity, factors that enhance or hinder it, and test its presence and the degree to which it occurs. Yet all this body of research starts from either ambiguous definitions or, in some cases, no definition at all - the assumption being, I guess, that everyone knows what creativity means, or that any definition will do.

(Gotz, 1981)

There are a relatively small number of research studies that have focused particularly on the perceptions of creativity held by teachers and academics (e.g., Gioia 1995, Fryer 1996, McGoldrick 2002, Oliver 2002, Jackson & Shaw 2003). Jackson & Shaw (2003) contend that “at the highest level of abstraction there is a good degree of consensus as to what being creative means in any context” and in his guide to creativity in the curriculum, Jackson provides the following definition:

> Creativity involves first imagining something (to cause to come into existence) and then doing something with this imagination (creating something that is new and useful to you). It’s a very personal act and it gives you a sense of satisfaction and achievement when you’ve done it.

(Jackson, 2002)

As part of a wide-ranging series of studies, papers and events on the theme of creativity that were undertaken under the aegis of the Imaginative Curriculum Network, Jackson and Shaw (2003) compiled the results of what they referred to as “many conversations in workshops, interviews and email surveys” and produced the following list of the most common ideas academics associate with creativity:

- **originality** (making a contribution that adds to what already exists)
- **being imaginative** (using imagination to think in certain ways that move us beyond the obvious and the known into the unknown, that see the world in different ways or from different perspectives that take us outside the boxes we normally inhabit and lead to the generation of new ideas and novel interpretations)
- **exploring for the purpose of discovery**: (experimenting and taking risks; openness to new ideas and experiences)
doing / producing new things (invention)
doing / producing things no-one has ever done before (innovation)
doing / producing things that have been done before but differently (adaptation, transference).

**communication** – which is integral to the creative process

(Jackson & Shaw, 2003)

Jackson and Shaw point out that the list, though interesting in itself, requires operationalisation and contextualisation in order to understand its significance, and they refer to the studies of McGoldrick (2002) and Oliver (2002) who both asked academics the question ‘what does being creative mean when you design a course?’. Jackson and Shaw synthesised the responses to that question into the following list:

**creativity as personal innovation** – something that is new to individuals.
This is often about the transfer and adaptation of ideas from one context to another

**creativity as working at and across the boundaries of acceptability in specific contexts:** it involves exploring new territory and taking risks

**creativity as designs that promote the holistic idea of graduateness** – the capacity to connect and do things with what has been learnt and to utilise this knowledge to learn in other situations

**creativity as making sense out of complexity,** i.e. working with multiple, often conflicting factors, pressures, interests and constraints

**creativity as a process of narrative-making** in order to present the ‘real curriculum’ in ways that conform to the regulatory expectations of how a curriculum should be framed

Gioia (1995), working in the United States, analysed forty-six essays on creativity submitted by academics and ‘business practitioners’, and found that the academics tended to:

dwell on the novelty dimension of creativity.
seek novel solutions and look for value.
emphasize the divergent thinking and acting involved in creativity.
think of creativity as thinking differently.
focus on producing diverse ideas.
make more general, global statements about creativity.
treat creativity as an unbounded enterprise.
talk about creativity as an aesthetic accomplishment.
are more dispassionate and removed in their discussions of creativity.

(Gioia, 1995:319)
It is perhaps significant that in that those three lists of ideas or conceptualisations of creativity by academics, there is only mention of ‘value’ in relation to creativity is contained in a list from a paper on creativity written from a business and organisational perspective.

This next section reports on the interim findings of a current research project – utilising a phenomenographic methodology that focuses on the variations in conception – exploring how academics, across a range of disciplines, conceptualise creativity in relation to their pedagogic practice. The source material for this research consisted of an online questionnaire and a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. There were 82 respondents to the questionnaire, representing a wide range of disciplines, age and experience. The questionnaire was a relatively short, carefully designed and structured combination of ‘tick-box answer’ questions and questions that required an open-ended, essay style answer. (It is worth noting that the thought and care that went into the design and presentation of the questionnaire was rewarded by both the surprising number of responses and the depth and detail of those responses). Those who participated in the interviews were selected from amongst those respondents to the questionnaire who agreed to participate further in the research.

The questionnaire was structured to expand the detail and precision of the responses. It commenced with asking the respondents simply to write down the words and/or phrases that came to mind when considering ‘creativity’ or ‘being creative’. Though there needs to be a far more detailed and nuanced analysis, the findings reveal a strong correlation with Jackson and Shaw’s (2003) synthesis of the views of teachers. There appears to be a strong association of creativity with using one’s imagination and being imaginative; with notions of novelty or the ‘new’; with innovation and being innovative; with difference i.e. being different or, particularly, doing thing differently; and with originality. It is worth noting that not one of the 66, often full and detailed, responses to that question - amounting to over 1100 words and phrases - included anything explicitly associated with utility or value., and that one might conclude that, as an initial supposition, that those 66 academics who responded to the questionnaire do not instinctively or immediately associate creativity with utility and value.

When the were asked to provide their own definition of creativity, the initial iterative analysis of those responses created c. 40 different categories that ranged from clear process- and/or product-oriented definitions to far more ideational definitions e.g. “creativity is a state of mind”. The analysis of those definitions and the grouping of very similar definitions into single categories revealed that – to the questionnaire respondents - creativity, above all, is about creating something new and tangible. Also important are ‘thinking outside the box’, expanding conventional horizons, and finding new ways to do something. Creativity is linked to utility and/or value in a relatively small number of those self-definitions of creativity. However, when the respondents were provided with an extant list of definitions of creativity gleaned from the work of leading creativity researchers that reflected the wide range of definitions of creativity i.e. from the elitist to the democratic, from the product-oriented to the process-oriented, from high use-value to low or even non-use value, etc., the responses again revealed a preference for value- and utility-free definitions of creativity. But in this case, those definitions that clearly linked creativity with utility and value still scored highly. Again this needs a far more detailed, rigorous and nuanced analysis, but the hypothesis is that although individuals do not instinctively associate creativity with utility and value, when prompted that utility and value are or might be linked with creativity, there is a sense of recognition or agreement that that may well be the case.
The final, and most important part of the data-collection, was the in-depth, face-to-face interviews undertaken with a number of the respondents to the questionnaire. Together with material from the online questionnaire they form what Marton and Booth (1997) define as a 'pool of meaning' that

.....contains all that the researcher can hope to find, and the researcher's task is simply to find it. This is achieved by applying the principle of focusing on one aspect of the object and seeking its dimensions of variation while holding other aspects frozen.

(Marton and Booth, 1997:133)

This material has been and continues to be subjected to an iterative and intensive process of phenomenographic analysis with the intention of producing final descriptions of categories that constitute not just a set of meanings, but a logical structure relating the different meanings (Akerlind 2002, 2006). This relational aspect is important, but at this stage of the research, dealing with a particularly complex subject, that relational aspect requires clear and detailed articulation. At this interim stage of the research, the analysis of the interviews points to the following variations in the way in which academics conceptualise creativity in relation to learning and teaching in higher education:

Category A: Stasis
A1 as a reaction to resistance, conformity and compliance.
A2 (as constrained)
A3 (as suspended)

Category B: Process
B1 as a process not leading to any outcome (explicit or implicit)
B2 as a process leading to an implicit, intangible outcome
B3 as a process leading to an explicit, tangible outcome

Category C: Change
C1 as deriving from the desire to change combined with the will to action
C2 as willingness to engage with and in change

Category D: Risk and Chance
D1 as engagement in risk-taking
D2 as the exploitation of chance and accidental occurrences
D3 as engagement in an activity that involves disorientation and encountering the unexpected

Category E: Product
E1 as the production of something new
E2 as the production of something new that has utility and value.

Category E: making connections
F1 as making new connections

Category G: Fulfilment
G1 as personal and/or professional fulfilment
These categories of variation already provide a landscape of creativity that contains both the expected and the unexpected. Some elements of this landscape, such as notions of process, product, and risk are almost taken ‘as read’ when considering creativity. Others such as the role of chance and the ability or freedom to exploit it, and the necessary disorientation and uncertainty that often accompanies creativity, are more problematic in terms of fitting them neatly into a hierarchically and relationally ordered ‘outcome space’ that is the goal of phenomenography.

Of particular interest, and particularly problematical are those conceptions of creativity, revealed in the transcripts, that refer to creativity – specifically in relation to learning and teaching – as either constrained or even suspended. For example, a dance tutor quite consciously suspending their creativity when working with the students in order to ensure, given the constraints of the course, that the students were able to acquire sufficient skills in the time available in order that the students might be creative. When those particular conceptions emerged, the probability was that they would be excluded from the research as they did not ‘fit in’. But given the clear evidence in the transcripts, it seems right to find a way to include them in the landscape of the research, and to discover if and how they relate to the other categories.

**Toward a conclusion**

This research is necessarily emergent, but several elements are beginning to clarify themselves. Creativity, as Prentice (2000) warns, is “slippery and complex”. It is also subtle and nuanced, particularly in the way it is conceptualised and operationalised. The emphasis on the social use-value of creativity has led, in one direction, to the over-commodification of creative products and the subsequent threats to cultural production and heritage, and in another to the increasing commodification of creativity in education where it can be defined, delivered, measured and assessed, or at least the attempt can be made to define, deliver, measure and assess it. But the paradox is that those with responsibility for delivering the enhanced creativity agenda in education appear to conceptualise creativity in a way that does not place much value on value.

**References**


CRAFT, A. (2001) An analysis of research and literature on Creativity In Education.
Report prepared for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.


DCMS (2001) Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years


NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE on CREATIVE and CULTURAL EDUCATION (1999) All Our Futures: creativity, culture and education. DfEE/DCMS: London:


OFSSTED (2003) Expecting The Unexpected. HMSO.


