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Interpreting secondary English curriculum policy in England past and present

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***Conversations in creativity:
Interpreting secondary English curriculum policy
in England past and present***

Lorna Ann Smith

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, School of Education.

November, 2020

85,225 words

Abstract

This thesis is a response to the expurgation of the term ‘creativity’ from the revised National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2014), inspired by my view – borne of 30 years’ experience - that English and creativity are intimately connected.

The research aims to understand the deep relationship between English policy and creativity, and the response of subject experts to the current Curriculum in this light; and hence make recommendations towards the next Curriculum, promote the agency of English teachers, and emphasise the importance of maintaining a community of practice.

I draw on the substantial existing literature on creativity in education and its (sometimes disputed) importance to English, using an interpretive hermeneutic approach influenced by Gadamer (1975/2004), to appreciate:

- i) how creativity appears throughout English education policy, through analysis from the first ‘Blue Book’ (BoE, 1905/1912) to the present Curriculum (DfE, 2014);
- ii) how expert English teaching professionals (or ‘colloquists’) conceive contemporary policy, through a series of semi-structured interviews.

There are four key findings. First, that policy from 1905 to the first Curriculum (Cox, 1989) establishes a tradition of creative English grounded in humanism; second, that subsequent Curricula (from DfE/WO, 1995) increasingly decouple creativity and English, such that the absence of ‘creativity’ from the current Curriculum is not as great a departure it might appear; third, that the colloquists align themselves with the tradition of creative English; fourth, that they remain committed to creative practice despite suggestions (Biesta, 2015; Erss, 2018) that today’s Curriculum disempowers and demotivates teachers.

I argue that preserving the tradition of creative English in both policy and practice is vital: creativity is a fundamentally humanising force, necessary to help young people cope with local, national and global challenges. Harnessing the collective memory of expert professionals provides an important counter-perspective to the current Curriculum until the policy is reviewed.

Acknowledgements and dedication

I would like first to acknowledge the contribution to this thesis of my original supervisor, Dr Malcolm Reed, for some inspiring conversations that launched me on my way. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my subsequent supervisors, Professor Keri Facer and Dr Janet Orchard, whose kindness, reassurance, expertise and erudition supported me immeasurably and enabled me to complete my research journey: thank you.

To the colloquists who gave so generously of their time and ideas: thank you for your inspirational testimony, and thank you for all that you have done, and still do, for secondary English.

To all those I have taught, both as a secondary English teacher and teacher educator, and to all colleagues I have ever had the privilege of working alongside: thank you. I have learnt everything from you.

To my dear father, John, thank you for your constant interest in my work and for being the most generous and exacting of proof-readers; and to my beloved late mother, Ann, thank you for your quiet guiding wisdom: I hope that you would have been proud to see this project reach fruition.

To my sons, Will and Alex, thank you for your continuous smiling encouragement.

To my husband, Paul, whose very presence has sustained me throughout: thank you for your understanding, patience and unconditional love.

I would like to dedicate this work to all the teachers of the past who were instrumental in establishing and growing subject English, often against the odds; to all who are teaching English now, continuing to enthuse and delight their students despite the multiple challenges faced; and to the English teachers of the future: be yours to hold the torch of English high.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is my own. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:



DATE: 3rd November 2020

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List of abbreviations

A level	Advanced Level
AOF	All Our Futures (NACCCE, 1999)
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Authority
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BBC	British Broadcasting Association
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BoE	Board of Education
CLIE	Committee for Linguistics in Education
CA	Continuous Assessment
CP	Creative Partnerships
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DfE/WO	Department for Education and the Welsh Office
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EA	English Association
EEC	European Economic Community
EMC	English and Media Centre
ESC	House of Commons Education and Skills Committee
ESRI	Education and Social Research Institute
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HMI	Her/His Majesty's Inspector of Schools
HMSO	Her/His Majesty's Stationery Office
ISBL	Institute of School Business Leadership
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LEA	Local Education Authority
KS3, KS4	Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4
L1	First language
LATE	London Association for the Teaching of English
NAAE	National Association of Advisors in English
NACCCE	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education
NATE	National Association for the Teaching of English
NCEE	National Center (<i>sic</i>) of Education and the Economy
NESTA	National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts
NEU	National Education Union
NGSA	National Grammar School Association
NUT	National Union of Teachers

NWP	National Writing Project
O level	Ordinary Level
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
PEE	Point, Evidence, Explain
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate of Education
PIRLS	Programme in International Reading Assessment
PISA	Progress in International Reading Study
PoS	Programmes of Study
PRP	Performance-Related Pay
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RSA	Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce
SAT	Standard Assessment Test
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UK	United Kingdom
UKLA	United Kingdom Literacy Association
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WEB	Writers Examination Board
WHC	Wise Humanising Creativity

Chapter 1: Introduction: ‘nothing without the make-believe of a beginning’¹

1.0 The starting point

Raymond Williams, in *The Long Revolution*, writes: “No word in English carries a more consistently positive reference than ‘creative’, and obviously we should be glad of this, when we think of the values it seeks to express and the activities it offers to describe” (1961: 19). As I shall go on to demonstrate, ‘creative’ is associated with making, developing, inspiration, artistry, originality and the imagination; it is associated with effective learning, and with acquiring the skills learners will need to respond to as-yet-unknown challenges. Yet the qualities and values that are ‘obvious’ to Williams are not truths universally acknowledged, particularly in the field of education. The fact that both academic and professional literature (e.g. Craft, 2001; Ofsted 2010; Bleiman, 2020) has continued to make the same or similar pleas for creativity to be made central to education as Plowden did in *Children and their Primary Schools* (1967) over fifty years ago, suggests that, despite the positivity associated with creativity noted by Williams above and its championing by influential bodies, its position is vulnerable.

This seems particularly so in the field of English education in England. ‘Creativity’ is entirely absent from the current *National curriculum in England: English programmes of study* (DfE, 2014) (hereafter ‘the National Curriculum’ or ‘the Curriculum’). Although the previous National Curriculum for English (DCSF/QCA, 2007) included creativity as one of its four core principles, and creativity *is* retained in other subject areas² of the current Curriculum, the expurgation of the term creativity (and any words containing the ‘create’ root) appear to be a particularly stark indicator that creativity is out of political favour where English is concerned.

I have been involved in secondary English teaching in England all my professional life and, throughout, have particularly enjoyed the explicitly creative aspects of the roles I have undertaken, both as a secondary classroom English teacher and English teacher educator. In addition, I am active within the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), and promote the work of the National Writing Project (NWP) through leading the South West Teachers as Writers group. Creativity has underpinned my work. I was therefore troubled by the new ‘creativity-less’ National Curriculum (DfE, 2014). I first felt caught, almost trapped,

¹ George Eliot (1876) *Daniel Deronda*, Chp 1.

² Art and Design, Computing, Design and Technology, Mathematics and Music (DfE, 2014).

as I considered how English teaching professionals in England might undertake their role *without* creativity, but then felt compelled to act: I wanted to understand how the subject professional body might interpret the orders and react to them.

Accordingly, this thesis is my response to having been 'called or summoned' (Moules et al, 2014: 1) to respond to the challenges posed to the English teaching profession by the current Curriculum. Hans-Georg Gadamer, the German philosopher whose tenets of hermeneutics are central to my study, suggests that an inquiry 'begins when something addresses us' (1975/2004: 299). My experience of being personally addressed ignited the fuse that eventually led not only to an understanding of the views of English professionals in England, but an enhanced, deeper appreciation of creativity and its centrality to English teaching.

Before continuing, it is important to note that I have published some of my findings at various points on my research journey (Smith: 2017, 2018a; 2018b; 2019; 2020a; forthcoming; Smith and Wrigley, 2019). These publications are listed in full in [Appendix 1](#) in response to the University of Bristol's guidance on self-plagiarism. Occasionally I cite myself in the text below, as recommended by Thomson (2017), because I cannot find a better or more economical way to express the ideas discussed. The peer-review process has been invaluable in helping me hone the arguments that I now make in this thesis.

1.1 Connecting the personal with the policy

'Well-rounded research brings together the personal and the public, the intuitive and the rational; art and science.' (Jessop, 2019: n.p.)

Research is a *personal* story that takes place in *public* context (in this case, public education policy). Since I am situated within this inquiry and the thesis will bear my 'signature' (Kinsella, 2006: 4) in more ways than one, I want to start by explaining in more depth how my personal professional experience working with that policy (the Curriculum) inspired this project.

As indicated above, I have spent the entirety of my thirty-year career in the field of English education in England. Coincidentally, that career - as teacher of secondary English in a mainstream school, author of teaching resources, and subsequently within the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) departments of three universities as tutor to students following Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programmes - has spanned the life of the Curriculum. The singular determiner 'the' is in fact a misnomer (there have been six versions

of the Curriculum to date, and one unpublished). This means that my career has necessitated reflecting upon the changes between the iterations on multiple occasions.

I recall poring over the initial version, *English for ages 5-16* (Cox, 1989), during my own PGCE year, inspired by its twin aims of contributing ‘to the personal development of the individual child’ (Cox, 1989: 59) and preparing them for the adult world; I remember the challenges of putting that Curriculum into practice during my probationary year in a school in the south west of England. There, I worked under an inspirational Head of Department who believed that English could be taught exclusively through literature. He encouraged us to read fiction extensively with our classes and to experiment in our wider practice. So, in the days before Health and Safety concerns proscribed such activity, I took my mixed-attaining classes to sit under a tent of cherry-tree blossom in the school grounds, or to the churchyard down the road (having first telephoned the vicar to check there was no funeral taking place that day) to write poetry. I would type up learners³ work for an anthology which we then discussed in class as if it were published literature. I encouraged them to write for other audiences – one won a national letter-writing competition. We were early adopters of email, using it to correspond with a partner school in Australia. I revised punctuation conventions by pairing my Year 8 class with a primary school class and getting them to design a bespoke ‘Mr Men’-style book with an animated punctuation symbol as the lead character and a narrative tailored to the interests of the buddy pupil. Although I did not refer to it in such terms at the time, I came to define my approach as ‘creative’. My learners enjoyed English; they happened to do very well in examinations, too. These experiences had a fundamental impact on my future practice.

I stayed at this school for ten years (including a year-long sabbatical to teach English to Santhali children in India and, later, 6 months’ maternity leave) and served a spell as Head of Department myself. The 1990s were dynamic in terms of curriculum change: Cox’s version was almost replaced after only a few years by that drafted by Pascall (DfE/WO, 1993), but after a wave of complaints from teachers and academics, this was deemed too contentious (Marshall, 2000) and was shelved. However, two new iterations were soon published

³ I debated whether to label the children ‘pupils’ (the term used in Curriculum documents), ‘students’ or ‘learners’. I settled on ‘learners’, a learner being defined as one who acquires knowledge or skills through study, experience or teaching (www.oed.com). The word ‘pupil’ originally meant an orphan or ward, which has uncomfortable connotations of powerlessness, while ‘student’ is simply a description of one who studies. I interpret ‘learner’ as carrying with it a greater sense of agency and so is appropriate to my argument about creativity; it also to some extent ‘flattens’ the hierarchy between teacher and child (Chappell *et al*, 2016: 18) because, as I go on to show, a creative teacher is a learner too.

(DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999a). Thus, in the first decade of my career, I worked with the first three published and the one unpublished Curriculum documents. Their number and this short timespan indicates the extent to which the subject was a site of struggle: each Curriculum told a slightly different story about the place, role and substance of English. While the narrative became increasingly tied to 'standards agendas' (Dymoke, 2011: 144), at the same time creativity became 'something of a catchphrase' (*ibid*) in education management – 'catchphrase' suggesting that although while creativity was being popularised, it was possibly a tokenistic understanding that was being promulgated. Nevertheless, I continued to seek to develop my creative practice through building on my earlier work.

When the fourth National Curriculum was launched (DfES/QCA, 2004) I was a visiting lecturer working with PGCE student teachers and undergraduate students in Education Studies; when the fifth Curriculum followed (DCSF/QCA, 2007), I was leading a successful PGCE English programme at a post-1992 university, and saw it as my mission to nurture a new generation of creative English teachers. This role as a teacher educator forged the focus for my early research, which centred on creative ways to use technology effectively in the classroom (Smith, 2008; Smith, 2014a) and approaches to creative writing (Fitzgerald and Smith, 2012; Smith and Spiteri, 2013; Smith, 2014b; Smith and Foley, 2015).

I was two years into my present post as the coordinator of the PGCE English programme at a Russell Group university and had already launched the Teachers as Writers group when the current Curriculum was introduced (DfE, 2014). The aims of this Curriculum appear not unlike those of Cox:

A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. (DfE, 2014: 13)

However, the document continues with a list of requirements that surely would have been anathema to Cox. The emphasis on canonical English literature and technical accuracy, decontextualised grammar and spelling, does little or nothing to promote personal development (NUT, 2014; Huddleston, 2015) and arguably stymies creative opportunities, with a 'naming of parts'-style knowledge (Brindley, 2015: 45) foregrounded rather than personal growth.

I became concerned that the formal tenor and prescriptive content of the revised Curriculum, together with greater than ever pressure on teachers driven by accountability

and performance tables, and greater societal pressure on young people to achieve, could change what happens in English lessons. This fear was compounded when I observed that some of my student teachers on school placement were required to 'teach to the test'; in certain schools, even learners in early Key Stage 3⁴ (KS3) were made to practice GCSE⁵-style questions at the expense of broader, creative, age-appropriate content. I heard anecdotes suggesting several schools had reduced creative writing to training learners to memorise passages to regurgitate in an examination, requiring only slight variance according to the question ('The grey clouds lumbered across the sky' or 'The silver clouds scudded across the sky'?). I realised that English teachers adopting such practice are resigned to 'curricularization' (Kress *et al*, 2004: 152) and that those who wish to actively promote creativity and foster personal growth had (ironically) to be creative and 'struggle inventively and subversively' (Brown, 2012: 258) to do so.

At the same time I was aware that the teacher workforce was declining (Burns, J., 2018), with the suggestion from high-profile observers that this was due to an erosion of teacher agency across the curriculum (Rosen, 2015; Londesborough *et al*, 2017). Laurie Smith (2017) suggests that second and third most common reasons for English teachers to leave the profession are a) the impact of policy changes that 'overwhelm [them]... by necessity and responsibility' (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012: 72) and b) feeling undervalued. And, remembering Mrs. Wiggins, Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Ryder - creative teachers who did much to cultivate my own love of the subject through facilitating rich classroom discussion, pointing me towards books I might not otherwise have come across, and encouraging me to experiment with writing - I was also anxious that the learners' experience of English was being reduced as attention shifted away from creativity⁶. The situation thus described appeared bleak indeed. I saw a picture emerging that suggested the marginalisation of creativity was delimiting the English offer in secondary classrooms at the expense of the teacher, the learner, and the subject itself.

⁴ Key Stage 3 in England is intended for school years 7-9, i.e. for students aged 11-14.

⁵ General Certificate of Secondary Education, usually taken in the academic year in which learners turn 16.

⁶ While learner wellbeing is not a focus of this thesis, it is worth considering whether the move away from creative English might be a contributory factor in reported increases in mental health problems (Weale, 2018) and behavioural issues (Wenham, 2019) amongst learners. This is a potential new area for research.

Indeed, my concerns went beyond English, as I began to ask broader questions about the remit and impact of the education system at a whole, which I here pause to consider. The Latin root 'educare' means 'to lead' (www.oed.com) which suggests that to educate is to develop, to nurture: education is about *becoming* - there is an implicit emphasis on cultivating the whole child that is reminiscent of Cox's primary aim cited above (*op cit*). The Oxford English Dictionary privileges the cultural and moral dimensions in its definition: education is 'The culture or development of personal knowledge or understanding, growth of character, moral and social qualities, etc., *as contrasted with* the imparting of knowledge or skill' (*ibid*, my emphasis). In a similar vein, Biesta defines education as 'a human event of communication, meaning making and interpretation' (2015: 11). It is this definition that I have chosen to adopt for the purposes of this thesis because of the import given to 'human' (humanism is the philosophy underpinning early English policy documents), 'communication' and 'meaning' (both of which rely on language), 'making' (a synonym for 'creating') and interpretation (which is core to hermeneutics). The perspective has recently been given fresh prominence through Unesco's *Futures of Education: Learning to Become* initiative (<https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/>) which seeks to 'reimagine' (*ibid*) knowledge, education and learning to enable humanity to meet the imagined and as-yet-unimagined challenges of the future.

However, a more prosaic definition of education has been adopted by the current Department of Education (DfE), one that departs from its etymological roots. In a speech to the Education Reform Summit in 2015, the year after the current Curriculum was published, Nick Gibb MP (Schools Minister) stated, 'Education is the engine of our economy' and went on, '... most important of all, we must ensure that more people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a demanding economy' (2015: n.p). Granted, Gibb goes on in his speech to discuss the importance of education in nurturing an appreciation of culture and of preparing children for adult life but – in a move away from the OED definition – Gibb suggests that ensuring young people are ready for work through providing them with 'knowledge and skills' is the prime purpose of education (*ibid*), termed the 'cause-effect' (Biesta, 2015: 11) notion of education as it assumes certain inputs ('knowledge and skills') will result in corollary (economic) outputs.

This is notwithstanding the debate that 'knowledge', although the driver of educational politics (a point reinforced by Gibb's speech), is itself ill-defined: 'the meaning of knowledge is at best implicit and at worst virtually empty of content' (Young, 2009: 193). And to ask what 'being educated in English' means (Wilson, 1972: 9) is not necessarily rhetorical. From

a subject English perspective, Brindley describes a 'knowledge dichotomy' (2015: 46) through which English is concerned with the knowledge decided by 'policy committees' (*ibid*) which is measurable and accountable, *and* knowledge borne of 'self-reflexivity' (*ibid*) – personal growth - which is not. The two knowledges are equally valid but are in competition with each other, creating a 'conundrum' (2015: 47) for English teachers who are required by the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011) to teach both. This conundrum is made that much more challenging since all references to 'knowledge' in the KS3 Curriculum (12 instances across 6 pages (DfE, 2014: 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.)) connote formal curricular knowledge only: the personal growth aspect is missing.

I am not suggesting that the economy should be ignored, but I do wish to question the absence of creativity in the current curriculum, and what this means for subject English. What might be the impact on both those teaching secondary English in schools and ITE tutors, like me, working with new English teachers? Is it even possible for me still to justify my reference to 'creative' in my PGCE Handbook⁷, given that the inclusion of the term is in apparent opposition to the language of the Curriculum my student teachers are required to teach? Are my colleagues in the field as troubled by the removal of 'creativity' from the Curriculum as I am? What impact, if any, do *they* believe it has on the subject and on their practice? To answer these questions, it is necessary to consider the very relationship between creativity and English – what binds them together, what has been their story over the years, whether anything has changed (and why).

1.2 The aims of this thesis

I therefore intend this project to examine how the idea of creativity in English is interpreted by subject experts today, and whether (or to what extent) this reflects how the relationship between English and creativity in England has been seen over the years, recognising how understanding what is happening in the present in the light of the past might inform the future. While there is a substantial body of existing work on creativity in education and its importance in English (to which I refer), no study to date focuses specifically on the response of subject English experts to this latest curriculum change, and none specifically explores the long view of the history of creativity and English policy.

⁷ The PGCE Handbook states that we aspire to develop 'excellent, enthusiastic and creative teachers of English who can inspire young people and enable them to become confident and competent users of language' (Smith, 2014c: 2).

Given that the purpose of educational research is ‘not just research in what is the case, but research in how to make what is the case more like what ought to be the case’ (Wilson, 1972: 7), and that any good research has a political purpose to bring about change (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012), my ambition is that this thesis should ultimately contribute to the regeneration of secondary English education policy. (The current Curriculum was published seven years after the previous version, and none to date has survived longer than this - the average is 5 years - which suggests that revision is soon due.) The hermeneutist perspective of my research is intended to provide a rich, deep, authoritative context for the debate, so that those charged with developing the next Curriculum might be better aware of the complex history of English and creativity in curriculum policy and, through that understanding, make decisions that more carefully reflect the complex nature of English. I aspire, too, to contribute to English ITE by demonstrating to student teachers that are joining an established community with a long tradition of creative practice.

I seek to achieve these aims through first exploring the role of creativity in English curriculum policy from the formation of the subject to the present day through documentary analysis; and then considering how creativity is understood by expert English teaching professionals, and their response to the current climate. Accordingly, my research aims are:

1: to understand the place of creativity in English education policy, now and throughout its history.

This involves exploring English curriculum policy documents to understand how creativity in English emerged; what are its hallmarks; how it has been contested over time; and the extent to which there has been continuity in received notions.

2: to understand how creativity in English education policy is conceived by expert English teaching professionals.

This involves gaining a lived insight into how experienced, expert teaching professionals understand creativity, and how they respond to the current English curriculum policy; it leads on to considering the extent of teachers’ agency when charged with enacting the policy.

The fields of analysis for the two research aims are, respectively, English curriculum policy texts past and present, and testimony from expert English teaching practitioners.

1.3 A note on my positionality and hermeneutics

In terms of my physical positionality, I live and work in England; this research focuses exclusively on the education policy in this single context. All references to 'English' in thesis henceforth should be taken as being nested in England and the findings are limited to this setting. Politically, I am a liberal-socialist; hence, my teaching career was in a publicly-funded (maintained) school (rather than an independent school) and the majority of my student teachers are on placement in and go on to work in maintained settings. I am primarily interested in exploring English teaching in the maintained sector. However, I hope that this project may be of value to educators and researchers in English education in both the maintained and independent sectors in England, other English-speaking jurisdictions in the UK and beyond, and also to first language (L1) teachers in the wider world.

I acknowledge I am writing from a position of several biases. I am a lover of language, seeing language as humankind's most important invention; I am a natural optimist, with an idealist, constructionist perspective; as noted above, I hold that creativity is important not only to English but to education more widely, and believe it is a huge error of judgement to write creativity out of the Curriculum. My position and my prejudices have been determined by my lived life; what I see is illuminated 'by their light' (Gadamer, 1975/2004: 360). The metaphor is important: it emphasises that one's experiences *elucidate* what we seek to understand, so that far from trying to suppress what led me to embark on this inquiry, they need to be foregrounded.

As I go on to explain in more depth, I have therefore opted to undertake this study through hermeneutics. Doing so ensures that my professional and intellectual situatedness are not veiled but made as open as possible. Far from being merely a set of research tools, hermeneutics is an approach which directs and informs the way one can survey fields of knowledge and make an interpretative argument, allowing for truths to be revealed (or reinforced). I rely particularly on the work of Gadamer and, indeed, an additional aim of my work is to reappraise the value of Gadamerian hermeneutics to the social sciences.

It has more recently been suggested that the daily lives of professionals in any field involving human interaction (nursing, psychology, education) are hermeneutic in character because such professionals interpret people all the time (Moules *et al*, 2011: 2): hermeneutics is therefore, for them, a diurnal reality. Their 'own being comes into play' (Gadamer,

1975/2004: 484) in a literal way through their work, and I want to emphasise this human aspect of hermeneutics.

1.4 An overview of the thesis structure

I now go on, in Chapter 2 – given the reliance of hermeneutics on context - to ground my argument through summarising key literature on creativity, education and English. I then explain in more depth, in Chapter 3, how hermeneutics – reliant as it is on language, imagination and interpretation - inspired my approach. In Chapter 4, I show how a hermeneutic understanding shaped the creative methodology that guided each stage of my research design. I then share my findings. In Chapter 5, I explore English policy (1905-88), demonstrating how the development of English, informed by experienced subject experts, was rooted in humane, creative practice: English and creativity are historically intimately connected. I show in Chapter 6 how, while this view was maintained by Cox (1989), successive National Curricula (1995-2014) - by now influenced more by policy predicated on Gibb's economic agenda than the philosophy that a humane education might further personal and social development - reshape English to the point at which creativity vanishes entirely, rendering the subject apparently rootless. Yet in Chapter 7, through the trope of a script that re-presents my research interviews, I show that a sample of expert English teaching professionals deplore the way in which creativity and English have been forcibly separated in the policy, and that their testimony suggests creative English survives in practice. I discuss the agency of English teachers further in Chapter 8, as I consider the extent to which creativity shapes their practice notwithstanding the policy; how teachers might 'inhabit' (de Certeau, 1984) the policy and make it their own, within limits. I nonetheless call, in Chapter 9, for further research into opportunities for the meaningful restoration of creativity to English curriculum policy to help rebalance the experience of all learners, and thereby equip them for the challenges of the future.

Throughout the process, ideas are constantly interpreted and re-interpreted. Knowledge is therefore being made and being tested simultaneously, a process known as double hermeneutic (Scott and Usher, 1996: 19). I hope to carry my readers with me as *they* interpret all these interpretations through my work.

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Chapter 2: The challenge of defining creativity and its controversial place in curriculum policy

2.0. Introduction and overview

I want first to investigate why creativity has become such a contentious term. It has, after all, positive connotations in common parlance; to be recognised as ‘creative’ is usually taken as a compliment, and English and creativity are popularly closely associated. Indeed, it is appropriate, given Dryden’s designation of Chaucer as ‘the father of English poetry’ (in Patterson, 1991: 13) that the first recorded use of the term ‘create’ (en.wikipedia.org) appears in Chaucer’s *The Parson’s Tale*: ‘Al be it so that God hath creat alle thynges / In right ordre, and no thyng withouten ordre’ (c. 1390: 218). However, the removal of creativity from the National Curriculum is evidence that its story is no simple one, and an exploration of the literature begins to reveal some of the complexity.

To begin, however, a word about my approach to this chapter. As I began my research journey, I realised that neither a standard methodological nor systematic literature review (Punch, 2009; Hart, 2013; Booth, Sutton and Papaionannou, 2016) would be appropriate for this project. Hermeneutics – as I go on to explain in more detail in Chapter 3 – is concerned with understanding developed through immersion in context (Gadamer, 1975/2004). The word context is from the Latin *contexere* meaning ‘to weave together, to connect’ (www.oed.com), which emphasises that knowledge is woven into (and so cannot be separated from) its context. I thus understood that the role of this chapter is to provide the context for my research, to ground both me and my reader (Dowling and Brown, 2010).

I was reassured by the notion that a literature review for a thesis should not attempt to survey the whole field (Booth, Sutton and Papaionannou, 2016). Indeed, I was struck by Kamler and Thomson’s analogy (2006) of a literature review as a dinner party to which special guests are invited for conversation and debate (particularly as the relationship between creativity and dialogue is a central theme of my research). My guests trace the complex history of creativity, identify the key debates concerning how creativity is understood in education policy in England, and examine the effect of that policy on contemporary secondary English practice; the discussion provides structure for the rest of the thesis. They highlight key arguments, contradictions, questions. However, a hermeneutic perspective recognises that the conversation is incomplete. In fact, it will never be finished, as knowledge is constantly being made and remade.

The chapter begins (section 2.1) with a broad-brush overview that provides a history of creativity and shows how it has been variously understood in the broader literatures including psychology, art and design theory, literature and education. It then focuses in (section 2.2), providing context specific to my research by exploring the contentious position of creativity in education policy over the last fifty years as seen through the research literature, starting with the 1960s (when the debate rose to prominence), through to a renewed interest in creativity in the 1990s, to a resurgence in the 2000s. Section 2.3 then provides an overview of the state of the current debate around creativity in the secondary English classroom context, as a precursor to identifying the gap in the literature this thesis seeks to fill (section 2.4).

2.1 The contested notion of creativity

Here I attempt to map some of the many different definitions of creativity across various fields. Given the wealth of available literature and vast range of meanings, this is a daunting task, but is guided by two key purposes: I want first to provide a sense of the range of meanings to highlight how potentially ambiguous the term creativity can be, and hence how confusing it is to apply in the practical field of education (ahead of section 2.2); and second to highlight the interconnectedness of creativity and English to provide context for section 2.3. I deal with the main movements in the development of creativity in roughly chronological order - although this is not to suggest that the story is a simple linear narrative, nor complete: indeed, notions of creativity themselves are constantly being (re)created (Chappell, 2018).

2.1.1 Big C Creativity: from Gods and geniuses to the hard graft of the great artists

The perspective which associates creativity with God (as Chaucer does above) and other geniuses with God-given artistic skills and imagination exists only in rare quarters today (Sternberg, 1999; Scruton, 2000 *in* Banaji and Burn, 2010). It is the view that great artists are born with an inspired combination of spontaneous insight and skills, their work thus 'result[ing] from an interplay between the intuitive and the conscious' (Bannerman, 2008: 135). This view suggests that their natural gifts and intuition generates their creative capacity.

A more common thread in the literature is that creativity is as much a result of nurture as nature - and that nurturing creativity is hard work. Matisse famously said, 'Creativity takes

courage,' yet it is the sentence preceding this that is pertinent here: 'The artist begins with a vision — a creative operation *requiring effort*' (n.d. in Brown, 1998: 62, my emphasis). Matisse is talking about one who combines talent *with application* to produce something beautiful. The sense of the sheer exertion needed for creativity is reinforced by Kostler, who describes having to 'wrench [...] away from the known to create the unknown' (1959, n.p. in Lytton, 1971: 15), the violence of his choice of verb suggesting that creativity can be a painful process; for Spender, writing a poem depends upon inspiration but takes 'sweat and toil' (1946, n.p. in Lytton, 1971: 18).

It can also be an involved process - Wallas (1926 in Lytton, 1971) lays down the stages he believes necessary to reach a creative destination: preparation, incubation, illumination and, ultimately, verification. Lytton (1971) uses a mountaineering metaphor to sum up how both physical *and* complex the imaginative thinking required can be, the product arrived at on reaching the summit; while Summerfield describes 'the state of mind' of a 'good artist' as one which 'includes absorption, curiosity, persistence, inquisitiveness, tentativeness, experimentation, and exhaustion' (1968: 23). Similarly, Sternberg implies that the creative act takes vision, strength and determination: he presents the view that creativity is 'sculpted' out of 'imagination, originality, genius, talent, freedom and individuality' (1999: 17).

These renowned creatives cited above (Matisse, Spender, Summerfield) are associated with the aesthetic (painting and poetry), but more recent scholarship suggests that the concept has connotations beyond the arts, so that a great creative may be anyone whose work is influential or 'publicly acclaimed' (Craft, 2001: 11). The idea that creativity bridges science and the arts has been made explicit: Einstein saw science, for instance, as a creative exploration: 'The greatest scientists are artists as well' (1923 in Ossola, 2014)⁸. Bertrand Russell described mathematics as having 'supreme beauty... like that of a sculpture' (en.wikipedia.org). It has been proposed that there are 'domain differences' between creative people, so that while Einstein and Russell might have 'greater flexibility in the intellectual sphere', the artist might have 'greater flexibility in the emotional or affective sphere' (Stein, 1950 in Runco and Jaeger, 2012: 95). Despite the apparent privileging of physicists, this position acknowledges the importance of creativity across domains and opens up the idea that creativity is significant in many fields.

⁸ The corollary statement is by Arnold: 'Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete' (1880: n.p.).

There are three points here that are significant to my inquiry. First, the literature suggests that creativity can be nurtured (by oneself) or taught (with the support of peers or more experienced others). Secondly, there is recognition that creativity might involve intuition but is also effortful and requires resilience (*e.g.* Lytton, 1971; Summerfield, 1968), which counters implications from some quarters that it is merely “light relief” (Claxton, 2006: n.p.) or an easy, sugar-coated appendage (Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014). Finally, it appears that great creatives exist not only in the arts, but across domains (Craft, 2001; Runco and Jaeger, 2012; Chappell et al, 2019). I am interested in exploring whether and how these aspects are acknowledged when I analyse the English policy documents in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.1.2 The interdependence of creativity and culture

Any debate about creativity presupposes that it cannot exist in a vacuum (Jones, 2009). Creative outputs have to be acknowledged as valuable (Robinson, 2007; Chappell *at al*, 2019), and therefore creativity should be conceptualised as a sociocultural entity (Loi and Dillon, 2006: n.p): judgements about creativity are based within the embedded socio-cultural context⁹. The difficulty lies in who does the valuing and how that value is acknowledged (Craft, 2006; Burnard, 2006; Dymoke, 2011)¹⁰.

At one extreme, cultural conservatives such as TS Eliot (1923) see culture as appropriate only for the select minority (Fleming, 2010): the art produced by the Big C creatives (Craft, 2001) is not a universal entitlement but, rather, a rarefied offering for those who can properly appreciate it. In this exclusive and purist view, a self-appointed hierarchy make judgements about what is culturally significant on behalf of the majority.

Ironically, an English curriculum built around Eliot’s notion of a literary canon would be inaccessible to most learners, given his belief that high culture is reserved for the chosen few. Eliot’s elitist perspective sits uncomfortably with the view of contemporary scholars who suggest that the cultural value ascribed to a product of creativity is flexible: the value is fluid because society and culture are undergoing constant change. The literature emphasises that it is difficult to know which of today’s creations will be valued in the future and which

⁹ I develop the theme of creativity as a carrier of what society values in Chapter 3 when discussing the work of Gadamer.

¹⁰ I am aware that most of the examples I have cited thus far, and go on to reference in this section, are western white men. This is not intentionally to exclude women, people of colour, or those of the global south; it is a result of the texts I consulted themselves being by/focusing on western white men, and highlights the difficulty of ascertaining who does the valuing and how it is acknowledged. I return to issues of diversity briefly in Chapter 9.

rejected: Bach was seen as no more than a proficient composer in his day (Bannerman, 2008), while Van Gogh, despite deliberately experimenting and innovating, was not recognised by contemporary critics: he sold only one painting during his lifetime (Jones, 2009). This point about the sales-worthiness of a painting emphasises that the monetary value of a created work does not necessarily reflect its aesthetic or cultural value. Yet the Big C artists are revered – and so their work becomes expensive - *because* their art has become culturally significant in their respective canons (Green and Cormack, 2008).

Today, however, with near-universal education in the West, the concept of the canon is understood more broadly than it once was (*ibid*). Although Big C creatives are traditionally associated with high culture, there is no straight-forward correlation between Big C/high culture and little c/low culture. As creativity becomes less the preserve of the culturally and educationally elite and becomes more popularised, labels become increasingly difficult to apply. For example, highly successful creative people such as the Beatles – whose pop (popular) music is by definition low culture (Helson, 1996 *in* Sternberg, 1999) - are now recognised as part of the canon. They rose to fame during the 1960s, at a period when elitist notions of culture were being re-appraised. This in turn calls into question further judgements: ‘The distinction between high and low art is initially easy to recognise but difficult to sustain’ (Fleming, 2010: 60) due to the challenge of identifying distinguishing criteria and even the problem of identifying what is ‘art’.

The relationship between creativity and culture is, therefore, complex, value-laden and disputed. I am interested in investigating which notion of culture prevails in English policy documents - is there a high culture, canonical view, or one that allows for a wider definition of culture (or cultures); is the understanding of ‘culture’ consistent; is it possible that the different notions are understood in parallel?

2.1.3 Democratising creativity: making it personal

While Big C creatives make transformational ‘knight’s move[s]’¹¹ (Haste, 2008: 97) that advance human understanding, there is another view of creativity at the opposite end of the scale, small scale ‘baby steps’ (*ibid*) that have an impact at a personal level: ‘little c’ creativity

¹¹ A knight is the only piece on a chessboard that does not move in a straight line; it is also the only piece that can jump over others and the only one to change the colour of the landing square on every move. It is therefore associated with power, flexibility and unconventionality. As my supervisor Dr Janet Orchard has pointed out, there is a nice irony that only those with Big C capital can understand the reference.

(Craft, 2001: 45) or 'ordinary creativity' (Carter, 2004). The call is not to reject high culture, but to enrich it with 'lived culture' (Williams, 1958: 93) as a means of conjoining 'the special processes of discovery and creative effort' (*ibid*).

Little c creativity does not sit in opposition to Big C creativity, but complements it (Craft, 2001). This position suggests that people can not only appreciate the aesthetic creative outputs of others *but be creative themselves* and that, through individual aesthetic experience, grow as individuals.

Little c also goes beyond the aesthetic: it describes the creativity latent in humans to enable people to cope with the everyday. It is 'possibility thinking' (Cremin, Burnard and Craft, 2006: 108), a notion of creativity that enables us to solve problems, find alternative ways to do things; and is thereby essential to a full life (Seltzer and Bentley, 1999). The term little c might be a more economical way of expressing what has been termed 'clusters' of creative capacities: 'originality, fluency and volume of ideas, adaptive flexibility, spontaneous flexibility, expressional fluency, sensitivity to problems' (Barron, Montuori and Barron, 1997: 12) and 'flexibility, critical evaluation, taking multiple perspectives, and exploring non-obvious connections' (Haste, 2008: 96). And it is not a new idea – over a century ago, Dewey noted,

Only silly folk identify creative originality with the extraordinary and fanciful; others recognise that its measure lies in putting everyday things to use which had not occurred to others. (1916: n.p.)

In this view, creativity refers to an individual's relationship with the world - one that is constantly evolving - and is about the interplay between what is known and unknown. It could be said here, then, that creativity is synonymous with learning – the term 'creative thinking' perhaps being an oxymoron (www.catalign.in), as to think is to be creative – and that such thinking is necessary, according to Dewey, to enable people to make responsible, informed choices necessary for the functioning of a democratic society.

Piaget presents a slightly different angle, when he yokes together intellect and creativity, suggesting intellect refers to logic and factual knowledge, while creativity refers to the 'emotional, imaginative, spontaneous and productive' (Banaji and Burn, 2010: 51), the one being seen to enrich the other. The latter is Lytton's Subjective creativity (1971) - personal development, irrespective of its impact on others.

The difficulty with the little c view is that it is 'self-endorsed' (Banaji and Burn, 2010: 32) and so does not sit comfortably with the notion that creativity brings something special or

enriching to our lives. Some critics reject the notion of ‘little c’ as ‘vulgar creativity’ (Thomson and Hall, 2006 *in* Banaji and Burn, 2010: 32); others question its very premise, arguing that since it is the tension between the mundane and the exceptional that is at the heart of creative encounters (Negus and Pickering, 2004), little c, everyday creativity is by definition *unexceptional*¹².

Nonetheless, the little c perspective challenges the suggestion that creativity is reserved for the elite. Rather, the literature presents little c creativity as fundamental both to the full development of individuals and to learning, and it is this that makes the removal of creativity from the Curriculum intriguing and concerning.

2.1.4 Community and collaboration

Most of the things that are interesting, important, and human are the result of creativity. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 139)

The positions outlined thus far largely describe creativity as generated by individuals. However, in tune with the notion that creativity is a sociocultural phenomenon, as sketched above, is the idea that creativity happens when humans communicate, are in dialogue with each other, work together. Countering the view that creativity is the result of work by ‘autonomous agents’ (Knoop, 2008: 122) – Philip Pullman, for instance, celebrates *individual* acts of creativity in his Isis lecture (2003) – is a significant body of literature (*e.g.* Sternberg, 1999; Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008; Littleton and Mercer, 2013; Chappell *et al*, 2016; Chappell *et al*, 2019) that argues creativity develops within a community and is dependent on collaboration. John-Steiner’s *Notebooks of the Mind* (1997) highlights the extent to which sociocultural connections (whether deliberate or accidental) are necessary to inspire creativity; she goes on in *Creative Collaboration* (2006) to emphasise the importance of partnerships, friendships and communities to creativity. Given that schools are communities that offer (or not) opportunities for collaborative interplay, this view is of particular import to my thesis.

¹² I am grateful to Dr Kerry Chappell for alerting me to Kaufman and Beghetto’s (2009) interesting paper, which critiques the Big/little c categorisations as restrictive for researchers as insufficient to describe the range of creative activity. The authors offer instead a Four Cs model, whereby mini-c is the preparation stage for little c, ‘everyday’ creativity (perhaps typically exhibited by school students), while professional or Pro-c creativity describes someone who might make their living through their art or their writing (a category which might include teachers) but will never achieve Big-C eminence. I feel that these finer gradations would be highly relevant; I look forward to using them in future.

Sternberg (1999) suggests that one reason for the interdependence of creativity and community is that ideas borne of creativity need an audience. He identifies three intellectual abilities as important for creative production: the 'synthetic' ability to see a problem in a fresh light, the 'analytic' ability to realise ideas that are worth following through and the 'practical-contextual' ability *to explain and defend those ideas to others* (Sternberg, 1999: 11). In other words, the combination of particular sorts of intelligence and motivation may well result in creative outputs, but these are worth little if one lacks the persuasiveness to convince others that they are worth putting to the test. By extension, creativity is important for leadership (Sternberg, 2008) – society depends on the creativity of its chiefs. Leaders are not only those who have the best ideas, but are those who are best able to talk other people into following them. (It is interesting to consider this in an education context where teachers might be seen as leaders; by extension, good teachers are therefore creative, and this understanding empowers their work with learners (Cremin and Barnes, 2018).)

It is not always top down, however. The notion of socially-responsible creativity is explored in an essay entitled *Creativity and Wisdom: Are They Incompatible?* which argues that humans have a 'transformational imperative' (Feldman, 2008: 81) - a tendency to become dissatisfied with the world as we know it and seek to change it through creative efforts. This idea of people working something out together has elsewhere been termed 'interthinking' (Littleton and Mercer, 2013), the coinage highlighting the active and collaborative way that humans solve problems through dialogue 'inter' – between - one another. Biesta suggests that it is this very 'gap between the teacher and the learner' (2004: 13) through which learning happens, the 'gap' providing opportunities for participation and coordination.

Nevertheless, even though creativity is positioned at the forefront of human consciousness and 'is the most hopeful source of transformation for the good of all' (Barron, 1997: 1), the literature acknowledges that humans do not always capitalise on creative interplay – it is often stymied at both personal and institutional levels. For instance, a popular dictionary defines creativity as 'The use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness' (www.oxforddictionaries.com) and provides as an example, 'firms are keen to encourage creativity' (*ibid*), putting creativity solidly in an economic and collaborative context, and presenting the view that a creative and collaborative workforce is seen as necessary for economic success in a post-industrial society, to invent, improve, market (an idea I explore in more detail below, when considering how it sits in an educational context). However, it has been pointed out that the irony is twofold: on the institutional level, if employers *demand* creativity, they are potentially thereby limiting their choice of employee

(not all potential applicants will see themselves as creative, so will not apply for a role for which they are qualified); equally, job security is not necessarily enhanced by developing a creative, flexible workforce (Banaji and Burn, 2010) – on a personal level, employees who can see ways of streamlining a production line are not necessarily likely to pass on their idea to their employer and thereby render themselves redundant. This reinforces the suggestion that the settings we inhabit constantly both encourage and *discourage* creativity (Knoop, 2008).

2.1.5 Considering the ethics of creativity

From a different contemporary economic angle, it has been asked to what extent a consumer's wish for the newly-minted product is at the expense of sustainability (Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008), with the warning that if we continue to want what is freshly-created, people are in danger both of ignoring all that has been carefully created in the past (thereby missing what might be of aesthetic and cultural value) and using up unrenovable resources. There cannot but be 'collateral damage' (Rowson, 2008: 85) if the imperative is ever to seek the new.

Further, it is worth touching on the paradox that not all that is newly-created is universally understood to be 'good'. Sometimes acting creatively means breaking away from received wisdom, as the polymath Galileo – whose world-changing ideas were rejected by many of his contemporaries - might attest (Sharratt, 1996). Sometimes what is created causes harm (Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008): humans have created weapons as enthusiastically as they have things beautiful, benign and progressive. An invention used generally constructively – the internet – was initially funded by the US Department of Defense for military purposes (Couldry, 2012) and so has arguably *destructive* roots, and there are thousands of examples of its having been subverted by those acting harmfully or illegally: paradoxically, an artefact produced by extremists to wage terror may be of 'value' to its makers only through creating devastation.

These arguments indicate that creativity is a term laden with values (Whittemore, 1968). To reiterate, what is not clear is *whose* values and who is qualified as arbiter (Burnard, 2006; Craft, 2006; Dymoke, 2011). Thus, Craft et al (2008) urge us to use our creativity wisely, suggesting that creativity should not simply be associated with novelty but with 'trusteeship' (Claxton, Craft and Gardner, 2008: 172) of each other, the environment and the wider

world¹³. They propose the notion of Wise Humanising Creativity (WHC) (Chappell and Craft, 2011: 4), through which creativity is ‘generated by an inside-out/outside in dialogue’ (Chappell, 2018: 6) involving individuals and communities searching for new possibilities. A similar argument is posed by Osberg (2010) and Facer (2019), both of whom suggest it is our duty to use our creative talents carefully in order to safeguard ourselves and the planet for the future. Accordingly, creativity is not an end in itself, but a means to a greater end: one that is about nothing less than survival of the world and everything in it. In such a context, the claim that ‘creativity is as much a decision about and an attitude toward life as it is a matter of ability’ (Sternberg, 2003 *in* Rowson, 2008: 85) takes on a real magnitude.

Recently, New Materialist theorists (Chappell, 2018; Chappell et al, 2019) have extended the notion of WHC beyond the human, to a ‘post-humanising’ notion of creativity that sees places, spaces and objects as equal ‘actants’ (Chappell, 2018: 9) to humans. They suggest that it is wrong to overstate the dominance of humans in the world, stressing that humanity is merely ‘enmeshed’ (*ibid*) in a greater whole.

Given our collective reliance on creativity, then, it is of fundamental importance to explore the extent to which these notions are acknowledged and represented in English policy documents. Key to my research is therefore to ask not only whether the documents engage with ‘What is creativity?’ but with ‘Creativity for what?’

2.1.6 Towards ‘creativities’

These research accounts present multiple definitions of ‘creativity’ and suggest that the notion of creativity is multi-faceted, ‘a fuzzy concept’ (Fryer, 2012: 21) understood in so many different forms that effectively resist a definitive definition¹⁴. It is applied to the arts and the sciences, to great achievements and to everyday life, to individuals and to community (Banaji and Burn, 2010; Chappell, 2018; Chappell *et al*, 2019) and is essential to our continued existence. It may not be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that there are as many definitions of the term ‘creativity’ as there are people who use it, such that the plural coinage ‘creativities’ (Han and Marvin, 2002: n.p; Sternberg, 2005: n.p; McCallum,

¹³ Advocates of this view see creativity as the aforementioned ‘journey of becoming’ (Chappell, 2016: 1), which points to the transformational opportunities for individuals involved in creating alongside others - or, to appropriate Craft et al’s (2008) term, co-creative activity can enable the ‘trusteeship’ of oneself.

¹⁴ As I go on to demonstrate in Chapter 3, this ambiguity makes hermeneutics particularly suited to a study on creativity, as hermeneutics embraces ambiguity (Kinsella, 2006).

2012: 20) is perhaps more helpful than a single abstract noun to convey the range of meanings¹⁵.

While Han and Marvin (2002) and Sternberg (2005) discuss ‘creativities’ from a psychological perspective, with Sternberg considering the ‘processes, domains, and styles’ (2005: n.p.) that might categorise the different creativities, it is McCallum’s argument that is most salient to my work¹⁶. He reiterates ideas rehearsed above: that creativities are central to the freedom and growth of both individuals and societies and, indeed, that it is ‘[o]ur impulse’ (2012: 32) to create and, accordingly, to learn.

It would therefore appear self-defeating for a Curriculum whose *raison d’être* is to facilitate learning (DfE, 2014) to deny students that learning by removing creativity from the equation. The fact that it *has* been removed indicates that the curriculum policy field must itself hold conflicting views on creativity, and so it is to the literature on creativity in the educational policy context that I now turn, looking to see where the emphasis lies and what the tensions are.

2.2 ‘Creativities’ in education policy

‘Creativity seems to hold an ambiguous place in this country. We appear uncertain as to its value, unable to decide whether it is a good or bad thing’.

(Marshall, 2001: 116)

My interest in this thesis is in what is lost if we do not include creativity in English curriculum policy. Through reviewing the work of those researchers who have gone before me in studying the often fraught political relationships between creativity and education policy, a picture emerges of tensions between educationalists of different constituencies and between politicians of differing hues. The relationship is made all the more complex given that neither of the two major political parties who have governed England over the years that this research covers (the Conservatives and Labour) has a fixed notion of creativity. Notions vary according to the policy context, which is itself dependent on the socio-political

¹⁵ The term ‘creativities’ is gaining traction. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) now awards an annual ‘Anna Craft Creativities in Education Prize’ (<https://www.bera.ac.uk/award/>) and the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge has established a research centre named ‘Creativities, Arts and Literature’ (<http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/>).

¹⁶ McCallum is a former English teacher educator in England and is currently the director of the English and Media Centre (<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/>).

context; and the place of creativity *in* education¹⁷ is directly connected to how the purpose of education is construed, which is also not fixed. An added challenge for researchers in the field is that criteria vary from study to study (Craft, 2001; Blamires and Peterson, 2014).

These tensions are played out in policy and practice. In this section, I show how some of the constructs of creativity (or ‘creativities’) in education as outlined in section 2.1 have shifted over recent decades according to political vicissitudes. I highlight in particular significant moments of the 1960s, 1990s and 2000s to illustrate the different perspectives and set the context for the discussion of how contemporary researchers in the field of secondary English respond to the policy.

2.2.1 The 1960s - Creativity (re)discovered: from Pestalozzi to Plowden

This section focuses on how education in the 1960s advanced child-centred, personal growth models of creativity and so began the culture wars that ultimately led to the current situation.

However, it is important to emphasise that a creative approach to education is not a modern invention. Henry Wotton, writing in the sixteenth century, noted that the first step of a teacher should be ‘to discern the natural inclinations and capacities of children’ (n.d. *in* BoE, 1937: 8), and two hundred years later, Pestalozzi re-advanced the idea of a creative, nurturing, child-centred pedagogy (Darling, 1982), arguing that learning happens through the ‘head, hand and heart’ (en.wikipedia.org). These child-centred ideas were advanced in early pedagogical literature – for instance, they inspired Elizabeth Mayo when she established the progressive Home and Colonial [Teacher] Training College in 1836 (Gillard, 2018). However, they were not then widely taken up, suggesting that creativity attracted suspicion in some quarters even then.

Instead, the stereotype holds of children learning by rote in a manner caricatured by Dickens’ Mr Gradgrind, whose ‘little pitchers’ were to be ‘filled... full of facts’ (1854: n.p.) – the ‘facts’ being the products of the Big C creatives of the past in the domains of both the arts and sciences (and presumably it was for the ‘facts’ that the parents of Gradgrind’s pupils paid their fees). Ironically, there were with few opportunities for the little pitchers themselves to be creative. The received view (Jones, 2009; Medway *et al*, 2014) is that this

¹⁷ For the purposes of this thesis, I am using the term ‘education’ to describe practice in primary and secondary schools.

fixed, knowledge-based curriculum was favoured in English schools from the Victorian era up to and including the 1950s (something that I explore further in Chapter 5).

Change at primary level came upon the election of Harold Wilson's Labour government in 1964 on a manifesto that included the abolition of selective education (Medway *et al*, 2014). The change – even 'revolution' (Cooper, 1981: 125) - resulted from two key events: the introduction (in most local authorities) of a new comprehensive system which ended the 11+ tests that divided the grammar school sheep from the secondary modern goats, thereby freeing primary teachers from stultifying test preparation; and the publication of *Children and their Primary Schools* – more commonly known as The Plowden Report (Plowden: 1967). Plowden was influential in showing teachers an alternative – and, implicitly, creative – pedagogy through which the development of the whole child is promoted, not merely their intellectual capacity. The Report is variously interpreted as representing the 'first wave' (Craft, 2002 *in* Craft, 2005: 11) and the 'high water mark' (Sugrue, 2010: 107) for progressive primary education, this oceanic imagery indicating that some commentators see it as the start of refreshing change while others, less optimistically, see it as its apogee.

Plowden eschewed a knowledge-based curriculum. Building on policy developed through the Hadow Report that called for 'a humane and general education' (1926: xx), but used successfully in only a minority of primary schools (Kogan, 1987), the Report promotes a curriculum where teachers work in 'artistic interaction' (Kogan, 1987: 14) with their pupils. The ambitious aim was both to support individual development and promote a fairer society. This corresponded with ideas simultaneously resurging in the secondary context that championed a child-centred, personal growth curriculum through arguing that 'literacy *depends upon* creative living' (Holbrook, 1968: 2, my emphasis).

Plowden's recommendations that 'broke so much new ground' (Corbett, 2000 *in* Sugrue, 2010: 106) were welcomed by a Labour government keen to make a difference after over a decade of Conservative rule in a country still recovering from the second world war. The government took note of the Report's recommendations and acted upon them. Government policy therefore had a direct impact on the ushering in of a child-centred, personal growth view of creativity in the classroom¹⁸.

¹⁸ Whether this was the 'revolution' (1967: 210) Plowden claimed it to be is debatable, as I discuss in Chapter 5 when I return to consider this period with a particular focus on secondary English education.

Yet the literature demonstrates that such pedagogy was not welcomed in establishment quarters. Because child-centred, creative approaches are, by definition, not prescribed, some contemporaries viewed them as dangerous because policy-makers were not in control (Whittemore, 1968). For others, creativity is the antonym to accuracy (anon, n.d. *in* Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014), with creative work in English, particularly writing, seen as ‘sloppy’ (Summerfield, 1968: 22) or ‘vague’ (Whittemore, 1968: 45). Even more damningly, Holbrook claims there are those who explicitly blame ‘shoplifting, sexual misconduct, etc... on “creative work”’ (1968: 20).

Accordingly, despite government support, schools were not always able to promote creativity in the ways Plowden recommends. Although schools were advised to introduce an ‘Imaginative Critical Model’ (Creber, 1970 *in* Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014: 210) to foster an ‘experimental, creative, open-ended approach to learning in each individual field of the ordinary curriculum’ (Lytton, 1971: 98), it was found to be difficult to encourage creativity in formal classroom settings, perhaps because confidence, creativity and independence are best developed *outside* these constraints: schools - given the importance they place on adhering to rules - were simply not generally set up to promote creativity (Corbin, 1970 *in* Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014; Lytton, 1971; Benson, 2004). Hence, in many quarters, little changed.

It is also worth noting that the personal growth metaphor popularised by Plowden, which imagines the child as a growing plant (Darling, 1982), itself has critics. Darling discusses the horticultural image in depth, illustrating that while it is used by thinkers such as Rousseau (1911 *in* Darling 1982) to illustrate the care and nurture that children need to ripen the ‘fruit’ of maturity, it has its limitations. Children (unlike plants) are not passive receptors but have their own agency; the criteria are inadequate (since people are more complicated than plants, what does it mean to be fully grown?); the analogy breaks down because a seed (the child) cannot ‘grow’ into a gardener.

The image, however, proved enduring, and came to be particularly influential in English pedagogy. I go on to discuss its impact in chapters 5 and 6 but will add here that I find the metaphor helpful, particularly in the light of two related notions. The first is that all seeds are different, unique, which reminds us that each growing plant is *also* unique, and it is not the business of education to try to make them identical, but to enable them to *grow alongside* (or understand) other plants; and, to develop the image, thereby create a more beautiful, colourful garden. The second is that the soil from which the individual grows –

assuming that the soil is conceived of as existing knowledge or understandings – is not necessarily a predictor of how the plant will grow: ‘what emerges is more than the sum of its parts and therefore not predictable from the “ground” it emerges from’ (Biesta and Osberg, 2008: 316). This speaks to the idea that education is not merely concerned with recycling already existing knowledge, planned ‘enculturation’ (*ibid*), but with growing new understandings and meanings *through the development* – the personal growth - of the individual.

2.2.2 The 1990s - Flexible skills for C21st employers

A second creative ‘revolution’ (Craft, 2005: 3) took place during 1990s, when creativity came to be viewed as ‘centrally relevant to education as never before’ (*ibid*). A different notion of creativity was now promoted, albeit entwined with older understandings (Jones, 2009). The literature reflects a retaining of the personal growth view while privileging notions of creativity concerned with community, collaboration and economic imperatives. Human capacity for creativity is presented as crucial in enabling appropriate responses to changes in the social, technological and political context (Fryer, 1996; Burnard, 2006; Jeffrey, 2006). However, the momentum behind pro-creativity policy is shown to be in tension with restrictions imposed by the new National Curriculum, introduced as a result the Education Reform Act (1988), particularly regarding English (Fleming and Stevens 2010; Dymoke, 2011; Knights, 2015).

Britain in the 1990s was different in many ways from the Britain of Plowden’s 1960s. The notion of the family was more flexible; there were more women in the workplace; there had been dramatic increases in the use of technology. The country was transitioning swiftly from being primarily a manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based economy, so needed a workforce able to identify and solve problems; further, culture (including popular culture) was being actively promoted as a key UK industry and export (Hattenstone, 2008). It was at this stage that the notion of collaborative creativity as necessary to economic success found favour, so that education - which has a ‘dynamic’ (Craft, 2005: 6) relationship with shifting world of work – could be ‘reconstructed’ (Robinson, 2001 *in* Craft, 2005: 7) to prepare children to work effectively in this evolving economy. The understanding that creativity leads to economic wellbeing (Craft, 2005; Fryer, 1996) was also recognised internationally, for example in Canada, the US and Singapore (Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008).

There was simultaneously a revival in creativity for personal and social wellbeing. In Italy, the 'co-participative approach' devised by Reggio Emilia (1996 *in* Jeffrey and Craft, 2004: 83) through his work in early education brought renewed interest in a child-centred, personal growth curriculum; while in America, Bruner's work on discovery learning offered a similar take on creativity, with education and culture (where culture is small c, lived culture) as inter-dependent. For Bruner, school is a culturally productive democracy, where a society both shares existing knowledge *and* negotiates new forms - education is nothing without its cultural context:

you cannot understand mental activity unless you take into account the cultural setting and resources, the very things that give mind its shape and scope. Learning, remembering, talking, imagining: all of them are made possible by participating in a culture. (Bruner, 1996: x)

He argues that young people should be encouraged to recognise their culture, yet also challenge and question it, and change it where need be. To do so they need to learn, talk, imagine: verbs particularly associated with creativity. In Britain was advocated the view that children should see themselves as 'creators of innovative experiments in living' to avoid 'passively suffer[ing] their fate and appear to be incapable of seizing control over their futures' (Elliot, 1998: 70), although this position ran counter to the notion that it was important to teach high culture to working-class children who might otherwise lack cultural capital and be disadvantaged in comparison to middle-class children (Whitty, 2010), and is less prominent in the literature.

However, it is important for the purpose of my research to recognise that synchronous with these debates about the importance of creativity in the changing global context (and perhaps sometimes overlooked when considering the macro socio-economic picture), the educational context in England was itself experiencing change. It underwent enforced acclimatisation to the new National Curriculum from 1989, which introduced the requirement for 'teachers and schools to perform at pre-ordained levels' (Goouch, 2011: 78) – the verb 'perform' suggesting some artificial, planned - and anathema to notions of creative dialogic teaching and learning through which knowledge 'emerges' (Biesta, 2004; Biesta and Osberg, 2008: 313).

The impact of the Curriculum in the field of secondary English in England will be discussed at length in later chapters, but it is important to introduce it here because its arrival prompted further debate about creativity in the classroom - the literature of the 1990s rehearses arguments in direct response. Many educationalists felt threatened and disempowered

(Davison, 2009); its arrival was the 'worst of times' for creativity (Anning, 1996, n.p). Fryer (1996) reports on Project 1000, which surveyed the views of over 1000 teachers across all phases and found creativity to have been neglected since the Curriculum's introduction. While acknowledging that creativity can still theoretically take place in spite of its impositions, there was a warning that the teachers with flair and commitment to such practice were vulnerable to burn out (Woods, 1995 *in* Anning, 1996).

Into this messy situation, in which creativity was being promoted as economically necessary on the one hand yet arguably diminished on the other, arrived the influential report *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (NACCCE, 1999). Like the Plowden Report, it was published soon after the election of a Labour government after years of Conservative rule - in this case, Tony Blair's New Labour government, famously promising to prioritise 'Education, education, education.' It influenced policy without being a policy document *per se*.

All Our Futures (hereafter *AOF*) positions creativity not only as a means of enriching students' lives through developing their cultural understanding, but as 'essential' to 'unlock[ing] the potential of every young person' and, accordingly, 'Britain's economic prosperity' (1999: 5). It defines creativity as 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (1999: 30), a phrase which arguably became the 'standard' (Runco and Jaeger, 2012: 92) definition although (as Runco and Jaeger point out) it relies heavily on Stein's (1953) work of 50 years previously. Making a distinction between 'teaching creatively' and 'teaching for creativity', *AOF* states that to achieve the original and the valuable, creative approaches are needed right through schools - in management, in the design of the curriculum, and in teaching methods. One approach to encouraging creativity is through development of cross-curricular work to capitalise on 'overlaps' (NACCCE, 1999: 78) between subject areas (Stevens, 2011), and it further proposes that links are developed with outside agencies.

Some critics of *AOF* (Lucas, 2001 *in* Craft, 2001) point to its many examples of creative practice in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects as a lever to discredit arts subjects, yet this is countered by those who see rather a tendency to promote a traditional, arts-based view of the curriculum through its twin emphases on creativity and culture (Blamires and Peterson, 2014). They point out that although *AOF* presents creative learning as divided into four elements - Using Imagination, Pursuing Purposes, Being Original, Judging Value (1999: 31ff) - these are weighted differently in different subjects in

the Curriculum, undermining the argument that creativity can be truly multi-disciplinary (Blamires and Peterson, 2014). And, while *AOF* recommends structure to support creativity (thereby preventing critics from writing it off as advocating a return to the child-centred learning of the 1960s), it does not make clear how it expects an understanding of culture to be promoted whilst simultaneously encouraging creative production (Banaji and Burn, 2010).

In her review of professional literature emanating from *AOF*, Compton (2011) underlines and helps to explain the difficulty of putting its recommendations into practice. Taking *AOF*'s definition of creativity as a framework, she highlights how three documents, each designed for a different stage – and each drawing on the NACCCE research - interpret creativity in different ways. A publication concerned with pre-school education, *Birth to three matters* (Sure Start, 2003) prioritises making connections that are 'new and meaningful to the individual concerned' (in Compton 2007: 110) as well as developing a young child's imagination and resourcefulness. Here, creativity is associated with being a competent learner. Yet *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* (QCA, 2000), while stating that 'creativity is fundamental to successful learning' (in Compton, 2007: 112) goes on to privilege the arts rather than the other areas of the curriculum, implying that creativity is mainly associated with the aesthetic. Thirdly, the primary National Curriculum (DFEE/QCA, 1999b) points to the importance of creativity as a 'universal' skill that is 'essential for effective learning' (in Compton, 2007: 113), yet includes creativity only rarely in the actual subject-specific curriculum statements, thus inadvertently implying that it is *not* an integral part of the curriculum. Compton's view is that the Sure Start definition is the most useful for educators, given its emphasis on children taking responsibility for their own learning. She concludes by calling for a 'clearer understanding of creativity, shared by all those involved in education' (2007: 114). While a hermeneutic perspective suggests that it is impossible that there should be one understanding 'shared' by all, it is certainly the case that others call for further research (e.g. Sternberg, 1999; Jeffrey, 2006; Fryer, 2012).

The literature, then, illustrates an uncomfortable and paradoxical tension between economic policy and education policy at the turn of the millennium. The government-championed revived interest in a social, collaborative notion of creativity as centrality to the economy is in tension with the embedding of a Curriculum seen to stifle creativity. The contradictory nature of the politics meant that there continued to be no consensus on what creativity is and of its role in schools.

2.2.3 The 2000s - The chimera of creativity

Has there been a time when in reality creativity has really been fostered by the majority of schools and teachers during my teaching career? I would argue not and there is much to be done in the near future if we are to change that. (Benson, 2004: 141)

As the Labour government consolidated power, AOF's championing of creative education gained traction into the early 2000s, with creativity actively promoted. It led to 'creative thinking skills' being added to the National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 22) - a requirement that was retained and developed when the Curriculum was revised in both 2004 (DfES/QCA) and 2007 (DCSF/QCA). There were numerous projects and publications on the theme of creativity, and a resulting 'unprecedented resurgence' (Burnard, 2006: 313) in the field of scholarship on creativity. Jones' definition of creativity - 'a capacity for meaning-making' (2009: 8) - appears in his literature review for the centrally-funded *Creativity, Culture and Education* series, the very existence of which indicates a combined academic and political interest in creativity and schooling.

In this section I work through the literature to analyse the political context and trace some of the key debates. I argue that despite the great investment and energy expended, understanding of the place and value of creativity in education remained partial at best: a collaborative, risk-taking, arts-based notion was promoted on the one hand yet frustrated on the other. This is due to a lack of research into the best means of *promoting* creativity, an emphasis on economic benefits at the expense of its 'softer' attributes and, crucially, because the accountability agenda ended up as more dominant.

Some projects and publications were well received: for instance, the curriculum models developed by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) are acknowledged to have strong creative themes (Blamires and Peterson, 2014; Whitty, 2010). Others were less so. For instance, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's guide for schools, *Creativity: find it, promote it* (QCA, 2005) is problematic because its definitions of creativity are muddled (Compton, 2007). Scholars at the University of Sussex found the *Opening Minds* project run by the Royal Society for the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) successful in terms of 'resonating' (Aynsley, Brown and Se, 2012: 2) with the economic debate, but its definitions of competence are unclear and it was not always appropriately focused on the local context (*ibid*).

The centrally-funded award-winning *Creative Partnerships* (CP) programme (which ran from 2002 until it was shelved by the coalition government in 2011) offers another good example of the tensions at play. In an apparent ‘cultural turn’ (Hall and Thomson, 2013: 315) in policy, CP sought to create opportunities for students through collaborations with outside artists, developers and scientists; and schools, ‘driven by a critique of the national curriculum’ (Thomson, Hall and Jones, 2012: 6), were enthusiastic to take part. The project was recognised for expanding creativity in schools on a local level (Pahl and Pool, 2019), sometimes with substantial impact: ‘At its best, when Creative Partnerships starts with a school development plan and builds a strong relationship between teachers and creative practitioners it can significantly expand the capacity and ambition of a school to teach creatively’ (ESC, 2007: 23). However, it is elsewhere suggested that there was perhaps a lack of deep curriculum theorising (Thomson, Hall and Jones, 2012) and teachers were often insufficiently involved (Wyse and Spendlove, 2007). Thus, despite its ‘radical openness’ (Pahl and Pool, 2019: 24), the aspirations of the programme were not fully achieved. (I briefly discuss CP further in 6.2.1.)

Craft suggests that reason for the limited impact of such projects is that insufficient research has been conducted into which creative approaches work best across the curriculum (2001; 2008). The literature indicates particular disagreement between the arts and STEM factions, and even within them: Benson (2004) argues that Design Technology is overlooked in policy papers on education at the expense of the other STEM subjects and is taught badly due to poor or non-existent continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers.

These projects – and, accordingly, much of the contemporaneous literature - focus on the economic benefits of creativity because of the associated political imperative. However, it is pointed out that there was comparatively little interest (and investment) in creativity in terms of its importance for cultural, aesthetic and personal development at this time (Barnard, 2006), Fleming being a relatively lone voice in calling for creativity in the arts to provide ‘ethical nourishment’ as central in ‘affirming and revealing humanity’ (Fleming, 2006 *in* Fleming, 2010: 61). I see this aspect as central to English education, however, and discuss it further below.

A further problem was that the long-term, visionary aims of *AOF* to promote creativity sit awkwardly with the perceived political imperative to engineer immediate improvements in educational standards (Joubert, 2001; Burnard 2006). In parallel with the drive for creativity was ever-increasing pressure for schools to outscore their rivals in national tests, resulting in

a more limited curriculum offer. Since results began to be published in 1991, the majority of 400 primary schools surveyed by the QCA reported that they had changed the way they taught, with the breadth of the curriculum and ‘experimentation, original thinking and innovation’ (NACCCE, 1999: 126) compromised to test preparation. Other studies demonstrate that many primary schools were unwilling to teach much beyond literacy and numeracy, with up to 50% of curriculum time devoted to these two areas (Benson, 2004; Boyle, n.d.). This builds up problems for later: when it is not promoted at primary school, it is harder for students to show creativity at secondary level (Benson, 2004).

Secondary schools, increasingly ‘steered’ by an accountability ‘delivery chain’ (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012: 73) of which they became perhaps unwilling links, also began to delimit their curriculum offer in an effort to maximise their GCSE and A level outcomes, at the expense of creative opportunities for students - and despite evidence that standardised curricula with set learning outcomes mitigate *against* helping students become flexible learners who can solve problems (Elliot, 1998; Craft 2001). Criticism of this assessment-centric practice comes from many quarters. Commentators as diverse as the National Primary Headteachers Association (2003 in Compton, 2007); poet and Professor of Children’s Literature, Michael Rosen (<http://michaelrosenblog.blogspot.co.uk>); academics critical of the now-defunct KS3 Standard Assessment Tests in English (Yandell, 2008); and the National Union of Teachers (NUT) all argue that ‘teaching to the test’ (NUT, 2014: 5) stifles creativity and prevents sustainable improvements to pedagogic practice. Even the examination boards themselves are critical: Burdett (writing in a document published by the Assessment and Qualifications Authority (AQA)) bemoans the ‘false dichotomies between learning and assessment’ (2015: 17), while Huddleston, in the same document, states:

A ‘one hit and you’re out’ mentality does not reflect the way in which knowledge, skills and competence are built up over time. It is inconceivable that a crafts person would achieve competence on the first try. (Huddleston, 2015: 30)

Even Ofsted – the body seen by many as in part responsible for the accountability culture - are now concerned both about the ‘narrowing’ (Mudis *et al*, 2019: 29) of the curriculum and with schools equating examination specifications with curriculum (Ofsted and Spielman, 2017). However, with performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests increasingly governing the national curricula in many countries, the situation is unlikely to be relaxed in the near future (Wyse *et al*, 2014). On the creativity-accountability balance beam, the literature suggests that schools see accountability as weightier. It is of little solace that a similar situation is described in the United States (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013) and

in Australia, where the pressure of assessment is seen to 'shape and constrain' classroom practice (Gannon, 2012: 429).

In summary, the literature indicates that a lack of synthesis between the political context, educational research and educational policy in England has had a marked impact on how creativity is seen and valued and, as a result, on the presence or absence of different notions of creativity in classrooms. While valued by educators, in political discourse creativity is often seen as subsidiary to measurable outcomes, with the contribution of creativity to successful outcomes generally unacknowledged. This is true of all subjects, but I now go on to focus specifically on secondary English.

2.3 Creativity and the English teacher

Teachers cannot develop the creative abilities of their pupils if their own creative abilities are suppressed. (NACCCE, 1999: 90)

While the previous section focused mainly on policy, I now turn to consider the classroom perspective. This section examines recent research on creativity and the English teacher, looking to understand what is known and thought about creativity in the English classroom. My interest here was driven not only by a concern with the relationship between English education and creativity in general, but also its impact on English teachers' perceptions of agency.

2.3.1 The decline of creativity

One of the key lessons from section 2.2 is the dominance of accountability at the expense of creativity. Education now takes place 'within a dominant audit culture' (Heilbronn, 2013: 31); accordingly, examination preparation now explicitly drives what happens in many English lessons (e.g. Fleming and Stevens, 2010; McCallum, 2012; Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014; Yandell and Brady, 2016; Bomford, 2018). All these commentators voice their dismay that, in their view, the role of the English teacher has been eroded: rather than having the freedom to make professional decisions about lesson content and approach, what to teach (and even how) is out of a teacher's hands. The literature suggests that this encroachment of teachers' authority and agency began with the inception of the National Curriculum (Stubbs, 1989; Cox, 1991) but grew steadily to the point that it is now 'a given' (Anderson, 2013: 113) in English circles that prescription and quantification seriously impacts what happens in the classroom. The emotive language of the title of Yandell's article, *Thoughtless Language, or*

the Death of Child-Centred Education (2003), published when the Curriculum was just over a decade old, demonstrates the author's fear both of the uncritical practice that is being promulgated by default, and the danger that he perceives the subject to be in.

To be clear, critics are not arguing that assessment *per se* is conceptually flawed (although there is a parallel debate surrounding how creativity can be assessed (Craft, 2001; Beetlestone, 1998 in Banaji and Burn, 2010; Blamires and Peterson, 2014). Rather, they are concerned with the form of the assessment, how the results are used (or misused) for accountability purposes, and how this impacts both teachers and learners. Gallagher has identified the crime of 'readicide' (2009: n.p.), the killing of reading by schools through over-testing. In terms of writing, a core element of English pedagogy, 'Artistry and creativity have not been at the forefront of writing pedagogy in recent years due to prescription and accountability' (Cremin, 2016: 3). It is reported that good practice is turned on its head, with teachers typically requiring their classes to write in preparation for tests, instead of the tests enabling demonstration of learning that has taken place (Cremin and Myhill, 2019).

The literature charts how both the content and style of lessons has changed since the introduction of the Curriculum and harks back to a time when a creative, child-centred, personal growth pedagogy held sway; it suggests that lesson content is now reduced and delimited. Anderson (2013) highlights this by comparing how she used a resource called *The Island* in her own classroom in the 1980s (pupils wrote diary entries about surviving on a deserted island; drew and labelled maps; read challenging literary extracts about islands; imagined, told and wrote camp-fire stories; planned a documentary, etc.) and use of a similar resource in a lesson she observed thirty years later, when pupils merely identified parts of speech in an artificial piece of purple prose.

In terms of lesson style, this last example is typical of those using the four-part structure (starter, introduction, main activity, plenary) introduced through the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998). Bomford argues that English lessons have hence become 'over-determin[ed]... depersonalised closed systems' (2018, n.p) that deny the opportunity for the deviations where *real* learning (prompted by the unscripted questions of engaged students) often happens. There is no space for serendipity, to the detriment of child-centred, personal-growth learning. The rise of the now near-ubiquitous PEE (point, evidence, explain) paragraph is also noted, with despair. Although structures to support thinking and writing can be helpful, Gibbons (2019) points out the irony that structure over content has reached the stage where the *purpose* of many an English lesson today is to write a PEE paragraph

rather than to demonstrate understanding of whatever the paragraph is purportedly discussing.

2.3.2 The diminishing role of the creative teacher

Many English teachers did not come into the profession to teach such lessons. The majority see English as a means of developing personal growth and so want to contribute to society (Marshall, 2000; Goodwyn, 2016). They are not only well-qualified in English, but have a passion for their subject which they want to share (Blake and Shortis, 2010). Further, many come specifically because they wish to be creative: in recent research, 35% of a sample of over 1000 teachers agreed that 'to be creative' was a driver to their entering the profession (Perryman and Calvert, 2020¹⁹).

Whilst unspecified in Perryman and Calvert's research, it is worth considering exactly what a 'creative' teacher might look like. The literature suggests that there are two key facets, the first being taking risks and being creative in one's own practice, the second being encouraging and facilitating learners to explore meanings, question, find things out (Elliot, 1998) – the process which allows new knowledge to emerge (Biesta and Osberg, 2008).

Although both positions could coexist in one practitioner, teaching creatively is not a synonym for teaching for creativity (Starke, 2005, *in* Banaji and Burn, 2010). Jeffrey and Craft argue that while the distinction between 'teaching creatively' and 'teaching for creativity' (NACCCE, 1999: 102) is helpful, it has 'dichotomised an integrated practice' (2004: 77). They propose that a more useful distinction might be between 'teaching creatively' and 'creative learning' (*ibid*) and, crucially, argue for a 'learner inclusive' approach (Craft and Jeffrey, 2004: 84) in which teachers are learners too. (It is worth observing that implicit in Biesta's description of the 'gap' (2004: 13) between teacher and learner through which education happens, is the idea that the teacher benefits as much as the learner.)

The suggestion that *teaching* creatively, in a way that ignites children's interests and so inspires them to *learn* creatively, builds on Dewey's contention that good teaching is built on interaction between a child's experience and the knowledge being taught (1916). It is argued that the most effective lessons are those in which creative processes are set up carefully by the teacher (Reid *et al*, 1993 *in* Banaji and Burn, 2010; Ofsted, 2010; Anderson, 2013). These

¹⁹ This sample includes alumni of one of the largest teaching universities in the UK. It does not break down teachers into subject areas, but it might be surmised that English teachers make up a good proportion of the 35%, given that English teachers (and Music teachers) are seen by students as those most likely to be creative (Harris, Jarvis and Fisher, 2008 *in* McCallum, 2012).

involve active, questioning, challenging approaches, through which students are encouraged to envisage, explore and critically reflect; crucially, such practice is often dependent on strong relationships being forged between teachers and students. In the field of English, this is all bound up in themes of individuality, freedom and growth (Green and Cormack, 2008; Goodwyn, 2016). Teaching creatively also encompasses co-discovery models such as those advanced by Friere, where students are not 'docile' but 'critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher' (1968 *in* McCallum, 2012: 26).

Yet, as demonstrated, the literature indicates that to teach English in the way here described is extremely difficult in the current climate where external pressures and high-stakes accountability get in the way. Recent decades of prescriptive curricula and oppressive testing have de-professionalised teachers of all subjects by removing their agency (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015); yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Smith and Wrigley, 2019), there is particular anger in the field of English that teachers and students are too often denied the opportunity to focus on what they believe really matters – 'the local, the particular' (Yandell and Brady, 2016: 46). Because the creative, individual elements aspects are being lost to 'an accountability system that squeezes the last drop of joy out of day-to-day teaching' (Williams, 2017 *in* Perryman and Calvert, 2020: 7), teachers are being denied the pleasure that comes from learning, and become demotivated.

Teachers are responding in two ways. Some capitalise on initiatives such as First Story (a charity which places writers in residence in schools in predominantly lower socio-economic areas, producing professionally-published anthologies of children's work (Cochrane, 2017)), Paper Nations (a creative writing incubator (<http://papernations.org>)) and Teachers as Writers (Gooda, 2016; Smith and Wrigley, 2019) which provide platforms that encourage creativity in schools through writing, although arguably these currently have a relatively limited reach²⁰. Elsewhere, there is encouragement for teachers to become 'disruptive professionals' (Thomas, 2019: n.p.) who act subversively to be the creative teachers they wish to be (Smith, 2018a) – and I go on to consider in later chapters how this might be possible within the boundaries set by the Curriculum.

Others, however, are simply calling time (Perryman and Calvert, 2020). Many leave not just because of the workload and other well-documented stresses of the role, but as a direct

²⁰ 3,000 young people across 120 schools participated in First Story and Paper Nations combined in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years (Millard, Menzies, Baars and Benardes, 2019). I have been involved in all three of these initiatives in the South West.

result of the accountability agenda: 'being in teaching stifles creativity, and it is this that leads to a person's departure' (*ibid*: 16); similarly:

English teachers remain convinced that student-centred progressive education offers the most valuable form of English for all students and they find themselves profoundly at odds with official prescriptions. This unquestionably has a damaging effect on teachers' motivations and can lead them to leave their profession. (Goodwyn, 2016: 7)

The haemorrhaging of English teachers here described is not just a problem in terms of supplying sufficient suitably qualified professionals for today's classrooms. Those who remain may not have colleagues to turn to who can remember what practice used to be like, so the awareness of how things might be done differently is being diluted or erased. Indeed, as I have shown (Smith and Wrigley, 2019: n.p.): 'recent research suggests that many newer English teachers, weaned in schools where accountability is all-dominant, have narrow conceptions of what counts as writing and low opinions of themselves as writers (Cremin and Oliver, 2017).' Thus, as well as matters of lesson content and style being vulnerable, are 'crucial questions about conduct and sensibility' (Green and Cormack, 2008, n.p). As NACCCE warned nearly twenty years ago in the quotation cited as the epigraph to this section, it is very hard for teachers to enable their students to learn creatively if opportunities to develop their own creativity are inhibited.

This leaves a situation, then, in which the problems are starkly defined. The pressures of the accountability agenda and the concomitant loss of creative practice are keenly felt, but the situation cannot easily be altered while the status quo is maintained (Dymoke, 2011; Smith, 2018a) and teachers feel mere 'cogs' (Greene, 1995 *in* Thomas, 2019 n.p.) in the academic machine.

2.4 Implications of the literature for this study

To recap, this thesis considers how secondary English professionals today understand both creativity and the English teacher's role in the context of the current Curriculum, foregrounded by a deep exploration of how creativity appears in English education policy in England. Before explaining how the literature surveyed above led to the development of the research aims, I here briefly pause to reflect on my own understandings of creativity in English education in order to anchor my work and defend my approach.

When I began this project, I saw creativity as a very important aspect of English education. I understood it to be every child's right to have creative opportunities and for creative

potential to be nurtured. I promoted creativity in my own practice and that of my student teachers in the manner described by Anderson when teaching *The Island* (2013): I held it as crucial in developing understanding, promoting a love of literature and maintaining learner engagement, and as a foil to mechanistic exercises. I saw it to be a deeply desirable value, a principal ingredient. However, I did not then see creativity as fundamental.

I now understand creativity to be *vital* in the life-giving sense of the word, essential to human life (Summerfield, 1968). I am persuaded through the literature discussed in this chapter (*e.g.* Craft, 2005; 2006; Cremin, 2009; Dymoke, 2011; Bomford, 2018) that, as educators, we can value and promote creativity (and creativities) both for the self and for the collective; we can appreciate the creativity of Big C names like Milton, Matisse and Mahler, Angelou, Emin and Rihanna at the same time as, and even as a means of, developing personal growth, ‘little c’ creativity in ourselves and our students. Creativity celebrates the imagination; it encourages risk-taking, collaboration, agency. I agree with McCallum (2012) that there can *be* no education in English without creativity – it is the essential ‘force that through the green fuse drives the flower’ (Thomas, 1934: n.p.). While this images risks over-romanticising learning through presenting it as a ‘flower’, it nonetheless emphasises the metaphor of personal growth, with children as vigorous, limber ‘green fuses’.

More broadly, I better appreciate that the reliance of creativity on communication has liberal and humanist connotations, which is highlighted by the notion of WHC (Craft, 2006; Chappell *et al*, 2019); it is associated with social justice and so has political agency (Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008; Amsler 2015). Creativity can offer opportunity, and so is especially significant to those who are unlikely to be offered opportunities elsewhere. Creativity runs counter to other powerful discourses that currently dominate education, such as the importance of examination results as the measure of an individual’s success – what has been termed ‘the old, tired industrial model of education’ (Moules *et al*, 2011: 2) – yet is simultaneously a *victim* of this ‘old, tired’ model (*e.g.* Fleming and Stevens, 2010; McCallum, 2012; Anderson, 2013; Goodwyn, 2016; Thomas, 2019).

My bid to untangle these threads led me to recognise absences in the literature that influenced the development of the two research aims:

2.4.1 Towards Research Aim 1

The literature discussed in section 2.3 deals primarily with recent policy and criticism of that policy alongside practitioners’ views, often citing classroom practice. In other words, the

literature is informed by empirical evidence in the form of videos, observations and interviews (e.g. Blake and Shortis, 2010; Goodwyn, 2016) and from professional experience (e.g. Yandell, 2003; Anderson, 2013; Bomford, 2018; Thomas, 2019). It might be termed ‘bottom up’ – it has been inspired through practice. These valuable studies are, however, relatively contemporaneously fixed: they do not tend to include the historical context regarding creativity and English.

Where there is historical context (Shayer, 1972; McCallum, 2012; Gibbons, 2017) the focus tends to be on creativity and English *pedagogy* rather than creativity and (specifically) English *policy*. Yet it is the impact of current *policy* rather than the pedagogy with which the literature (e.g. Goodwyn, 2016; Bomford, 2018; Thomas, 2019; Perryman and Calvert, 2020) takes issue. I therefore want to provide a ‘top down’ historical examination of policy to contribute to and illuminate the debate. I hope that an exploration of the place of creativity in English policy over time – how it is defined, what is its status, how its presence or absence is justified – hitherto overlooked, will complement the existing research. Further, understanding the history of creativity in English education policy will also help me to appreciate the significance of the loss of the term ‘creativity’ from the current Curriculum. Accordingly, research aim 1 seeks to provide historical exegesis through *understanding the place of creativity in English education policy past and present*.

2.4.2 Towards Research Aim 2

As I have explained, the contemporary academic literature tends to be based on empirical studies of practicing English classroom teachers: it looks at how teachers are working in schools, with the theme of creativity often implicit rather than explicit. Some of the authors were, or are, English teachers themselves; they make reference to their own classroom practice (e.g. Yandell, 2003; Fleming and Stevens 2010; Anderson, 2013; Yandell and Brady, 2016; Bomford, 2018). I realised that what is missing is both explicit engagement with subject experts who have extensive professional understanding that provides them with authority in relation to the policy, and a focused discussion on their views of creativity within the Curriculum. What lived insights can they offer about how the Curriculum is interpreted in practice?

I thus wanted to investigate the perceptions of expert English teaching practitioners with experience across a breadth of ages and stages of secondary English pedagogy. Just as the authors of some of the policy documents central to my inquiry (Newbolt, 1921; Bullock, 1975; Cox, 1989) gathered evidence from subject experts immersed in the field (as I discuss

further in 4.3.1), my intention was to consult a spectrum of experienced, specialist practitioners to consider how those in the field perceive and experience creativity today. By surveying former and current acknowledged successful academics, headteachers, heads of English, classroom teachers, examiners and teacher educators – particularly those who have been or are influential in the field - I sought to discover whether there was consensus (at least within the sample) about the role of creativity in English. How do these experts understand creativity in their work; and how do (or did) they respond to curriculum policy? These questions shaped research aim 2: *to understand how creativity in English education policy is conceived by expert English teaching professionals.*

I saw as an added benefit that capturing the memories of long-serving professionals would be a means of preserving and promulgating what the literature (Green and Cormack, 2008; Cremin and Oliver, 2017) warns is susceptible to being forgotten or lost as a result of current policy. As the leader of a secondary English PGCE course, I particularly hope to enrich the literature pertaining to ITE in subject English. There have been various calls (NACCCE, 1999; Benson, 2004) to ensure that ITE programmes prepare new teachers to teach creatively. I hope that by presenting the views of experienced English teaching practitioners, framed by a the deep history of English policy and creativity, I can provide a richer, complex and more nuanced picture than that of some popular ITE resources (*e.g.* Wright, 2005; Curtis, 2019). Through so doing, I am fulfilling my duty as an educator (Biesta and Osberg, 2008) by enabling them to engage in dialogue with ideas, perspectives and ambiguities they may not otherwise encounter, and from which new knowledge can emerge. In this way, I offer new entrants to the profession a secure perspective from which to orientate their work, develop confidence in a creative pedagogy and go on to flourish as teachers.

So, from this starting point, I now set out to answer these questions. Developing this chapter reminded me that creativity is a '*journey of becoming*' (Chappell *et al*, 2016: 1, my emphasis): the writing process enabled me both to establish the starting point for my own journey and to develop as a researcher (conscious that a doctoral researcher should demonstrate her personal growth through her approach to the literature review (Daigneault *et al*, 2014, *in* Booth, Sutton and Papaionannou, 2016).) I am nonetheless aware that this literature review is, in some ways, unfinished – my hermeneutic positioning acknowledges that meaning is temporary (Gadamer, 1975/2004), so it can *never* be completed, nor be deemed entirely authoritative. However, it is offered in good faith as sufficient for purpose (Kinsella, 2006). I now proceed in Chapter 3 to explain more fully how hermeneutics will guide my journey further.

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Chapter 3: The creative art of hermeneutics

3.0. Introduction and overview

The process of understanding policy and practitioner views is dependent on understanding and interpreting texts. My challenge in developing this thesis, therefore, was to find a theoretical framing that would allow me to engage deeply with texts and enable me to reflect my own thoughts about creativity in a way that is consistent with my world view. In this chapter I explain how hermeneutics emerged as my ontological and epistemological framework and methodological approach, inspired by Gadamer (1900-2002) - one of the leading philosophers of the twentieth century. Gadamer's interests lay not only in the spoken and written word, but also in culture, history, literature and the creative arts, making his work especially significant for a study on English and creativity.

I am particularly dependent on two hermeneutic tools that are central to Gadamer's approach, the fusion of horizons and the hermeneutic circle, which I go on to define and explain in detail below. My reliance on these tools is due not only to their dynamic role in hermeneutic research, but their relevance to my understanding of education and creativity. The fusion of horizons is a way of describing what happens to bridge the 'gap' (Biesta, 2004: 12) between teacher and learner - the dynamic moment of communication when meaning is *given* and *made* (*ibid*: 15) and transformed into new knowledge. That moment of communication necessarily happens within a context, a culture (Biesta, 2004; Biesta and Osberg, 2008). The hermeneutic circle is a way of acknowledging the 'wholeness' of this context so that the communication that takes place can be trusted - or truth-bearing, as Gadamer (1975/2004) would have it. Here I explain how Gadamer himself applies the two tools before discussing how I use them in my own work.

Although hermeneutics is rarely used for research in my field, I argue it has valuable potential in the social sciences simply because of this intimate connection between language, communication (Rocavert, 2016) and knowledge (Hekman, 1983) within human society. I conclude the chapter with reference to two researchers, Elizabeth Ann Kinsella and Philip Gardner, whose use innovative use of hermeneutics in education research has influenced my own approach.

3.1. Introduction to hermeneutics

Interpretation of language is essential for the ‘conversation of mankind’ (Oakeshott, 1959: 11) to flow; for meaning to be given, taken and remade. Hermeneutics as a philosophical and methodological practice is about *understanding interpretation* (Gadamer, 1975/2004; Kinsella 2006). It is a creative, flexible yet rigorous paradigm: flexible, because it sees ontological ‘truth’ as constantly emerging; rigorous, because those truths are simultaneously checked and revised by epistemological inquiry (Hekman, 1983; Kinsella, 2006; Sherratt, 2006; Rocavert, 2016).

In the following section, I describe Gadamer’s philosophical perspective: that hermeneutics is situated, language-dependent and concerned with forging ‘true’ connections (1975/2004). However, before I start, I want to pause to acknowledge that Gadamer comes from a particular philosophical tradition, drawing on Socrates, that privileges language as a theory of knowledge above other ways of knowing. I am aware that Gadamer’s ‘truth’, borne of language, is seen as an idealist, subjective ‘truth’ (Sherratt, 2006). It differs, say, from the pragmatic and realistic, objective sense of ‘truth’ advanced by philosophers such as Dewey and Rorty (Misak, 2018), the physicality of materialism (Smart, 2020) and the holistic nature of embodiment (Kiverstein, 2011). Yet while Gadamer’s ontological perspective may not explicitly include other ways of knowing, I show below that his ideas are not necessarily in conflict with them; indeed, his work includes perhaps implicit, unstated overlaps with other ways of knowing – the frisson sometimes experienced when arriving at the fusion of horizons (finding a ‘hotspot’ (MacLure (2013: 661)) may, for instance, be understood as sensory knowing.

3.1.1 The importance of language

The process of writing this thesis is entirely dependent on language. The literature I consulted is composed of language; notions blossomed in my thoughts through language; I made these manifest by using language to jot them down, then developed my notes further through language – conversations with my supervisors, ‘conversations’ with other texts I read, ‘conversations’ with myself as I drafted and re-drafted. The completed thesis will be examined through spoken language. At every stage is interplay between me as a consumer of language through what I hear and read, and creator of language through what I think and say and write. In other words, the genesis of the thesis is a microcosm of the creative

becoming that is my adopted definition of education: ‘a human event of communication, meaning making and interpretation’ (Biesta, 2015: 11).

Oakeshott saw the human condition as a ‘conversation’ (1959); for Gadamer (1975/2004), language is what makes us human. It is how we know the world. Gadamer followed the eighteenth century Prussian polymath Wilhelm von Humboldt in arguing that language is what separates us from animals and is what connects us to fellow humans: ‘Language is not just one of man’s possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all’ (Gadamer, 1975/2004: 440, emphasis original). Similarly, Friere draws attention to how the *word* gives us the *world* (Friere and Macedo, 1987). It is a view that is widely accepted, and beautifully expressed by Palmer, who sees language as ‘a carrier of the experience of being,’ with history as the reservoir and language as the water in which we are immersed (1969: 213).

As I have argued previously, ‘Language is the foundation from which things that matter (relationships, ideas) can be built (or created); it is therefore radical, in the sense that our lives are *rooted* in it’ (Smith, 2019: 258). Language is also radical in that it enables the debates that leads to reform - or, really to emphasise the creative connection here, ‘re-formation’, re-making²¹. However, language *by itself* is not enough: for *communication* to take place, language needs to be *understood, interpreted* - hence my interest in hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the branch of philosophy concerning the interpretation of language. It has ‘human communication, language and discourse at its centre’ (Gardner, 2010: 39).

3.1.2 A brief introduction to hermeneutics as ontology and epistemology

Hermeneutics is aptly named after Hermes, the messenger of the gods: when we say we have ‘got the message’, we are confirming communication through language. Hermes was also the patron of literature and poets amongst his other roles (Kearney, 2011), which underlines the applicability of hermeneutics to a thesis on English education. When seeking a philosophy that would enable me to frame my inquiry in the spirit of the inquiry, and

²¹ The adjective ‘radical’ has also been applied to the research process (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012: 24) which suggests that the research gets to the *root* of understanding; it also suggests a life-giving force – newly-rooted understandings will ‘grow’ – and the term ‘radical’ is associated with reform driven by morals or ethics.

combine my interest in language, literature, culture and history, hermeneutics sang out, for reasons I go on to explain.

Hermeneutics itself has a long and fascinating history - it is possible only to sketch it here. It first developed when Plato and his fellow philosophers realised that textual understanding can be problematic - a single text may offer more than a single meaning. A line attributed to Plato may be used in illustration: 'No human thing is of serious importance' has multiple nuances depending on whether 'No', 'human' or 'serious' is stressed. Centuries later, understanding that a single text might offer different 'truths' to different people because each might interpret a text *in their own way*, the challenge of interpretation became important to theologians working on religious texts: hermeneutic scholars sought ways to interpret the universal 'truths' of the Bible (Sherratt, 2006).

In the Romantic era, the German theologian and philosopher Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the so-called 'Father of Modern Liberal Theology', first argued that a hermeneutic approach should apply not only to ancient and biblical texts, but to *all* texts, spoken or written - hermeneutics should be universal (Gjesdal, 2016). His compatriot and biographer, the eminent philosopher Dilthey (1833-1911) built on this, being the first to take hermeneutics *beyond* texts and into the wider sphere of human existence: he conceived of the whole socio-historic world as a text. The concept developed so that, today, a hermeneutic approach might be applied to any human work (Palmer, 1969).

Dilthey too was influenced by Romanticism. He saw that all human history can be interpreted as a grand narrative, 'just like a novel or story, and we and all our predecessors and neighbours are the characters in the story' (Sherratt, 2006: 71). The events that shape our individual lives are episodes in a never-ending tale. 'Dilthey's major contribution to hermeneutic thought is that ideas need to be examined *in relation to the social and cultural context from which they come*. Thus, small events can be interpreted in terms of larger ones (a battle in the context of a war; a defendant's speech in the context of a trial) and it is important to know details of the 'characters' involved to understand things from their perspective and so interpret their actions - there is the need for us to *use our imagination* to see through another's eyes and come to a hermeneutic understanding' (Smith, 2019: 258).

'Hermeneutics is therefore a *creative* paradigm, concerned as it is with finding meanings through a synthesis of interpretation. Because hermeneutists are always questioning in their search for a deeper interpretation and understanding, the conclusions reached and knowledge gained are never static or secure, but simply the basis for the next question'

(*ibid*). Truth is not fixed, but part of an ongoing cycle of inquiry. Therefore, for hermeneutists, ontology and epistemology are bound together: 'knowledge involves the grasping of an object that is simultaneously revealing itself to the knower... [O]ntology precedes epistemology; the act of knowing entails that *being* is revealed' (Hekman, 1983: 208, emphasis original). Ontological 'truth', or 'knowledge,' is constantly emerging, ongoing; yet is simultaneously checked and revised through epistemological inquiry.

3.1.3 Offering perspectives: Gadamer and hermeneutics as methodology

Inspired by his interest in Romanticism and the wider humanities, Dilthey worked to establish hermeneutics as a valid scientific method of inquiry. He saw the potential for hermeneutics to provide a methodology as robust as the post-enlightenment positivist research that was favoured during his lifetime. Dilthey's ideas influenced Gadamer (Sherratt, 2006). Both saw that the ontological-epistemological interplay of hermeneutics could – and should - be applied as a methodology.

Gadamer, however, was not anti-positivist. He presents a nuanced perspective in his major work, *Truth and Method* (1975/2004), first published in 1960 in Germany²². He argues that hermeneutics is not only just as appropriate as positivism in finding 'truth', but that positivism *involves* hermeneutics. This is for two key reasons: the situated nature of any study, and human dependence on language²³.

Gadamer must have been acutely aware of the heated debate between the critical rationalists like Habermas and the Frankfurt School regarding the scope of positivism as a means of social science inquiry that was going on at the time (Sherratt, 2006). In *Truth and Method*, he propounds his theory that even natural scientists taking a positivist approach rely on hermeneutics in their research, since any inquiry or experiment is bound *in context* and that scientists *use language* at all stages of their work. It has been suggested that the title must be ironic (Palmer, 1969): one theme of *Truth and Method* is that truth cannot be discovered through a standard 'scientific' methodological approach alone. There is an echo of Keats' 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know' (1819) that appears significant: for both Keats and Gadamer, the world is revealed through art.

²² My work is based on the second edition of 1975, which was translated into English.

²³ These are discussed in more depth in the next section.

My decision to follow Gadamer thus provides a robust, cohesive and self-contained framework for my study. It also allows me to remain true to my values, many of which echo Gadamer's. Gadamer celebrates and encourages creative expression: his later essays, most of which are collected in a volume entitled *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (1977/1986), discuss the art of painting and literature from a hermeneutic perspective with a critical yet passionate voice. Further, because hermeneutics is a creative discipline, involving imaginative effort and the forging of connections, it is appropriate for an inquiry about creativity.

Finally, my thesis is an opportunity to reappraise Gadamer's potential for contemporary research. Much current debate in education is polarised: Gadamer's approach offers possibilities because it is about *understanding different perspectives*, not winning an argument. His optimistic stance provides the potential means to open up opportunities for mutual interpretation and, perhaps, build the bridges needed to reconcile proponents of different views on creativity.

3.2 Gadamer's five key concepts

I now turn to five ontological concepts presented by Gadamer that I identify as central to my own inquiry. I examine them in same order he discusses them in *Truth and Method* (1975/2004), thereby demonstrating the sequencing of his ideas, although under my own headings for reasons of clarity.

The key concepts are that i) history is iterative, ii) art is a way through which we know the world, iii) language requires interpretation, iv) interpretation is always specific and local, v) meaning is open and temporary. I present each concept in detail before explaining, in the following section (3.3), how they are applied to the fusion of horizons and the hermeneutic circle; and so, in section 3.4, to their practical application in research. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 may thus appear to be a lengthy detour, but such a structure enables me to present Gadamer's ideas separately and as a unity before reflecting on the application of all five together; and since they interlock and overlap, this avoids repetition. It is also worth noting that, since Gadamer writes in the first person plural - perhaps to emphasise the humanist associations of hermeneutics and actively to involve the reader – I here adopt the same approach to reflect his philosophy.

3.2.1 History is iterative

Gadamer begins *Truth and Method* by discussing the crucial importance of culture, which he defines as ‘the concept of self-formation, education, or cultivation’ (1975/2004: 8). We are each rooted in our culture; through culture, humans grow, learn, bond with each other. For Gadamer, culture is not an optional extra, nor a choice adopted by cultural elitists such as Eliot (as discussed in Chapter 2), but the foundation of knowledge and understanding, fundamental to human existence. This is key to my study because of the relationship between creativity and culture (both high and low).

Gadamer emphasises the importance of culture through exploring the concept of ‘Bildung’, a complex term that is impossible to render precisely into English as there is no exact translation (Biesta, 2006). While ‘bildung’ is commonly understood as a synonym for ‘education’²⁴, Gadamer argues that the term should be understood as Goethe saw it, ‘cultivating oneself’ (1975/2004: 9) – enculturation²⁵. The close association between culture, art and education is captured and emphasised through the rich complexity of the word itself: a ‘bild’ is an image, suggesting ‘bildung’ is built on images. Our memories are a collection of images, but as it beyond the capacity of our brains to remember everything, we forget what is not valuable and only remember what *is* valuable. We each pass on what we value to our children. Gadamer thereby presents culture as our *collective* memory: through culture we pass on what we value from one generation to another. Culture is what is preserved.²⁶

Understanding ‘bildung’ is helpful in understanding how Gadamer’s ideas draw on Dilthey. Dilthey said the results of experience, expressed through the single term ‘Erlebnis’, is ‘the epistemological basis of all knowledge’ (1975/2004: 57). Our lives are full of experiences and these experiences are assimilated; those that are valuable become the images that constitute themselves in memory. Gadamer summarises Dilthey thus: ‘What we call experience and acquire through experience is a living historical process’ (1975/2004: 217). In other words, through the fusion of *Bildung* and *Erlebnis*, culture and experience, we make history.

Because experience is continuous, history is constantly being made and remade. Gadamer quotes Dilthey directly to press home the point: ‘I myself am a historical being... the person

²⁴ An authoritative German-English dictionary translates ‘bildung’ as ‘education’ (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-german>)

²⁵ J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, who translated this edition of *Truth and Method*, give the German term *Bildung* followed by ‘Culture’ in brackets.

²⁶ I would like to return to investigate Gadamer and Biesta’s (2002; 2006) respective understandings of ‘bildung’ in future research.

studying history is making history' (n.d. in 1975/2004: 217). We are each products of the culture into which we were born, intimately connected with those who share our culture, and, through our own remembered experiences, add to that culture and so create (and recreate) history. Gadamer says,

History does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live... The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. (1975/2004: 78)

No one is excluded; we all have a role. History is like a live performance, with every character – consciously or unconsciously – improvising (or experiencing) their part based on the themes of the play (culture). Characters are born, experience, pass on memories they value, die. Each new character has a greater store of culture on which to create their own performance, since 'the essential nature of the historical spirit consists not in the restoration of the past but in *thoughtful mediation with contemporary life*' (1975/2004: 161, emphasis original). The key concept to be taken from this is that history is iterative and eternal. Tradition is understood, continued and renewed. On 'historical preparation' (1975/2004: 175) a hermeneutic study can be built.

3.2.2 Art is a means through which we know the world

The second key concept is that art is an important means through which we know the world. Art can be defined as the artefacts created by humans that record their memories; art, images, therefore, is a carrier of culture, the 'bild' of 'bildung'.

Gadamer discusses how art came into being through creative human attempts to reproduce their experience in the world. I offer as a simple example the prehistoric images of deer on the cave walls at Grotte de Lascaux, France²⁷, presumably painted by hunters to record the memory of an important chase. Gadamer shows that what the world *presents* us is *represented* (or re-presented) through art – so, in my example, the charcoal-drawn representations of the deer are *re-presentations* of living creatures. Art made today has the same function as the deer drawings: it signifies some element of the artist's experience in the world²⁸.

²⁷ See <https://tinyurl.com/yapc6v48> Photo copyright: Lonely Planet

²⁸ Biesta (2004) points to ancient artefacts to illustrate how culture is dependent on communication: an artefact may well be preserved in concrete terms, but if we are unable to understand its meaning

Gadamer goes on to suggest that there is a heightening, an '*increase in being*' (*ibid*, emphasis original) of the original by its representation: 'It is only by being pictured that a landscape becomes picturesque' (1975/2004: 136). In other words, a piece of art *reinforces* the existence of what it represents. In turn, because it was a conscious choice to depict the deer, a deliberate act to preserve a valuable memory, the image *itself* becomes of value. What is copied is independent of the original and has its own existence; the cave-painted deer are as 'real' as the animals that inspired them. A key point in Gadamer's argument is that an artwork is ontologically balanced with what it portrays:

Every such presentation is an ontological event and occupies the same ontological level as what is represented. (1975/2004: 135)

Since the artwork itself has own being, then, separate to what inspired it, we come to know the world as much through our experiences of art as through our experiences of the world itself. This is important, because once art is created and so becomes part of our collective culture and collective history, our response to it is 'an event of being' (2004: 147). Whilst of course our response to *any* stimulus is an experience or 'event of being', the experience *through art* is intensified because the creation of the art was *itself* an event of being. Gadamer promotes Hegel's view that *the mediation that results from the experience* with the art is 'on the same level as the truth of art itself' (2004: 135). Hence, Gadamer suggests, we know and understand the world *better* through art.

3.2.3 Language requires interpretation

The examples of art I have offered above are of visual art – drawing and painting – yet the concept that we know the world through art applies to other artforms too. Gadamer also references sculpture; I might add photography, mime, music, dance, and a range of other plastic and physical art forms that are experienced visually or aurally. In each of these cases, the appreciation of the artwork could be immediate. This is not to say that the art offers itself up to easy interpretation, but that it is there in front of our eyes (or channeled into our ears)²⁹ – there is no barrier to *accessing* the artwork, even if it is not necessarily instantly 'understood'.

as communication with its makers has been lost, the artefact remains 'silent' (2004: 19), its meaning reduced.

²⁹ I do not wish glibly to imply by that by referring only to visual and aural art that I am assuming those with sensory impairments cannot access art. I feel uncomfortable about appearing to ignore those with additional needs, but have decided to follow Gadamer's lead in not drawing attention to the issue for reasons of clarity. The same is true when discussing speech below – although I make

However, the same cannot be said of the art forms most associated with English – the art of the written word, of poems or of novels, nor of the written word performed – a play or a song or an opera. Before a text can be read and appreciated, it needs to be made accessible: a *translation* has to take place, an event Gadamer describes as miraculous, such is his astonishment at what the human eye and brain are capable of. The third key concept, then, is that language needs to be decoded at a basic operational level to be accessed before any understanding of its 'meaning' is possible. Reading a text with understanding depends upon knowing and being able to apply phoneme-grapheme correspondence, a linguistic process so near-physical that Gadamer refers to it as 'corporeality':

Reading with understanding is always a kind of reproduction, performance and interpretation... Meaning and the understanding of it are so closely connected with the corporeality of language that understanding always involves an inner speaking as well. (1975/2004: 153)

Without this skill of 'hearing' the words one reads in one's head, a text is nothing but a series of meaningless symbols. It is useless if it cannot be deciphered, an object rather than an artwork, valueless to the illiterate beholder. Once the meaning of those symbols is grasped, however, the text opens up – the 'trace of the mind' (1975/2004: 156) is available:

In deciphering and interpreting it, a miracle takes place: the transformation of something alien and dead into total contemporaneity and familiarity. This is like nothing else that comes down to us from the past. The remnants of past life – what is left of tools, buildings, the contents of graves – are weather-beaten by the storms of time that have swept over them, whereas a written tradition, once deciphered and read, is to such an extent pure mind that it speaks to us as if in the present. (ibid)

When a text is deciphered, it offers insights from history and brings the past into 'sheer presence' (*ibid*): it lives. The ontological presence of a text, then, does not depend on its mere *existence*, as with other artforms; it is only 'in being' if it is *understood*. Reading and understanding the text is part of the event in which meaning occurs.

Although Gadamer discusses only the language of written texts at this point in *Truth and Method*, the argument could be extended to speech. Hearing a language with which the listener is unfamiliar renders communication futile: the common idiomatic phrases 'You're talking double Dutch' and 'It's all Greek to me' emphasise how meaningless foreign or ancient languages appear to the uninitiated. Spoken language can only be made sense of if the listener understands the vocabulary; without an appreciation of the meaning conveyed

simple distinctions about speaking and listening, I do not wish to suggest I am unaware of those who communicate in ways other than speech.

by the individual words, speech is mere noise. The term 'translation' that Gadamer frequently uses to emphasise the importance of the process of deciphering texts can be applied literally to speech.

3.2.4 Interpretation is always specific and local

I introduced above the ontological notion that hermeneutics and language are inter-dependent; I return to it here as it is key to Gadamer's philosophy. That language makes the world is an idea he returns to again and again, such as in the following statement: 'It is the medium of language alone that, related to the totality of beings, mediates the final, historical nature of man to himself and to the world' (1975/2004: 454). The equation is balanced: while language makes the world, the world makes language – Gadamer shows that there is a co-dependent and symbiotic relationship: 'Not only is the world insofar as it comes into language, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it' (1975/2004: 440). Yoking together language and the world underlines the *universality* of language, and emphasises how 'fundamental' (Cox, 1989: 85) language is to all human interaction.

Yet this does not imply that *meanings* made from language are also universal. Gadamer states, '*Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs,*' but goes on, '*Understanding occurs in interpreting*' (1975/2004: 390, emphasis original). The key concept here is that while understanding takes place through *shared* language, each interpretation of language is *unique*. Gadamer stresses that each single instance of interpretation is dependent on its context; each of us will interpret the same message differently. As Auden writes, 'To read is to translate, for no two persons' experiences are the same' (1963, n.p.).

This is because each of us comes to a moment of interpretation from a different place. Gadamer explains that our individual histories, made up of our personal experiences and personal memories, are specific and exclusive to each of us. Since human history is iterative, it is apparent that our personal histories are so too, as we add daily layers of experience and memory; writing these words now, I am a slightly different person to who I was yesterday and by tomorrow I will be different again. Thus, we bring to the moment of interpretation knowledge that is ours alone, knowledge that is unprecedented and will never be repeated.

This accreted 'knowledge', what we think we 'know', is determined by our prejudices. The language we use is filtered through these prejudices. For Gadamer, the term prejudice does not have connotations of bias and chauvinism: a prejudice is not necessarily negative, but

merely a reflection of, or result of, our accumulated personal history and the cultural history that has come down to us. (For instance, as Shotter (2003) notes, we are prejudiced when we come to a Shakespeare play for the first time because we know of his pre-eminence.) Our prejudices are the 'horizon' (1975/2004: 304) of our current situation, representing the limits of what we can know and understand.

Moreover, our individual prejudices and positions are relative not only to our *own* former positions, but to the positions of the 'other,' the person with whom we are conversing or the text we are reading. We can define a conversation as two people *coming from their respective situated positions* and each opening themselves up to the other's words. It is a never-to-be-repeated opportunity because the situation will never again recur where the two people are situated in exactly the same context with the same relativism.

This idea also applies when interpreting the language of written texts: Gadamer presents the text as a quasi-personified discussant to explain the active dialogue in which we engage. Perhaps drawing on the German philosopher Martin Buber, who proposed that we may consider existence as either an 'I – 'It' relationship (in which the 'It' is distinct from the 'I') or an 'I – 'Thou' relationship (in which there is no discrete separation) (n.d. *in* Kramer, 2003), Gadamer terms reading as an 'I-thou' conversation in which the text 'speaks' from its *own* situated position. Because a text is interpreted anew by each reader through time - as every reader will come from their own position bearing their own history and prejudices - every text continually accumulates its own history.

The Marxist philosopher Jameson likewise emphasises the influence of the past on our reading, here stressing the weight of history in forming the 'narrative' of the present:

We never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or - if the text is brand new - through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions. (1981: 9)

Gadamer's view is not only that texts are always-already-read (like Jameson), but suggests that each successive reading *adds* something to the text, and one's own reading is unique - each time it is read, a new and unique layer of interpretation is added to a text.

3.2.5 Meaning is always open and temporary

At the same time, the text remains constantly 'free for new relationships' (Gadamer, 1975/2004: 397). Building on the notion that our individual cultures and personal histories mean our interpretations are unique, is the idea that meaning is not temporally limited. Gadamer's point is that a text is 'shaded' differently in individually distinct ways (1975/2004: 444) on each (re)reading. A similar idea is expressed by the novelist Jeanette Winterson: 'The power of a text is not time-bound. The words go on doing their work' (2011: 27). For Gadamer, a text not only carries new meaning whenever it is read, but language presents us with the opportunity to understand the differences between interpretations and resolve them.

According to Gadamer, we can enter 'foreign-language worlds' (1975/2004: 445) through speech or text. Doing so enables us to overcome the limitations of our previous understandings: 'like travellers we return home with new experiences' (*ibid*). The foreign-language worlds might be literal (in the sense, for example, of holding a conversation in a different language) or metaphorical (the language might be 'foreign' because it represents a different faith or philosophy); they might exist in the present or come from the foreign country of the past where 'they do things differently' (Hartley, 1953: 5). The journey to the foreign-language world need not be arduous: it might be a chat with a friend – but could equally be part of a deep scholarly inquiry. But wherever we go, each visit provides us with the opportunity to experience life from a new perspective and thereby reform our own horizons³⁰, even unwittingly; it enables us to come to an agreed moment of comprehension (albeit not necessarily come to accord). Language 'opens up the whole of our world orientation' and 'operates in a creative way, reconciling these stratified living relationships' (1975/2004: 446). By enabling us to see into the worlds of others through talking and through reading, we open up new vistas.

Such visits (to continue the metaphor) are experiences that become part of our personal history. As with other aspects of history, they are iterative: they are built on our experience of previous travels. They provide us with a *constant* flow of novelty and new meanings (albeit often subtle and even unacknowledged). Once a new perspective has been opened through visiting a foreign-language world, we are in a new position, we have a new context,

³⁰ The term 'horizon' reminds us how the semantic field of vision is often used in relation to understanding: we say 'I see' when understanding dawns; we use 'perspective' and 'point of view' to describe a personal take; an 'outlook' is a position or belief. I suggest that Gadamer was consciously referencing these associations when he used the metaphor of 'horizon'.

and so make a new meaning. We then visit somewhere else and the view changes again. The key concept here is that, as a result, our interpretations are never fixed, but always open and temporary. While this very changeability might be seen as a disadvantage because we connote impermanence with insubstantiality, I suggest that this concept ensures meaning is always fresh, 'live' and relevant to the moment.

Gadamer states that by applying this idea that meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-scalar to the general rather than the individual, we see how language enables us to trace how human values and customs change. Language is effectively a mirror of society that 'helps to fashion the world orientation in which we live' (1975/2004: 446). Language changes as the world changes. In illustration, Gadamer points to words that have come to bear an ironic meaning. The instances he uses do not translate from the original German, but I suggest examples in English include 'nice' – which has come a long way since Jane Austen used it as a term of mild disparagement, and 'bad' which means 'good' for a tranche of the youth community. The meanings of 'nice' and 'bad' are not fixed, and they will be open to carrying new meanings as society moves on.

Bringing us back full circle to the first key concept discussed above - that history is iterative – Gadamer reminds us that it is *because* language meanings are open and temporary that we know about the sedimented layers of history:

Language is the record of finitude not because the structure of human language is multifarious but because every language is constantly being formed and developed the more it expresses its experience of the world... It is the medium of language alone that, related to the totality of beings, mediates the final, historical nature of man to himself and to the world.' (1975/2004: 453-4)

The qualities of language here discussed - the living ability of language to change, and its generous ability to be open to accept new meanings – prompt Gadamer to personify language and provide it with its own breath: 'It is literally more correct to say that *language speaks us, rather than we speak it* (1975/2004: 459, my emphasis).

3.3. Applying the concepts

I now go on to demonstrate how I apply the five concepts practically in my thesis (whilst mindful of the irony that a research study guided by the tenets of Gadamerian hermeneutics might be said rarely to have a definitive starting point or endpoint). I do so through explaining how I use two hermeneutic tools that Gadamer employed extensively in his own work: the fusion of horizons and his interpretation of the hermeneutic circle.

In some ways, it is difficult to separate the five concepts - perhaps best envisaged as five interlocking circles in a Venn diagram - in relation to the two tools. However, the fusion of horizons relies most heavily on the key concepts that *language requires interpretation* and *interpretation is specific and local*, while the hermeneutic circle draws upon the idea that *meaning is always open and temporary*, as I seek to show below.

3.3.1 The fusion of horizons

As the title *Truth and Method* intimates, Gadamer is concerned that we get to the 'truth'. Yet, given that we have established that language requires interpretation and that interpretation is bound to its context, 'truth' is a tricky concept. Gadamer's answer to this puzzle is the fusion of horizons.

Let us first consider what happens when a dialogue takes place. Gadamer reminds us that when we start a conversation we do not have control over its direction: it is unplanned, spontaneous, an 'unrehearsed intellectual adventure' (Oakeshott, 1959: 11). (Similarly, Shotter recalls Wittgenstein's idea that speech does not translate ready-made thoughts: it *accomplishes* thought (2003).) A conversation *evolves* and so 'bears own truth within it' (Gadamer 1975/2004: 385); it allows something to '*emerge*' (*ibid*) which then *exists*. It also requires commitment. Gadamer writes:

... you must realise that when you take a word in your mouth, you have not taken up some arbitrary tool which can be thrown in a corner if it doesn't do the job, but you are committed to a line of thought that comes from afar and reaches on beyond you.
(1975/2004: 552)

As that line of thought develops, there is a constant process of question and answer, checks and balances, as the participants seek the 'truth'. Gadamer emphasises the importance of being open and probing throughout: conversation is dialectical. Through this mutual interplay, two people become bound in understanding. 'Understanding' is not about getting inside the other person's head (which is patently impossible), but each interlocutor making their own 'truth' that fuses with the other's.

Interpreting the written word is a special kind of dialogue because we lack clues given through conversation (tone of voice, gesture), so coming to an understanding is harder than with speech. However, interpretation is not a case of second-guessing the author's 'meaning' but, again, coming to our own understanding, finding our own 'truth' in relation to what is read. As with a conversation, each interpretation of a text is the combination of

the specific context of the reader *and* that of the text: 'Each interpretation has to adapt itself to the hermeneutical situation to which it belongs' (1975/2004: 398).

Whether in conversation or reading, Gadamer describes this moment of discovery of the full 'truth' as the fusion of horizons. It takes place when two horizons, that of the interpreter and the interpreted, are 'fused' in mutual understanding. Gadamer said that *genuine* understanding of a text, one that overcomes potential barriers of miscommunication and transcends any anomaly or difficulty, depends upon the discovery of a meaning that blends the text - situated in its own context and with its own history - with the reader's interpretation, which is itself governed by their own personal history. In so doing, a new perfect 'unity' of their two respective horizons is created, one which 'does not allow the interpreter to speak of an original meaning of the work without acknowledging that, in understanding it, the interpreter's own meaning enters it as well' (1975/2004: 578).

Every fusion of horizons is a unique and positive event. Gadamer explains that at the point of fusion, '*old and new are always combining into something of living value, without either being explicitly foregrounded from the other*' (1975/2004: 305, my emphasis). For the reader, the moment of fusion is a genuine experience, 'an encounter' (1975/2004: 483) that might even be visceral - a lightbulb moment that creates a shiver down one's spine – and becomes part of their personal history. The sociologist Maggie Maclure describes a similar near-tangible encounter that takes place when a researcher experiences an encounter with data, which she terms a 'hotspot' (2013: 661). Put another way, 'It is rather like a *creative conversation* between within and without, a kind of dialectical education in which the form becomes in actuality what from the very beginning it had been potentially' (Goethe/Heller, 1952 in Shotter, 2000: 241, my emphasis). A possibility that had been latent prior to the interchange is brought into existence.

Gadamer later re-emphasises that fusion, 'a new creation of understanding' (1975/2004: 468), is not about finding a meaning that a text once had, but appreciating its history while imbuing it with a meaning that works for the reader in the present:

[A]s far as the hermeneutical experience is concerned, ... all the meaning of what is handed down to us finds its correction (i.e., is understood) in its relation to the understanding I – and not in reconstructing the originally intended I. (1975/2004: 468)

It is as if the fusion enables the interpreter to 'see into the life of things' (Wordsworth, 1798: n.p.), the reference to 'life' signalling the relevance of what is 'handed down' to the here-and-now.

Gadamer illustrates the fusion of horizons theory through discussing the dialogic relationship with two participants. This gives us the basic model, whereby the voice of the interpreter and the voice of the interpreted come together to create a construct so strong that has its own presence, a 'third voice' (1975/2004: 468). Shotter later explains that this single dialogue is one of an infinite number of simultaneous dialogues:

In such a participatory stance, 'I', 'my world' and 'my language' are all internally related participant parts of a larger, indivisible, dynamic whole, a ceaseless stream of ongoing activity, of understandable-being in motion. Thus the 'parts' in question are not at all physically distinct or separable parts as such, but distinctions of function or of role being played, that is, they are participant parts, in relation to the conduct of the whole stream of activity within which they have their existence, that is, the 'world' as a 'real presence'. (2003: 444)

Thus, fusions are being created all the time and that the number of 'truths' created is exponential.

There are critics of the fusion of horizons theory. Some point to the difficulty presented by different contexts that, potentially, present us with a sort of contextual *faux ami* whereby what might seem familiar actually obscures the unfamiliar and leads to misinterpretation (Forster, 2002/2015)³¹. Kinsella (2006) highlights the possibility of deliberate miscommunication, when a writer creates a text that obfuscates to obscure 'true' understanding; Sherratt (2006) makes a similar point, offering *Mein Kampf* to suggest that if writer *intentionally* misleads their readers, fusion cannot happen. It reminds me of the famous saying attributed to the politician Talleyrand in the early nineteenth century, 'La parole a été donnée à l'homme pour déguiser sa pensée'³² (in Nyberg, 1993: 112) – a notion that is perhaps frighteningly relevant to education in the current climate of fake news and distrust in those who make education policy in England (Taylor-Gooby and Leruth, 2018). However, for Gadamer, that truth might be present in the very recognition that something is being concealed.

³¹ The symbolism of the colour white provides a simple example of a potential contextual *faux ami*. In contemporary western Christian culture, a woman wearing a long white dress would be seen as a bride; in Chinese culture, white is the colour of mourning. It is important that one understands the cultural context to know whether to offer congratulations or condolences.

³² Language has been given to man to enable him to disguise his thoughts (my translation).

Gadamer, apparently, does not entertain the idea that there might be those who do not want to understand (or want to be misunderstood): in the Supplement to *Truth and Method* he responds to some of the critics, remaining sanguine in the face of dissent. He confidently states,

I would say that the misunderstanding in the question of the linguisticity of our understanding is really one about language – i.e. seeing language as a stock of words and phrases, of concepts, viewpoints and opinions. In fact, language is the single word, whose virtuality opens for us the infinity of discourse... Language is... the generative and creative power to unceasingly make this whole once again fluent.
(1975/2004: 553)

The 'single word' is the fusion of horizons, the 'third voice' that enables two positions to be joined in a moment of understanding. The 'whole' might represent the world; if so, he is suggesting that the fluency provided by language has the ability to promote universal understanding. Given that he was writing as the world was recovering from the impact of World War II, Gadamer's optimism is ambitious and humane - and it is worth observing here that an ambitious and humane world view also characterises the earliest subject English policy documents I discuss in Chapter 5, and is largely shared by the teaching practitioners I interview.³³

3.3.2 The hermeneutic circle

Gadamer developed his ideas on the fusion of horizons alongside the notion of the hermeneutic circle: used together, they can reveal 'truth'. Based on a theory first advanced by Spinoza in 1670 (Ramberg and Gjesdal 2006/2014: 1) and developed by Dilthey, 'the hermeneutic circle is a dialectic tool of interpretation whereby understanding of the whole is confirmed through exploration of its parts' (Smith, 2019: 259). The 'whole' here is not simply a text in its physical entirety, but 'whole' in the philosophical sense: the entirety of what a text can tell us, its 'whole' argument. It works by applying the concept that meaning is open

³³ As a coda to this discussion of the fusion of horizons, it is interesting to note that, today, the term 'fusion' has multiple creative nuances - we might think of fusion food or fusion music. However, it was in 1951 that nuclear fusion was first accomplished. Gadamer was then around 50 years old and a newly-appointed professor at the University of Heidelberg; he was working on *Truth and Method*, which was published in Germany ten years later. Perhaps the excitement over the conjoining of two atoms (the exact opposite of the process of *splitting* the atom, which led to the creation of the atomic bombs released over Hiroshima and Nagasaki only 6 years previously) inspired him to appropriate the term 'fusion' for his theory. Whether concerned with atomic particles or food or music, 'fusion' suggests a *dynamic* and *irreversible* event through which two separate entities conjoin to create something new and generative.

and temporary; it is a cyclical process of questions, hypotheses, checks and balances (1975/2004: 461). Using the circle, we might move from the part to the whole and back again - and then to a different part - in a fluid way, refining our interpretations of the meaning and understanding of the 'truth' of the text at each turn.

Gadamer shows that the hermeneutic circle enables the reader to gain understanding by concentrating on what *matters*, to focus, by allowing her to 'direct [her] gaze on the things themselves' (1975/2004: 269), avoiding distraction. As I have suggested elsewhere, 'it can be envisaged like the focusing in and out of a microscope, enabling her to look at a portion of a sample on the slide in detail, then zoom out to see the entire sample, then zoom in to take a close look at another portion, in order to learn more about the substance being analysed at various levels' (Smith, 2019: 259-60). An initial meaning (Gadamer terms it a 'fore-meaning' (1975/2004:270)) gleaned from a tiny detail (such as an individual word) examined when the microscope is at its greatest magnification might be compared with the meaning from tiny details in other areas (other words, phrases). Assuming there is synergy, the emergent meaning is further tested when the microscope is recalibrated to a lesser magnification so that more of the original is revealed (a sentence, a paragraph, the whole), giving a different perspective from which to reappraise the meaning.

Gadamer emphasises the hard work involved; creative effort is required in generating the interplay between the positions and making the hermeneutic circle 'work'; we must remain alert, open to surprise. In this dialectic process, we might be 'pulled up short' (*ibid*); if the fore-meanings do not align at different positions or different magnifications, they are found to be 'false' and renewed examination is required. He reminds us that 'the hermeneutic task consists of not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out' (1975/2004: 305). We might need to re-examine our prejudices. Only when a reader has arrived at a meaning that 'works' at any level can she be confident that she has reached a 'truth'. Yet even then, because truth is temporary and history is iterative, this truth is itself then open to further question.

In an image highly appropriate for a thesis centering on English pedagogy, Sherratt (2006) explains the hermeneutic circle by showing how a single paragraph in a novel would not convey the same meaning if read outside the novel, while interpretation of the novel is enhanced through that paragraph; indeed, it would be a lesser work without it. We might even go back to the given paragraph when we have finished the novel and, through re-reading it, re-interpret it; our interpretation of the whole novel might hang upon it.

3.3.3 Exploring horizons and thinking in circles

Gadamer's constructive, optimistic attitude is clear from his use of the fusion of horizons and the hermeneutic circle in his own work. In his essay *Composition and Interpretation* (1977/1986) - highly apposite to a study looking at English and creativity - he discusses the difficulty of interpreting poetry. He suggests that although the 'meaning' found by the reader (the 'fusion') through close reading of both the whole and its parts (using the hermeneutic circle) may not be that which the poet intended, the poet's intention is not superior. The poet is the initial creator and interpreter of meaning; the reader is re-creator and re-interpreter; each finds their own horizon through the poem, and these are of equal value.

Accordingly, Gadamer suggests that poetry, being dependent on language, is more intimately connected to the practice of interpretation than the other arts. He argues that there are parallels between poetry and philosophy as both require effortful thinking (or a long time spent using the hermeneutic circle); neither offers up an interpretation lightly. He reminds us that poetry has an oral tradition and so a poem's function is a 'shared saying' (1977/1986: 70), with horizons being fused at each sharing, whenever the poem is passed on. He gives as an example the allegorical poem, which only works on one level if there is 'a secure common horizon or interpretation' (*ibid*). To offer my own example here, both parties need to know, say, that the fox is wily, the serpent wicked, for certain meanings to be fused – yet even with this awareness, there remains 'an open dimension of indeterminacy' which means the poem is 'conceptually inexhaustible' (1977/1986: 71).

In the same essay, Gadamer discusses the creation of a novel, suggesting that a novel's beauty is a result of the conflicting voices of both the author and her character(s): in the process of writing the author cannot distinguish between the language of narration and the language of reflection; she discovers her direction as she goes. This suggests that the novelist experiences a fusion of horizons through the writing process, as well as, subsequently, the reader: a 'third voice' is born that is the fusion of author and her created character.

Gadamer concludes the essay by suggesting that for both writer and readers, a fusion of horizons is not the destination, but in a direction towards an 'open realm' (1977/1986: 68) that can be explored in various ways. As I have argued, 'Whilst 'open' has connotations of danger and exposure, which may be apposite, perhaps Gadamer is also referring to its sense of unrestricted freedom, particularly as 'realm' suggests a demesne over which the owner

has influence. The writer and readers might end up in different realms (even opposing realms), but this does not diminish the authority of their interpretations' (Smith, 2017: 50); the number of new truths to be discovered is infinite. It is in this sense that the fusion of horizons, in tandem with the hermeneutic circle, are valuable tools for the present inquiry. It has been established that *universal* truth cannot be guaranteed through hermeneutics; *individual* truths can, however, and these are still significant because they are forged through and anchored in the text.

3.4. A defence of the use of hermeneutics in the social sciences

The past two sections have been very theoretical: I now wish to get practical and discuss methodological implications. In this section, I hope to demonstrate how the hermeneutic circle and moments of fusion (tools that I am consciously using myself as I undertake this project) are employed by contemporary academic hermeneutic researchers in the fields of creativity and education. (In fact, I wonder whether the term 'tool' is sufficient to describe the hermeneutic circle and fusion of horizons: a tool is selected to undertake a job and might then be stowed away when the task is complete, but a hermeneutic approach cannot so easily be taken up and put down; indeed, as a hermeneutist, I am mindful that the work is ongoing, as my own understanding is constantly being remade as I become increasingly immersed in the project.) In grappling with these ideas, I seek to show the relevance of hermeneutics to social science research today.

3.4.1 The art of applying hermeneutics: understanding understanding

Gadamer states in the preface to *Truth and Method* that 'The understanding and interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general' (1975/2004: xx). To recap, hermeneutic thought sees ontology bound up with epistemology because hermeneutics involves thinking in questions rather than finding neat answers - it is a constant and iterative process of concept formation. Hermeneutics is a process by which that 'understanding and interpretation' can happen, not one that can be 'verified by the methodological means proper to [natural] science' (*ibid*), but one of legitimising knowledge and truths gained through insight.

Gadamer was concerned principally with philosophy, culture, history, art and literature, although – as noted – he realises that the positive correlation between the 'factualness' (1975/2004: 448) of language and the human capacity for science implies that the natural

sciences too rely on hermeneutics. This social sciences study of creativity in English education - a subject itself rooted in literature and the arts, culture and history - not only chimes with Gadamer's areas of interest, but is made possible through his methods.

It is interesting, then, that hermeneutics is a relatively rare methodology for researchers in the field of creativity. It is a perspective has been 'so far little attended to', despite creative ideas being 'implicit within hermeneutic literature' (Rocavert, 2016: 230). For instance, there is not one reference to hermeneutics in *The Routledge International Handbook of Creative Learning* (Sefton-Green *et al*, 2012). This may be partly because hermeneutics is inherently backward-looking (a point I return to in 4.3.1 below when I address the lack of black, Asian and minority ethnic representation in my study); possibly, too, given the reliance on the researcher as well as the research subject, hermeneutics is too 'self conscious' (*sic*) (McCaffrey, Raffin-Bourchal and Moules, 2012: n.p.) and the emphasis on language as sometimes slippery and ambiguous does not sit easily with thematic research (*ibid*). Perhaps most significantly, recent conceptualisations of embodied and collaborative creativity that rely on non-linguistic communication – as exemplified by the title of Lipari's *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement* (2014) - might be difficult to study hermeneutically.

Nevertheless, given that my focus is on language and English, I believe that the advantages of a hermeneutic approach outweigh these concerns, and I argue that hermeneutics does have a role to play in research today. The contemporary Australian philosopher specialising in the Arts, Carla Rocavert, is 'keen to encourage research into creativity through hermeneutics. She reminds us of Gadamer's point that dialogue is itself *created* as it plays out, and so the dialogic nature of hermeneutics is pertinent to conversations on creativity' (Smith, 2020a: 306). Rocavert also refers to Gadamer's notion that reaching understanding, a fusion of horizons, requires a *creative* approach, and thus that creativity is 'an enabler... to understanding' (2016: 230) and critiques anti-creative approaches:

This hermeneutic conception is driven by imagination, as well as a purpose and an outcome that exceeds materiality and profit. Unlike those inventions or novelties or crimes that prevent the possibility of creativity, creativity in the hermeneutic context must open up something that allows for more possibility, and ultimately, human advancement. (2016: 235)

For Rocavert, hermeneutics can lead to democratic and socially conscious action. I am ambitious that the findings of this thesis may be applied in a way that advances English pedagogy for democratic and social ends.

In the field of education, the historian Philip Gardner quotes Gadamer to argue that since 'We are always situated in history' (Gadamer, 2004 in Gardner, 2010: 55), the study of History should be itself hermeneutic. Gardner researches the history of History education in the twentieth century, using a hermeneutic approach to interview former teachers and interpret relevant texts (2010; 2011). This thesis follows his precedent by applying a hermeneutic approach to the history of creativity in English education.

McCaffrey, Raffin-Bourchal and Moules (2012) and Moules *et al* (2014) defend the rigour of their hermeneutic research by stressing that it offers an approach and method that make it just as robust as more conventional approaches; Gardner too defends a hermeneutic approach to critics wary of 'truths' uncovered by hermeneutics, but slightly differently. He suggests that hermeneutists might better be described as having 'historical consciousness' rather than 'historical knowledge' (2010: 54). He shows that complete objectivity is impossible - like Rocavert (2016) he emphasises the importance of imagination: '*imagining* a place in the past through interpretation of historical texts is the best we can do, yet to do so is crucial to historical understanding' (Smith, 2020a: 306). The necessity of using one's imagination and applying a creative approach makes hermeneutics, for Gardner, an 'art' (2010: 41).³⁴ I use this term advisedly: this notion of 'art' acknowledges the ideas rehearsed above (Chapter 2) that a work of art is the result of effort (Matisse, n.d. in Brown, 1998; Einstein 1923 in Ossola, 2014) and that the arts are as purposeful as the sciences (Runco and Jaeger, 2012).

3.4.2 Kinsella's five features of a hermeneutic methodology

I turn now to the work of Elizabeth Anne Kinsella, a researcher based in the Occupational Therapy department of Western University, Ontario. Although she is in a medical setting, her interests are not indistinct from mine. Practically speaking, while I am concerned with the education of teachers, her work involves the education of health professionals; she is an advocate of creative approaches, such as using drama or collage to inform her students' reflective practice (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016). In terms of research, Kinsella uses both texts and interview as sources of data – as I do in this project – as a means of understanding and interpreting in order to shed new light on an identified problem.

³⁴ Kearney, too, describes hermeneutics as the '*art* of deciphering multiple meanings' (2011: 1, my emphasis); Luttrell suggests effective research is concerned with '*artful* representation' (2010: 1).

Kinsella advocates that qualitative inquiry can be enriched by a more explicit connection to the tradition of hermeneutics. In a (for me) pivotal article *Hermeneutics and critical hermeneutics: Exploring possibilities within the art of interpretation* (2006) – like Gardner, she sees hermeneutics as an ‘art’ – Kinsella reflects on the affordances of hermeneutics, laying out five features of a hermeneutic methodology that she has applied to her own work. The features are valuable at both a conceptual and practical level. Kinsella draws on Gadamer in her argument; here I discuss each of the five features in relation to Gadamer.

1: A hermeneutic approach ‘seeks understanding rather than explanation’

Kinsella reiterates Gadamer’s point that *any* qualitative research is underpinned by a hermeneutic approach, even if not acknowledged, stating that it is all about ‘understanding and interpretation as opposed to explanation and verification’ (2006: 1). She stresses the importance of being open and *questioning*, and the need to welcome *differences* in data. Complexities are to be celebrated: a researcher is challenged when she reaches a ‘horizon’ (a limit to understanding) but rewarded when she arrives at a *fusion* of horizons that provides her with a new event of understanding.

Kinsella also recognises the centrality of the hermeneutic circle to each event of understanding, noting the interdependence between the part and the whole. She wryly warns of the danger of a ‘vicious circle’ (2006: 4) when the researcher might run out of energy to look further and so fail to achieve fusion.

Taking on board the practical conundrum for researchers that, if history is iterative and meaning is always open, ‘truth’ is itself always temporary – and so any findings from research are themselves temporary – Kinsella is reassuring. Following Hoy (1991), she says that it is important to embrace differences between one’s own understanding and others’, and even that looking for convergence between two viewpoints (horizons) might be ‘oppressive’ as it ‘obstructs the awareness of difference’ (2006: 4). However, she suggests that *sufficient* understanding is acceptable. Understanding does not need to be complete for the research to be of value.

2: A hermeneutic approach ‘acknowledges the situated location of interpretation’

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer defends the idea that our perspectives and hence, our interpretations, are personal, stating:

The fact that in such knowledge the knower's own being comes into play certainly shows the limits of the method, but not of science. Rather, what the tool of method

does not achieve must – and really can – be achieved by a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth. (1975/2004: 484, my emphasis)

Kinsella echoes Gadamer, emphasising that we all have our own vantage points and thus 'how we interpret what we see bears our own signature' (2006: 4). She goes *beyond* Gadamer in pointing out that these different perspectives are *advantageous* as they provide different angles and different points of view that are necessary in research. Extending this concept, it could be suggested that numerous voices thereby enrich the research, since they collectively provide a multiplicity of perspectives from which a question can be approached – an idea relevant to this thesis, as I go on to listen to the voices of expert English teaching practitioners.

Once again, Kinsella is reassuring when considering the practicalities, so while a single researcher's view is necessarily 'partial' because of her particular situatedness, the work can yet be 'rigorous' (2006: 5) through repeated 'questioning and inquiring' (*op cit*). Thus, although it is impossible to control how this research will be interpreted, I can still strive to make a meaning that can be accepted by others from *their* own situated contexts.

3: A hermeneutic approach 'recognizes the role of language and historicity in interpretation'

Gadamer states that 'what we encounter in a tradition says something to us' (1975/2004: 483): what we know of the past – recent or otherwise – informs our understanding of where we are. As a result, history is fundamental to any scientific inquiry. Understanding whence we have come, trusting that culture holds the knowledge that was important to our forebears, provides us with a footing on which to understand where we are and so ask questions to guide future. By this token, it is history that fashions our prejudices, whether collective or personal.

Kinsella reminds us that we must remain alert to the influence our 'prejudgements' (2006: 5) have on the way in which we interact with the world and with others. Since the context of any text used in an inquiry will be different to the researcher's personal context - and therefore their use of language is also different – a researcher must maintain 'vigilant subjectivity' (Deluca, 2000 *in* Kinsella, 2006: 7), that is, vigilance towards the texts combined with a vigilant awareness of her own position. This is especially important when the context and language of the texts under investigation appear familiar and so obscure differences.

Kinsella suggests that 'language and history are always both *conditions* and *limitations* of understanding' (2006: 5). That research takes place through language and history is

incontestable – it is Kinsella’s use of the word ‘limitations’ which reminds us that language and history define the boundaries of what is possible and practical; and, indeed, that any study necessarily has limits. This helps me to keep the scope of my inquiry realistic and manageable.

4: A hermeneutic approach 'views inquiry as conversation'

As discussed, Gadamer presents the hermeneutic process as a dialogue between an interpreter and the text, whether that text is written or live-and-in-the-moment conversation. This has several implications. We know that we must remain focused (the experience involves 'uninterrupted listening' (1975/2004: 461)) but also flexible and ready for anything, as we cannot foretell where a conversation will take us. It also requires commitment, as each word in the chain has consequences for meaning (1975/2004: 552). Linge (1976) offers the analogy of a game of tennis: a player’s shot (or interpretation) depends on that which they are receiving (the nuance they pick up from the text) and their position on the court (their language and history); no two games (readings) are the same, and what happens can be unpredictable.

Kinsella acknowledges the challenging role of interpreter in these circumstances. She draws particular attention to Bakhtin’s point that a researcher has numerous texts to explore, and/or there may be more than one researcher, resulting in polyphonous voices (2006: 6) – there could be several ‘conversations’ going on at the same time, or numerous participants in a single conversation. (To recast Linge’s image, the ‘sport’ of hermeneutic interpretation is perhaps nearer to a football tournament involving many players over many matches than a one-on-one game of tennis.) Kinsella argues that each interpreter will ‘highlight’ (2006: 6) certain passages in a different way, contributing a unique tone or shading to the text. In this way, ‘the various texts can be given a voice to participate in conversation and speak to one another’ (2006: 6). The researcher’s role is to listen to the different voices, keep an open mind and play around with the possibilities to achieve fusion (and fusions).

5: A hermeneutic approach 'is comfortable with ambiguity'

Gadamer argues that there can be no one authoritative reading of a text, for reasons already rehearsed. As a result, ambiguity is inevitable.

Given that the term ‘creativity’ is itself ambiguous, it is reassuring that Kinsella stresses that, far from being a problem, ambiguity is an *advantage*. Methods which do not address the potential for ambiguity might be inadequate or partial in some way. Furthermore, the

haziness of language enables a researcher to capitalise on the array of meanings that are offered - ambiguity can be an opportunity to explore the unexpected.

In illustration of this point, I deconstruct the title of an influential report into English education that I discuss in Chapter 5, *A Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975). 'Life' may be interpreted in several senses, all of which are pertinent to the Report. 'Life' is our everyday existence, the hum-drum, the quotidian: we need language to get through the day. 'Life' is the span of our existence, from birth to death: we need language to survive our tenure on earth. 'Life' is also vital – the adjective is 'lively' - and so suggests energy: we need language to bring us joy. The preposition 'for' has various connotations that enrich these interpretations. 'For' can be purposeful and suggest intent (language *promotes* life); it also can mean to acquire or gain (language *gives* life); it can equally suggest a sensitivity to (language *appreciates* life).

This example shows rich ambiguity present in just three words. Here, the multiplicity of meanings is presumably deliberate; yet even if unintentional, Kinsella suggests that ambiguity can shine a light to reveal new meanings, and thus that ambiguity is something to be welcomed by a researcher.

However, the fact that I have drawn several overlapping connotations from three short words raises the terrifying prospect that a reader could quickly get mired in an infinite number of possible connotations in any longer text - including the 80,000+ words of this thesis, rendering it effectively meaningless. It is therefore difficult fully to embrace Kinsella's contention that ambiguity is not to be feared or avoided. However, not only have I supervisors and the peer reviewers from my already-published work to provide reassurance that my research is *sufficiently* meaningful (*op cit*) to make it possible to continue, but the creation and structure of the work itself. Through being as transparent as possible in explaining my approach, methods and findings, and through constantly 'questioning and inquiring' (*op cit*) as I go, I believe that what I have written is trustworthy.

3.5. Moving forward

In conclusion, through this thesis I actively seek creative encounters with policy texts - rooted in their historical context and carrying interpretations from all who have read them before – to understand how creativity is presented in national policy and guidance to English teachers; and I seek encounters with expert English teaching professionals to see how they understand creativity from their own situated perspectives and make sense of these policies.

Through so doing, I am responding to Rocavert's (2016) call to use hermeneutics in research into creativity. The success of the inquiry depends upon thinking these ideas 'through to the end' (Gadamer, 1975/2004: 421), finding 'truths'. The hermeneutic circle will allow me to test nascent interpretations; the fusion of horizons will confirm a working confidence in the interpretations I reach.

It is important to stress at this point how Gadamer's values and his optimistic outlook align closely with my own. In *The Education of Radical Democracy* (2015), Amsler suggests that 'It is only in the context of *speaking, hearing*, trying ideas out in the concrete circumstances of an ordinary life' that research can have any hope of 'respond[ing] to some need or desire' (2015: 22, my emphasis). I have identified a need to explore the state of creativity in English education: applying Gadamerian hermeneutics enables me to find ways of *speaking* and *hearing* to reveal 'truths' that will, in turn, ultimately inspire conversations that will lead to concrete action – and, I hope, a positive impact on what happens in English classrooms.

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Chapter 4: The craft and design of a hermeneutic methodology

4.0. Introduction and overview

All research activities, from conceptualisation to interpretation of analytic results, are always linked and must therefore be understood in relation to their cultural, historical, political and social contexts. (Bergmann, 2010: 388)

I now move on to explaining how I use hermeneutics as a ‘creative approach to understanding’ (Lavery, 2003 in McCaffrey, Raffin-Bourchal and Moules, 2012: 16) in crafting the research. To reiterate, hermeneutic practice is grounded in the understanding that interpretation is situated and that role of historicity is recognised (Kinsella, 2006), and I have already described how my own situated perspective led me to this project and informed the research aims.

In this chapter, I show how I use Gadamer’s tools - the hermeneutic circle and fusion of horizons - taking account of the five characteristics of the hermeneutic approach (Kinsella, 2006); I explain how I apply them to systematically reflect on ‘the meaning-carrying expressions of others’ (Gjesdal, 2016: 1) past and present, both through extant texts (policy concerning secondary English education) and the texts created over the course of the study (voices of expert English teaching professionals and the developing thesis itself). I aim to make the ‘approaches utilized (*sic*) [in the research] as transparent as possible so that others may make reasoned judgments as to their potential value in other contexts’ (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016: n.p.) - my overarching objective being that this ‘value’ will be weighed through the contribution of my thesis to the field.

Therefore, the role of this chapter is to make explicit the choices I made when designing my research in the light of the theoretical considerations explored in Chapter 3. First, in section 4.1, I re-clarify the research aims from a hermeneutic standpoint. Then, in section 4.2, I focus in detail on the decisions made pertaining to the first aim through justifying the period of analysis and the process of identifying the English education policy texts, while in 4.3 I explain decisions around the selection of participants and my conversations with them. I then describe how I realised that the conscious choices I made when representing (re-presenting) the policy texts and the participants’ voices resulted in a heightening of their significance (Gadamer, 1975/2004): the respective value of the two sets of texts is enhanced *through the understandings made when they are interpreted in the light of each other*. Thus, in 4.4, I explain how this project led me towards another question, hitherto unconsidered: I became interested in not only how policy is *interpreted* by English teaching professionals,

but what happens as they *enact* that policy – where is the agency? I accordingly describe how I developed my research aims to ask whether power lies more in the policy or in the hands of those charged with carrying it out.

4.1. Re-clarifying and defending the research aims

In this short section, I deepen my discussion of the research aims that conclude Chapter 2. While I appreciate that this risks repetition, I want here to reinforce their validity within a hermeneutic framing and to re-introduce the voices chosen to help answer my questions, given that a hermeneutic perspective sees the texts as well as participants as ‘voices’ (Gadamer, 1975/2004).

4.1.1 Research aim 1: to understand the place of creativity in English education policy, now and throughout its history

I have already identified the need to understand the place of creativity in English education policy in England. A hermeneutic methodology emphasises the importance of historicity and context: as explained in Chapter 3, the hermeneutic circle functions – ‘truth’ is revealed - through understanding of an element in relation to its entirety (Gadamer, 1975/2004). Thus, to really understand the place of creativity in policy today, I saw it was important to get as rich a sense of the context as possible – the long view. This suggests conducting a broad historical survey: I needed to get as close to the beginning of English education policy as I could so that I could listen to the voices from the very start of its story.

The focus on policy documents (rather than the wider academic and professional literature) enables me to understand officially recommended practice – or *required* practice, on the inception of the National Curriculum. Policy documents represent the national line: almost by definition, they might be assumed to have universal readership. School leaders, heads of department, all those training to become English teachers in this country should have encountered them. Thus, as a hermeneutist, I recognise the policy documents as *carriers of the culture of English teaching*. While it may be extreme to present them as works of art (which Gadamer sees as particular carriers of culture (1975/2004)), they are nonetheless representational images: important, widely-publicised snapshots of what was advocated at any given time.

It is important to re-emphasise at this point that my interest is in secondary education in England³⁵. While several documents to which I refer (*e.g.* Newbolt, 1921; Cox, 1989) include chapters on what are now known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (for children aged 2-4) and Primary phase (4-11), I concentrate on policy relevant to children aged 11 and over. Further, due to my liberal-socialist positioning, it is the maintained sector which is my main focus.

Examining policy documents also provides the opportunity to appreciate the context in which English educators in England work. Policy offers a framework for professional practice, so affords a view of how teachers themselves are valued, which underpins the connection between this and the following aim.

4.1.2 Research aim 2: *to understand how creativity in English education policy is conceived by expert English teaching professionals.*

This aim encapsulates my need to understand how those using the policy themselves understand it. I want to know how the policy documents are *interpreted*: what 'truths' are conveyed through the policy to those who are bound to deliver it? What are their impressions on the presence of creativity in policy past and present, and why? How might their practice have shaped their response to the policy and vice versa?

I have established that a conversation might include polyphonous voices (Kinsella, 2006). Each voice is situated differently and so brings a different angle - rather than restrict the 'truths' in the policy texts to the interpretation of a single researcher, numerous voices, like a kaleidoscope, present opportunities to throw light into different patterns and so, potentially, reveal new truths (Kinsella, 2006). In this study, I envisage the voices of a range of expert English teaching professionals as co-readers of the policy texts (albeit in very limited amounts). Comparing the voices allows them to be interpreted in comparison to each other; from a hermeneutic perspective, it is this 'display of the relations' (Shotter, 2000: 237) or 'plurality of interpretations' (Bryman, 2012: 561) between the data that leads to new understandings.

Involving expert, experienced participants suggests that they will already have grappled with the challenge of creativity in English: the topic is already in play – as co-readers of the policy,

³⁵ The National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) states that secondary education begins with Key Stage (KS) 3, typically for ages 11-14, followed by KS4, for ages 15-16.

they will each have developed a perspective to add to the ‘conversation’ (Kinsella, 2006: 6). Yet simultaneously this research values the participants as receivers and enactors of the policy, thereby giving them a dual role. I, too, have a dual role as researcher: my work is thereby ‘double hermeneutic’ (Usher, 1996: 19). I have chosen to conduct this part of the research through interviews, so am actively involved as interviewer, yet my voice is present within the data I go on to interpret.

4.2. A hermeneutic approach to analysing policy: gathering the voices

I now explain how I carried out the research on the policy documents through close textual analysis within a hermeneutic framing, conscious throughout that hermeneutics is an ‘art’ (Gardner, 2010; Kearney, 2011; Kinsella, 2006; Luttrell, 2010). Radnor offers an artistic analogy to illustrate how data – the ‘product of the skills and imagination of the researcher and of the interface between the researcher and the researched’ (Ball, 1993 *in* Radnor, 2002: 36) – are blended together like the coils of a clay pot. I am aware that however skilfully I, as the interpretive researcher, shape and mould the pot, I am reliant on the integrity of my data (the clay) to create something lasting and of value - the success of my research is dependent on the quality of the data.

4.2.1 Defining the period of analysis and identifying the texts

I want to begin, briefly, by locating the policy texts I will be discussing within a short overview of key moments relevant to education policy across the 120-year period of study (1902-2014). I do so at this point to help ground the reader in preparation for the explanation and illustration of my approach to analysing the texts in the following section (4.2.2).

Universal secondary education in England can be traced to the Education Act of 1902, when the school-leaving age rose from 10 to 14 (Aldrich, 2005; Gillard, 2018)³⁶. At this time (as today), a minority of children from middle class homes attended fee-paying grammar or independent schools; the vast majority - the offspring of the working class - were educated in maintained public elementary schools that taught children right through from 5-14 (Aldrich, 2005). Although a family’s economic circumstances meant that, in practice, many

³⁶ Universal *primary* education had theoretically been required since the Education Act of 1870 (Aldrich, 2005). The Act of 1902, brought in by the Conservative government under Lord Balfour, also established local education authorities, thereby going some way to standardising universal educational provision.

children were exempted from staying at school until 14, the Act demonstrates a recognition of the importance of universal secondary education. I therefore began my search for policy documents from 1902 onwards.

Elementary schools were staffed by generalist teachers. They were overseen by the national Board of Education (BoE) - the forerunner of today's Department for Education (Gillard, 2018), established in 1900 (Aldrich, 2005). Alert to the needs of the non-specialist teachers dealing with a suddenly increased pupil population, the Board published a paperback volume entitled *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools* (BoE, 1905/1912). As the title suggests, it contains practical advice for teachers, including subject content and pedagogy. The fact that it was printed and published by His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) indicates that it was government-sanctioned. For this reason, *Suggestions for the Consideration...* (BoE, 1905/1912) appears to be the first policy document in the field and its publication therefore marks the beginning of this inquiry.

The book must have been popular: the 1905 edition was reprinted in 1912 (identical to the first but for additional sections on Needlework and Gardening which do not play a part in this study) and this second edition was reprinted in 1914, 1918 and 1921. Over the next five decades multiple new editions appeared (BoE, 1923; 1925; 1927; 1935; DES, 1959), each containing a chapter on English. The final edition focuses on primary only (5-11), but the others cover the entire period of compulsory schooling, although I focus on secondary-specific content (11 and above) where possible. One additional volume, *Some Suggestions for the Teaching of English in Secondary Schools in England* (BoE, 1924), is devoted entirely to English. A Prefatory Note states that the text should 'be regarded as part of the necessary equipment of every teacher' (BoE, 1927: 3), which makes clear the breadth of the intended readership. Bound in blue card (and, later, blue hardback covers), the publications became known as the Blue Books. I adopt this snappier title from here on.

The next Education Act was passed in 1918. A response to renewed popular interest in education (Shayer, 1972), and designed to set the country back on track after the Great War of 1914-18, its main proposal was that all children should remain in school until the age of 14 without exemption, and it further encouraged full-time education up to 16 and recommended part-time education until 18³⁷ (Gillard, 2018). Like its 1902 predecessor, the

³⁷ It was not until 1971 that universal education to age 16 was enforced, although more and more young people chose by then to stay on until what was then known as the Fifth Form (Gillard, 2018).

Act spawned education-related publications. Key amongst these was *The Teaching of English in England* (Newbolt, 1921) – the first government-commissioned report on English - which was to influence English teaching for decades to come (Shayer, 1972). It is a key policy document in this inquiry.

The Education Act of 1944 was intended to bolster the recovery of the nation following the Second World War of 1939-45. This Act was instrumental in driving systemic change in terms of school administration, finance and structure, and did not touch on curriculum matters (indeed, it is not even mentioned in Shayer’s book (1972) on the history of subject English teaching); the Education Acts that followed (1964; 1967; 1968; 1973) were also principally concerned with economic, systemic and pastoral issues (Gillard, 2018). I am therefore assuming that the Blue Books published through much of this period (*op cit*) continued to represent policy.

However, the emerging post-industrial international economy saw the school curriculum once again as a political imperative. Renewed interest in subject English is seen through the publication of *A Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975), the second government Report on English. A decade later, the Education Reform Act of 1988 was immediately followed by *The Teaching of English Language* (Kingman, 1988) in preparation for the introduction of the National Curriculum.

Like the Blue Books, the content of the first three Reports (Newbolt, 1921; Bullock, 1975; Kingman, 1988) was not statutory, but given that they were commissioned by the government and published by HMSO, they can be assumed to be tantamount to being policy. All the policy documents mentioned thus far are analysed in Chapter 5.

The fourth Report, *English for ages 5 to 16* (Cox, 1989) *did* become statutory, by definition, when its recommendations were enshrined in the first National Curriculum. This inquiry surveys all six iterations of the Curriculum to date (Cox, 1989; DfE/WO 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999a; DfES/QCA, 2004; DCSF/QCA, 2007; DfE, 2014), and also alludes to an unpublished version (DfE/WO, 1993³⁸); I discuss these in Chapter 6.

Before I go on to explain my approach to analysing these texts, a word about their accessibility. Since all are in the public domain, most are relatively easily available. The

³⁸ As I noted in Chapter 1, the 1993 version did not make the statute books following an outcry from teachers regarding its reactionary and prescriptive content, but the controversy is an indication of the sensitivity surrounding curriculum policy subsequent to the arrival of the National Curriculum and is indicative of the debates I go on to explore.

Newbolt, Bullock and Kingman Reports are freely accessible through educationengland.org.uk and the National Archive website, as are all versions of the National Curriculum. Their online format enabled me to take advantage of the electronic search facility. Additionally, I also have access to most of the original print editions from my own collection, so was able to read them in their original format. The Blue Books are rarer: I am fortunate that the University of Bristol library houses the full series.

A full chronological list of these texts is available in [Appendix 2](#). (They are also presented in standard alphabetical order in the References). This sequencing is important: hermeneutics sees the *structure* of a text as significant: ‘The analysis follows the structure of the text (sequentially) and sees statements in this context’ (Flick, 2014: 458), and this applies not only to the texts individually but to the whole body of texts: the intertextuality, or their relationship to each other, is relevant. The documents respond and ‘speak’ to their predecessors, sometimes explicitly, so the successful use of the hermeneutic circle effectively relies upon critical chronological awareness of them all.

4.2.2 A three-tier approach to dialogic analysis

To reiterate: as a hermeneutist, I know that a text is never understood in the same way twice. This is not a deficit: rather, it is an opportunity for an open-ended dialogue with the texts. All this means being open to how imagination contributes to the process – not in a fanciful, dreamlike way, but because the imagination provides ‘the ability to synthesise and recognise patterns, significance and meaning in data’ (Luttrell, 2010: 8) which I hope will lead me to answer the research questions I have posed. Thus, having identified the policy documents that are the objects of my research, I now explain in this section the practical steps involved in analysing them in a robust, purposeful, systematic manner. My approach involves applying the five characteristics of hermeneutic research (Kinsella, 2006) - as outlined in the previous chapter - through a three-tier model developed by Kinsella. It consists of:

- 1) *holistic analysis (reading for a sense of a whole),*
 - 2) *selective analysis (identifying important parts i.e. passages that elicit understanding)*
and
 - 3) *detailed analysis (identification of meaningful words and phrases)*
- (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016: n.p)

Operationalising this approach first requires, then, a holistic understanding of the policy documents. I read each one several times, conscious that I was differently situated at each

iteration, and so in hermeneutic dialogue with my prior interpretations. My understanding developed through each re-reading, as my notes testify, illustrating how hermeneutics is live, dynamic and continuous, with interpretations continually being *reinterpreted* and further 'truths' discovered.

Once I was satisfied that I had a sufficient holistic overview, I moved to the second selective stage. This involved drawing up a table of key sections, including annotations and colour-coding to record ideas. I sought out words associated with creativity drawn from the literature discussed in Chapter 2 (e.g. create, imagine, conceive, collaborate, discuss) but looked too beyond the surface features for words, phrases and arguments that suggest the spirit of creativity (such as themes of personal growth, child-centred learning and enjoyment). It was particularly important to be aware of the semantic field associated with creativity in the pre-Curriculum texts written before the term 'creativity' became 'enregistered' (Agha, 2003) (commonly used) in the field of education. For example, my table included one section sub-headed *Drama* from *The Teaching of English in England* (Newbolt, 1921). Newbolt describes children co-creating a play with the teacher acting as scribe, an activity recommended as preferable to 'premature essay writing' in the development of language skills and confidence because they 'like' to do drama and such an activity is 'fun'; developing and performing a play is 'in the fullest sense, practical English composition', and a class of playwrights is better equipped to study playwrights (1921: 311-312). I interpreted this as creative teaching, even though 'creative' is not used. Yet, careful not to allow my relativism to bias my interpretation (Gadamer, 1975/2004), I also was alert to the *absence* of creativity in the texts. As advised by Radnor (2002), I knew it was probably impossible to avoid prejudgement entirely, but I was aware of the possibility, which prompted caution.

This prepared for the third tier, a final selective analysis, when I re-read important passages and explored them in detail. As a graduate of English Literature, I am expert in practical criticism (also known as critical commentary), an approach to deep reading developed by Richards (1930). It was logical to capitalise on this expertise and apply it to the texts under scrutiny, particularly as some are by authors also famed for their literary outputs (Newbolt and Cox are acclaimed poets, Bullock a successful writer) and so, it can be assumed, are attuned to the nuances of language.

Practical criticism is interpretation practised through exploration of textual detail (*ibid*). It involves deep consideration of a writer's choice of vocabulary (including the semantic field

and lexical style), grammar, punctuation, imagery and tone, with the understanding that all these elements have an impact on the 'truth' of the text. It acknowledges that there may be more than one reading, but as a hermeneutist, I know that embracing ambiguity is helpful in revealing new horizons (Gadamer, 1975/2004; Kinsella, 2006; Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016). At this point I used the hermeneutic circle to zoom in and out to check that the emerging truths were valid: my interpretations were developed and then reinterpreted through a 'creative, constructive intellectual process' (Radnor, 2002: 91) which informed my understanding of shades of meaning. For example, in the Drama section cited above, Newbolt writes 'In a sense children are primitive beings, and the essay is not a primitive form' (1921: 311). The term 'primitive' could have pejorative connotations, suggesting that Newbolt is dismissive of children's ineptitude; but the surrounding argument emphasises Newbolt's high expectations of children's aptitude for writing (and then performing) plays rather than essays of 'no purpose' (*ibid*), and this positive, encouraging tone echoes throughout the text.

It was the discovery of such 'hotspots' (Maclure, 2013: 661) in the data that made tangible the fusion of horizons. When I lit on similar examples, elements of the texts 'glimmer[ed]' (*ibid*), drawing my attention; discovering them helped me become sufficiently confident that my interpretations are appropriate and make the research findings relevant (Kinsella, 2006).

It is here worth making the obvious point that the practical criticism taking place daily in English classrooms has hermeneutic characteristics. This further underpins the suitability of the approach in this inquiry: my research is conducted in the spirit of the topic as I have practiced it throughout my professional life. McCallum describes the process of reading a novel in class: '[at] the heart of this practice is the act of interpretation' (2012: 87). He continues,

It begins with an acknowledgement that reading is an experience and, consequently, the text acts upon the reader as the reader acts upon the novel. Creativity comes from both sides in a transactional process. The original never stays the same, for even when the physical text is unchanged, every reading – and the simple passage of time itself – works upon it in some way. It is in a continual state of creation. (ibid)

The active, creative process of reading described by McCallum echoes Gadamer's understanding of the re-creative nature of reading and is synonymous with the fusion of horizons – Gadamer's tool for analysis is also a tool for the classroom.

4.2.3 Presenting my findings

As mentioned, the findings of this analysis are presented and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6: Chapter 5 examines policy and guidance from 1905-1988; Chapter 6 focuses on the era of the National Curriculum (1989-2014).

In Chapter 5, I present each document (or group of documents) in turn. Recognising the importance of situating the texts in their historical context (Gadamer, 1975/2004; Kinsella, 2006), I preface the discussion of each with a brief introduction to the socio-economic, educational and political context. Also, mindful that hermeneutics also 'recognizes the role of language... in interpretation' (Kinsella, 2006: 5) and that the authors made conscious language choices (in terms of structure, tone and style), I provide brief author biographies which allows me to reflect on the authors' implicit and explicit voices as well as the 'voices' of the policy documents themselves in my 'conversations' (Kinsella, 2006: 6) with the texts.

I then introduce each document with a discussion of how English is positioned and the presentation of creative teaching and learning. I comment variously on the role of the teacher, the learner and curriculum content within the situated context, with intertextual references where relevant. In each case there then follows explicit focus on

- i) speaking and listening (also referred to as talk or oracy),
- ii) reading
- iii) writing.

These categories reflect the three main components of school English, as laid out in the original Blue Book (1905/1912), reinforced by Newbolt (1921) and formalised by Cox as Attainment Targets in the first National Curriculum (1989). Therefore, adopting this structure is to follow the structure of the majority of the policy documents themselves. This is not to suggest that the categories do not overlap, and there are of course other ways of conceptualising the subject (for example, one model pairs speaking with writing as *producers* of language, while listening is paired with reading as *receivers* of language (Sampson, 1922; BoE, 1937; McCallum, 2012)); indeed, several of the documents draw attention to the close connection between oral work and writing. However, the three-fold model is well understood by those in the field; further, it has shaped my own position as a teacher, my own definition of English. To borrow the words of one of the Blue Books for my own purposes, I understand that '[s]peech, reading and writing... are interwoven in

children's growth in language; but, as a matter of convenience, each of these aspects is separately treated' (DES, 1959: 135).

Chapter 6 is structured slightly differently. I divide the period covered (1989 – 2014) into three sections according to the government of the time - Conservatives (1989-1997); New Labour and Labour (1997-2010); Coalition and the Conservatives (2010 -). In each case, I provide the brief socio-economic, political and educational context as appropriate for my hermeneutic method. However, unlike Chapter 5, it is impossible to provide background to the authors of each document (apart from Cox, 1989) as their names are unknown – which is itself an indication of one of my main findings: that education policy becomes more centralised and, arguably, opaque over the life of the Curriculum.

The contextual information is followed by an introduction to the Curricula specific to each phase and the stated role of English within them. I use pointers established by my findings in Chapter 5 to structure the analysis in Chapter 6, so that each component (speaking and listening, reading, writing) is presented in turn: their stories are told longitudinally, across the six Curricula. To enable clear comparison, the main themes identified are presented in a table (following the approach used by Kinsella and Bidinosti (2016)) summarising the content of each Curriculum.

4.3. A hermeneutic approach to understanding how creativity is conceived in English education policy by expert English teaching professionals.

In this section I introduce my co-readers of these policy texts, explaining how they were selected. I go on to provide my rationale for interviewing them, and the interview design and process.

4.3.1 Selecting and introducing the participants

When designing this aspect of my project, I knew it was important that potential participants were actively involved in secondary English education in England, or 'nested in their context' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 27); I was conscious that I, as an English teaching professional myself, was similarly 'nested'. In hermeneutic terms, I would share their 'situatedness' to some extent. This provided advantages: I would be able to 'approximat[e] the emotional stance of the people... stud[ied] (Adler and Adler, 19987 *in* Anderson, 2006: 380); I had a 'general cultural understanding' (Douglas, 1976 *in* Radnor, 2002: 49) and was familiar with

the community's codes and practices (Mertens, 2004; Silverman, 2013), so could forge the necessary 'understanding and confidence' (Kumar, 2011: 160) necessary for deep conversation. My membership of their community also increases the chances of my findings being accepted by them (Kumar, 2011). I was, however, aware that my insider position meant there could be a danger of 'saturation', given that I might be 'confronted with self-related issues at every turn' (Anderson, 2006: 385-386); I was aware that I would have to remain alert to views that 'may not correspond' (Silverman, 2013: 305) with my own.

In opting to talk with expert, experienced English professionals I followed the approach taken by authors of some of the policy documents I examine in Chapters 5 and 6 as they sought to ascertain 'the nature and purposes of English as a school subject' (Cox, 1989: 57). As they make explicit in their respective Reports (Newbolt, 1921; Bullock; 1975; Cox, 1989), they consulted widely in the field, each conferring with hundreds of relevant people including experienced English teachers, heads of department, headteachers, academics, examiners, *etc.*; the names and roles of those who contributed, listed in the Appendices of the Reports, indicate that they were leaders in their field.³⁹

Accordingly, after discussion with my original supervisor, I decided that it was within the scope of my research to gather 'oral evidence' (Newbolt, 1921: 3; Bullock, 1975: 561) from a similar range of expert English teaching professionals, albeit at a much smaller scale. Indeed, I wanted to reach those who might have been consulted had the (unknown) authors of the

³⁹ *Appendix 1 of The Teaching of English in England* (Newbolt, 1921: 361-367) lists dozens of sources who supplied written evidence, including government departments, universities, schools, and commercial and industrial firms. The committee also heard 'oral evidence' (1921: 3) from 102 witnesses, whose names and roles are recorded. These include Head Masters and Head Mistresses (*sic*), representatives of teacher training colleges, various university lecturers of Language, Literature and modern foreign languages. Their locations span the country, from Newcastle to Bristol, Crewe to Cambridge.

Bullock and his committee, in a bid to 'seek as wide a range of objective information as possible' (1975: 359) sent a questionnaire to over 2,000 schools and received an 87.5% response rate, which they suggest is 'the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken in this country of the teaching of various aspects of English in ... schools' (*ibid*). In *Appendix A: List of Witnesses and Sources of Evidence*, Bullock also cites almost 60 representatives of organisations, LEAs, Head Teacher associations, subject associations, *etc.* who provided 'oral evidence' (1975: 561), together with over 50 individuals (including professors, directors, consultants, tutor-in-charge). This is followed by a list of a further 226 contributors of written evidence, and a separate *Appendix B* (1975: 577-584) of visits made to schools, colleges, universities, *etc.*

Cox and his committee list in *Appendix 5: Sources of Evidence* (1989: 131-133) over 100 'organisations, associations, institutions [including schools and universities] and other bodies' (*ibid*) who contributed, followed by over 100 individuals. These include headteachers, heads of English, English teachers; published academics and lecturers; advisers on teaching, the curriculum and assessment; teacher educators; and those influential in subject bodies.

current Curriculum undergone a process of consultation as transparent as that of Newbolt, Bullock and Cox.

I therefore decided to invite 12 people to participate, a number that was both manageable yet provided findings sufficiently 'thick' to represent a dependable cross-section of the field (Mertens, 2004: 105). Getting the *right* participants was, of course, crucial. I used a variant of Kinsella's three-tier process to arrive at the sample. First, I consulted the Appendices of the Reports (see Footnote 37) to compile a list of the roles that typified those consulted by Newbolt (1921), Bullock (1975) and Cox (1989) and added to each category names of those with experience, influence or 'reputation' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 28) in the field, using sources such as subject association websites, the literature explored in Chapter 2 and my own professional networks⁴⁰. This provided 'a sense of the whole' (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016, n.p.). In the second, selective stage, I narrowed down the list of expert names in each category to provide diversity in terms of their years of experience, gender, current and previous role(s), location, type(s) of school, etc. Finally, I narrowed the list down to 12 people that gave as comprehensive a cross-section as possible, before approaching individuals to invite them to participate. In the end, two of those initially invited declined to take part, citing workload pressures, so I went back to the stage 2 list and approached two others with similar profiles. Of course, even though the project was neutrally couched in the invitation, it could be suggested that only those with a predisposed positive view of creativity would accept, but it is important to stress that I did not know anyone's explicit views on creativity at this stage.

As [Appendix 3](#) illustrates, the final list of expert participants includes those who have varied length of experience (some were teachers well before the introduction of the National Curriculum, some are recently qualified), from different constituencies within the field

⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the list included no black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) expert teaching practitioners, which – in the light of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement - I now see to be a fundamental flaw in my research and, perhaps, of an intrinsically 'backwards-looking' (see p. 74) hermeneutic method: the fact that Newbolt, Bullock and Cox did not include BAME experts in their respective work should not have precluded my actively seeking out of BAME experts, even though their absence from this research is an indication of the lack of representation of people of colour with 'reputation' (*ibid*) in the profession. Indeed, this very situation is an indication of the challenge faced by BAME professionals, and I recognise the urgent need to recruit more BAME English teachers, not least because expertise in teaching BAME students is likely to reside with BAME professionals (Gay, 2018; Isles, n.d.). A diverse teaching profession benefits all (Coults, 2020; Snapper, 2020). In explanation, I completed this part of my research in 2016-17, before the BLM movement gained momentum and I became aware of the lack of BAME participants. The time-lag necessitated by the part-time nature of my research within a fast-changing professional context exposed this shortcoming at a time when, regrettably, it was too late to make changes to this project. I look to address this oversight in my future research.

(including an influential chief examiner, academics, headteachers, leaders of school English departments), in different settings and regions, and a roughly equal number of males and females; almost all have a position of leadership or are otherwise influential. As far as I am aware, this project is the first time that such a range of voices has been collated so that their perspectives can be shared and compared.

4.3.2 Developing an approach: the decision to interview and the challenges inherent

Qualitative research insists upon a face-to-face heart-felt encounter between knowing subjects, a recognition that each of us is unique in our effort to make sense of ourselves and the world around us. (Luttrell, 2010:1)

Not only was decision to gather 'oral evidence' (*op cit*) appropriate in that this approach was used by the policy writers, but it was intended to make the research process meaningful for both me as the 'knowing' researcher and the 'knowing' participants in the balanced manner implied by Luttrell. While the famous speakers in *The Four Quartets* 'had the experience but missed the meaning' (Eliot, 1943, n.p.) and I was expecting 'shifting, sometimes contradictory' voices (Stronach 2010 *in* Gannon, 2012: 424), I trusted that through the encounters experienced in this inquiry meanings – truths – would emerge. Given that a hermeneutic approach 'views inquiry as conversation' (Kinsella, 2006: 6) and an interview is a conversation through which meaning is made between two people, it was logical to take literally Luttrell's exhortation for 'face-to-face' research and adopt interviewing as a method in this project, in preference to other methods of data collection.

Kvale and Brinkmann suggest that a hermeneutic interviewer is a 'traveler' (*sic*) (2009: 48-49) on a journey through 'unknown domains... The potentialities of meanings in the original stories are differentiated and unfolded through [the] interpretations... she brings back' (*ibid*). This echoes Gadamer's metaphor describing how limitations in our perspectives are overcome by visiting 'foreign language worlds' (*op cit*): there are riches to be thus gained. However, the 'traveler' image is more concerned with *taking* than *making*. I suggest that it does not fully reflect the purposeful creative choices made by an interviewer; an interview is a *thing made*.

It is worth noting that art and interviewing share a semantic field: as well as the process being a 'craft' (Myerhoff and Ruby, 1982: 23; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 81), an interview might result in a 'portrait' (Myerhoff and Ruby, 1982: 18); crucially, they are both associated

with 'culture' in its sociological *and* artistic sense: the decision to interview is therefore true to both the theme of creativity and a hermeneutic approach, as I now explain in more depth.

Talk, conversation, dialogue is the way in which humans naturally communicate with one another. Hence, 'Interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings' (Fontana and Frey, 1998: 47). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) separate the word *interview* into morphemes, Inter View, to stress the



way in which a dialogue *between* people enables them to see more clearly. Their use of the famous image in which one either sees two people looking into each other's faces or a vase, yet the vase cannot exist without the faces and vice versa – each is formed *through* the other (Fig. 1) – helps us visualise Gadamer's idea that in dialogue we are 'drawn into an event of truth' (1975/2004: 484) and so create something new and valuable that did not exist before. This all confirms that interviews are eminently suited for a hermeneutic methodology (Carr, 1995; Punch, 2005; Wilson, 2013).

Figure 1: Book jacket: *InterViews*

While this justifies my choice of interviewing from a hermeneutic perspective, I am aware of potential limitations. Interviews provide only what the participants *say*, not what they *do* (in their place of work), and I appreciate that there are ways other than interviewing of gathering data suitable for an inquiry on creativity, such as observation (Angosino and Mays de Perez, 2003) and action research. However, in this project, observation of the participants would have been impossible, given that half of the sample are no longer classroom-based teachers (although they remain active and influential in the wider field), and action research was unviable for the same reason. The decision to interview ensured that each participant could be treated in the same way.

I now turn to two factors that had an impact on the way I chose to structure the interviews.

- Firstly, Gadamer holds that the best way for the researcher to come to the right questions is to be immersed in the topic (1975/2004). Ideally the partner in the discussion is equally involved, since that common immersion maintains the flow of the conversation. However, despite their professional expertise, I was aware that it

would be unlikely that the participants would have as deep an awareness of the policy documents as I had. I needed to find a means of enabling them to be co-readers without requiring them to undertake onerous preparatory reading.

- Secondly, conscious that conversation is spontaneous (Gadamer, 1975/2004), triggered through our ‘living, moving, responsive and responsible engagements’ (Shotter, 2003: 464), I sought an approach that allowed for freedom of direction during the interviews but simultaneously provided opportunities for comparison in the analysis phase.

I go on to explain how I address both points in the next section.

4.3.3 The ‘art’ of interviewing: developing an approach

As I have explained, this project concerns English teaching professionals’ understanding of creativity: I want to know how their lived experience shapes their interpretation of English policy documents. The interviews therefore needed to be grounded in that policy. Thus, rather than opt for a standard semi-structured interview approach, I decided to offer participants a representative selection of extracts from the policy and related literature to act as prompts for discussion, these texts thereby becoming the craftsman’s tools (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012) that would shape our conversations. Such an approach chimes with the idea that interview design is an art that involves ‘intuition, creativity, improvisation, and breaking the rules’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 86). It also went some way to meeting the first problem identified above (that the participants would not be as deeply immersed in the topic as I was), since by offering the participants carefully-selected extracts, I was providing them with insights (albeit not immersion) into significant elements of the policy and related literature. This approach also supported the process of analysis, since a common set of prompts enabled me to compare different participants’ responses to a given extract. The decision to use the secondary texts, makes the process double hermeneutic, as they provide the situated context in which the policy documents are themselves ‘nested’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 27).

I went on to select the extracts through a means similar to the three-tier process already described (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016). I returned to the policy documents and other sources discussed in Chapter 2; I then drew up a shortlist, aware of the importance of including a representative range of historical and contemporary stances; I finally narrowed the list to eight extracts, presented in [Appendix 6](#). They are loosely grouped around four

themes related to my research aims (On the purpose of education, On creativity, On creative English, On the components of the English curriculum) with two extracts per theme. Each pair comprises one English education policy text and one secondary text. Together, the eight extracts represent publications across seven different decades; four extracts are taken from texts published prior to the first National Curriculum (Cox, 1989) and four subsequent to this. I aimed for each to be short enough to read and assimilated easily and quickly, yet sufficiently rich to provoke ideas – and this was confirmed through the piloting stage.

Wanting the conversations to be as natural as possible, to enable a ‘living, moving, responsive’ (Shotter, 2003: 464) dynamic, I structured the interviews so that they were, to some extent, participant-led. The chosen extracts were printed on separate coloured cards and scattered randomly on a desk. I invited the participants to respond to a selection of the extracts in any order, in any manner: they might agree or disagree; they might offer anecdote or opinion. The cards were printed on coloured card according to the four themes. I suggested that participants might choose one of each colour, so that the discussion could range across the four areas, but did not enforce this. This approach ensured participants some freedom over the process: they could direct the conversation within the boundaries provided.

The interviews were audio-recorded, which ensured that I could pay attention to each conversation as it unfolded, although I also took brief notes. I made a primary recording using the Voice Recorder app on my iPad and a back-up recording on my phone. I tried to position both recorders so that they were not in the participants’ eye line and so, as far as possible, did not distract from the conversation. I deleted the recordings once they were safely transferred to a password-protected computer, in accordance with ethical protocols (BERA, 2011; 2018).

4.3.4 From colloquies as conversation to colloquies as text

I now discuss how I met the challenges inherent in moving from interview to transcription to analysis, but first, a word on my choice of terminology. So far, I have used the conventional terms ‘interview’ and ‘participant’, adopting these labels because they are common in methodological literature and so are familiar to my readers. However, I am uncomfortable with this language. It carries connotations of a hierarchical relationship with the interviewer as the primary player (one might think of a suspect at a police interview or a politician being grilled on Radio 4) and I was mindful that Gadamer sees an interaction between texts as one

between equals (1977/1986). I therefore considered how to convey the ‘inherently more equal relationship’ (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995: 163) between me as interviewer and the participants, seeking terms that would convey the conversational nature of the encounters. I settled on ‘colloquy’, with the two participants (researcher and participant) accordingly being ‘colloquists’. Although admittedly relatively archaic, a colloquy is a ‘talking together; a conversation, dialogue. Also, a written dialogue’ (www.oed.com). Since the conversations were once ‘live’ but the written transcripts – ‘written dialogue’ - form the basis for hermeneutic study, the dual definition is entirely fitting and so I adopt these terms where appropriate from now on.

Given the importance of the colloquies, and the weight of representations they carry - especially for a hermeneutic researcher conscious of the range of interpretations that can be found in even a short utterance – I knew that my *approach* to transcription would be pivotal (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005: 1274). In the discussion on creating the written colloquies that follows, I show how I try to ‘honor (*sic*) both the research process and the participant’s voice’ (*ibid*: 1287) as a hermeneutist (Ochs, 1979).

Transcription is a selective process (Dowling and Brown, 2010; Hitchcock and Hughes: 1995): transcribed texts are at several removes from the ‘live’ interviews and I was conscious of the need to capture as ‘truthful’ an image as possible. Winterson beautifully expresses the problem:

Truth for anyone is a very complex thing. For a writer, what you leave out says as much as those things you include. What lies beyond the margin of the text? The photographer frames the shot; writers frame their world. (2011: 8)

Thus, while I had the words from the audio-recordings, I was alert to the idea that meaning in conversation is made by means other than verbal language alone: Gadamer discusses ‘the *language* of gesture, facial expression and movement’ (1975/2004: 551, my emphasis), otherwise termed ‘carnal hermeneutics’ (Kearney, 2011: 4) or – to use a less extreme term – embodied hermeneutics (Friedman, 2014; Carel, 2016)⁴¹. An audio-recording misses such information; it provides no visual record of how embodied communication might have influenced the conversation. (Might a colloquist’s interpretation of my (possibly inadvertent) reaction to their words have influenced their subsequent response?) My challenge was, then

⁴¹ Lady Macbeth was keenly aware of embodied communication when she warned her husband that ‘men/May read strange matters’ (Shakespeare: I v 53-54) in his face – she was aware of the possibility of others interpreting Macbeth’s guilt through his expression. Kearney discusses how embodied meaning can be borne from a ‘fragment’ (2011: 7).

– in Winterson’s words - to ‘frame’ the recorded words appropriately as text. Here I describe and justify decisions taken.

- Repeated listenings of the audio-recordings enabled me to re-familiarise myself with the data and so, although a ‘slog’ (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995: 265), it was a worthwhile one as it allowed me to get an ‘ear’ (*ibid*) for the general content and tone.
- I first drafted each colloquy using ‘naturalized’ (*sic*) transcription (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005: 1273) with all the pauses, hesitations, repetitions and discourse markers included (see [Appendix 7](#), Stage 1 for an example). Even here, interpretive choices were necessary throughout. For instance, occasionally a colloquist’s diction obscured the sense of the utterance; there were other occasions when they and I spoke at the same time. Many re-plays of the recording and re-drafts of such sections resulted in an interpretation that felt true to the audio.
- I then revised each colloquy to provide a ‘cleaner’ or ‘denaturalized’ (*sic*) (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005: 1274) version, with superfluous elements removed, making it smoother to read (see [Appendix 7](#), Stage 2). I attempted to harness both the ‘essential’ and the ‘intricacies’ (*ibid*: 1284) of the dialogue. Where it felt relevant, I retained some details from the naturalized version such as ‘[laughs]’ in a bid to record the mood and thereby retain a sense of meaning carried through embodied communication.
- Finally, I read the revised colloquies alongside a replay of the audio recording, to confirm that the written version was as close an interpretation of the verbal colloquy as possible (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005), and sent the written colloquies to the colloquists, inviting them to confirm each as an accurate record. I made corrections where requested (although these were only of minor points, such as typos; there were no substantive corrections necessary). The fact that the colloquists were by this stage (often several weeks afterwards) interpreting the conversation from a different situated perspective strengthens the transcripts’ validity.

I used the resultant ‘meaning-full’ (Bleicher, 1980: i) texts for analysis, conscious of the process they had undergone: the colloquists had constructed meaning in response to the prompts and the subsequent direction of our conversation; I further constructed meaning from that encounter through transcribing them; a third voice (Gadamer, 1975/2004: 468) was thereby created.

Re-reading the colloquies for analysis was yet another 'dialectical encounter' (Palmer, 1969: 209). I analysed the colloquies in the same way as the policy texts, using the three-tier holistic-selective-detailed analytical approach (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016). At the final stage, I was able to confirm or revise each 'fore-meaning' (Gadamer, 1975/2004: 270) through using the hermeneutic circle – checking and balancing by zooming in or out of other parts of the text - and until I was confident a fusion of horizons had been achieved, connections between 'hotspots' (Maclure, 2013: 661) justified, ensuring again that I had sufficient understanding.

4.3.5 Ethical considerations

The research was conducted with full adherence to BERA guidelines (2011; 2018) (see [Appendix 4](#)). The colloquists were provided with detailed information about the project and gave their informed consent ([Appendix 5](#)). This confirmed they were satisfied that appropriate measures regarding confidentiality and anonymity were provided, and all approved the biographical information presented in [Appendix 3](#). Interviews took place in each colloquist's choice of setting (usually their place of work) at a time convenient to them, and lasted between 30-60 minutes.

While I have discussed above some of the challenges inherent in my position as a researcher situated in the same field as the colloquists, I want to comment further, briefly, on my role from an ethical perspective. I am alert to my 'uniquely privileged' (Gardner, 2010: 91) position as interviewer – I am both a colloquist in the dialogue, and the person analysing. Because my words are present in the transcripts, I am 'part of the data' (Steier, 1991 *in* Radnor, 2002: 23), and so must remain particularly 'vigilant' (Deluca, 2000 *in* Kinsella, 2006: 7) of this dual role. This means being aware that the whole procedure is 'responsive to cultural biases and itself biases readings and inferences' (Ochs, 1979: 51) and that the data will include tensions. When considering historical situatedness, for instance, Kinsella (2006) notes that even when tradition has an acknowledged positive influence, researchers need to be explicitly aware of its influence on those interpreting it; and yet history is *not* always rosy and does not reveal what we might wish. It is therefore important that I maintained integrity in not ignoring or airbrushing data that does not 'fit'. I suggest, however, that a hermeneutic perspective is helpful here, because to ignore one portion of data means that the data remaining is not whole, which this then impedes the workings of the hermeneutic circle –

thus, 'rigour' (Kinsella, 2006: 5) is in some ways integral to careful hermeneutic practice. I comment on practical implications of this below.

4.3.6 Creative (re)presentation: from transcript to playscript

The findings from the colloquies are found in Chapter 7. Rather than present them in the same format as Chapters 5 and 6, I present them as a playscript, for reasons I now go on to explain.

First, it is appropriate that a thesis on the topic of creativity experiments with genre, in keeping with the notion that creativity involves risk-taking. Further, a playscript is associated with drama and, as I show in Chapter 5 (and 6), drama is particularly associated with creative English. To craft Chapter 7 as a script is therefore a *response* to these chapters. We use the idiom 'speaks to' to describe how one text might address another; in Chapter 7, the individual written colloquies are brought together to 'speak to' each other more literally.

I also suggest that creating a script is appropriate for a hermeneutic inquiry. As discussed in Chapter 3, hermeneutics is concerned with dialogue, the interpretation of language, with 'discourse at its centre' (Gardner, 2010: 39). Through using a script - a genre that presents human communication in written form - I am building on Gardner's work, which focuses on 'explor[ing] relationships between uses of the written word and the spoken word in representing or reconstructing the educational past' (www.educ.cam.ac.uk)⁴².

The format enabled me to bring the discourses developed in separate colloquies into a unified whole. My script shows the colloquists sitting together in one setting, at one time, engaged in a conversation; making that conversation appear 'truthful' demanded my imagination, a hermeneutic act that allows us to envision and consider various possibilities before coming to a judgement (Dilthey, n.d. in Sherratt, 2006; Oakeshott, 1959; Gadamer, 1975/2004; Kinsella, 2006).

Furthermore, as I blended voices together in a fiction that represents reality, reconfirmation of my thinking happened via the composition process (Jessop, 2019). The writing of Chapter 7 was not simply an exercise to show what I know, but a way of *coming to understand* what I know (Jessop and Penny, 1999); the very process contributed to the knowing, in a manner unlike the composition of the other chapters. It was creative and messy, but the

⁴² Gardner's work focuses especially on education in the first half of the twentieth century (Cunningham and Gardner, 2004). I am capturing the more recent educational past.

hermeneutic circle allows me to have confidence in what resulted; sharing a draft with the colloquists was then another means of validating the findings.

The script format allowed me to present myself as researcher – I have cast myself, imagining myself as part of the conversation; I introduce, interpret and synthesise ideas. I was careful to present myself as honestly as possible (warts and all), in keeping with the ethical requirement for rigour outlined above. However, I know that, simultaneously, my *unspoken* voice is present in the way I have chosen to curate the colloquies. What I chose to include or exclude is revealing of my subjectivities, despite having worked hard to use the hermeneutic tools described above to provide an accurate representation of views expressed: this very understanding is consistent with a hermeneutic positioning.

Finally, the script format allowed me to bring the audio recordings to life (to represent, re-present them) through stage directions that indicate intonation, pace, pauses, *etc.* The script thus includes a sense of the embodied communication that is impossible to capture in a written colloquy, thereby offering arguably as ‘truer’ representation.

I planned my writing according to the same three-stage approach to hermeneutic analysis as used when analysing the policy documents (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016). The process of developing the chapter is thereby consistent with the preceding chapters. At the third stage, I grouped together quotations from the colloquies on similar themes, using the hermeneutic circle to assess their significance. I then used these quotations as the basis of the script, retaining the colloquists’ words verbatim as far as possible, but editing them for coherence and adding incidental text to knit them together. While I have not used every quotation on a particular theme, the proportion of voices represents the overall picture – so, two or more voices chiming together is an effective means of demonstrating consensus, while the variety and range of differing views are illustrated by the number of voices expressing these (see [Appendix 8](#) for an example of work-in-progress).

Here again, having the colloquists comment on the draft was a means not only for them to re-engage and offer further ideas, but of confirming the script as an appropriate curation of their views. I was reassured that seven of the eight who responded both enjoyed the script and confirmed that I expressed their contributions accurately. Comments such as, ‘[Y]ou perfectly summed up my ideas’ (Ruth), ‘It’s a lovely thought experiment... I’m entirely happy with my contributions to it’ (Leon), ‘It raised my spirits to be reminded of your work’ (Gary) are typical. The only colloquist who suggested amendments was Doug, who requested that I

nuance some details because he felt 'typecast' as the sole independent school representative. I accordingly made the changes he requested (see [Appendix 9](#)).

4.4. Re-pitching the tent and playing with the play

The process as described so far resulted in two sets of texts inspired by my research aims – the policy documents which I present in Chapters 5 and 6, and the colloquists' script presented in Chapter 7. It was at this stage, as I developed my analysis to make connections between the two sets of texts, that I realised that together they pointed towards a further question I had not hitherto anticipated: if creativity as it exists in one discourse (English education policy) is *challenged* in another (by expert English teaching professionals), where does the power lie? Where is the agency?

In this section, I present two analogies to illustrate how my findings then led me beyond my original research aims, causing me to extend the ambition of my study: it was now a matter of not only understanding how the policy is interpreted by the expert English teaching professionals, but their reactions to it; how they see themselves as 'enactors' (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012: 72) - or counter-enactors - of policy whilst being simultaneously 'enmeshed' (*ibid*) in a hierarchical and accountable system consisting of a complex relationship of people, processes, practices and policies (Smit, 2005). I discuss first how, as a nomadic hermeneutic researcher, I was able to re-pitch my tent in my quest for fresh horizons, then how I creatively combined the two sets of texts to come to fresh understandings.

4.4.1 A nomadic journey to new horizons

As my descriptions of the interviewing and script-writing processes that led to the development of Chapter 7 have already shown, a researcher's practical approach to the inquiry can be creative in design: we can 'craft' (Mills, 1959 *in* Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 85) an inquiry, 'think differently' (St Pierre, 1997: 407).

Gadamer (1975/2004) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) cast researchers as travellers; St Pierre extends the metaphor by describing her own inquiry process as 'nomadic' (1997: 408), suggesting that researcher nomads

... search for mobile arrangements of space where thought can settle for a time and then multiply and recombine, always displacing the sedentary and unified... The field grows; it erupts in some strange, new place. (ibid: 412)

Such freedom of movement is liberating: it enables the researcher to travel *with* her topic rather than to a pre-meditated (or pre-mapped) destination, to arrive at an ‘open realm’ (Gadamer, 1977/1986: 68) that reveals new understandings. That is not to say that a nomadic approach is entirely unstructured – there is a life-sustaining purpose behind each movement of my tent, each change of scene. The movement is like that of a conversation, responsive to in-the-moment understandings.

This journey may expose the nomadic researcher (I am forced to consider areas I had not prepared for); arriving will have changed her (the inquiry will be shaped differently to that initially envisaged). The ‘new place’ will not necessarily be a safe space, because it might be subject to even more questions. Yet to mix the metaphor, I should know when I have arrived when I have created something original and worthwhile. As with carving a sculpture, the decision when to stop is with the artist (or researcher) (Dowling and Brown, 2010). Whether the work of art created ‘was there in the stone all the time’ (*ibid*: 154) or something entirely new, it is acknowledged to be of value if it can be appreciated by others.

I now go on to describe the process through which this creative journey took place, this time using an image more immediately connected to my inquiry: the classroom study of a Shakespeare play.

4.4.2 “Play on”⁴³

I advise my student teachers to ‘play with the plays’ of Shakespeare by getting learners to enact them in the classroom, bring them off the page, experiment with the ambiguities and various interpretations of the text by trying out different versions. I remind them that Shakespeare wrote scripts to be *performed*, not merely read. The student teachers are sometimes reticent to do so (especially the graduates of English Literature) since they see themselves as expert readers of the text rather than performers and directors. However, when reflecting on their practice, the student teachers generally go on to report that this active approach brings new, deeper understanding of the text as teacher and learners work out, together, how they believe a speech or scene could be interpreted.

⁴³ Shakespeare (1602) *Twelfth Night* Act 1, sc 1

I am doing something similar in this thesis: I have asked those who have spent their professional lives *studying* and *enacting* the policies to reflect on them. In both cases, we have a text (a play script, a policy) that is of interest in itself to a scholar or researcher, but written to be performed – the text is of surely greater interest when we consider how it is interpreted by those responsible for giving it breath. Indeed, Ball, Maguire and Braun present the teacher as the ‘actor and object and subject’ (2012: 72) of policy. She is the subject, because policy is about her; the object, because the policy is directed to her; and the actor, because it is her role to bring it to life.

Therefore, exploring first the policy texts and then hearing the colloquists’ thoughts on elements of those texts is a bit like studying a play, then asking the cast to review their performance. These colloquist-actors highlight salient aspects of policy, offer recommendations for revision, make judgements. I have not seen them ‘performing’ the policies on their respective classroom stages, but I am interested in what they learned from so doing: they explain what they like and dislike about their ‘script’ (the policy they are required to follow); share their opinions on the playwright and the director (the policy writers; their boss) and their fellow performers (their colleagues and their learners); comment on whether they adhered closely to the text or whether they ad-libbed or re-wrote parts - if they could get away with it – and why. Indeed, one perhaps surprising aspect of Chapter 7 (given the number of commentators who view prescriptive policy as limiting and constraining (Anning, 1996; Anderson, 2013; NUT, 2014; Bomford, 2018)) is the extent to which the colloquists describe going off script, extemporising, and their confident justifications for so doing. Teachers may be ‘silent voices’ as ‘objects’ (Smit, 2005: 292) of the policy, but here I give them a platform to respond.

This analogy demands some suspension of disbelief. The colloquists have not had experience of teaching each of the policy documents. However, their collective experience is broad and overlapping (see [Appendix 3](#)). Gill, Leon and Jack entered the profession in the 1970s, before the advent of the National Curriculum: they have little recent classroom experience, but are engaged with the policies through their current roles. Others, younger, have fewer years to draw upon, but are active in classrooms today. Some will be familiar with the older policy documents in the way that a Shakespeare scholar might be familiar with his sources – Boccaccio, Plutarch, Holinshed – and so can reflect on the curriculum ‘story’ being told.

Of course, the analogy only takes us so far, but does demonstrate the value of lived experience or, as Gardner eloquently expresses it, of moving 'from silence to sound. It takes us from the hush of the archive to the bustle of here and now' (2010: 90). Gardner is describing the movement from 'history to memory' (*ibid*) in the study of History teaching in the twentieth century, but the image can be easily transferred and applied to the written 'history' of the English policy documents and the colloquists' professional reflections or 'memories'.

I move through this project 'from silence to sound'. I have read and interpreted the policies presented in Chapters 5 and 6, and listened to the views of those tasked with working with and enacting the policies in Chapter 7. That the colloquists, as co-readers of the policies, come with their *own* histories, values, subjectivities and emotions (Smit, 2005) provides me with the opportunity to widen my hermeneutic circle, and I use this enriched understanding in Chapter 8 when considering the dynamics of policy and practice. In contemplating how policy frames practice, I envision the twin discourses as dimensions: the two-dimensional hermeneutic circles I created to understand first the policy documents and then the colloquies are here slotted together like a child's model kit to form a three-dimensional hermeneutic sphere that enables me (to misquote EM Forster) to see the relationship between them as rounded rather than flat. I can turn the sphere to see how creativity as it exists in one dimension – the policy documents – is challenged in another – the classroom.

Methodologically, I ensured that my research is unified by employing the same three-tier approach used when analysing the policy texts and colloquies separately (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016) as previously described, with the understanding that each stage has an impact on the 'truth' of the whole.

I now turn to sharing my findings.

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Chapter 5: Rooted in creativity: the development of subject English

5.0. Introduction and overview

The purpose of this chapter - which focuses on English education policy from 1905-1988 - and the succeeding chapter (which focuses on the six versions of the National Curriculum for English (1989 – 2014)) is to explore the presence and role of creativity in the policy documents, consider how it is valued, and draw attention to where it is missing.

In Chapter 2, I surveyed some of the many ways in which the term 'creativity' is defined and recognised that the term 'creativities' (McCallum, 2012: 20) is perhaps more useful.

However, one immediate challenge for the present chapter in determining its presence or absence in the policy documents is to consider how creativity is presented before the term is even coined and prior to it being 'enregistered' (Agha, 2003). The adjective 'creative' is first applied to English pedagogy in a written text in 1919 (Sharwood Smith, 1919: 29) in the proceedings of the English Association conference of 1918; it may thus be that the term was already in common parlance (at least among the delegates). Forty years later, by the late 1960s, there is wide-spread use of the noun 'creativity' in English circles, as evidenced by publications from the Dartmouth Conference (*e.g.* Dixon, 1967; Summerfield, 1968), but it is not until a few years later that 'creativity' first appears in a secondary English policy document (Bullock, 1975: 6). I go on to show in Chapter 6 how the use of the term gains momentum through the National Curriculum, so that by 2007 'creativity' is one of the so-called 'four Cs' around which the English NC orders are centred (DCSF/QCA, 2007), before it then disappears altogether (DfE, 2014).

This presents a situation in which the term 'creativity' is absent from both the first (BoE, 1905/1912) and last (DfE, 2014) documents in my inquiry, but for different reasons. It is absent from the first Blue Book because it had not been coined, while its prominence in the late twentieth century and its status in the 2007 Curriculum suggest its absence from the 2014 version is deliberate. As a hermeneutist I recognise that history is iterative, but that sedimented layers of history do not cumulate *evenly* or *logically*: changing language usage is dependent on multiple factors. I want to understand the twists and turns in this story.

Accordingly, this chapter sets out to ask:

- a. What is the relationship between English and creativity as constructed by the policy documents (1905-1988)?
- b. Which notions of creativity are presented and why?
- c. What role is creativity seen to play in learning?

I demonstrate that the relationship between creativity and the English of these policy documents is remarkably consistent over the eight decades survey (1905-1988). A consensus emerges that creativity is predominantly concerned with personal growth (and the associated forging of human connections); such creativity is nurtured by being exposed to high culture and practised through everyday culture.

5.1. The legacy of Matthew Arnold

However, before turning to the policy documents, I want to go back even further briefly to discuss the legacy of Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), the critically-recognised poet and respected inspector of government schools. While Arnold's work does not represent a policy text for the purposes of this inquiry, it is crucial context for the policy texts that follow. In his belief that literature of 'exceptional quality' is a 'counterforce' (McCallum, 2012: 11) to stultifying industrialisation lies the seeds of creative practice in school English.

Arnold grew up in a household steeped in education and literature. His father was the Headmaster of Rugby School, with a mission to help the pupils become socially useful. The family were friends of Wordsworth (1770–1850), the Romantic poet whose verse highlighted the importance of the working class and who described the 'still, sad music of humanity' (1793). The twin influences on the young Arnold in terms of art and sensibility from a socially-aware father and the future poet laureate would have been profound⁴⁴.

Arnold won prizes for his poetry as a boy; he continued writing during his undergraduate days studying Classics at Oxford. However, his output gradually decreased as his career as an elementary school inspector (taken to supplement his income on his marriage in 1851) took more energy. Having seen first-hand the impact of the payment-by-results Revised Code in 1862, which changed his inspector's role from that of 'guide' to 'examiner in the 3Rs' (Dover Wilson, 1932: xiv), he spent much of the rest of his life lobbying for all children in England (particularly the working class) to be culturally educated.

⁴⁴ Arnold quotes Wordsworth generously in his essay *The Study of Poetry* (1880).

It is perhaps significant that Arnold was working roughly in parallel with Dilthey⁴⁵. Dilthey and Arnold both reacted against the positivist approach to reading that was expounded in the late nineteenth century (Nicholls, 2011). Arnold travelled abroad with a view to advising the British on secondary education in 1859 and 1865⁴⁶. It is not clear whether he and Dilthey met - or even knew of each other's publications - but it is fascinating to speculate on the conversation they might have had, given their mutual interest in the power of literature. Both demonstrate the importance of the power of the imagination through their work: Arnold describes how 'the happy moments of humanity... are the flowering times' (1869: 69).

It is in his series of essays *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), the product of a series of lectures he gave when elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford⁴⁷, that Arnold most clearly advocates an English education that promulgates a love of culture as the means of preventing discord (Logan, 2012). Arnold asserts himself to be a 'believer' in culture and sets out to demonstrate 'what good it can do' (1869: 4). He dismisses a traditional Classical education as a mere 'badge' (*ibid*) of culture, suggesting instead that culture is not something held by individuals but by a responsible society: culture should be 'a study of perfection' (1869: 47) inspired by the moral and social desire of doing good for all. For Arnold, culture should be 'of service' (*ibid*); it is concerned with *becoming* rather than *having*; it is about our collective striving for - and responsibility for sharing - beauty and human perfection. Thus,

[i]t is in making endless additions to itself, in the endless expansions of its powers, in endless growth in wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of the human race finds its ideal. To reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture. (ibid)

Arnold's conception of 'culture' is the creative output of poets and writers. Learning to appreciate their creativity, Arnold suggests, enables children to access the 'wisdom and beauty' of English poetry and wider literature and so learn to *question* things; once inspired, they will continue to seek ever more 'wisdom and beauty' and continue after intellectual pursuits - including challenging the status quo. The implication is that pursuing 'culture' together in this way would enable the industrial poor – victims of the factories that fed

⁴⁵ Dilthey is the German hermeneutist who influenced Gadamer, as discussed in Chapter 3.

⁴⁶ He published several works as a result of his tours, including *Popular Education on the Continent* (Arnold, 1861), which presents education in English schools as meagre in comparison to European models.

⁴⁷ Arnold here broke the mould by lecturing in English rather than Latin.

Britain's industrial dominance - to escape the 'anarchy' of lives in which they had 'lost [them]selves' (1896: 208) - and, perhaps, the wider political 'anarchy' that was sweeping through mainland Europe in the nineteenth century. He equates beauty with harmony, arguing that if culture, 'the true nurse of the pursuing love' (1869: 108) were seen as important as economic success, people exposed to art and beauty would become alive to opportunities: everyone would be encouraged to nourish their best selves and realise the need to put common good above personal gain. Thus, appreciating culture is not an end in itself, but a means of 'growing and becoming' (1869: 94), as individuals *and* a society.

Arnold's view of the transformative nature of culture is idealistic and perhaps uncomfortable to modern sensibilities. At first glance, as I have previously argued (Smith, 2019: 261), he seems to have 'a paternalistic view of the poor and an elitist view of culture. However, Arnold makes clear that education should not be 'Intellectual food prepared in a way that [politicians and religious influencers] think proper for the actual condition of [what they call] the masses,' as that is 'indoctrination' (1869: 69/70)'; and unlike his fellow poets Coleridge (1817) and Eliot (1923), he does not see either the creation or appreciation of culture as the preserve of the few. Instead,

culture works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgements and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely, nourished and not bound by them. (ibid, my emphasis)

To draw again on my previous argument (*op cit*): 'this quotation makes clear his egalitarian, humanist stance, his belief in the common good. He argues that such an education is the means of changing (to appropriate the words of one of his most famous poems) the 'darkling plain' of the present into 'a land of dreams' with 'joy... love... light... certitude... peace [and]... help for pain' (1851). In an inspector's report written over a decade after *Culture and Anarchy*, he cites Comenius to reiterate the point that learning is everyone's birth right: 'The aim [of education] is to train generally all who are born men to all which is human' (1880, n.p. in Newbolt, 1921: 48).'

Such is Arnold's influence that his metaphors of growth and nourishment are echoed in the literature on creative English pedagogy throughout the twentieth century and beyond

(McCallum, 2012; Stevens 2011; Holbrook 1968; Summerfield, 1968). He is referred to explicitly by Newbolt⁴⁸ and, later, Plowden (1967: 216) and Bullock (1975: 135).

5.2. Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary schools - the first Blue Book (BoE, 1905/1912)

5.2.1 Context: The establishment of subject English

Around the turn of the twentieth century – in no small measure due to Arnold’s work - the new subject of English had become established to the extent that it was recognised by further education institutions: Oxford opened a School of English in 1893; Cambridge followed suit in 1917 (Shayer, 1972; Medway *et al*, 2014). Both offered courses that focused on English literature. A parallel developing interest in English language is reflected in *Pygmalion* (Bernard Shaw, 1913). The famous story of a young, uneducated flower seller, taught to adopt Received Pronunciation and thereby become a ‘fair lady’, is more than a rags-to-riches fairy tale: Shaw explores themes including education, art and humanity. The play is a critique of the attitudes and values of Edwardian society - ironically, a society which needed to be sufficiently educated to recognise the classical allusion in the title and thereby judge itself.

As explained in Chapter 4, the implementation of the 1902 Education Act led to a flurry of education-focused activity in all sectors as generalist teachers in the newly-enlarged public elementary schools developed their curriculum offer. These were teachers who held a teaching certificate from a College of Education. Meanwhile, their colleagues in grammar and independent schools were university graduates, permitted to teach their degree subject with no formal teaching qualification. They taught, typically, a watered-down version of their degree course. Thus, English provision differed according to the type of school (Medway *et al*, 2014)⁴⁹ yet, overall, was ‘in a somewhat sorry plight’ (Shayer, 1972: 2).

⁴⁸ Newbolt cites Arnold 18 times, often quoting him directly and approvingly. Other Victorians we now associate with creative thinking are also cited (Ruskin, 6 times; Carlyle, 5 times; Morris, twice), but these references are simply to provide examples of ‘good’ writing than explore their ideas.

⁴⁹ However, it is clear that English Honours graduate teachers were also teaching in elementary schools by the 1920s: the Blue Book of 1924 comments that the supply of such teachers meant that English could be taken as an Advanced subject.

Perhaps in recognition of this ‘plight’, two important events occurred within a few years of the 1902 Act. The first Blue Book⁵⁰ was published in 1905 – the first policy document on teaching in the maintained elementary schools - with a chapter on English. Then, whether by coincidence or not, the following year saw the establishment of the English Association (EA) (1906) by a group of teachers and academics. Intended to serve teachers in grammar and independent schools - perhaps as a response to a perceived need for the professional and pedagogical guidance that the Blue Book provided their elementary school colleagues - it sought principally to offer practical, subject-related advice (www2.le.ac.uk/offices/english-association). The EA was clearly both popular and active, running regular conferences, and was relatively prolific, publishing around 50 pamphlets between 1907 - 1921 on topics pertinent to English teachers (English Association, 1907-21).

The EA pamphlets are not policy documents and thus not part of this inquiry, but they provide important context. Their authors are known (see 5.3.1 below), while the entire Blue Book series is anonymous. However, the Blue Books cite examples of classroom practice, suggesting that the authors were experienced either as teachers or BoE inspectors; the tone and content of the Blue Books and pamphlets is very similar⁵¹. It is perfectly possible that they were written by the same individuals, or at least that they were in conversation with each other. This suggests that discussions about what represented good practice in English took place across the various settings: there was enthusiasm and energy to grow the nascent subject. On the other hand, the Blue Book writers are unlikely to be the same BoE inspectors as those who signed off ‘stagnant’ English departments without complaint (Medway *et al*, 2014: 3) in the early decades of the century, indicating that not everyone involved in English education saw the subject in the same way.

5.2.2 Creativity for personal growth

The opening of the first Blue Book suggests that the intended readership was catholic: lecturers in colleges, experienced teachers, new teachers, inspectors, all working together,

⁵⁰ As noted in Chapter 4, the Blue Book series is formally *entitled Suggestions for the consideration of teachers and others concerned in the work of public elementary schools*. ‘Blue Book’ is adopted here for reasons of economy.

⁵¹ For example, the Blue Book recommends a child has ‘liberty of expression’ (1905/1912: 22) to ask questions of the teacher as well as respond to a teacher’s verbal questions; a few years later, Miss Gill advocates the same – ‘What the children want to know is of much importance’ (EA, 1909: 2, emphasis original).

across all subjects, with the stated aim of furnishing guidance to the profession and 'to encourage careful reflection' (BoE, 1905/1912: 3). It is stressed that teachers should respond thoughtfully to the challenges of the classroom. Yet the tone is tentative. A message that appears in the *Prefatory Memorandum* (and is reinforced in each subsequent edition - often in the same words) is that the book – as the title makes plain - contains *suggestions* only: teachers, as professionals, are free to practice in any way that they see fit. Teachers are recognised as creative practitioners, mindful of their responsibilities.

Throughout, a child-centred view is advocated. The general Introduction makes clear that education should be relevant to the child: 'enforced recollection of words and phrases which convey no meaning should be avoided' (BoE, 1905/1912: 6). Instead, interest, understanding and 'formation of character' (*ibid*) are promoted; there is a need to appeal to child's imagination through passages of 'best literature' (*ibid*), history and music; class discussion is encouraged as a way to share viewpoints; while testing – or 'put[ting] a pecuniary value on the success of a child in giving correct answers' - is a surefire way to 'to spoil teaching, to weaken or destroy the interest of the pupil, and to misdirect the whole purpose of school life' (1905/1912: 10). Rather, a teacher's role is to promote 'active curiosity'; they 'must know the children and sympathise with them... and adjust his (*sic*) mind to theirs'; teaching should take account of the past experience of the child; each lesson must be 'a renewal and an increase of that connected store of experience which becomes knowledge' (1905/1912: 11).

Chapter 4 is entitled *The teaching of English*. It follows immediately on from generalist chapters on the curriculum (Chapter 2) and methods (Chapter 3). That it precedes all other curriculum subjects underlines the stated point that English is the most important. This chapter was not revised until the third edition of the Blue Books appeared in 1923; the 1905 version therefore represents the only official guidance to English teachers until the publication of Newbolt (1921).

It begins by emphasising the centrality of language: without good English teaching to develop an understanding of language – 'the most perfect and accurate instrument mankind has for the expression of thoughts and ideas' – the child is but a 'slave... with a mind in which his passions and prejudices masquerade as thoughts' (BoE, 1905/1912: 21). This analogy, emphasising how a child is disenfranchised without language (both to receive and convey), suggests the extent of Arnold's influence, the humane tenor of the document and the theme of personal growth.

The chapter goes on to discuss how 'practice in speaking English', whether 'incidental' or 'systematic' (BoE, 1905/1912: 22) – implicit or explicit – is not only the most important aspect of English, but the foundation of education. Good teaching provides 'not only [...] accurate *expression* for thought, but also [enrichment of] the child's vocabulary by giving him larger powers of expression and therewith a wider range of available thought' (1905/1912: 21, emphasis original). Children should be granted the 'liberty of free expression,' as to fetter individual response is 'disastrous' (*ibid*). Use of dialect is 'not... necessarily bad' (1905/1912: 23) – there is explicit advice that, while children should be encouraged to pronounce words clearly (aided through the use of tongue-twisters and singing lessons), local variation in both pronunciation and terminology is natural and appropriate.

The use of rhymes, games and stories is also recommended to develop confidence in oracy, as well as the learning of some poetry by heart, according to the child's preference, so that (in words strikingly similar to Arnold's) their 'memory is enriched with a store of beautiful thoughts expressed in beautiful language' (BoE, 1905/1912: 24) which will both enhance their expression and be a source of pleasure.

The chapter argues that confidence in oracy leads to confidence in reading. Teachers should encourage reading for pleasure, instilling a love of literature in a new generation and broadening children's perspectives. There is no list of recommended authors, but reading material should be drawn from 'the national literature' (BoE, 1905/1912: 21), implying that, in terms of providing access to high culture, the canon of English literature is sufficient. Exposing children to the beauty inherent will nourish their lives: the metaphor is of literature as a 'rich source' of sustenance that will lead to a life of 'wide sympathies, of noble ideals and of courageous endeavour' (*ibid*). There is an explicit warning that creating a 'distaste' (*ibid*) in a child for literature will deny them this source; implicit is the suggestion that such a child who does not read will lack sympathy, nobility and courage – perhaps, so soon after the end of the bruising second Boer War (1899-1902), these heroic ideals were particularly valued.

There is criticism of a previous (undated) Code which had recommended the reading of only two or three books a year; instead, an 'unlimited supply' (BoE, 1905/1912: 28) as possible is recommended. The importance of furnishing schools with book corners and ample libraries so that children can choose their own reading matter from a range of good-quality literary

material (fiction and non-fiction) is stressed, and the new National Home Reading Union, which involved parents in encouraging reading, is promoted.

The chapter concludes that writing should be introduced only when oral expression is well-established: 'Good written English is only more careful spoken English' (BoE, 1905/1912: 26). It advocates that exercises in composition should develop in parallel with the individual child's abilities and interests, implying a link between creative practice and independent critical thought. Initial lessons see the teacher writing on the blackboard 'at the children's dictation' (1905/1912: 26), so it is their *own* words that are used as models for sentence construction. In contrast, traditional Latinate grammar lessons are presented as 'valueless' as they 'tend to obscure rather than reveal thought' (1905/1912: 30).

This very first policy document, then, establishes a child-centred approach to learning to foster personal growth, stimulated by generous exposure to literature. Children are seen as individuals, encouraged to express their own views in their own voice and follow their own interests. A teacher's role is to be responsive to their needs and provide guidance.

5.3. The Teaching of English in England: The Newbolt Report (1921)

5.3.1 Context: Post-war reconstruction

When the Newbolt Report was commissioned, Britain was emerging financially broken from the First World War, with debts of 136% of its Gross National Product (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk); but it was the human cost of the conflict - two million British soldiers were killed and 1.5 million wounded (Herbert, 2018) – that weighed more heavily on the public consciousness. Unemployment was high and public spending was slashed, but a more democratic society began to emerge: women over 30 were given the vote, the strict class hierarchy was dissolving (the power of the upper class declined markedly), and the working class began to be employed in white collar jobs (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk).

The following extract from the Chairman's Address to the EA conference of 1918 perhaps reflects a tentative optimism. What is striking is his insistence that English teaching is the vehicle through which a humane society might be achieved:

The moral of the war was, not that they should develop trade, but that they should develop humanity. A chief burden in maintaining and keeping uppermost the spiritual element in man must rest... more upon the teaching of English and English literature than upon any other subject. (English Association, 1919: 3)

Throughout the conference, English is positioned as ‘a subject including the whole of English culture – in a word... Humanism’ (Dover Wilson, 1919: 30). Another delegate argues that an essential element to enable the growth of ‘the true self of the child’ is ‘The encouragement of a creative spirit. Children could and should write for themselves’ (Sharwood Smith, 1919: 29-30). As I have shown (Smith, 2020a: 311), ‘this is the first reference to the term ‘creative’ being used in a recognisably modern sense in the literature relating to English teaching: it suggests that creative work is more than a means to develop a child’s appreciation of literature – it is recognised as contributing towards personal growth and, hence, human understanding.’

It is very likely that Sir Henry John Newbolt (1862-1938), an active member of the EA, was present at the 1918 conference⁵². Newbolt was middle class, the son of a country vicar; he had been a day boy at the newly-established, progressive Clifton College in Bristol, before gaining a scholarship to read Classics at Oxford. He was a lawyer, novelist and historian, but is most remembered today – like Arnold before him - as a poet. It was perhaps the fame of Newbolt’s patriotic poems *Vitai Lampada* (1892) and *Drake’s Drum* (1910), together with his role in the War Propaganda Bureau, that reassured the president of the Board of Education - who commissioned *The Teaching of English in England* - that Newbolt was the man for the job.

Newbolt’s position in the EA makes it unsurprising that his committee of six women and eight men included EA members or those otherwise involved in debates about English, both academic and pedagogic. Among their number were Boas, a founder member of the EA and author of an EA pamphlet on Wordsworth (1914); Fowler, author of EA pamphlets such as *The Teaching of English Composition* (1910) and *School Libraries* (1915); and the Shakespeare expert Dover Wilson, author of EA pamphlet *Poetry and the Child* (1916). Dover Wilson was also an HM Inspector for the Board of Education, as was Miss KM Baines: both would surely have known of the Blue Books, and possibly contributed to them⁵³. Included too were Newbolt’s former schoolmate from Clifton College, Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, novelist, critic and editor of the popular *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1900* (1912); and George Sampson, already widely published (e.g. *Cambridge Readings in Literature* (1918)), who went on to write further works in the Cambridge Literary series (1924, 1926, 1941) as well as *English for the English* (1922), the first full-length book on English teaching.

⁵² Newbolt becoming the EA President in 1928.

⁵³ It is perhaps significant that Dover Wilson must also have been interested in Arnold’s work - he went on to edit the 1932 reprint of *Culture and Anarchy*.

In other words, 'Newbolt gathered around him the expert and erudite, men and women who were familiar with the work of elementary *and* grammar and independent schools; and who were presumably respected both by English teaching professionals of the day and, through their works, the wider public' (Smith, 2019: 259). The committee consulted widely, calling over 100 witnesses, including representatives of 13 bodies. Its Report draws explicitly on both EA and BoE publications, synthesising views on English teaching.

5.3.2 Creativity the cornerstone

The child-centred, humanist mood of the EA conference set the tone for *The Teaching of English in England* (1921). In the Introduction, Newbolt echoes the EA Chairman (*op cit*) in stating that the most important result of education is not knowledge but 'experiences of human beings which are gained by contact with human beings' (Newbolt, 1921: 8): he saw that the way to prevent further calamitous warfare is through enriched human understanding (Smith, 2020a).

Newbolt's remit was to consider 'the requirements of a liberal⁵⁴ education, the needs of business, the professions, and public services, and the relation of English to other studies' (Newbolt, 1921: 4), in response to English education having been deemed 'unsatisfactory' (*ibid*). Even before World War I - and despite the presence of the Blue Books and the EA - concern about English teaching had been expressed. A Board of Education report stated boys have 'little skill or facility' (n.d. *in* Fowler, 1910: 1) to express themselves either orally or in writing, and a letter to *The Times* complained 'The English boy cannot write English' (*ibid*). Newbolt himself reports that some children were leaving school functionally illiterate, having had 'imposed upon them a type of education which takes for granted a certain degree of culture' (1921: 114). This suggests that the ideal had Arnold promoted was not easily translated into practice. Part of the problem, Newbolt suggests, is that English, as a new subject, has no 'definiteness of aim' (1921: 105) and people were sceptic of its value. There was suspicion and distrust of adventurous (creative) methods, and he acknowledges that the subject had yet to become established. It appears that reach and influence of the Blue Books (and EA pamphlets) was not what their authors might have hoped.

Newbolt is emphatic that the poor state of English is not the teachers' fault. Rather, he suggests it stems from the 'failure' of the whole education system 'due to a

⁵⁴ Is this a nod to Lloyd George's Liberal government which had commissioned the Report? It is interesting that *Culture and Anarchy* (Arnold, 1869) was published under Gladstone's Liberal government.

misunderstanding of the educational values to be found in the different regions of mental activity, and especially to an underestimate of the importance of the English language and literature' (1921: 4). Using an architectural metaphor reminiscent of the Bible that would have undoubtedly resonated with the original audience⁵⁵, English is described as the keystone rejected by the builders because 'the arch is too faulty to admit it' (1921: 5). The committee saw its task was to rebuild the arch of the educational system with the keystone of English in its central place and, as a result (and maximising the impact of the image) 'bridge social chasms which divide us' (1921:6), bringing 'national unity' (1921:14). This closely mirrors Arnold's philosophy – the Report even quotes Arnold directly, 'Culture unites classes' (1869 *in* Newbolt, 1921:6), to underline their liberal, humanist viewpoint.

Accordingly, Newbolt oversteps his brief and discusses school education in general as well as the place of English within it. He defines education as the development of the human spirit: 'The first thought of education must be fulness of life, not professional success' (1921:61). Yet, for Newbolt, the terms 'English' and 'education' are tantamount to being synonymous. The point is oft re-stated: English is 'the true starting point and foundation from which all the rest must spring' (1921: 14); it is both 'the very stuff and process' and 'the principal method' of education (1921: 56).

The Report's definition of English is noteworthy. English is an 'art, a means of *creative expression*, a record of human experience' (1921:11, my emphasis) – with an explicit statement that it does not include grammar and philology as these are 'scientific studies' (*ibid*). The word 'creative' is emphasised through its reappearance on the following page: English in the 'highest' sense is

...the channel for formative culture of all English people, and the medium of creative art by which all English writers of distinction, whether poets, historians, philosophers or men of science, have secured for us the power of realising some part of their own experience of life. (1921: 12).

Here, the association of 'culture' and 'creative' is again reminiscent of Arnold: Big C culture is seen as potentially enriching for 'us', everyman; but the importance of children being writers too is also later stressed.

As I have summarised elsewhere (Smith, 2019: 267), the Report's main recommendations are that children should be 'train[ed]' in i) 'sounded speech', ii) standard English (both

⁵⁵ 'The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner' (Psalms 118: 22); Christ is repeatedly referred to as the 'corner stone', e.g. 1 Peter 2: 4-8; Acts 4: 10-12; Ephesians 2: 20-22.

spoken and written), iii) in reading (1921:19) and iv) the 'use of literature'. Yet while the tone might appear authoritarian, the noun 'use' rather prosaic, and the repetition of the verb 'to train' perhaps severe, I suggest this is a deliberate attempt to assuage the traditionalists and reassure them that a creative curriculum will be suitably formal. Similarly, the Report praises the 'army' (1921: 25) of teachers. Perhaps in the post-war context the military semantic field is deliberately redolent of self-sacrifice and heroism. My reading is that the recommendations are underpinned by a liberal, life-enhancing stance.

This is emphasised by the Report's reinforcing the notion described in the Blue Book (BoE, 1905/1912) that talk is the foundation of English, not least because good oral skills are the prerequisite of good writers. Drama, too, is 'very important' (Newbolt, 1921: 310): children should dramatise familiar ballads, stories or fairy tales, or famous historical incidents; schools in districts where a genuine dialect survives should make use of any traditional fragments of old folk plays. Children are encouraged to consider and take pride in the language of their community.

The emphasis on dialect is also significant. Newbolt argues that teachers should encourage children's 'self expression' (*sic*) through a constant use of classroom talk to develop 'connected and continuous speech' (1921: 70). While some might argue that encouraging dialect is a covert means of restricting social mobility by keeping the working class in their place, this would appear contrary to Newbolt's ideal that children should become 'bi-lingual' (*sic*) and *also* learn 'standard English' (*sic*) (1921, 67). This is not to gain 'social superiority' (*ibid*), but because English had been voted the international language by the Northern Peace Union after the First World War and it was important that English children could speak a standard version in order to communicate with their European neighbours. This suggests an ambition that international travel (whether for commerce or tourism), or at least dialogue with international visitors to England, was something for which all children should be prepared, and demonstrates Newbolt's vision of a then undreamt-of future for working class children.

Concerning reading, Newbolt argues that children should learn not merely the skill of reading (including reading aloud), but find literature 'a possession and a source of delight... an equipment for the understanding of life' (1921: 19). This is not just canonical literature, but contemporary: he strongly recommends that *modern* literature be part of the Advanced course for prospective teachers to inspire their practice:

[W]e think that the students are far more likely to perceive in literature not merely a school subject but the most direct communication of experience by man to men if they are encouraged to find out how the life of their own time has been interpreted by contemporary writers. (1921: 186, my emphasis)

This indicates that Newbolt recognises culture as something living, constantly remade, and directly related to his humanist perspective.

The Report criticises practice whereby literature is taught through 'linguistic, historic and comparative methods' (Newbolt, 1921: 118) as such methods, it is argued, fail for want of emotion. Instead, it advises the teaching of literature alongside 'the visual arts, music and architecture, to enable focus on beauty and expression; once again, Arnold's presence is felt through this endorsement of culture as a means of both providing pleasure and stimulating thought' (Smith, 2019: 268)⁵⁶.

Writing too is presented as the tool for thinking. Creative approaches are encouraged as a means of exploring the art of others - by writing a poem, a child can better appreciate the writing of published poets - and also of exploring ideas:

As our discoveries [of the world and of ourselves] become successively wider, deeper and subtler, so should our control of the instrument which shapes our thought become more complete and exquisite, up to the limit of artistic skill. (1921: 20)

The implication here is that students *themselves* are creative, so their artistic skill should be nurtured. Children should take stimuli from literature, their wider reading, their environment and their own experience, to make something of value to themselves.

Exercises in 'descriptive and imaginative writing, as well as practice in verse composition, in letter writing, and in dialogue... with a view to encouraging self-expression' (Newbolt, 1921: 103) are recommended, although the Report is critical of some practice where 'imaginative subjects' are insufficiently challenging. 'Full use' should be made of any teacher who has a 'special aptitude' for teaching poetry or written composition (1921: 348).

In summary, English is presented as a fundamental tool for the 'full development of mind and character of English children' (Newbolt, 1921: 20) and simultaneously a fine art which should be taught as such. There is explicit reference to creative English in the Arnoldian sense of imbibing or *taking* culture to inform and inspire. However, the Report also goes beyond Arnold, promoting personal growth through emphasising the importance of discussion and through encouraging imaginative topics for writing, thus developing learners'

⁵⁶ The two paragraphs following, beginning 'Writing too...' and 'In summary...' are also drawn from Smith, 2019: 268-69.

creativity through *making*. Newbolt yokes these elements together in the Conclusion: 'a humanised industrial education is the chief means whereby the breach between culture and the common life of man may be healed' (1921: 352). He is perhaps attempting to reassure capitalist politicians that the Report's view of English is suitably 'industrial' (even though it contains relatively little emphasis on functional English) whilst being humane. The explicit reference to 'culture and common life' mirrors the title of *Culture and Anarchy*; that Newbolt recognises a breach between them acknowledges that Arnold's ideal is as yet unrealised, but is still possible. The final phrase is pleasingly ambiguous – the 'healing' of an English education can be applied to the individual and the collective.

5.4. The Blue Books (BoE, 1923; 1924; 1927; 1937; DES, 1959)

5.4.1 Context: Continuity across the mid-century decades

The interwar years saw universal suffrage, a further blurring of class boundaries as the working classes increasingly took on non-manual roles, the rise of the Labour Party and trade unions, and the expansion of the welfare state. The standard of living improved for the working class through the council house programme. However, the economy was relatively stagnant, and the Great Depression led to high unemployment in many sectors. School milk to support children suffering from poor nutrition was introduced in 1934, while cultural nourishment was made possible through the burgeoning film industry, the vast expansion of public libraries (stock was tripled during the 1930s) and the launch of the Penguin paperback in 1935 (Morgan, 1984; Gillard, 2018).

At the end of the Second World War (1939-45) – as after the First - there was seen a need to revitalise the education system in a bid to rebuild the nation. The Education Act of 1944, designed by the Conservative Rab Butler with cross-party consensus, was intended to deliver this. As explained above (4.2.1), the Act gave greater responsibility to local authorities, changed the elementary system to the tripartite system (primary, secondary, further education) and strengthened provision to increase the school leaving age to 16. However, it did not deal with the curriculum itself for party political reasons (Tomlinson, 1949 *in* Medway *et al*, 2014). Hence, this time, there was no change to English policy: it can be assumed that the Blue Books continued to represent recommended practice.

5.4.2 Continuing to cultivate

The Newbolt Report had apparently galvanised educationalists and practitioners to think further about English teaching: according to the bibliography in *The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-70* (Shayer, 1972) there were 18 books on English method published over the next ten years (the highest number in any decade until the 1960s), and three new Blue Books appeared in quick succession. The 1923 version was written explicitly in response to Newbolt, whilst noting Newbolt's dependence on its predecessors: 'this Report emphasises anew many of the points to which the Suggestions direct attention...' (1923: 23). The next comments on teachers' 'enthusiasm' for Newbolt (1924: 4), with further homage paid in the following edition (1927). And the Blue Books grew in weight as well as number: while the 1905/1912 edition is a pamphlet of approximately 130 pages, the 1937 version is a thick book of almost 600 pages set in a dense font.

I here discuss the Blue Books series post-Newbolt (BoE 1923; 1924; 1927; 1937; DES, 1959) as a unity because of the overlaps between them⁵⁷. While points are revised and extended from edition to edition, and examples of good practice increasingly provided, the key ideas remain constant. Each edition echoes its predecessor, often word for word. English is both an art and a 'living language' (BoE, 1924: 4). A key point reiterated from the original 1905 edition is that the purpose of the Books is not to dictate 'any rigid or unthinking uniformity of method' (BoE, 1924: 3), but to offer ideas and stimulus. It is when the teacher approaches her role creatively and is responsive to learners' needs that learning happens, as discussed below.

As in the first Blue Book (BoE, 1905/1912) and Newbolt (1921), developing a child's capacity for talk is seen as crucial: it is explicitly stated that linguistic development is impossible without. New experiences in a child's life are vocabulary-enriching opportunities (BoE, 1937), speech being 'an effective instrument of understanding and thought, and hence, of communication' (DES, 1959: 135).

Extending Newbolt's acceptance of dialect for cultural and historic reasons, the Blue Books demonstrate an appreciation of the importance of the home language to the child. Echoing Newbolt, the term 'bilingual' is used (BoE, 1927: 74; 1937: 378), suggesting that dialect and Standard English are equal but separate. The advice is not to attempt to 'nullify' (BoE, 1923: 24) a child's home language but help them 'purify' (*ibid*) it for occasions when Standard

⁵⁷ However, I make minimal reference to the 1959 edition as this focuses on the Primary phase.

English is required. Teachers are twice warned that they should guard against 'slovenliness' (BoE, 1927: 74; 1937: 377) – perhaps to assuage traditionalists for whom use of Standard English and education are synonymous - yet the liberal and child-centred underlying message is clear: children should be able to use their own dialect 'freely and boldly' (BoE, 1937: 378) and teachers should 'seek to encourage [children's] power of vigorous and racy expression [since]... even slang has its place' and thus a child 'will have frequent occasion to remind himself that language is the creation of the many and not of the few' (BoE, 1937: 391). The final edition is sensitive that 'children associate their way of speaking with those they care about in their homes and neighbourhoods', arguing that 'it would be improper and unwise for teachers to try to discredit [dialect] use' (DES, 1959: 146).

Further, good oral work results in good writing: a teacher's responsibility is to ensure their students have something worth saying, as one cannot 'make bricks without clay' (BoE, 1924: 23). Thus, 'every oral lesson is a lesson in composition' (1924: 25).

Again, echoing previous policy, reading is seen as developing both children's intellectual and emotional understanding (BoE, 1927; 1935) and so contributes to personal growth. The importance of good libraries is repeatedly stressed. Teachers are urged to include 'real' books that spark the imagination, such as *The Water Babies* (Kingsley, 1863), *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe, 1791) and *Tom Brown's School Days* (Hughes, 1857). The final edition cites Dr Johnson's remark that 'Babies do not want to hear about babies; they like to be told of giants and castles and of somewhat which can stretch and stimulate their little minds' (n.d in DES, 1959: 168). There is the warning that trying to teach Shakespeare to children at the Elementary stage is folly: teaching professionals should be allowed to judge when (and even if) to introduce him (BoE: 1923; 1927). Across the series, the reading of poetry is promoted, chosen according to children's interests. The approach should be not through formal analysis, but artistic means, enabling children to discover meanings themselves.

To 'feed' (DES, 1959: 164) children books to stimulate their writing is promoted, and writing should also emanate from their experiences – 'the sights and sounds, the thoughts and feelings of everyday life' (BoE, 1923: 39). The 1923 edition is the first to refer to an unsourced claim by Robert Louis Stevenson that his habit of writing descriptions of everyday life was the best preparation for his own narrative writing. Later editions contain lists of possible classroom activities, including the active modelling of writing by the teacher (BoE, 1924; 1927), with topics for writing suggested (e.g. describe the same landscape in winter

and summer). A child-centred view is evident: teachers should strive to ensure that the child's pleasure at "self-expression" in language' (BoE, 1924: 26) is not compromised.

Encouraging children to write poetry is also encouraged:

Good teaching of poetry cannot fail to stimulate the creative impulse, and in literature, as in the other arts, creative work, even though of no particular merit in itself, is of great help in developing the power of critical appreciation. (BoE, 1927: 92)

This suggests that although the children's compositions are of little worth, such activities should be promoted because engaging in them will help pupils develop a 'sensitiveness to the poetic values' (BoE, 1927: 92). However, a later edition presents a different perspective. It describes the 'art of expression' (BoE, 1937: 352, my emphasis) in children's writing – implying inherent merit - and so recalls Newbolt's point that imaginative writing is of value, albeit if only to the child herself.

Despite the above allusion in the 1927 edition, the term 'creative writing' is not used once across the series, yet it is stated that children should be allowed to write 'independently and freely' (BoE, 1923: 31), with the topic 'factual or... imaginative according to a child's own gifts and interests' (DES, 1959: 162). Such writing enables children to 'put themselves in other people's places, to realise that there are more sides than one to every question, and by so doing he can help to lay the foundations of sympathy, toleration, justice, and other essentially social forces' (BoE, 1923: 40); the teacher's role is as discussant and audience (DES, 1959). This, again, is a child-centred view, in which the teacher promotes creative work to develop the child's social and empathetic skills; it is also humane, in striving for the common good, redolent of Arnold.

The value of children's writing is emphasised through discussion of assessment.

Compositions should be marked carefully by a teacher who has an 'enlightened idea' (1927: 102) of the improvements needed. A child should not feel too anxious about technical accuracy or presentation as that 'clogs... thought' (BoE, 1923: 31). Instead,

The chief criterion by which the pupils' compositions will be judged will be their truthfulness in the widest sense – the truthfulness with which they record their experiences and impressions; the accuracy with which they describe things or scenes; and the honesty that they show in stating, when called upon to do so, what they really think or feel, and not what they imagine they are called upon to think or feel. (BoE, 1937: 396)

The writing should be genuine, a means of expressing what is important to the writer; the ideas and content are more important than a polished product. This is an example of creative practice that recognises personal growth.

There are strong themes connecting the Blue Books. They are child-centred; they foreground the importance of oracy and accepting dialect; they promote the exploration of language; they hold that the purpose of learning to read is to love and learn from literature; grammar is presented as subservient to the writing, grammar teaching arising naturally from writing being undertaken. They promote a broadminded, forward-looking approach – they welcome the use of new technologies such as the wireless and, later, television. The centrality of the teacher is crucial. The Conclusion to the English chapter of the 1937 edition is worth quoting in full:

It is evident that the task of the English teacher is no light one. It requires an interest in children, an interest in words, and an interest in the larger world. Specialised knowledge is of less importance than such interests as these, for they can easily flower into the relevant kind of knowledge, whereas knowledge without these interests can only succeed in imprisoning the child's vital and curious mind within a mesh of facts. With such interests and aims the English teacher in the Senior School should succeed in the essentials of his (sic) task: the training of a young citizen who can speak clearly and sensibly, who can write with order and expressiveness, who can find what he (sic) wants in books, who is alive to the fullness of words, and who confronts his environment with enjoyment, with self-reliance, and with an openness to new ideas and new experiences. (BoE, 1937: 400)

The imagery is striking. Such a teacher celebrates the freedoms that creativity provides, rejecting external structures of a fixed, uncreative curriculum that might 'imprison' a child's mind: the implication is that the teacher can create learning experiences that she judges appropriate. References to vigorous life ('flower', 'vital', 'alive') reinforce the message that such an approach allows for personal growth; hence, the child is free to develop, alert to the fulness of life.

5.5. A Language for Life: The Bullock Report (1975)

5.5.1 Context: Creativity becomes mainstream

There was no policy document relating to secondary English published between the final Blue Book (BoE, 1937) and the Bullock Report (1975) – almost four decades. However, this is not to suggest that the field was dormant. I here show that despite (or because of) a lack of official steer, practice developed markedly: a creative, child-centred personal growth model became increasingly accepted, and formed the context for *A Language for Life*. I here present this context in some depth because it is significant in the story to come.

5.5.1.1 From World War Two to the 1960s:

After the War, the newly-elected Labour government led by Attlee launched a radical agenda to rebuild a near-bankrupt country, investing vast sums on welfare (including the introduction of National Insurance and the National Health Service) (Gillard, 2018). The Festival of Britain of 1951, celebrating British industry, arts and science – with the main South Bank exhibits attracting 8 million visitors - symbolised a new optimism (Morgan, 1984). However, this coincided with the beginnings of the Cold War, one of the factors that enabled the Conservatives (led by Churchill) to be re-elected in 1951. The party remained in power for 13 years, pursuing policies that favoured business and led to increasing prosperity and low unemployment, albeit at the expense of the welfare state (*ibid*); they showed little interest in education (Gillard, 2018).

This is despite evidence that curriculum reform was long overdue, certainly in subject English. An HMI report from 1951 found ‘English in both grammar and modern schools to be competent but dull’ (Medway *et al*, 2014: 38), while practice in the 1940s-60s was ‘largely stagnant and... dominated by textbooks containing abstract grammatical exercises and literature lessons focusing on the appreciation of long-dead great authors’ (*ibid*: 3); it was ‘sterile’ (Dixon, 1967: 10), drear (Plowden, 1967). One student of the 1950s remembers getting the slipper if he got more than three spellings wrong (BBC, 2007); Dixon notes that his favoured approach - a personal growth model - was a rarity (1967). All this suggests that the child-centred, humane practice advocated in the Blue Books (*op cit*) and Newbolt (1921) was not often apparent in classrooms.

It seems that one factor preventing English teachers from following the policy and guidance was the pressure of accountability. As indicated in Chapter 2, English was one of the two subjects (with Mathematics) tested in the 11-plus examination - ‘the task-master’ (Plowden, 1967: 2) for primary teachers - the prize being a grammar school place⁵⁸. For 16-year olds, Ordinary (O) levels in the 1960s (sat by students at grammar or independent schools) were almost indistinguishable from those of the 1920s (Shayer, 1972; Bullock, 1975); they consisted of ‘naming of parts... with little or no interest in eliciting from pupils how such units might combine to form larger functional meanings and effects’ (Hall and Hewings, 2001: 89). Teaching was spent in turgid preparation. Yet the majority of secondary students, destined for employment that did not require academic qualifications, did not sit school-

⁵⁸ In the 1960s, only about a quarter of pupils in state-funded secondary schools in England won a grammar school place (Bolton: 2017); doing so could be life-changing.

leaving examinations at all (Medway *et al*, 2014; Newsom, 1963): there was little impetus on their teachers to inspire or the students to achieve (Shayer, 1972).

However, this post-war period saw the founding of the grass-roots London Association for the Teaching of English (LATE) in 1947 (Gibbons, 2013), a coming together of teachers of English in the maintained sector in the capital. LATE teachers did have impetus. Daringly, they taught modern as well as nineteenth century novels and began to publish student-friendly textbooks to replace formal grammar books (Medway *et al*, 2014). LATE inspired the foundation of the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) in 1963, providing a new opportunity for teachers across the country to work together along similar lines (Gibbons, 2017). NATE became the equivalent body to the English Association for the maintained sector.

5.5.1.2 Plowden and the Dartmouth Conference

The incoming Wilson Labour government captured the freshness of the Swinging Sixties by abolishing selective education, freeing primary teachers from the pressure of preparing pupils for the 11+. To inform future policy and practice, the government commissioned *Children and their Primary Schools* (Plowden, 1967).

To reiterate (see 2.2.1), Plowden advocates a child-centred, creative approach. Out of 1252 paragraphs, only numbers 578-613 (35 in total) are explicitly on English, but the Report is of interest here as representative of the progressive thinking of the time. Echoing earlier policy (although without acknowledging the Blue Books), Plowden emphasises the importance of providing opportunities for rich classroom talk to give children confidence in speaking; she recommends that teachers should be relaxed about 'correctness' and 'accent' which 'should be sacrificed rather than fluency, vigour or clarity of meaning' (1967: 211). Borrowing the nutrition imagery that is a recurring trope of the Blue Books (*op cit*) - and seen elsewhere by those championing a humane approach (*e.g.* Arnold, 1869; Boas 1919) - children are presented as 'literary cormorants, *swallowing* all that comes within their reach' (Plowden, 1967: 218); reading is said to 'awake new interests as well as *nourishing* existing ones' (1967: 215) and children need '*nourishing*... with great poetry' (1967: 217, my emphasis in each). Literature is as vital as food. That diet should be administered by enthusiasts - 'a teacher can only share with children what he (*sic*) understands and likes' (1967: 217). And, as in the Blue Books, where they are said to 'blunt' children's sensitivity to language (BoE, 1937: 163), text

books are to be deprecated – '[children] learn to write by writing and not by exercises in filling in missing words' (Plowden, 1967: 222).

Yet, significantly for this study, one area which Plowden does welcome having observed is:

free, fluent and copious writing on a great variety of subject matter... Sometimes it is called 'creative writing', a rather grand name for it. Its essence is that much of it is personal and that the writers are communicating something that has really engaged their minds and their imaginations... It is nearly always natural and real and sometimes has qualities which make it most moving to read. (1967: 219)

This first reference to the term 'creative writing' in a policy document – albeit a rather patronising one - suggests that the term is in common parlance. Plowden argues that such writing supports personal growth. In *Growth Through English*, Dixon (1967) too suggests that creative approaches that build on what the learner brings to the classroom, their *own* language and life experiences, strengthens what is innate within them. Dixon's choice of title echoes imagery used by Arnold (1869: n.p.) when he talks of our 'growing and... becoming' through cultural activity.

Wilson's wholesale education reforms had an impact on secondary education too, particularly through developments to the examination system. Inspired by the Newsom Report (1963), *Half Our Future*, the government introduced the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) to enhance the prospects of average and lower-attaining 13-16 year-olds not entered for O levels. The CSE included teacher-assessed components and shorter, more accessible questions, and so were less pressurised than O levels (Medway *et al*, 2014). For teachers, there was a fresh interest in inspiring CSE students and promoting their sense of self (Shayer, 1972).

Within this newly-liberalised context, the creative, child-centred approach popularised through the work of LATE and NATE gained traction at secondary level (Perry, 1974), drawing the attention of American academics concerned at the state of English in the United States. Accordingly, an English contingent was invited to join them for the *Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English* at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, in 1966. It became known as the Dartmouth Conference and was an important influence in English education over the next decade on both sides of the Atlantic. Publications arising from the Conference – including *Growth Through English* (*op cit*) and *Creativity in English* (Summerfield, 1968) - became seminal texts for English teachers. Although not policy texts, they are important in understanding subsequent policy documents.

One theme of the publications emanating from Dartmouth is the value of children's writing (Dixon, 1967). Just as Plowden argues that the writing of poetry enables children to write from 'deeply-felt experience' (1967: 220), Summerfield emphasises the importance of creativity for personal development - 'without the exercise of imagination we not only fail to know others but also fail to know ourselves' (1968: 37) - and argues that 'creative English' helps to form 'more articulate, more effectively human people' (1968: 40). His vision combines teaching creatively and creative learning:

"Creative English" is not for me a matter of simply eliciting verse or prose, but rather of establishing a relationship and an ethos which will promote experiment, talk, enquiry, amusement, vivacity, bouts of intense concentration, seriousness, collaboration, and a clearer and more adequate self-knowledge. This will involve us in talk about our selves (sic), our language, our behaviour, our attitudes and beliefs, and, when appropriate, in recording such things in writing. And the teacher's sense of his (sic) role is crucial. If he is prescriptive - knowing what he wants, knowing all the answers beforehand - he will be less effective than if he is prepared to allow the pupils' awareness of criteria to grow for itself in the business of making, modifying, and so on. (Summerfield, 1968: 44)

This view is of creativity celebrating the personal through the expressive. It is about the right human relationships and 'ethos', the conditions in which learning best occurs. The repeated use of 'our' stresses the connection between the individual and the collective, and how language is central to the development of both. Plowden concludes her Report with a similar point: 'We cannot afford to slacken in advancing the power of language which is the "instrument of society" and a principal means to personal maturity' (1967: 223).

Summerfield's teacher is not one who knows all the (examination) answers, but who encourages questions; one who privileges child-led approaches in which the process is as valuable as the product.

However, despite this interest at both primary and secondary level by the end of the 1960s, creative practice was not universally accepted (Shayer, 1972). Tussles for English continued to be rehearsed across teaching communities and beyond. Five years after Dartmouth, the educational philosopher John Wilson invites consideration of what education in English should include and who has the authority to judge:

Does "being educated in English"... imply knowledge of grammar and syntax? Competence at 'literary criticism' (and what is this anyway)? Ability to produce 'creative writing' (another obscurity)? Knowledge of the dates of authors and the dimensions of the Shakespearean stage? And so on. (1972: 9)

He does not proffer answers, and questions remained about English subject content. The political establishment especially was suspicious of child-centred practice. For example, John McGregor - briefly the Conservative Secretary of State for Education (hereafter Education Secretary) - claimed in an interview that a perceived fall in educational standards was a direct result of notions of child-centred learning popular from the late 1950s to 1960s (Ribbins and Sherratt, 1997).

Such beliefs were one factor that led to the commissioning by the then Conservative Education Secretary, Margaret Thatcher, of the first report on English teaching since Newbolt (1921). *A Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975) was actually published two years later, during Wilson's second term as Labour Prime Minister. The Report criticises an anti-creativity position – which was not perhaps Thatcher's intention.

Alan Bullock (1914-2004) in some ways had a similar educational background to Thatcher. She was a grocer's daughter who went to grammar school and thence to Oxford; Bullock was the son of a gardener and a maid, went to grammar school and thence to Oxford. Yet there the parallels end. She read Chemistry; he read Classics and Modern History. Bullock became an accomplished writer and champion of the arts: as an eminent historian, his publications included biographies of Ernest Bevin and Hitler. He was the first Master of St Catherine's, Oxford - a college that was pioneering in promoting the arts and sciences as equals - and became the University's Vice Chancellor. He completed his term in 1973, the same year in which he became Chair of the Tate Gallery, and began work on *A Language for Life*.

Bullock set about the task in a strikingly similar way to Newbolt. His committee was not as balanced in terms of gender as Newbolt's, consisting of 16 men and 6 women but (as noted in footnote 37 above) it included teachers, teacher educators and academics (among them, James Britton and Professor Brian Cox). Together they consulted some 1400 primary schools, 400 secondary schools, 56 organisations (including NATE, The Arts Council, the Secondary Schools Examinations Council, The Nuffield Foundation) and 66 individuals, as well as HM Inspectorate (Bullock, 1975). This involvement of so many in the field of English education suggests that Bullock, like Newbolt, wanted to do a thorough job.

5.5.2 A defence of creativity

The stated aim of *A Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975) is to be valuable to a wide target audience (everyone 'from parents to publishers' (1975: xxxii) and - as a priority - support the teaching profession. Ostensibly responding to anxieties about reading standards in schools,

primary and secondary, the Report goes far beyond. Bullock's tone is confident and knowing: the introduction, citing Newbolt, reminds critics that it is common to hark back to a golden past when standards were supposedly better, but suggests that at issue is whether education is equipping children with what they need *now* and for their futures.

He engages specifically in the creativity versus formality debate, stating – possibly to the dismay of the Conservatives - that there was no evidence that school English was declining 'in a climate of unchecked creativity'⁵⁹ (Bullock, 1975: 6), although accepts that in some schools the personal growth view had become so all-pervasive that children were falling back on cliché rather than expressing genuine feeling.

Bullock promotes the centrality of language within and beyond school. Talk and listening, reading and writing are presented as a 'unity' (1975: xxxv) – the importance of the 'wholeness' of language is several times repeated (*e.g.* 1975, 242; 340). Language is described as developing incrementally and organically 'through an interaction of writing, talk, reading, and experience' (1975: 8); the teacher's role is to 'intervene' (1975: 8) to develop children's confidence and fluency. Like Newbolt, Bullock states that the job of teaching English is too important for non-specialists and calls for properly-qualified teachers. It is made clear that 'Literacy is a corporate responsibility' requiring a 'community of endeavour' (1975: 26), restating the message of the Blue Books and Newbolt that every teacher is a teacher of English. He calls for all teachers to be trained appropriately.

Language (in any mode) is shown to be the key to learning. In a striking metaphor, the Report suggests language functions as a 'filing pin' (Bullock, 1975: 48) that can store an infinite number of pieces of information collected one by one, enabling children to link the new to the familiar, classifying experiences so they can be applied to other situations. Language development and learning are presented as heuristic, both dependent on 'discovery' (1975: 50); children should use language to find out for *themselves*. A key recommendation is that every school should develop a policy of language across the curriculum.

⁵⁹ The negativity of the phrase 'unchecked creativity' encapsulates the difficulties faced by those who wished to promote creativity - the alliteration suggests that detractors *assume* that creativity is *always* 'unchecked' (and thereby somehow leads to a curriculum that is itself unconstrained, unbridled, uncontrolled - with the unspoken dangers of social upheaval that such abandon might lead to). There is no intimation that the critics had considered a 'checked' or controlled climate of creativity, such as might be developed in a classroom context – the very approach to creativity that Bullock's Report goes on to support.

Bullock reinforces this point through his discussion of oral work. Talk is defined as the 'instrument for learning and for thinking' (1975: 154, my emphasis), with the role of talk in society highlighted. It is recognised that our use of language should be appropriate to each of the speech communities to which we belong. Like the Blue Books and Newbolt, the Report states that a child's home language should be valued.

Drama is seen as particularly important because it provides opportunities for improvisation of language not afforded elsewhere:

In drama an element of invention lies round every corner, and dialogue has a way of surprising itself so that nothing is predictable [while] [a]ll writing, even when at its most creative, tends in school work to be a patterning of words within which thoughts and feelings have to be contained and ordered. (Bullock, 1975: 158)

This emphasis that teachers should create opportunities for practising talk through drama reminds schools that drama 'warrant[s] serious study' (1975: 160) and so deserves curriculum time. The quotation not only illustrates Bullock's awareness that everyday language use is innovative but draws attention to this reference to 'creative' writing. It is interesting that creative writing here is shown to have limitations – the very act of writing something down imposes a shape which constrains it. Creative writing is here set in opposition to drama, thus presenting it as offering *less* potential for personal growth than extemporised verbal language.

In terms of reading, the Report moves swiftly beyond the mechanics of decoding to a consideration of content. While the word 'hermeneutic' is not used, reading for meaning is described in hermeneutic terms:

... reading is more than a reconstruction of the author's meanings. It is the perception of those meanings within the total context of the relevant experiences of the reader – a much more active and demanding process. Here the reader is required to engage in critical and creative thinking in order to relate what he reads to what he already knows; to evaluate the new knowledge in terms of the old and the old in terms of the new. (1975: 79, emphasis original)

The passage echoes Gadamer's explanation of how the third voice, the combination of the text and all that the reader brings to it, leads to 'a new creation of understanding' (1975/2004: 468). That 'critical' and 'creative' are combined demonstrates Bullock's hermeneutic recognition that reading competence *depends* upon imaginative or original thought.

Discussing the reading of literature in particular, Bullock refers directly to Dartmouth's re-emphasising the long tradition that literature supports personal or moral growth: teaching

literature 'provides imaginative insight into what another person is feeling; it allows the contemplation of possible human experiences which the reader himself has not met' (Bullock, 1975: 125); indeed, 'To read intelligently is to read responsively; it is to ask questions of the text and use one's own framework of experience in interpreting it' (1975: 129). This commitment to developing empathy recalls earlier arguments (e.g. Newbolt, 1921; BoE 1927; BoE 1935). A good reader, then, is recognised as one who uses language skillfully and imaginatively to relate what they read to their own experiences, and thereby create new and significant understanding. A good teacher of reading, Bullock notes, does not waste time on plot summaries and cataloguing characters; she is creative, encouraging prediction, anticipation, speculation. The Report, too, is mindful that canonical literature is not altogether popular with students, so – again, like Newbolt, and now perhaps capitalising on the work on LATE and NATE - recommends the study of modern 'fresh' (Bullock, 1975: 135) work to encourage enjoyment.

The discussion on writing opens by acknowledging the high prestige writing holds in education: it is the means of showing what has been learnt. The Report notes approvingly that the scope of writing activities in junior schools had increased since the demise of the 11+, with teachers no longer feeling the need to teach to the test. Bullock then tackles head-on the thorny topic of 'personal' (as opposed to 'impersonal' or transactional (1975: 163)) writing:

The form that has attracted most attention is that which has become known as 'creative writing', a term which has acquired emotive associations and has sometimes polarised attitudes... The truth is, of course, that 'creative writing' has come to mean many things. At its best it is an attempt to use language to recreate experience faithfully and with sincerity. It draws upon all the resources of language inventively yet in a form which is organic with the feelings or experience from which it grew. From this point there is a sliding scale of interpretations. Some teachers encourage children to strive for effect, to produce the purple patch, the stock response. Others have merely adopted the label and apply it to any kind of writing. (1975: 163/4)

It is made explicit in this report that the term creative writing is confusing for many and is controversial, but the reference to 'faithfulness and ... sincerity' calls to mind the 'truthfulness in its widest sense' of a Blue Book (BoE, 1937). The metaphor of growth reappears, linked to 'feelings' and 'experience,' indicating Bullock's belief that learning is a result of living – language is for life.

Bullock resists providing a definition of creative writing, but does say what it is not: it is not 'spontaneous' writing, nor writing using 'colourful or fanciful language... divorced from real

feeling' (1975: 163/4). Effective writing arises from 'corporate enterprises of the classroom' (*ibid*), the product of effective talk. The 'solution' (*ibid*) is for the teacher to encourage a child to articulate their intentions, then to help them achieve by providing guidance on appropriate techniques. This is an explicit endorsement of child-led teaching.

The Report proposes adopting categories developed by the Schools Council Writing Research Unit, which divides language users into two modes, *participant* and *observer*. In each mode, writing might be Transactional-Expressive or Expressive-Poetic, where 'expressive' sits in the overlapping circles of a Venn Diagram illustrating forms of writing. All writing is thereby seen as 'expressive.' An 'expressive' writer is described as 'offering' feelings and beliefs to their audience, a trusted teacher, and enjoys 'the sheer satisfaction of making, of bringing into existence a pleasing verbal object' (Bullock, 1975: 164). The term 'creative' is not used, but the physical creation of a piece of writing is shown as joyous, life-enhancing, and thereby promoting personal growth.

Bullock discourages the uncontextualised teaching of spelling and prescriptive grammar, instead encouraging risk-taking, experimental approaches to develop students' self-confidence. He suggests that successful teachers use imagination and inventiveness, pedagogy described as 'creative' elsewhere. Finally, citing Newbolt (1921) in asserting that the teaching of writing should be far more than preparation for limited, rigid examination syllabi, the Report calls for a broader approach to assessment, including school-based assessment with external moderation.

In sum, the Report endorses much of the philosophy and creative practice that came to the fore during the 1960s. Bullock promotes dialogic teaching by emphasising the interdependence of oral language and learning. He describes a good reader as one who is in dialogue with a text - asking questions, anticipating, speculating – and shows that personal growth is enhanced through writing. All of this is made possible through a teacher who provides the right opportunities.

5.6. The Teaching of English Language: The Kingman Report (1988)

5.6.1 Context: Towards the National Curriculum

Education policy under Margaret Thatcher's premiership suggests that she was not convinced by the findings of the Bullock Report. Replacing Edward Heath in 1975 as the

leader of the Conservative Party, Thatcher went on to become Prime Minister in 1979, promising to deal with the Northern Irish 'Troubles', high unemployment and high inflation. She presided over Britain joining the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, as I have noted, 'a decision confirmed by a referendum in 1975 when 67% of the population voted in favour (Morgan, 1984). At the time, Britain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) lagged behind the USA, Japan and Germany and was on a par with France' (Smith, 2020a: 312).

Thatcher bid to improve Britain's place in the free market through introducing a free market economy into education. According to neo-liberal orthodoxy, indicators of student performance should determine which schools should thrive and which should fail. Traditionalists in her party also voiced a desire for state control of curriculum content (Gillard, 2018). A National Curriculum⁶⁰ with national performance indicators satisfied both needs.

In preparation for the National Curriculum, the Education Reform Bill of 1987 gave sweeping powers to the new Education Secretary⁶¹, Kenneth Baker. Baker commissioned John Kingman to advise on how English language is best monitored and assessed and on teacher training – at the time, 28% of those teaching English in secondary schools (responsible for 15% of English teaching nationwide) had no formal qualification beyond O level (Kingman, 1988).

In some respects, parallels may be drawn between Kingman (1939 -) and the writers of the previous Reports. He too progressed from a working-class background via grammar school to Oxford. However, while Newbolt and Bullock were prominent in the Arts, were at the peak of their professional achievements when commissioned (both were in their 60s) and were successful writers (as had been Arnold), Kingman was different. A statistician and former Professor of Mathematics at Oxford, he was in his early 40s and newly installed as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Bristol (a post he held from 1985-2001)⁶² when

⁶⁰ The 'National' Curriculum was a misnomer from the start. It applied to only England and Wales (not Scotland or Northern Ireland) and only to maintained schools.

⁶¹ With great prescience, the former Chief Education Officer of the Inner London Education Authority (which had been disbanded by Thatcher's government), warned, '[W]hat if one day this country were to find itself with a Secretary of State possessed of a narrow vision of what education in a democracy should aspire to be, coupled with a degree of self-regard and intolerance of the opinions of others that caused him or her to seek to impose that vision on others?' (Newsam, 1987 *in* Gillard, 2018, n.p).

⁶² Whilst at Bristol, Kingman gained notoriety for having the third highest VC salary in Britain, his pay doubling in his final year in office. He remains Emeritus Professor of Mathematics and is the director of several industrial companies (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kingman; Gillard, 2018).

commissioned. Thus, Kingman's background does not suggest expertise in English or education, and his career was arguably still in the ascendancy.

His committee consisted of 13 men and 6 women; they included novelists, broadcasters, businesspeople and academics; there were only two teachers, both from independent girls' schools in London; there was one Professor of Education, based in London, and one Local Education Authority adviser from Berkshire (Kingman, 1988). It is not obvious that there was anyone to represent English teachers in maintained schools around the country. (It did, however, again include Professor Brian Cox, whose impact on creativity in English is discussed in Chapter 6.)

The input of schools to Kingman's inquiry was more limited than those of Newbolt, Plowden and Bullock, with just 14 primaries and 16 secondaries involved (although 240 individuals and organisations were canvassed), perhaps due to time pressures. However, the committee chose their own way in spite of advice received. For instance, the Report states that although 'almost all' (Kingman, 1988: 57) evidence submitted argued *against* testing - particularly of 7-year olds - for both practical and pedagogical reasons, Kingman recommended testing anyway. His paymaster, Baker, who spoke disparagingly of educationalists' 'smug complacency' in rejecting testing (Independent, 1987 in Gillard, 2018, n.p.) would have been pleased. Kingman's was the first Report in which advice from the field of English education was ignored.

5.6.2 Creativity criticised

While the remit of *The Teaching of the English Language* was to present a 'model' of English language (Kingman, 1988: 4), and it thus arguably did not have the full scope of its predecessors, it differs markedly from all the policy documents that predate it in both tone and structure. Speaking and listening, reading and writing are here discussed in the sequence in which they appear in the Report (talk, writing, reading) as a means of highlighting some of the contrasts.

The Report's only explicit reference to 'creativity' is at the start, where Kingman explicitly echoes Newbolt's concerns about the state of English education; yet he goes on to pronounce that teachers - while not 'indifferent', and 'anxious' to support children's language development (Kingman, 1988: 1) - labour under a misguided belief that 'conscious knowledge of the structure and working of the language... damages creativity' (1988: 1).

There is no evidence to substantiate this claim about teachers' attitudes and beliefs, and no further defence of the value of creativity.

Rather, Kingman is critical of practice reported in schools. In a contradictory paragraph, he notes the 'debt' that his committee owes to the Bullock Report, citing its 'great influence on the teaching and learning of English in British schools' (Kingman, 1988: 2), but then points to 'deficiencies' in pupils' language use as reported by some school inspectors, a 'narrow diet' of writing and reading taught separately, and a lack of consensus regarding what English should consist of and how it should be taught (1988: 2). However, he notes that not all of Bullock's recommendations had been implemented, particularly regarding the needs of training teachers.

The semantic field in Kingman's Report is strikingly authoritarian. In tune with the prevailing political mood, it states that 'accurate use of the rules and conventions' are important 'to increase the freedom of the individual' and promote 'personal liberty' (1988: 3); the notion of power is conspicuous - language enabling humans to 'name [what] we have power over' and 'defend their rights and... fulfil their obligations' (1988: 7). There is a focus on developing children's language skills to meet their adult needs. Critical intellectual development comes before 'social, personal and aesthetic development' (*ibid*). Themes that can be traced through previous reports are conspicuously absent: the noun 'growth' appears five times, but always concerning linguistic and intellectual growth, never 'personal growth'.

The idea promulgated in the previous Reports that talk inspires good writing are here turned on their head: Kingman declares that command of written structures ensures that they are 'available for use in speech if the occasion demands, thereby increasing the power and flexibility of the oral repertoire' (1988: 10). This is followed by the claim that

Children who read Tolkien and then write their own fairy stories are engaged in a total process of language development which, among other advantages, may one day contribute to the writing of clear, persuasive reports about commerce or science.
(1988: 11)

It is not clear whether Kingman is suggesting that following Tolkien's lead and becoming an acclaimed author is as valuable an aspiration as the ability to write an authoritative piece on industry. There is passing reference to the notion that experimenting with various modes of writing should be encouraged for 'humanistic reasons' (1988: 10) - these perhaps are some of the unnamed 'advantages' - but the implication is that a key aim of developing the language of the individual is primarily to serve economic ends.

An interesting attitude towards literature may also be detected. Several previous reports paraphrase Arnold in describing English Literature is regarded as the best that has been thought and said; Kingman too describes literature as 'powerful and splendid' and praises its 'aesthetic properties' (1988: 11), but it seems implicit that literature's role is more to develop students' vocabulary and English cultural knowledge than to enrich their personal lives. The 'literature of the past' (*ibid*) is presented as primarily valuable in understanding how it informs the language of today, with examples of 'our' (*ibid*) writers. Shakespeare, Blake and Edward Lear are among the list of exclusively dead, white male authors recommended in a passage that might have been taken from a report from a century ago⁶³ – when post-war patriotism could be more easily rationalised - rather than a purportedly forward-thinking Report written in the latter part of the twentieth century when Britain had its first female prime minister and a growing black and minority ethnic population. (Kingman does, however, later acknowledge that ethnic 'groups settling in Britain have enriched English' (1988: 30).)

The Report is dismissive of classroom debates on moral and social issues prompted by literature that, it claims, characterised English lessons of the 1960s and 70s, since 'largely thematic discussions' on 'the relations between language, literature, politics and social conditions... offered little analysis of rhetoric, choice of language, metaphor, vocabulary and other persuasive and argumentative devices' (Kingman: 1988: 12) - thereby suggesting that the prime purpose of reading literature is to learn about language use. On the idea that reading literature might also provide pleasure or solace, or enrich lives through enabling children to place themselves in another's shoes, it is silent. A teacher's role is to 'match' (1988: 11) a book to the child, which Kingman acknowledges requires 'fine judgement and sensitivity' (*ibid*) but presents a very different teacher-pupil relationship than previous policy documents (*e.g.* BoE, 1905/1912; 1935) that called for class libraries so that the learner could make a choice for herself.

The Report's 'model' for language learning consists of i) forms of the English language, ii) communication and comprehension, iii) acquisition and development and iv) historical and geographical variation. It suggests that a systematic understanding of formal language terminology is necessary to enable children to develop their use language across all modes. This message is repeated at the end of the Report: "Knowledge about language" is not a separate component of... curriculum. It should not be 'bolted on', but should inform

⁶³ Newbolt does at least recommend Jane Austen (1921: 220).

children's talking, writing, reading and listening in the classroom' (Kingman, 1988: 48). Each element of the model is offered with examples of classroom approaches (e.g. comparing passages from different versions of the Bible to examine language change; investigating words containing the root 'self' and its antonyms; peer assessment of a formal debate concerning whether No Smoking areas contravene individual rights), with some pointers to help teachers support less confident learners.

The importance of English across the curriculum is stressed, illustrated with exemplars and commentary. For instance, the work of a secondary-aged history student is cited, a narrative account of life in a poor household 300 years ago: 'And once they asked what is for dinner and the reply is potatoes they start to moan' (Kingman, 1988: 34). Without apparent irony, the commentary is critical of the non-standard linguistic features and ambiguous use of 'moan'; there is no acknowledgement that the writing provides evidence that the student has engaged with the topic (they have understood the monotony of a diet of potatoes), far less the notion that he could *deliberately* be using a limited, non-standard language palette better to put himself in the persona of an unschooled child. The critique states that it is up to the teacher to decide how they might use the meta-language to help the student develop his writing, indicating that the teacher's professional judgement is important; however, the tone suggests that the use of Standard English is seen as a more valuable educational outcome than nurturing imaginative engagement with the past.

In summary, the dominant theme of the Report is that explicit knowledge about language develops wider knowledge and intellect, which are associated with freedom, power and economic success. Kingman does not disregard the development of the individual self, but this is subsumed within the broader theme. This emphasis is illustrated through the rigidity of the first four of the 14 Attainment targets the Report recommends for 16-year olds: '1) Speak in Standard English⁶⁴ ...; 2) Read aloud with appropriate stress, intonation and pause; 3) Use punctuation according to the conventions of Standard English; 4) Spell correctly' (Kingman, 1988: 52). Not until target 10, 'Express feelings and intentions as well as facts, ideas and arguments lucidly' (*ibid*), is any sense of the personal offered.

Kingman's Report, therefore, represents a departure from policy documents that preceded it. To reiterate, Kingman lacked expertise in the field, and was, perhaps, over-keen to please Baker; his committee may have been well-intentioned, but they too had very limited experience of English teaching, especially in the maintained sector. The Report is not

⁶⁴ Regional accents are acknowledged, but not dialect.

necessarily entirely uncreative or anti-creative in terms of pedagogy – the examples provided of the four-part model in action include discussion and the use of first-person narrative, which could be taught creatively – but is perhaps in spirit. It warns against a return to rote-learning, but does not explicitly favour child-centred approaches either. Canonical literature is promoted as informing cultural knowledge rather than aesthetic or personal development. ‘Knowledge’ comes to the fore. The teacher is presented as an expert who should teach language explicitly (although ‘sensitively’ (Kingman, 1988: 13)) using formal terminology. The document itself lacks the nuances of language and metaphor of those that came before: it is a blunter report with a blunter message.

5.7. Discussion: English rooted in creativity

In response to the questions posed at the start of this chapter, then, my review of the policy documents reveals that creativity has been valued and promoted in English since its inception a school subject. Kingman (1988) excepted, notions of creativity are at the heart of secondary English teaching. I wish here to summarise my main findings with specific reference to the literature discussed in Chapter 2.

The policy documents – written by experts in the field, and after wide consultation - suggest that creativity in English is not a glue-and-glitter reward, a fanciful appendage to be included if time allows after the ‘real’ work of the classroom has gone on, but the very foundation of learning in the subject. Indeed, they emphasise that creativity depends upon yet also fosters hard work and resilience, a point echoed in the wider literature (*e.g.* Lytton, 1971). Excluding Kingman, three key points emerge from my analysis:

- i) The policy documents demonstrate a remarkable convergence in describing and justifying what creative English *is* and what it can *do*: English is presented as a *unitary* subject concerned with nurturing children’s interest in language, developing their enjoyment and confidence in expressing themselves through the spoken and written word; and encouraging a love of literature.
- ii) Such a view of English *depends upon* creativity; and
- iii) such a view is consistently presented well before the term ‘creativity’ was enregistered as a term relevant to education.

Creative English was established through the Blue Book series (BoE, 1905/1912; 1923; 1924; 1927; 1937; DES, 1959), embraced and developed by Newbolt (1921) – decades before the

creative movements of the 1950s, which were seen as revolutionary (Jones, 2009; Medway *et al* 2014), and what is claimed to be the ‘first wave’ (Craft, 2005: 11) of creativity in the 1960s – and echoed in Bullock (1975). These policy documents *inform* what emerged as hallmarks of good English practice as defined in the literature (*e.g.* Fleming and Stevens, 2010; Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014; McCallum, 2012). They collectively present English as a rich blend of the different notions of creativity presented in Chapter 2. Holding this multiplicity of senses of the term is not to confuse or dilute – indeed, acknowledging ‘creativities’ (McCallum, 2012: 25) is to celebrate the scope, breadth and depth of English.

One important theme is the interdependence of creativity and culture. While the literature indicates that ‘culture’ is a concept as contested and slippery as ‘creativity’ (Green and Cormack, 2008), various notions of culture happily coexist in the policy documents. ‘Big C’ or high culture is recognised as a core element. The canon of English Literature is revered in the Arnoldian sense - it is not that case that the ‘best’ of what has been thought and said should be reserved for an elite minority (as Eliot might have it (Fleming, 2010)), but that literature is a treasure to be shared, democratically, for the nourishment, pleasure and delight of all (BoE, 1905/1912; Newbolt, 1921).

In balance with this view - and less acknowledged in the literature (Perry, 2019) - is that these same policy documents also stress the importance and value of lived, everyday culture, predating similar arguments made by academics from Williams (1958/1989) on. The policy documents recognise that culture is iterative, constantly being made – thus, dialect is promoted as having socio-cultural importance (*e.g.* Newbolt, 1921; BoE, 1957), and *contemporary* literature as well as the canon is recognised (Newbolt, 1921; Bullock, 1975).

The semantic field of culture is helpful in considering another theme featured in the literature, that of personal growth. To reiterate, culture is associated with growth; personal growth is about enculturing – or creating - oneself (Pestalozzi, n.d. *in* Darling, 1982). Accordingly, the policy documents that associate English with a broad view of culture are also those that emphasise the importance of English in nurturing personal growth. Although personal growth is not named as such until Bullock (1975: 4), the idea is prominent in the earlier documents (*e.g.* Newbolt, 1921; BoE, 1927; 1937) as crucial in promoting independent thought and developing the individual. Once again, English policy documents appear ahead of their time – as shown in Chapter 2, personal growth does not feature in the broader literature until the 1960s (Jack, 1962 *in* Darling, 1982; Lytton, 1971).

There are of course variations in the themes. In the earliest documents, creativity in *taking* and appreciating high culture is dominant; later, the pedagogy favours creativity in *making* everyday culture; often the two are blurred, melding the notions of Big C and little c creativities (Craft, 2001); the balance shifts in places. For example, the value of children writing poetry is presented sometimes as means of enabling them better to engage with published poetry (BoE, 1927), sometimes as means of developing their personal growth (Bullock, 1975).

Given this wealth of policy and guidance recommending creative English, therefore, and the associated arguments that a such practice develops the confident, inquiring, thoughtful, sensitive, broad-minded individuals that are the requisites of a humane society, the question that emerges is why the Reports (*e.g.* Newbolt, 1921; Kingman, 1988) successively comment on the unsatisfactory nature of English in schools. Descriptions of English lessons as dry, unstimulating, dominated by grammar, suggest that the creative practice promoted was not widely practiced. Ironically, some of the poor classroom practice described by Kingman, including a 'narrow diet' (1988: 2) where reading and writing are taught separately, are not a result of the creative English of 1960s he so disparages, nor Bullock's influence (1975), but a textbook-based approach to English teaching. Why did the policy documents not have more impact?

Reasons for this apparent contradiction are discussed through the colloquies presented in Chapter 7 and explored further in Chapter 8 but, before turning to Chapter 6 (an analysis of the National Curriculum), it is worth reiterating that when creative practice was popularised in the 1960s, it was at a time of education policy change (the demise of the 11+, the proliferation of comprehensive schools, the introduction of the CSE examination incorporating teacher assessment). Teachers felt less burdened by the test; they were liberated to teach using the child-centred approaches advocated by LATE (Gibbons, 2017) and NATE, and given further authority by publications from the Dartmouth Conference and the Plowden Report (1967). Education policy, arrangements for assessment and pedagogy were, for the first time, in tune.

The next time that curriculum policy and education policy were so aligned was twenty years later, as preparations for the National Curriculum were put in place. As the very existence of the Kingman Report (1988) suggests, the government was by then less desirous of a child-centred, humane, culture-rich view of English. It began to develop an accountability structure that would see children less as individuals to be nurtured, more as units to be

compared one to another. Although the Kingman Report is an anomaly amongst the policy documents explored in this chapter, Chapter 6 now explores how some of the ideas Kingman introduces gradually come to the fore through the various iterations of the National Curriculum, when policy documents become statutory.

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Chapter 6: Creativity ‘cabined, cribbed, confined’⁶⁵: English in the National Curriculum

6.0. Introduction and overview

This chapter follows on from Chapter 5 in presenting how creativity appears in the English policy documents of the past 30 years: the era of the National Curriculum. The second part of my response to research aim 1 – to understand the place of creativity in English education policy, past and present - it starts directly where Chapter 5 leaves off. The Kingman Report (1988), the final document there discussed, is the precursor to the Cox Report (1989), the first document discussed in the present chapter. As shall be demonstrated, the contrasting nature of the two reports is indicative of how creativity is variously understood and valued.

It is important at this stage to reiterate the significance of the National Curriculum (henceforward the Curriculum) on schools in England. While the policy documents presented in Chapter 5 were government-sanctioned, they were advisory only. In contrast, the Education Act of 1988 meant that every maintained school became, effectively, subject to the Curriculum.⁶⁶ The influence of the Curriculum has been eroded over the past decade by subsequent policy changes enabling academies and free schools to set their own curricula – currently only 31.2 % of state pupils attend schools still technically bound by the Curriculum (Blake, 2019: 25) - yet the fact that GCSE examinations reflect the Curriculum’s content for Key Stage 4 means that English at KS3 and KS4 is governed by the Curriculum orders⁶⁷. The Curriculum therefore has arguably greater bearing on classroom practice than the pre-Curriculum policy documents.

A statutory Curriculum means not only that the government can hold schools to account (and so have a direct influence on what happens in classrooms), but that government is simultaneously held to account by the electorate (who need ‘ocular proof’⁶⁸ that the government is succeeding in driving improvement). This may be one reason why the relative

⁶⁵ Shakespeare (1606) *Macbeth* Act 3, sc 4.

⁶⁶ Independent schools are – controversially - free to teach the less prescriptive International GCSEs (‘iGCSEs’) which include a coursework element; they are thereby even less constrained by the NC than academies and free schools (Oppenheim, 2018).

⁶⁷ The Curriculum covers KS1 to KS4. This chapter focuses on KS3 and 4, being those covered at secondary level. KS3 typically spans school years 7 to 9 (for students aged 11-14), while KS4 covers the time spent preparing for public examinations (GCSE) in years 10 to 11 (for students aged 15-16), although some schools now truncate ks3 by including year 9 in ks4, thereby providing an extra year for GCSE study - albeit often to the detriment of the breadth of opportunity afforded at KS3.

⁶⁸ Shakespeare (1603) *Othello* Act 3, sc 4.

brevity of the 25-year period discussed in this chapter (1989 - 2014) is not reflected in the number of documents produced: as noted above, there are 6 published versions of the Curriculum, with another unpublished (DfE/WO, 1993). The effort and cost expended were also considerable - Cox's Report (1989) alone consists of around 80,000 words. The very number and length of the publications (listed in [Appendix 2](#)) suggest how complex has been the Curriculum's history. This was perhaps always understood: Cox (1989) makes clear that his version is not definitive, although it is not until the fourth version that what had become accepted practice is actually stated: 'The National Curriculum is regularly reviewed,' ostensibly to 'meet the changing needs of pupils and society' (DfES/QCA, 2004: 3).

However, as established in Chapter 2 (*e.g.* Benson, 2004; Burnard, 2006; Jones 2009) the correlation between changes of government the iterations of the Curriculum indicate that those perceived changing needs vary according to political hue, with English in particular a 'battle[ground]' (Davison, 2009: 20) within and between groups of educationalists and politicians. And, as with the pre-Curriculum policy documents, the place of creativity is at the heart of these debates.

'Creativity' is by this time firmly 'enregistered' (Agha, 2003) as a term relevant to secondary English – it is included in Bullock (1975) and Kingman (1988) – which means that its incidence can be plotted through the Curriculum. Its presence or absence is deliberate: to include or ignore creativity is a calculated decision. Yet a hermeneutist approach means that merely hunting down its usage from this point on would be to over-simplify the endeavour: the creativity of English - associated with a child-centred, personal growth-led, humanist, dialogic pedagogy - is not always labelled as such, even post enregisterment, so it is important that I remain careful and vigilant in my reading of each document and my interpretation of creativity.

This introduces two questions that will be tackled in the course of this chapter:

- a. How far is the humanist, child-centred, personal growth view of creativity retained in the English of the National Curriculum (whether or not it goes by the 'creativity' label)?
- b. Language changes; definitions change. The concept of creativity is shaped and changed over time (Craft, 2005; Jones, 2009), but does the concept of creativity *in English* change through the National Curriculum?

I show that, while Chapter 5 indicates a broad consensus about the role of English in education and of creativity within it, the six Curricula presented here demonstrate only limited agreement on the purpose of English within the secondary phase and differing views on creativity. There is unanimity that English should develop students' literacy, enabling them to be confident speakers, readers and writers, access the wider curriculum, and prepare them for adulthood; but views differ on the underpinning principles. The tension lies in whether the purpose of education is the development of humane individuals able to foster the well-being of themselves and others and become custodians of the world (Biesta, 2015), or the development of adults who will contribute to the economy (Gibb, 2015). I chart the increasing commodification of creativity as the latter view takes hold. Creativity in English morphs from a child-centred, personal-growth-oriented approach to the subject (Cox, 1989); to something that develops problem-solving and collaboration as necessary to benefit Britain's changing economy (DfEE, 1999a); to a limited and proscribed genre, 'creative writing,' (DfE, 2014) - a victim of a belief that knowledge-rich curriculum is most appropriate for achieving social justice through employability. I argue that creativity in this latter incarnation does anything but. Not only does the term 'creativity' disappear from the current iteration of the Curriculum, but also its spirit.

The chapter is structured to demonstrate this dismantling of unitary English. To recap, I have divided the period under investigation into three phases to correspond with the party of government (Conservatives (1989-1997); New Labour and Labour (1997-2010); Coalition and the Conservatives (2010 -)). The first half of the chapter is taken up with providing the socio-political context for each section together with a summary of how the respective Curricula position English. Then, in the second half, through the lenses of child-centred oracy, reading for pleasure and expressive writing (established in Chapter 5 to be interdependent components of unitary English), I explore how the Programmes of Study (PoS) (oracy, reading and writing) are often so structured as to *prevent* creative work - even when 'creativity' is apparently in political favour.

6.1. Disunited factions: The Conservatives, English and Creativity 1989 - 1997

6.1.1 Context: Romantics and pragmatists, traditionalists and modernisers

As outlined above (5.6), the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher pressed ahead with the introduction of a National Curriculum as part of their strategy to revitalise Britain's

economy; the socio-economic for *English for Ages 5-16* (Cox, 1989) was, therefore, almost identical to that of *The Teaching of English Language* (Kingman, 1988).

1989 was the year in which Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web, which was to go on to influence almost every sphere of life in the decades to come (Couldry, 2012). It also coincided with Thatcher's tenth year as Prime Minister. Although she had marked her arrival in Downing Street with St Francis of Assisi's prayer for peace and harmony, the decade is arguably better remembered for violence: the Falklands War, the bitter year-long Miners' Strike, IRA bombings. Yet her policies of low taxation and increasing home-ownership - and a disorganised opposition - meant that Thatcher was twice re-elected, although the unpopularity of the poll-tax forced her from office in 1990, to be replaced by John Major.

In macro-economic terms, Britain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continued to lag. By 1989 Britain had dropped to seventh place in the world rankings, one lower than it had been on Thatcher's election (www.nationmaster.com). At the same time, Britain was preparing for the transition of the EEC to the European Community and the advent of the single market in 1993. The imperative for economic success in international terms was keenly felt.

Regarding education policy, the Conservatives remained divided between romantics who believed education was concerned with accruing cultural knowledge and modernisers mindful of the needs of industry in the global marketplace (Aldrich, 2005). A safe pair of hands was therefore needed to chair the committee to draw up the first Curriculum for English. The Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker, chose Professor Charles Brian Cox (1928-2008), known as Brian Cox. As co-editor of the anti-progressive *The Fight for Education* (Cox and Dyson, 1969) and *The Crisis in Education* (*ibid*), the first of the so-called Black Papers that criticised the failings of comprehensivisation, and a member of both Bullock's and Kingman's committees, he was regarded as appropriate and onside.

However, as Cox himself implies (1991), Baker had not done his homework. Just like *A Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975), *English for Ages 5-16* (Cox, 1989) was more child-centred and liberal than the Government might have hoped (Cox, 1995; Gibbons, 2017), perhaps due in part to the striking parallels between elements of Cox's background and those of Arnold, Newbolt and Bullock, which gave him a view of the transformative power of education. Cox too was born into a working-class home (in Grimsby); he won a scholarship to Cambridge. Briefly a supply teacher, he went on to lecture in English Literature at Hull; he was a professor at Manchester, becoming pro-Vice Chancellor there in 1987 (Schmidt, 2008): his whole career was in education, albeit mainly at the higher level. Like Arnold and Newbolt, he

was a gifted poet; like Bullock, he was a writer – he appreciated the Arts, and was to go on to chair the Arvon Foundation (a charity promoting creative writing) from 1994 to 1997. It is therefore unsurprising that Cox's National Curriculum echoed the work of Newbolt and Bullock more closely than that of Kingman.

Cox was in his 60s and at the top of his field when invited to chair the committee, so had no need to kowtow to the politicians who had commissioned him. His committee of 10 (of 7 men and 3 women) was chosen by Baker, but Cox found in them a progressive momentum (Cox, 1991; Cox 1995; Gibbons, 2017). They included representatives from maintained and independent schools, local authorities and universities. As explained in section 4.3.1, they consulted widely: Appendix 5 (Cox, 1989) credits around 100 organisations, including local authorities, broadcasters, subject associations and universities; there are an additional 68 individuals mentioned, including James Dixon, Dr Ron Carter and Peter Trudgill, who offered a range of expertise across English Language and Literature and from infant to higher education. Both the resulting Report (1989) and Cox's later reflections (1991; 1995) suggests that these experts were heeded.

6.1.2 *English for ages 5-16* (Cox, 1989): a defence of creative English

Cox was acutely conscious of the tensions concerning creative English, making explicit in the Introduction to *English for ages 5-16* his awareness of the political and educational debate – 'no position is neutral' (1989: 57). Rather than come to a 'timid compromise' (1989: 58) about what English is and means, his ambition was to build bridges between polarities separating 'individual and social aims, ... or language and literature' or (perhaps pointedly) 'craft and creativity' (1989: 57). He uses as the epigraph to his introductory chapter Raymond Williams' argument that formal education is 'a particular set of emphases and omissions' (1965 in Cox, 1989: 57), then goes on to demonstrate his child-centred perspective through quoting Plowden - 'at the heart of the educational process lies the child' (1967 in 1989: 61). Through this pairing, which might have made uncomfortable reading for the right-wing politicians who commissioned him, Cox both emphasises his understanding that education policy is partial and yet that young lives are at its centre, and signals his debt to the creative thinkers of the 1960s. He later explains that he was aware of the different ideologies in the Conservative Party at the time of his commissioning and was keen that his curriculum should 'overcome dogmatism' (Cox, 1991: 18). In the end, however, his curriculum proved unwieldy and could not meet everyone's interests.

Cox states the 'overriding aim' of the English curriculum is 'to enable all pupils to develop to the full their ability to use and understand English' (1989: 58), the two underpinning core purposes being:

First, English contributes to the personal development of the individual child because of the cognitive functions of both spoken and written language in exploratory learning and in organising and making sense of experiences... Secondly, English contributes to preparation for the adult world. (1989: 59; emphasis original)

While he stresses that they are interlinked, it is noteworthy that the *personal development* of individuals is foremost, with language presented as a means of *making sense of experiences* before the 'complementary' (*ibid*) purpose of readying the child for adulthood. Further, Cox suggests that English should take students beyond the core Attainment Targets of Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing: it should enable them to explore their own and others' linguistic and cultural identities; they should be able to use language for organisational purposes, or 'create and keep artistic artefacts – poems, plays, stories' (*ibid*). The range of language uses given reinforces the notion that education in English gives students the ability to deploy language *as they choose* to have power over own lives.

Cox identifies five 'views' that, together, summarise the purpose of English as a school subject: personal growth, cross-curricular, adult needs, cultural heritage and cultural analysis (1989: 60), popularly known now as Cox's models. The product of extensive research by Cox and his committee, they represent the views of *teachers* – not politicians, not theorists, but classroom practitioners - demonstrating that he sought, trusted and valued professional testimony.

It is striking that Cox chose not to organise the views in alphabetical order: 'personal growth' heads the list, which echoes the first core purpose quoted above, 'English contributes to the *personal development* of the individual child' (*op cit*, my emphasis). This implies that Cox sees personal growth as the most important. It reflects the dominance of personal growth in the policy documents discussed in Chapter 5, indicating that Cox's Curriculum is their natural successor.

As a hermeneutist and textual critic, I am drawn to the hermeneutic theme in Cox's argument. He defines personal growth as:

a view [that] focuses on the child: it emphasises the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives. (1989: 59)

As I have argued previously (Smith, 2020a: 113), 'this emphasis on the relationship between *language* and *learning* reinforces language as the means by which children understand the world [as discussed 3.2 above]; the emphasis on the *imaginative and aesthetic* recalls Gadamer's concept that art is a carrier of experience (1975/2004), something that Cox himself draws attention to when he points to 'cultural heritage' and 'cultural understanding' as concerned with 'passing on the culture from one generation to the next, and with critically understanding what that culture consists of' (1989: 60).'

Second in Cox's sequence comes cross-curricular, and third is adult needs (including the importance of English 'in a European context' (1989: 58) both for reasons of commerce and inter-cultural relations), as if there is a continuum from knowing oneself to learning at school to becoming an adult. Cox explains that the views look both 'inwards' (to the self) and 'outwards' (to the world) (1989: 60), but the suggestion is that the 'outward' is *dependent* on the 'inward': if the child is not whole in herself, the 'inward', she will not be equipped to go beyond and interact with others 'outwards', whether in the curriculum, the workplace or, in a broader sense, through the connections that language provides us to other places and other times. Cox is thus emphasising the importance of personal growth as the foundation in preparing a learner for life.

Accordingly, Cox's vision for the English Curriculum appears inspired by the previous policies (BoE, 1905-59; Newbolt, 1921; Bullock, 1975). It is undeniably creative, even if the term is hardly used. Perhaps this is a calculated omission, given the contentiousness of the debate.

Significantly, Cox's name is the last that can be associated specifically with any one iteration of the Curriculum. The authors of the five subsequent versions (and their committees' members) are absent. There is no suggestion that the authors requested anonymity; rather the lack of named author is symptomatic of a 'seismic shift' (Bleiman, 2020: 24) - the increasingly centralised approach to English education policy from the 1990s onwards (Gibbons, 2017). The later versions are colloquially known by the short-hand of the Secretary of State for Education who signed them off ('the Blunkett curriculum', 'the Gove curriculum') and, accordingly, with the political hue of the ruling party.

6.1.3 Creative English curtailed

Cox's Curriculum was 'generally welcomed' (Marshall, 2000: 6) by the profession on publication, despite its volume making it difficult to translate into classroom practice. However, Baker was unhappy (Cox, 1991) and Tory politicians challenged it (Knight, 1996; Gibbons, 2017). For romantics, it did not sufficiently celebrate the canon of English literature (Cox had resisted calls to include lists of prescribed texts). For modernisers, it was insufficiently rigorous: they pointed to Britain's relative economic decline in the new more globalised market economy and this proved decisive (Morgan, 2014). Pascall was called to review it almost immediately. Pascall's draft, similar in tone to the Kingman Report (1988), states the prime purpose of English education is to enable children to 'master the basic skills' (DfE/WO, 1993: 71) to serve the needs of industry. It focuses on 'correct' (*ibid*) uses of English at the expense of personal growth. Recognised as too controversial amongst educationalists, it was shelved (Marshall, 2000; Gibbons, 2017).

The second National Curriculum (DfE/WO, 1995) was in response to Ron Dearing's *The National Curriculum and its Assessment: Final Report* (1994), known as the Dearing Review. Dearing came from humble origins in Hull to become a career civil servant, Chancellor of the University of Nottingham and Chair of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (Hattersley, 2009). An economist, he has no obvious interest in English or expertise in education. While designed to placate educationalists – it appears more 'humane' than Pascall (Gibbons, 2017: 69) – this revised Curriculum is rather a watered-down version of Pascall's (even using identical wording in places) than a slimming down of Cox. Consultations with English teachers and subject bodies were ignored, the door 'closed' (Gibbons, 2017: 70), with the imposition of a list of authors from the English literary heritage (discussed further below) causing particular concern (*ibid*; Knight, 1996). The government was so keen to put its stamp on the Curriculum that it was prepared to antagonise the profession.

6.2. New Labour and Labour, 'raising standards', and creativity brought to the fore 1997 – 2010

6.2.1 Context: From *All Our Futures* to PISA and PIRLS

Tony Blair's New Labour party swept into government in 1997. It was a time of optimism: Blair was Britain's youngest Prime Minister for decades; the popularity of Cool Britannia

made social and cultural waves; and the dot.com boom, on the back of the rise of the internet, was generating jobs and investment. New Labour aimed to create a 'learning society', realising the need to move from a low-skill, low trust education system (post-manufacturing) to a high-skills, high trust system (Morgan, 2014: 16). The theory was that social change could be promoted by ensuring more students met national standards and so be well-equipped for a job in a dynamic twenty-first century economy. During this period a new style of creativity was actively promoted, yet was simultaneously constrained, as explained in Chapter 2.2 above.

New Labour determined to make a clean break from the redistributive notion of educational justice that depended on students imbibing cultural capital, thereby codifying (and perpetuating) 'elite' knowledge, as promulgated by Dearing (Gillard, 2018). Yet New Labour was not convinced by the recognition notion of educational justice that was then becoming popular in the academic field (*ibid*). This notion acknowledges that knowledge has many forms, questions *which* knowledge (or knowledges) are most worthy, and sees the role of education is to create a pluralist society in which such knowledge can be valued (Facer and Thomas, 2012). However, for the politicians, adopting this notion would have been too great a structural leap and, moreover, would not have been palatable to the Labour party nor a (small c) conservative electorate (Aldrich, 2005).

The influential *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (NACCCE, 1999), commissioned by Education Secretary, David Blunkett, contributed to the debate. To recap 2.2.2, it promotes and popularises a problem-solving, collaborative view of creativity, with the personal growth, child-centred view relegated. *AOF* was interpreted in various ways, not all of them aligned (Compton, 2007; Banaji and Burn, 2010; Blamires and Peterson, 2014). However, its appearance both reflected the growing understanding of the importance of developing a creative workforce, and triggered a revived interest in creative teaching and creative learning (Burnard, 2006; Dymoke, 2011).

The international context added further complexity. The 1990s saw education becoming increasingly globalised, on the back of economic globalisation. As I have previously demonstrated, 'High-profile reports such as *Education For All* (UNESCO, 1990) and the Delors Report (1996) argue for a humanist⁶⁹ education based on careful reflection of the needs and

⁶⁹ The aims of the Delors Report were 'to know, to do, to be and to live together' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delors_Report), an elegant and economical definition of a humane education.

goals of society. However, by the early 2000s, the newly-established PISA and PIRLS⁷⁰ rankings altered the landscape by effectively marketising education: jurisdictions were no longer colleagues in a global collaborative endeavour, but competitors in a global field' (Smith, 2020a: 315). Thus, not only were Britain's schools now compared with each other (which was pressure enough for teachers), but with international rivals, raising the stakes even higher.

As a result of these pressures, and despite New Labour's enthusiasm for education and fulsome investment (annual spending on education rose by an average of 5.4% across Blair's premiership (Gillard, 2018)), some policy decisions sat in uneasy tension with each other. To give two examples pertinent to a discussion of creativity:

- 1) Although creativity was encouraged for students, the climate for teachers became *less* creative. The new Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999a), far from enabling teachers to return to professional autonomy, was accompanied by the controversial National Strategies (DfEE, 1998), with prescriptive content that laid down not only what should be taught but *how*⁷¹.
- 2) The Creative Partnerships (CP) programme, providing creative practitioners (artists, poets, dancers) to work with teachers to make schools more 'lively, engaging and imaginative' (Thomson, Hall and Jones, 2012: 6), was launched in 36 socially-deprived areas in 2002. It was funded, however, not by the Department of Education, but the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and managed by the Arts Council. As noted above (2.2.3), there is evidence that CP had a transformative effect on results, behaviour, attendance and attitudes in many schools but, ironically, the programme was not acknowledged by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted: inspection reports of participating schools made no mention of CP, so the schools received no official credit (Thomson *et al*, 2009). Creative Partnerships had been positioned as an 'antidote' (Thomson, Hall and Jones, 2012: 9) to the Curriculum but became seen as an expendable extra, 'constrained by... the need to meet external mandates' (*ibid*: 6).

⁷⁰ *Programme for International Student Assessment and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*: note that scores are for the whole of Great Britain rather than England.

⁷¹ Cox was among the many critics of the prescriptivism of the Strategies, writing in *The Guardian* that teachers would be repelled by having to teach 'mechanistic skills' rather than what they came into the profession to do: develop students' 'creative imagination and an open mind resistant to propaganda' (1998 in Gillard, 2018, n.p.).

The government's reactions to other proposed education reforms were similarly conservative. For instance, the Tomlinson Report (2004), which recommended a wholesale change to assessment for 14-19 year-olds and had broad consensus from everyone from the National Grammar Schools Association (NGSA, 2004) to universities (McKendrick, 2004) was dismissed as too radical and politically dangerous (Baker, 2005); while Jim Rose's *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (DfES, 2006), seen as helpful and nuanced by primary specialists (Clark, 2006) was hijacked so that a 'phonics first and fast' approach to reading through Systematic Synthetic Phonics was introduced across all maintained primary schools, to the detriment of pupils' enjoyment of reading (Wyse and Styles, 2007). Thus, despite promising creativity, the government was less than creative in its own practice, becoming instead increasingly controlling.

6.2.2 The National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999a): creativity becomes official

The third National Curriculum was published in the same year as *All Our Futures* (1999). It focuses on developing skills needed for the workplace to drive Britain's economy.

The very first line of the Foreword (applying to all subjects, not only English) promises that the Curriculum will 'raise standards' (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 3). Interestingly, although 'raising standards' appears first in Pascall's proposals (DfE/WO, 1993: iii) it was not included in the subsequent Curriculum (DfE/WO, 1995); yet in this third Curriculum a phrase from an ultra-Conservative source becomes official Labour policy, an indication of the complex nature of the shifting in the debate about the purpose of education, beyond party lines. The idea of raising standards is not necessarily contentious (Ken Robinson jokes, 'after all, who would want to lower them?' (2008, n.p.)), but it is a decisive moving away from 'the personal development of the individual child' (Cox, 1989: 59), and indicates how education had become aligned with national economic well-being (the implication being that if 'standards' are raised, so will be 'prosperity' (NACCCE, 1999: 5)).

The Foreword continues by laying out the curriculum's aims:

[T]o ensure that pupils develop from an early age the essential [...] skills they need to learn; to provide them with a guaranteed, full and rounded entitlement to learning; to foster their creativity; and to give teachers discretion to find the best ways to inspire in their pupils a joy and commitment to learning that will last a lifetime.
(DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 3)

Here the term 'creativity' is brought to the fore explicitly for the first time in the life of the National Curriculum. This is the notion of creativity as expressed in *AOF*: 'imaginative activity

fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (NACCCE, 1999: 30). Thus, an outcomes-oriented notion of creativity is associated with raising standards. This is not to say that the notion of personal growth is entirely forgotten: there is the wish for students to find 'joy' (and, a few pages later, English is said to contribute to pupils' spiritual development by enabling them to 'explore and reflect on their own and others' inner life' (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 8), perhaps an element of personal growth by another name). Yet it is perhaps 'joy' tethered to 'commitment to learning' that is the goal here, less joy in learning for learning's sake, more practising the virtue of working hard - given the emphasis on 'essential [...] skills' (*op cit*) assessment, attainment and employment opportunities in the surrounding text.

The fourth Curriculum (DfES/QCA, 2004) is a re-publication of the 1999 version, identical in subject content but with a greater emphasis on developing skills through cross-curricularity. Since there are no changes to English Orders, I am not counting it as a separate document for the purposes of this research.

6.2.3 The National Curriculum: English (DCSF/QCA, 2007): creativity as key concept

The publication of the fifth Curriculum (DCSF/QCA, 2007) coincided with Gordon Brown taking over from Blair as Labour Prime Minister (he dropped the 'New'). Drawing even more explicitly on the arguments for creative teaching and learning outlined in *AOF* (NACCCE, 1999), it was promised that this Curriculum would ensure that all pupils were 'actively and imaginatively engaged in their learning' (Jewell, 2007). Creativity is made prominent across subjects.

In the English Orders, creativity is given status as one of the four Key Concepts - alongside 'Competence', 'Cultural understanding' and 'Critical understanding' (DCSF/QCA, 2007: 62)⁷². To spell out exactly how it was to be understood, a definition is provided, accompanied by an 'Explanatory note' in the margin. According to *this* Curriculum, creativity is concerned with:

a Making fresh connections between ideas, experiences, texts and words, drawing on a rich experience of language and literature.

⁷² There are 33 references to 'creative', 'creatively' or 'creativity' in the ks3 and ks4 English orders, with another 82 references elsewhere, including Art & Design, Mathematics and Modern Languages.

b Using inventive approaches to making meaning, taking risks, playing with language and using it to create new effects.

c Using imagination to convey themes, ideas and arguments, solve problems, and create settings, moods and characters.

d Using creative approaches to answering questions, solving problems and developing ideas.

Explanatory note: Pupils show creativity when they make unexpected connections, use striking and original phrases or images, approach tasks from a variety of starting points, or change forms to surprise and engage the reader. Creativity can be encouraged by providing purposeful opportunities for pupils to experiment, build on ideas or follow their own interests. Creativity in English extends beyond narrative and poetry to other forms and uses of language. It is essential in allowing pupils to progress to higher levels of understanding and become independent. (2007: 62)

The adjectives stand out: ‘fresh’, ‘rich’, ‘inventive’, ‘new’, ‘unexpected’, ‘striking’, ‘original’ – a semantic field conveying value in novelty, risk-taking and discovery. The verbs suggest energy, fun and an appetite for change: ‘make’, ‘play’, ‘engage’, ‘surprise’. This recalls how enjoyment was promoted at the time as firmly allied to achievement (NACCCE, 1999: 97) and fulfilment (*ibid*: 110), something confirmed by research into the Creative Partnerships programme (Thomson, Hall and Jones, 2012). The serious justification for creativity in the curriculum is nailed home in the final sentence of the Explanatory note: creativity is ‘essential’ for students to make progress.

However, my analysis of the Programmes of Study suggests that despite this apparent emphasis, the English Orders do not actually allow for creativity - an inherent contradiction I discuss in depth below, but one hinted at even in the definition above: the Explanatory note refers to how creativity is shown when learners ‘surprise and engage *the reader*’ (my emphasis), as if creative work is manifested only through writing.

6.3. Coalition and the Conservatives: the revival of knowledge and skills 2010 - 2020

6.3.1 Context: Changing gear: Michael Gove

Despite the public investment under (New) Labour, classroom time expended, and the consistent increase in the number of students getting high GCSE grades, Britain’s PISA scores remained relatively static (White, 2012) and Britain’s relative GDP performance continued to trail behind the USA and Germany (Conway, 2015). The problem-solving, collaborative,

practical skills view of creativity that had been writ large in education discourse was deemed to have failed, at least by these markers.

When Conservative Michael Gove became Education Secretary on the election of the Coalition government in 2010, he could point to these statistics as evidence that Labour's 'relentless' approach to education was not working (Hansard House of Commons 10 July 2007 *in* Gillard, 2018, n.p). Energetic and driven, Gove launched a wholesale programme of educational change. He retained and strengthened some Labour policies (including academisation and performance measures) but was ambitious to change the National Curriculum as quickly as possible.

Gove positioned himself as the champion of a knowledge-rich curriculum based on Hirsch's arguments for cultural literacy and Young's concept of 'powerful knowledge' (Abrams, 2012; Morgan, 2014) which advocates a redistributive form of educational justice. The idea of equity was reframed: rather than being concerned with personal development, or fitting a child with the creative, flexible skills to forge unique human relationships as advocated by Biesta (2006 *in* Chappell *et al*, 2019), Gove's mission appears to have been to increase learners' access to employment through providing them with specifically-sanctioned powerful sets of knowledge and ideas that would, in theory, level the playing field for those lacking 'cultural capital'.

Gove's reading of Young is perhaps a mis-reading. For example, Gove advocates teaching 'a *permanent* body of knowledge which should be passed on from generation to generation' (Curtis, 2008: n.p. my emphasis), seemingly ignorant of Young's recognition that powerful knowledge is flexible according to need (Burns, R., 2018) and far from recognising that culture is continually remade (Gadamer, 1975/2004; Biesta and Osberg, 2008). An indication of how Hirsch and Young's ideas were over-simplified is the apparent contradiction within the terms of reference provided to the expert panel commissioned to develop the sixth Curriculum: schools were to be given 'greater freedom over the curriculum' yet also ensure children 'acquire a core of knowledge in the key subject disciplines' (DfE, 2012: n.p.): the aim seems to have been simultaneously to liberate schools from the constraints of a prescriptive curriculum yet *also* require learners to acquire a body of 'knowledge', the success of which is measured by newly-revised GCSEs which are more prescriptive than ever.

Indicators of Gove's determination to push his faith in powerful knowledge is the privileging of STEM subjects over the arts and humanities, despite the creative industries being one of Britain's strongest exports (British Council, 2010; Last, 2017); and the controversial

withdrawing of the popular A Level in Creative Writing, deemed insufficiently rigorous (Taylor, 2015). Gove's zeal also led to a nationalist focus, perhaps influenced by a growing disillusionment towards the European Union within some quarters of the Conservative party. For example, Gove stipulated that the powerful knowledge required in the History curriculum should be Britain's 'island story', to the disquiet of History teachers (Bowen *et al*, 2012).

Gove brushed aside criticism from educationists, writers, subject bodies and other influential voices (White and Brown, 2012), including three of the four members of his own expert advisory panel who urged him to take the middle ground (Mansell, 2012); he ignored the advice of the business community who called for creativity and the so-called soft skills of speaking and listening to be prioritised (Wintour, 2012). The authors of the new National Curriculum were carefully chosen to fit their text to Gove's vision. Their names were kept secret, a very different approach to the careful gathering of experts and consultation that led to the development of previous key English policy documents.

6.3.2 The national curriculum in England (DfE, 2014): creativity expurgated

Given this context, the published aims from the introduction (applicable to all subjects) of the resulting sixth National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) raise interesting questions:

The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement. (DfE, 2014: 5)

As I have previously demonstrated (Smith, 2019: 262⁷³), we are taken from the prosaic 'essential knowledge' of the first sentence to the grandiose 'the best that has been thought and said' of the second. The direct quotation from *Culture and Anarchy* (Arnold, 1869) is unacknowledged. Whose view of 'best' is assumed? The syntax makes ambiguous whether it is to be understood that 'essential knowledge' is 'the best that has been thought and said', or additional to it. The final phrase, separated from the main clause by a clumsy semi-colon, is unclear: pupils are to *appreciate* 'human creativity', not *be* creative (and why the redundant 'human', especially when there is no other allusion to humanity or the humane?). Is 'achievement' a result of 'creativity' or independent of it? Is a connection assumed between 'knowledge' and 'creativity and achievement', implying that creativity is positioned

⁷³ Much of this paragraph echoes the paper cited.

not entirely in opposition to knowledge, but subsumed within it and of lesser value? This is significant because, in a curriculum that goes on to promote 'knowledge' extensively (the term appears a further 78 times in its 100 pages, with 20 references within the English orders), 'creativity' is absent entirely from the English orders⁷⁴.

This is followed by two short paragraphs promoting the importance of numeracy across the curriculum. Mathematics is positioned as a precondition of 'success' (DfE, 2014: 9), while the very next page then positions Language and Literacy as the means of 'access' to the curriculum (2014: 10). This juxtaposition of two words with the suffix '-cess' is striking. Coupled with the emphasis on STEM subjects and the demotion of the humanities, the implicit message is that English is the service subject, providing *access*, while mathematics, necessary for *success*, takes one higher; it is a long way from Cox's suggestion (1989)⁷⁵ that English provides access to the wider curriculum which then symbiotically reinforces learners' understanding of English.

Next comes an attempt to justify the paradoxically crucial yet subordinate position of Language and Literacy: 'older pupils should be taught the meaning of instruction verbs that they may meet in examination questions' (DfE, 2014: 11). None of the previous Curricula refer to this banal truism. It implies that pupils be taught to read and write in order that their reading and writing can be tested, far removed from the notion that the purpose of education is humane and will enable us to meet future challenges (Biesta, 2006 *in* Chappell *et al*, 2019; Osberg, 2010) and only obliquely referencing the notion that education meets economic ends (Gibb, 2015).

The suggestion from these references to Language and Literacy that English is primarily a service subject is strengthened in the opening sentence of the Purpose of Study for English: 'English has a pre-eminent place *in education* and in society' (DfE: 2014: 13, my emphasis). It continues:

A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development.

⁷⁴ 'Creativity' appears 11 times elsewhere in the 2014 NC, with pupils encouraged both to appreciate creativity in others and practice it themselves in Art, Design and Technology, Computing and Music.

⁷⁵ 'There is much in the structured thinking, the imagination and the symbolism in mathematics and science and in other subjects that can extend the pupil's capability in English' (Cox, 1989: 54).

Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils, therefore, who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised. (DfE, 2014: 13)

There is the shadow of negativity in this statement that is absent from its predecessors. The phrase 'high-quality' is used when it is surely self-evident. (Perhaps this is a veiled criticism of previous curricula – or of teachers?) Literature is a tool to develop a range of intelligences (listed here in alphabetical order, presumably to avoid privileging one over the others) rather than a source of pleasure; reading is reduced to a means of acquiring knowledge. Finally, there is the threat that those who cannot communicate well are 'effectively disenfranchised.' While the message is ultimately similar to that of the previous Curriculum (DCSF/QCA, 2007) in emphasising the necessity of equipping students with English in order to participate in society, the deficit tone of the 2014 version is cold in comparison, reminiscent of Kingman (1988) - although perhaps that is the point.

6.3.3 Summary

All this indicates that secondary English over the course of the past three decades has been subject to pressures as never before as successive governments took an increasingly active role in education policy. Before the advent of the Curriculum, the inner workings of the Department for Education were said to be a 'secret garden' into which no senior politician had 'the impertinence to trespass' (Donoghue, n.d. *in* Adonis, 2006, n.p). It is now familiar territory to them, whatever their level of educational expertise⁷⁶.

This, combined with a changing employment environment, local and international economic factors, and a newly competitive international educational context, creates a complex context in which creativity has become a pawn. While 'creativity' became recognised by some as a valuable element, different constituencies have tried to harness different aspects of creativity to serve short-termist ends, and failed to do so. Gove, perhaps thereby understandably suspicious of creativity, dismissed it, although it is ironic that he saw creative products of the past - cultural capital - as so important.

I now proceed to show the impact that this has on how creativity is (and is not) manifested in the English Programmes of Study of the various National Curricula.

⁷⁶ Of the 18 Ministers who have presided as Education Secretary between 1989-2020, only one, Estelle Morris, 2001-02, has been a teacher.

6.4. The dismantling of unitary creative English

In this section, I explain how Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing - the three components of school English that underpin the structure of the earliest policy documents⁷⁷ (e.g. BoE, 1905/1912; Newbolt 1921) and were confirmed as the elements of 'unitary' English by Bullock (1975) - are variously positioned in each National Curriculum, building on the findings from Chapter 5. I particularly focus on those aspects that are relevant to a child-centred, humanist, personal growth view of creativity, seeking the place or status that is accorded to:

- the recognition of spoken non-Standard as well as spoken Standard English;
- reading for pleasure, with the child choosing her own reading matter; an acknowledgement of the association between reading for pleasure and creative outputs;
- imaginative and expressive writing as a means through which children can explore their own and broader ideas.

This exploration of the three modes is a means of charting how creativity is presented and valued.

6.4.1 The death of dialect and rise of spoken standard English

All six⁷⁸ Curriculum documents emphasise that an ability to use spoken (and written) Standard English is essential. What is of interest here is whether and how the documents also recognise, celebrate and encourage the use of dialect (*non*-Standard English) since this is an important indicator of the value each Curriculum puts on personal identity and, accordingly, the personal growth view of creativity.

Table 1 highlights the main developments. While Cox (1989) assumes the child's own dialect is as valid as Standard English (both may be used in the classroom, with the child taught to use SE *when appropriate*), reference to dialect is markedly reduced in next version (DfE/WO, 1995); by 1999 (DfEE/QCA), dialect is effectively outlawed and Standard (or 'formal') English expected. Dialect never returns, even in the 2007 Curriculum (DCSF/QCA, 2007) which

⁷⁷ Kingman (1988) is the exception.

⁷⁸ To reiterate, I am including the DfES/QCA, 2004 Curriculum in the total number, although I do not deal with it as a separate document for purposes of analysis as the English orders are identical to DfEE/QCA 1999a.

heavily promotes ‘creativity’. This suggests a change of direction; a different understanding of creativity.

[Table 1: The death of dialect and rise of spoken standard English]

Date	Themes	Content / References
Cox, 1989	<p>Identifies Speaking and Listening as the first Attainment Target; acknowledges the importance of Standard English (SE) in certain contexts.</p> <p>Importance of dialect in one’s personal identity; the relation between this and personal growth.</p> <p>Active teaching/celebration of dialect.</p> <p>SE not expected/required by young learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘The development of pupils’ ability to understand written and spoken Standard English and to produce written Standard English is unquestionably a responsibility of the English curriculum.’ (1989: 67, emphasis original) • Presents SE as (merely) a ‘dialect’ and marker of class (1989: 11). • States non-standard dialect is not ‘sub-standard’, warns of danger to ‘self-esteem and motivation... by indiscriminate “correction” of dialect forms’ (1989: 11). • Recommends teachers actively discuss when SE might and might not be used; children should be actively encouraged to use SE when ‘necessary and helpful’ (1989: 11), noting that SE is ‘particularly likely to be required in public, formal settings’ (1989: 18). • States (in bold) SE is included in levels of speaking and listening attainment ‘wherever appropriate’ (1989: 13) from level 7 upwards (i.e. expected attainment of average 15-year old). • States oral assessment should not be subject to social or cultural bias; is emphatic it is not the school’s place to enforce RP.
DfE/WO, 1995	SE positioned as superior and preferred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removes designation of SE as a ‘dialect’, implying superiority of SE. • Requires formal language is given a more prominent position, albeit with ‘appropriate sensitivity’ (1995: 5). • Use of SE at younger age: pupils should ‘begin to be aware of Standard English’ to achieve level 3 (expected attainment of 8-year old).
DfEE/QCA, 1999a	<p>Speech for public life takes precedence over the private and personal.</p> <p>Emphasis on formality and conforming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime aim of the Speaking and Listening at KS3: to ‘develop confidence in speaking... for <i>public and formal purposes</i>’ (1999: 31, my emphasis). • Students should ‘use the vocabulary, structures and grammar of spoken standard English fluently and accurately in informal and formal situations’ (1999: 32).
DCSF/QCA, 2007	Apparent return to acceptance of non-standard forms...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘[P]upils should be taught to ‘vary vocabulary, structures and grammar to convey meaning, <i>including</i> speaking standard English fluently’ (2007: 64, my emphasis).

	.. yet 'formal' talk trumps informal; emphasis on collaborative rather than personal talk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Range and Content</u>: 'prepared, formal presentations and debates...; informal group or pair discussions; individual and group improvisation and performance; devising, scripting and performing plays' (2007: 69).
DfE, 2014	<p>Attainment target renamed 'Spoken Language' and demoted below Reading and Writing; renewed emphasis on formal language.</p> <p>Sole allusion to dialect is regarding grammatical awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Listening' disappears. • Pupils should be taught 'using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts...'; 'giving short speeches and presentations...'; 'participating in formal debates and structured discussions'; 'improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry' (2014: 17). • Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary can be consolidated through 'analysing differences... between Standard English and <i>other varieties</i> of English' (2014: 19, my emphasis).

Cox (1989) begins by echoing Kingman's (1988) highlighting of the importance of Standard English, even using bold type for emphasis. However – recalling Newbolt's argument that children should be 'bi-lingual' (1921: 67) - he goes on to stress that Standard English is itself merely a dialect form, as valuable as the child's *own* dialect, that *both* dialects are subject to change. Perhaps to win over those romantics who value the English literary canon and might otherwise balk at the promotion of dialect forms, he reminds us that dialects are found in 'folk songs, poetry, dialogue in novels or plays' (Cox, 1989: 18). Cox's message is that both SE and dialect have a place in the classroom - it is the teacher's responsibility to help the child recognise which to use when.

Cox recognises personal dialect as part of child's identity; he admonishes those tempted to 'correct' dialect forms, aware that a child's growth *in* school is dependent on the language they bring *to* school. Further, he suggests that alertness to the differences between dialects enables children to become proficient and critical users of language. Yet these arguments do not convince his successors: the next Curriculum (DfE/WO, 1995) does not ignore dialect but, by removing the designation of SE as a dialect form, strongly implies SE's superiority; also, learners are required to use SE from a younger age.

Blunkett tries to sidestep the issue by changing the labels: his Curriculum refers to 'formal' (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 31) language rather than 'Standard English'. Interestingly, 'formal' language should be used even in 'informal' (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 32) situations⁷⁹. The term

⁷⁹ Drama, previously positioned as a means of developing self-expression (Cox, 1989) is given a skills-centred makeover and is presented as a means of exploring ideas and issues (DfEE/QCA 1999a: 32).

'dialect' disappears for good. This Curriculum, then, focuses on developing workplace skills and promoting conformity, in tune with its objective of raising standards and elevating the socially disenfranchised: in theory, if everybody speaks Standard English, there is no divide. (It does not, however, acknowledge that those whose first language is *not* Standard English are put in a deficit position, and that ignoring dialects reduces opportunities to critically explore language.)

The 2007 Curriculum (DCSF/QCA, 2007), with 'Creativity' one of its four pillars, is slightly less rigid: there are fewer references to 'formal', and a range of opportunities are given for collaborative talk in classroom contexts, including Drama, which arguably accords with the risk-taking, experimental theme of *AOF* (NACCCE, 1999). However, dialect is not resurfaced, and the scope for creative speaking and listening seems somewhat limited. The suggested collaborative activities appear designed to hone workplace-style skills – 'formal presentations and debates' (*op cit*) top the list - demonstrating a continued sense of economic imperative; and there is little to foster personal growth.

The 2014 Curriculum (DfE, 2014) is starker. Standard English only is required. Dialect remains absent: the only hint that it is recognised the requirement to analyse the differences between Standard English and 'other varieties' in order to develop learners' grammatical knowledge – there is no suggestion of these 'other varieties' in use, of their intimate association with the personal or regional. The examples of language use that students are expected to practice are almost all in formal contexts: there appears little room for language used for experimentation or personal talk. 'Listening' is also omitted from this Curriculum, distancing it still further from the notion that subject English might foster humane relationships.

In summary, the growing emphasis on the importance of Standard English through the Curricula and the concomitant demise of dialect as an accepted form demonstrates an increasing perception that SE is necessary for economic growth, even when creativity is purportedly encouraged. The move away from an acceptance of dialect also illustrates different understandings of educational rigour and of how to promote social justice; and an increasing need by governments to control the Curriculum.

Unsurprisingly, given the context outlined above, the Curricula that immediately follow Cox (*i.e.* DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999a) offer fewer and fewer opportunities for the child-centred, personal talk that Cox encouraged, which has serious ramifications for the promotion of creativity; yet what is noticeable is that there is relatively little encouragement

of creative talk in the following version (DCSF/QCA, 2007). This is striking, given that this Curriculum expressly states the importance of creativity, and that *AOF (ibid)* - on which it draws - actively promotes creative, collaborative, risk-taking oracy for economic ends.

The current Curriculum (DfE, 2014) moves still further away from active, creative classroom talk: it concentrates instead entirely on the development of formal spoken English. The theme of privileging formal language use is discernable across Reading and Writing too, as I now go on to show.

6.4.2 Reading for pleasure becomes reading for learning

All six Curricula agree that learning to read fluently is crucial for success in education and life beyond. Each also asserts the importance of reading canonical English literature – all name Shakespeare, Dickens and Wordsworth, for instance, as writers of drama, prose fiction and poetry. What is apposite is whether such literature is recommended or *required* in each Curriculum, and the extent to which reading for pleasure is encouraged simultaneously. Whereas the authors of the policy documents explored in Chapter 5 are unanimous in emphasising that creative personal growth is bound up with ideas of pleasure and freedom of choice, various Curricula now suggest a more ambiguous attitude to reading for pleasure. This is not to suggest that such reading is discredited, but it is interesting to trace the relative import placed upon it.

Table 2 summarises the story. It demonstrates that while successive Curricula after Cox (1989) purport to promote reading for pleasure, a focus on reading skills for learning and defined lists of English texts actually limit range and choice.

[Table 2: Reading for pleasure becomes reading for learning]

	Themes	Content / References
Cox (1989)	Reading as pleasure, nourishing personal growth; child-centred. Non-prescriptive. Forward-looking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coins term ‘pleasure principle’ (1989: 20); reading gives ‘fundamental satisfaction’ (1989: 20). • Books develop child ‘emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually’ (<i>ibid</i>); importance of ‘personal response’ (1989: 30); ‘children construct the world through story’ (1989: 94). • ‘Creative’ (1989: 95) approaches to class novel are ‘<i>central means</i> of enriching the curriculum’ (<i>ibid</i>, my emphasis); ‘Too much concentration on set texts for assessment purposes can turn pupils against reading’ (1989: 20). • Declines to provide list of texts – ‘wrong’ (1989: 96). • Need for broad range/choice in class/school libraries (including media and IT texts).

DfE/WO, 1995	List of texts introduced, but continues to value personal response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows Pascal (DfE/WO, 1993) in providing list of texts pupils 'should' (1995: 20) read. • Encouraging reading for pleasure is of prime importance. • Pupils to 'respond imaginatively and intellectually' (1995: 19).
DfEE/QCA, 1999a	Increased formality; reading is for study. Workaday tone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading should be for 'understanding and appreciation' (1999: 34). • Use of verbs in Orders (in sequence, 'extract meaning', 'analyse', 'discuss', 'identify') suggest development of cross-curricular skills is priority; only a marginal comment states that pupils should read 'for pleasure and study' (<i>ibid</i>).
DCSF/QCA, 2007	Reading for pleasure promoted in opening statement, but Orders indicate emphasis on skills and understanding rather than pleasure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening statement: 'Pupils learn to become enthusiastic and critical readers of stories, poetry and drama as well as non-fiction and media texts, gaining access to the pleasure and world of knowledge that reading offers' (2007: 61). • Verbs in sequence: 'extract and interpret', 'infer and deduce', 'understand', 'recognise and discuss' (2007: 65).
DfE, 2014	Endorses love of reading while strongly promoting English literary heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims include developing pupils' 'love' of literature 'through widespread reading for enjoyment'; ensure they 'read easily, fluently and with good understanding... for both pleasure and information' (2014: 13). • 'Pupils should be taught to: read and appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage... understand and critically evaluate texts... [and] make an informed personal response' (2014: 18). • Requires 'high-quality, challenging, classic literature and extended literary non-fiction' (2014: 17), focusing on English C19th-C21st texts and poetry since 1789; monocultural.

For Cox, reading is all about enjoyment. He coins the term the 'pleasure principle' (1989: 20): reading is its own reward. Yet he makes clear that pleasure from reading is not trivial or light-weight: it is the pleasure that comes from immersing oneself in a range of cultures, traditions and histories; from experiencing emotions vicariously and coming to sympathetic understanding; from expanding oneself 'emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually' (1989: 20). It is through such experience that the 'inward' and 'outward' (1989: 60) child can truly grow. Like the Blue Books (BoE, 1905 - 1959), Newbolt (1921) and Bullock (1975), he advises that children should be free to choose their own reading matter from a broad choice, with a teacher pointing them towards increasingly challenging material if necessary. The 'pleasure principle' (*op cit*) should also extend to the classroom, with teachers free to choose the texts studied, and Appendix 6 of Cox's Curriculum supports the practice of reading together through a detailed list of active, creative approaches to a class novel. Encouraging reading together in turn encourages independent reading, thereby developing learners' reading skills

and confidence. This enables them to flourish across the curriculum *and* flourish in areas associated with creativity – personal growth, humane understandings.

While following Cox in encouraging reading for pleasure, the next Curriculum takes Pascall's cue (DfE/WO, 1993) and introduces mandatory lists of 'major works of literature from the English literary heritage' (DfE/WO, 1995: 20) from which teachers should choose, ostensibly to support learners be discriminating. It is a limited offering: male writers outnumber females by more than 5 to 1; all are white British (or Irish); potentially controversial figures such as Oscar Wilde are excluded.⁸⁰ It is difficult to argue that such an offer is humane – promoting human understanding and empathy - if a significant body of humanity is missing. And, although this Curriculum recommends activities that 'emphasise the interest and pleasure of reading' (1995: 20) rather than line by line study, the introduction of the canon reduces both choice for the child and agency of the teacher, curtailing creative opportunities.

The lists remain in the 1999 and 2007 Curricula, although some additional women and black, Asian and minority ethnic writers are added. However, as shown in Table 2, focus is on reading *skills* rather than reading pleasure, indicating a change in tone. Rather than encouraging children to delight in the written word, reading becomes a tool for study. Ironically, the Preface of the glossy 1999 publication (DfEE/QCA, 1999a) presents quotations from prominent (and diverse) writers on 'The importance of English' (*Fig 2*). Collectively they promote a personal growth view: they would probably balk at the notion that readers were merely to 'extract meaning' (1999: 34) from their work.

⁸⁰ The omission of Wilde is presumably to avoid contravening Section 28, the infamous clause in a 1988 Local Government Act that banned the promotion of homosexuality in schools.

The value of English in the curriculum? What can I say?
Without English, nothing. And without good English,
nothing very well.

Anne Fine, Author

English is the language of the future, the language of the
computer. English is the most important tool you'll ever
need, no matter what career you choose. You have the right
to English. Make it your right!

Benjamin Zephaniah, Poet, Writer, Actor, TV & Radio Presenter

A good book, studied with a good English teacher, takes you
on a journey in search of answers to the crucial questions in
life you didn't even know you wanted (or needed) to ask.

Professor Lisa Jardine, Queen Mary & Westfield College, University of London

Studying English literature at school was my first, and
probably my biggest, step towards mental freedom and
independence. It was like falling in love with life.

Ian McEwan, Novelist

Figure 2: *The Importance of English (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 15)*

The current Curriculum too purports to promote a 'love' (DfE, 2014: 13) of literature in order to celebrate the English literary heritage's 'depth and power' (*ibid*) (adjectives with triumphalist connotations that reflect the increasingly nationalistic mood of the Conservative right wing of the time) and enable students to practice the reading skills necessary to access the wider curriculum. Yet the challenging and prescriptive content – which requires study of at least one Victorian novel, a play by Shakespeare and Romantic poetry at KS4 - does not necessarily lend itself to pleasure, and does little to include students who come from backgrounds adversely impacted by British colonialism. Sadly, the latest PISA data (PISA, 2019; Videbaek, 2020) confirms that reading for pleasure has declined markedly amongst secondary students over the tenure of this Curriculum.

To conclude, whereas Cox explicitly counsels against prescription and over-concentration on set texts, subsequent Curricula gradually cement prescription to the extent that students today have little opportunity in school to read anything *but* complex required reading – even those Curricula that state that reading for pleasure should be encouraged. The result of this 'planned enculturation' (Biesta and Osberg, 2008: 316) is that the culture they are exposed to is narrow and creativity is stymied; learners who are not free to grow their own reading are limited in the extent to which they can grow their own thinking and writing too.

6.4.3. The ‘genrification’ of Creative Writing

All six Curricula require learners to experience a range of writing opportunities. They share an understanding that writing is the means by which learning across the curriculum is made manifest – writing ‘stor[es] information’ (Cox, 1989: 33) - and it is implicit in all that the ability to write clearly and accurately is necessary for adulthood. What is of interest to this thesis is how functional and formal writing is positioned in relation to independent, expressive, exploratory writing that promotes personal growth; the style known as ‘creative writing’ - albeit that Plowden (1967), Wilson (1972) and Bullock (1975) were uncomfortable with this term - and the bearing this has on creativity.

It is not surprising, given Cox’s position on Speaking and Listening and Reading, that he strongly promotes such writing as a tool of personal growth, as Table 3 illustrates. What perhaps *is* surprising, given that subsequent Curricula moved *away* from Cox’s recommendations on Speaking and Listening and Reading (as described in 6.4.1 and 6.4.2) is that the 1995, 1999 and 2007 Curricula notably *follow* Cox in promoting the practice of creative writing. Yet, as the table indicates, the 2014 Curriculum deliberately changes direction by foregrounding transactional writing, particularly writing required for examinations: ‘Creative Writing’ is entirely absent from this Curriculum. Paradoxically, however, it *is* a requisite of the GCSE examination, yet in a distinctly limited rendering, as I go on to discuss.

[Table 3: The ‘genrification’ of Creative Writing]

	Themes	Content / References
Cox, 1989	Value is in the process as much as than polished product; positions writing as facilitator of learning and thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing as both private, having ‘cognitive function’ in clarifying thought, and public/for an audience, ‘storing both information and literary works’ (1989: 33). • Divides writing into ‘composition’ and ‘secretarial skills’; composing is ‘obviously by far the more important’ (1989: 36); agrees with Kingman that ‘old-fashioned grammar teaching’ is ineffective - grammar should not be at expense of ‘subjective, creative, personal and expressive’ (1989: 66). • ‘Well-structured and interesting’ (albeit badly spelt) preferable to ‘badly structured and boring’ but accurate (1989: 33). Suggests 80/20 composition/accuracy split for purposes of assessment.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘The best writing is vigorous, committed, honest and interesting’... which are ‘vital qualities’ of writing (1989: 37). • Language is central to the self: writing should be based on pupils’ existing competences (1989: 84).
DfE/WO, 1995	Advocates enabling, supportive atmosphere.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages broad range of writing opportunities, including children’s ‘own distinctive and original styles, recognising the importance of commitment and vitality in what they write’ (1995: 23). • Opportunities for ‘aesthetic and imaginative’ (<i>ibid</i>) writing top the list of writing styles. • Writing should be ‘neat and legible’, pupils should be ‘helped’ to increase their spelling and ‘encouraged’ to use the ‘grammatical, lexical and orthographic’ features of SE (1995: 23/4). • Terms including ‘appropriate’, ‘imaginative’, ‘thoughtful’ and ‘developed’ far more frequent than ‘accurate’, ‘correct’, <i>etc.</i>
DfEE/QCA, 1999	<p>Introduces writing triplets: expressive writing takes precedence.</p> <p>Sequence suggests hierarchy where composition is valued over secretarial skills.</p> <p>Suggests the personal is recognised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge, Skills & Understanding ‘1) Composition’ is: “Writing to imagine, explore, entertain Writing to inform, explain, describe Writing to persuade, argue, advise Writing to analyse, review, comment” <i>followed by:</i> 2) Planning and Drafting; 3) Punctuation, 4) Spelling, 5) Handwriting and Presentation, 6) Standard English (DfEE/QCA 1999a: 37-38). • Breadth of Study: ‘The range of purposes for writing should... focus [...] on creative, aesthetic and literary uses of language. The forms for such writing should be drawn from different kinds of stories, poems, playscripts, autobiographies, screenplays, diaries’ (<i>ibid</i>: 39). • Audience for writing should include ‘specific, known readers, a large, unknown readership <i>and the pupils themselves</i>’ (1999: 39, <i>my emphasis</i>).
DCSF/QCA, 2007	Promotes Creativity through composition above the Competence of secretarial skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes 23 ‘composition’ processes, including (at KS3) requirement to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail; b) write imaginatively, creatively and thoughtfully, producing texts that interest and engage the reader; c) generate and harness new ideas and develop them in their writing; ...

		<p>f) use imaginative vocabulary and varied linguistic and literary techniques to achieve particular effects (DCSF/QCA, 2007: 67; itemisation original).</p> <p>Not until items t) to w), under a sub-heading of <u>Technical Accuracy</u>, are SE, grammar and spelling found.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range and Content: Learners should: ‘a) develop ideas, themes, imagery, settings and/or characters when writing to imagine, explore and entertain’ (<i>ibid</i>: 72); ‘stories, poems, playscripts’ (<i>ibid</i>) are listed first of the 23 genres.
DfE, 2014	<p>Foregrounds examination-specific writing skills; Grammatical knowledge and accuracy is now top priority.</p> <p>Formal genres take precedence over imaginative, expressive genres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils ‘should be taught to write formal and academic essays <i>as well as</i> writing imaginatively’ (2014: 14, my emphasis). • ‘It is important that pupils learn the correct grammatical terms in English’ (<i>ibid</i>) – although this statement is not explained. • Pupils should be taught to ‘write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length’ (2014: 16). • List of suggested genres starts with the ‘formal expository’ essays; ‘Stories, scripts, poetry and other imaginative writing’ are at the bottom (<i>ibid</i>). • Repeated references to Standard English. • Separate section on Grammar and Vocabulary (approximately 150 words) almost as long as the Writing orders themselves (approximately 190 words); accompanied by dense 18-page glossary defining the knowledge deemed necessary.

As shown, Cox is alone in making explicit the duality of writing. It is both a ‘process’ and a ‘product’ (1989: 35) and has both a public and private function, the latter fostering personal growth through enabling thought and reflection. It is striking that this is the only Curriculum to draw attention to one public function of writing being ‘storing... literary works’ (1989: 33) – writing is a reservoir of culture. Given his perspective on the importance of reading for pleasure, Cox is here implicitly connecting writing as product - a thing read – with personal growth. This view of writing as intimately associated with growth is emphasised through vocabulary associating writing with life - ‘lively’, ‘vigorous’, ‘vital’ (1989: 37) – and encapsulates ideas expressed by Newbolt (1921), Plowden (1967) and Bullock (1975) concerning creative development and genuine self-expression.

Cox does not use the term 'creative writing' – perhaps because *all* new writing is newly created - but his perspective celebrates writing as a creative enterprise through his emphasis on the personal, the humane and the expressive. Grammar, for him, is at the service of writing, not an isolated goal. He is concerned with the production of precise, accurate writing *as relevant to the task*; secretarial aspects of writing should therefore be taught *alongside* composition. Cox makes clear that a slightly flawed medium should not denigrate the strength of the message.

The next three Curricula (DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA 1999a; DCSF/QCA, 2007) follow Cox by placing imaginative, descriptive and expressive writing at or near the top of their respective lists of required skills, while narrative or fictional writing is placed at or near the top of the list of required genres. The similarities in this patterning are striking and are, I suggest, not coincidental. Even though the term 'creative' is not always used, creativity is given status through the pre-eminent positioning of words in the creative semantic field ('aesthetic', 'imagine', 'explore', *etc*). This suggests an awareness of the prominent place of creativity in political and popular discourse in the 1990s and 2000s – creative writing is a visible product that speaks to popular understanding of what English is about - and a sense that promoting creative writing in this manner highlights the creative credentials of these Curricula. And, like Cox, the requirements for accurate grammar and spelling are near the bottom of these lists, suggesting that while these technical elements are necessary, they are subservient to content.

However, while these Curricula apparently champion creative practice, changes to the GCSE specifications muddy the message. The assessment of writing within GCSEs changed markedly over this period, so opportunities for 'vigorous, committed, honest and interesting' (Cox, 1989: 37) writing diminished as anxieties about fairness and accountability increased (Beadle, 2014). In 1988 there were numerous examination boards, each offering different GCSE specifications (Blake, 2019). It is therefore difficult to summarise the national picture but, in brief, the assessment of creative writing was then very flexible – popular exam boards initially offered assessment entirely by teachers, internally and externally moderated (Davison, 2009; Gibbons, 2017). This allowed much creative freedom for both teachers and learners, but resulted in diverse products that were, arguably, difficult to compare and quantify with a grade, and became plagued with issues of plagiarism (Demopolous, 2005; Beadle, 2014). Changes were made, such that creative writing was examined through classroom-based Controlled Assessment (CA), but this too was prone to accusations of irregularity (Beadle, 2014). For my own children, creative writing at this time

necessitated composing a draft, having it edited by their teacher, then memorising an improved version to regurgitate in the CA. Thus, the ‘Creativity’ that is optimistically foregrounded in the 2007 Curriculum is perhaps more honoured in the breach than the observance.

The 2014 Curriculum, in a no-nonsense manner, foregrounds instead writing as a skill necessary to service examinations across the curriculum. As shown in Table 3, the focus is on accuracy and formality, thus reversing the balance between composition and secretarial skills hitherto maintained. It is strange, then, given that creative writing is not mentioned once by name and is barely alluded to in the Curriculum (‘imaginative writing’ is at the very bottom of the list of genres, the list being headed by ‘formal expository essays’ (*op cit*)), that the revised GCSE English Language examination includes a creative writing task.

However, the examination paper entitled ‘Explorations in creative reading and writing’ has marks allocated such that content and organisation of ‘creative’ writing earns fewer marks overall than technical accuracy (AQA, 2018): responses that are boring but error-free are rewarded more highly than those which have flair and originality but some minor mistakes⁸¹. This results, as I described in the opening chapter, in some teachers erring on the safe side. For their learners, ‘Creative Writing’ is a limited, prescriptive genre: 400 words of prose, including as many shoehorned-in tropes as possible, written in exam conditions. Ironically, the examination boards counsel against ‘over-preparing students with formulaic methods’, preferring ‘an honest response where the student’s voice can be heard, rather than an artificial, contrived construction’ (AQA, 2018: 8).

In conclusion, Creative Writing nominally survives today as an element of a GCSE examination but is absent from the Curriculum itself (2014). It is now a pale imitation of the writing promoted in Cox (1989) and pre-National Curriculum policy: it has been reduced to a sub-genre, tokenistic, an element of an examination in which SPaG⁸² scores more highly than originality and artistry.

⁸¹ The GCSE in English Language includes just one opportunity for students to write a ‘descriptive or narrative’ piece. While this element of the examination is worth 40 marks (25% of the whole), 16 of these marks are given over to ‘technical accuracy’ and only 24 (15% of the whole) to ‘content’ (AQA, 2018: 9; other examination boards offer specifications with the same weighting). The other 40-mark written question (‘writing to express a viewpoint’) (*ibid*) has the same 24-mark/16-mark split, meaning that ‘technical accuracy’ commands 32 out of the 80 marks available for writing overall, i.e. 40% of all marks available for writing, and 20% of the whole GCSE.

⁸² Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar.

To sum up briefly my analysis of speaking and listening, reading and writing over the life of the National Curriculum, I suggest that only Cox (1989) recognised the unitary nature of English as presented in the documents I discussed in Chapter 5: he understood creative writing as the *product* of rich and varied classroom talk, and wide, independent reading. In their mangled bid to promote oracy and reading skills that would benefit industry and the economy, subsequent Curricula brought in by Conservative (DfE/WO, 1995), New Labour (DfEE/QCA, 1999a) and Labour (DCSF/QCA, 2007) governments effectively *decouple* writing from the other elements of unitary, creative English, even while apparently promoting creativity. They thus starved imaginative, expressive writing of what sustains it; they also initiated the inexorable narrowing of creative writing, such that it is now, for many, merely a necessary component of a high-stakes examination.

6.5 Discussion: Creativity quashed

This chapter sought to inquire whether the humanist, child-centred, personal growth view of creativity that was fundamental to the development of the subject (see Chapter 5) is retained in the orders for English through the six National Curricula to date; and, given changing understandings of 'creativity', whether the concept of creativity *in English* changes. Here I respond to these questions with reference to the literature on creativity presented in Chapter 2.

In the first Curriculum, Cox (1989) attempts to defend the understanding - initiated by Pestalozzi around 250 years ago (Darling, 1982) and clearly traceable in policy documents from the first Blue Book (BoE, 1905/1912) through to Bullock (1975) - that a personal growth, humane, child-centred foundation should underpin education. In the creative spirit of his predecessors, Cox's vision of English prioritises personal and cultural development, whilst simultaneously seeking to incorporate different constituencies with opinions about what English is and is for.

Yet the political context was such that Cox's notion of creative English is quickly redefined and, over the next three decades, ultimately disappears. Its decline can be tracked relatively straight-forwardly through the Curricula representing the post-Cox Conservative, New Labour and Labour administrations. During this period, notions of creativity were revised to reflect the political and financial imperative: creative collaboration, problem-solving and risk-taking are seen as important in preparing students for success in the post-millennium economy (Barron, Montuori and Barron, 1997; NACCCE, 1999; Carter, 2004). In theory, the

English Programmes of Study could have included requirements to follow these recommendations but - as shown above - the focus instead was on developing formal spoken Standard English and the skill (not the pleasure) of reading. Even the unprecedented amount of contemporary research on creativity (e.g. Benson, 2004; Burnard, 2006; Jeffrey, 2006), including the reframing of personal growth as 'little c creativity' (Craft, 2001: 45), apparently had no impact on English policy. Indeed, although Fleming (2010) indicates that creativity for ethical nourishment was ignored in the 2000s in favour of creativity for economic ends across all subjects, the skills-centric nature of the Programmes of Study for Speaking and Listening and Reading imply that, in English, creativity was in danger of being ignored altogether⁸³.

The writers of the Curricula spanning 1995-2007 are unnamed. It is not clear that any had a career history rooted in English. What they produced are policies that ostensibly promote creativity whilst simultaneously presenting a view of creativity that is ill-defined and/or runs counter to other discourses; the Curricula are confused, self-contradictory, and lack a holistic underpinning. Cox's notion of a strong, unitary English balanced between oracy, reading and writing becomes a three-legged stool that wobbles with legs of uneven length. The volume of literature in the field of secondary English that criticises these Curricula is an indication of their unpopularity (e.g. Yandell, 2003; Fleming and Stevens, 2010; McCallum, 2012; Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014; Yandell and Brady, 2016; Bomford, 2018).

Ironically, there is also an imbalance between the Orders for Reading and Writing in today's Curriculum (DfE, 2014), but for opposite reason. This document seeks to inculcate a 'love' (*op cit*) of reading as a means of ensuring students imbibe the texts representing cultural capital. Simultaneously, however, it diminishes the means of developing the cultural capital of the future by devaluing writing: 'Creative Writing' is reduced to an element of an examination in which accuracy counts more than personal expression or originality. Therefore, students are required to be passive consumers of a curated culture and have very little latitude to 'create' culture that represents themselves. Even Kingman, whose *Teaching of English Language* is nearest in tone to the current curriculum and positions English

⁸³ A further irony is that personal well-being, a related theme apparent in the education literature of the time (Bruner, 1996; Eliot, 1998; Jeffrey and Craft, 2004) is also ignored in English policy. While the general introduction to National Curriculum of 2004 apparently heeds contemporary arguments for a greater focus on personal, social and health education, and purportedly aims to encourage pupils to develop 'personal response[s]' (QCA, 2004: 10), the English Curriculum ignores well-being by retaining the orders of the 1999 version word for word. This underlines that political and economic imperatives drove the content of the Curriculum.

Literature as knowledge more necessary for nationalistic reasons than aesthetic, recognised that culture ‘has to be revitalised by each generation’ (1988: 11).

This observation aside, the current Curriculum (DfE, 2014) is much closer to Kingman (1988) than to Cox (1989). It dispenses with creativity, leaving only knowledge and skills. Contrary to Gove’s stated mission, it has the effect of disenfranchising learners by making them receivers of a preordained set of cultural knowledge but effectively denying them the opportunity to create it anew.

The impact of all iterations of the National Curriculum on some of those who taught and experienced it will be explored in Chapter 7.

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Chapter 7: Conversations on creativity

7.0. Introduction and overview

The purpose of this chapter is to understand how the expert English teaching professionals in England I interviewed interpret and respond to the national policy and guidance discussed in the two preceding chapters. It explores how they perceive creativity, and how they read and respond to the policy and guidance around creativity in English teaching.

The chapter is based on colloquies (interviews) I conducted with both experienced and newer colleagues 'nested' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 27) in the field, all of whom are recognised as influential in secondary English, nationally or locally. As explained in Chapter 4, the twelve colloquists (participants) together represent a wide constituency of secondary English teaching in England (see [Appendix 3](#) for a summary of their career histories), although, of course, they each spoke in a personal capacity. The stimuli for the individual colloquies I conducted were eight quotations drawn from the policy documents discussed above and associated contextual literature. The context for the colloquies is thereby their framework.

As a hermeneutist, my readings of the resulting written colloquies (transcripts) saw the texts in dialectical conversation with each other as well as with me (Gadamer, 1975/2004), and 'hotspots' (Maclure, 2013: 661) emerged that helped me to understand synergies between them. It was therefore a creative leap to present these findings as a script through which the dialogues, individual 'event[s] of truth' (Gadamer, 1975/2004: 484), are woven into a single 'event'. The resulting presentation of the colloquists' polyphonous voices ensures a kaleidoscope of angles and perspectives, thus providing a 'display of the relations' (Shotter, 2000: 237) between the policy texts and the colloquists' responses. Further, the trope of a script underlines my interest in the humane: a script involves the *coming together* of people, a sharing of understandings, that I hold to be at the heart of English.

Moreover, creating a script is hermeneutic in nature (Oakeshott, 1959; Dilthey n.d. in Sherratt, 2006; Gadamer (1975/2004; Kinsella, 2006) since it involves playing with possibilities; this approach allows reconfirmation of my understandings through the very process of shaping the writing (Jessop and Penny, 1999). And not only is it appropriate that a thesis on creativity experiments with form, but it underlines arguments made in Chapter 5 that rich oracy stimulates original, sophisticated writing.

Applying the hermeneutic circle at various stages provided confidence that the resulting script might be accepted as a ‘truthful’ representation of the combined colloquies. I invited the colloquists to be co-readers of the draft of this chapter. Their comments were, in the main, extremely positive; I made corrections where necessary (see [Appendix 9](#) for sample responses). This further reinforces the idea that the final script is sufficiently truth-bearing.

Building on my paper ‘*We’re Not Building Worker Bees.*’ *What Has Happened to Creative Practice in England Since the Dartmouth Conference of 1966?* (Smith, 2018a) which drew on initial readings of the colloquies, I crafted four scenes based on four major themes that emerged. As previously explained, I had not known the colloquists’ attitude to creativity prior to conducting the interviews, so was struck by the extent of synthesis. Scene 1 affirms that they all view creativity (in a broad sense) as integral to English. In Scene 2 they deplore the restrictive nature of successive iterations of the National Curriculum, particularly the instrumental measures adopted by some schools as expedient for exam success; yet simultaneously they note the importance of the individual teacher as a foil to such practice. In Scene 3 they consider the conditions necessary for enabling creative English to thrive, before in Scene 4 suggesting some of the political and institutional changes that might lead to a revitalisation of creative English. Their ideas on the interdependence of Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing as central to a humane, creative, unitary subject are woven throughout, implicitly and explicitly, as they unconsciously echo ideas raised in Chapters 5 and 6.

7.1. Setting the scene

I showed in Chapter 4 that context is integral to a hermeneutic inquiry (Gadamer 1975/2004; Kinsella, 2006). It is therefore important to explain the setting and situation in which the script is set.

I imagined that, having interviewed all the colloquists individually in settings of their choice (as described in Chapter 4), research funding was provided to enable them to convene in one place to develop the conversations. That place is the British Library, chosen because, with its 200 million+ items, it is a world-class archive; it is the repository of every new book published in the UK; it is a major research library, with items in many formats (from ancient manuscripts to modern sound recordings); it is a modern, Grade 1-listed building that is

widely accessible; it has an inclusive ethos⁸⁴ (www.bl.uk/about-us). It thereby represents the old and the new, high culture and everyday culture, historic and ‘living’ creative English.

We are based in a small theatre within the Library, with a live audience. The audience represents the readers of this thesis. Having an audience is also a means of visualising the ethical conundrum that - in spite of all the care taken during the research process – the colloquies can only be as truthful representations of the colloquists’ beliefs as they chose to divulge. I have no way of confirming that they told me what they *really* believe, rather than what they thought I might want to hear, or what they thought might portray them in a good light. While I am confident in the integrity of the colloquists and consider deliberate fabrication very unlikely, I am alert to the notions that Kinsella (2006) highlights: that ‘truth’ is temporary, and that ambiguity is inevitable. The trope of a script in performance serves to emphasise the multiple layers of meaning and interpretation.

Please note that in order to retain the continuity of a script format, I have chosen to reference this chapter using footnotes rather than in-text citations.

7.2. The script

It is January 2017. Digital screens stage left and stage right display images of some of the ancient and contemporary ‘treasures’ on show in the Library’s Sir John Ritblat Gallery (<https://www.bl.uk/events/treasures-of-the-british-library>). On the rear wall is a further large screen that displays as appropriate:

- *titles of each scene;*
- *sub-titles (designated in bold in the script);*
- *the quotations under discussion;*
- *other visuals as described in the script.*

The entire cast is seated comfortably in a loose semi-circle around three coffee tables on which the coloured cards used to stimulate the colloquies are scattered. Cafetieres and coffee cups, water carafes and glasses are dotted around. The cast is facing the audience but in eye-line of each other. They appear earnest, engaged and absorbed. We join them as they launch the discussion.

⁸⁴ At the time of writing the final draft of this thesis, the Library was hosting two major exhibitions. One is on the 15th Century British queens, Mary and Elizabeth; the other is on Hebrew Manuscripts.

7.2.1 Scene 1: Why English, and what does creativity have to do with it?

Lorna Thank you so much for coming! We're here because you have agreed to discuss creativity in secondary English, with a specific focus on curriculum policy. But let's start with what you understand subject English to be – what exactly are we concerned with? I want to begin with this because your thoughts on what English *is* and what it *does* might have a bearing on how you understand English and creativity.

You have already seen the provocative way in which John Wilson posed that question (*the quotation appears on the rear screen*). What's your response?

Does "being educated in English"... imply knowledge of grammar and syntax? Competence at 'literary criticism' (and what is this anyway)? Ability to produce 'creative writing' (another obscurity)? Knowledge of the dates of authors and the dimensions of the Shakespearean stage? (Wilson, 1972: 9)

Anne I suppose the problem is that being educated in English means different things to different people. If you are David, who's just joined my Year 9 class from Hungary, being educated in English is being able to have conversations with peers. He doesn't understand most of what's going on in class, but he can tell me the witches in Macbeth are *deus ex machina* because we've been over and over it, so in that sense he is quite educated in English. But being educated in English doesn't stop on the 16th of August or whatever day it is that the results come out. I have a degree in English. Does that mean I'm educated in English? Yes and no. (*She shrugs*)

Gill That's a good illustration of how English is multi-layered, multi-disciplinary. I think it's about seeing *connections* between those different aspects of the subject.

Jack (*Chiming in, animated*) Those connections might come from that expressive talk that helps us make sense of everything...

Judy (*Also enthusiastic, she picks up immediately*) ... or through reading a shared bit of text. Or through the making of a text.

Jack Exactly. Reading, writing and talking are all aspects of the same process. I have a unitary view of English, and what we need is a unitary view of the English syllabus that doesn't make an artificial division between Literature and Language.

Anne That's fine, don't have a problem with that. And in terms of creative writing (*gesturing to the quotation on the display and making air quotes*), well, some really

good students are really good at analysis but can't write creatively at all, and that doesn't mean they are not educated in English.

Tony Perhaps. But creativity in English is not just about 'creative' writing. It's not just 'wow' words writ large. It's the whole range of writing, from poetry through to TV scripts to journalism, whatever. It's making things. So it might be a notice that's going out to parents, which is as dismal as you can get, but you're involved in something that's got to be made by somebody, it's got to be created.

Gill Yes – *all* writing ought to be seen as creative writing.

Pause

In some ways I guess the word 'creativity' is slightly problematic. Would it be difficult to teach English creatively if you didn't at some level reflect on *why* it was creative, whatever your definition of creative might be?

Lorna The difficulty in defining the term 'creativity' comes up a lot in the literature, of course.

Jack Well, I could simply open my OED and find 'creativity', but the key question is, what do people mean by it? What's their investment? What's their agenda?

He pauses to allow the questions to sink in.

What's being contested here? What are the armies that are being assembled? In whose interests?

Lights dim for a few second and come up again.

From skills to personal growth: the living of English

Judy I'm not sure that I like your military tenor, but those questions are interesting. But creativity's also to do with *creating*, which I think people lose sight of when they think of the word *creative*. What needs to be given time and space in this way of thinking is that you are actually in the process of *moulding* something; you are in the process of *building*; you are in the process of taking on new ways of looking.

Leon For me, creativity is more about cognition. It's to do with *flexibility* and having an *imaginative response* to what one's provided with culturally and educationally. One doesn't sit down and think, 'I'll learn this for the exam.' That's useless. It's the

response to it: 'What sense do I make of it? How do I relate it to my own life? How do I relate it to the lives of those around me? How as I develop in age and maturity do I relate it to society around me?' All those are elements of creativity.

Sara Totally! I think that when we talk about creativity in schools, people often think in terms of the Arts and (*in a sing-song voice*) sitting down and doing a nice piece of creative writing - but actually creativity is *thinking*⁸⁵...

(the speakers almost overlap each other in their enthusiasm)

Leon ... and using inference, deduction, comparison

Paul ... and making decisions

Gary ... and solving problems.

Anne It's about *discovery*.

Pause.

But also understanding that you can't always make sense of everything.

They smile in recognition of a shared understanding.

Leon All those mental activities we've just mentioned underpin creativity. I mean, look at Vygotsky, Piaget! Their understanding of these things is robust and they've never been seriously challenged on that.

Lorna It's interesting to consider whether those 'mental activities' you've described are prerequisites of creativity, or are developed *through* creativity or, indeed, whether there is a virtuous circle where creative practice reinforces what was already there.

Pause.

I think that you position creativity slightly differently, Paul? I remember that you described a perspective that does not contradict the idea that creativity requires these cognitive skills, but yet simultaneously places it on a different plane.

Paul Yes, for me, it goes beyond developing the intellectual or the academic. There's a spiritual element too. I was talking to my A level students yesterday about creativity

⁸⁵ I previously cited Sara's words in Smith, 2018a

– it’s our life blood and without it, people feel purposeless, despondent, and their life is just meaningless. Especially in a secular society which most of us inhabit.

Sara I know what you mean. I think being educated in English is about being educated within your soul. It’s about empathy and understanding of the human experience. I wouldn’t be teaching English now if I didn’t get that.

Paul Creativity is what makes life worth living. (*He looks around the circle; every eye is on him.*) Without it I would feel there was something missing. It’s brought meaning to my life.

Pause.

Judy For me, creativity is the living of English: it’s the opportunity for teachers and students to feel a happiness of a completeness or an excitement about living in the moment.

Lorna That’s also a beautiful notion (*looking at Judy*). It reminds me of some of the separate conversations I had with you all: a number of you spoke of ‘English’ and ‘creativity’ interchangeably, as though they were synonymous. It suggests an intimate, inseparable, indelible bond between English and creativity.

Lights dim for a few second and come up again.

People, processes and products

Ruth (*Enters the discussion tentatively, thoughtfully, after a moment or two*) So yes, it’s all these things; and it’s about enjoyment. But the last thing I would want is for one of my students to be really passionate about a topic yet not be able to express that to others. So creativity is also what we’re doing now, it’s about speaking, communicating with other people.

Anne Even if they are on the same topic but have totally different views! So yes, I’d say it’s about collaboration, and talk, and experiment.

Gary And it’s manifested through people who can work in teams, both in schools and in the world beyond.

Judy (*Leaning over to pick up the card with the Summerfield quotation, an excerpt of which appears on the rear screen*)

"Creative English" ... will involve us in talk about our selves (sic), our language, our behaviour, our attitudes and beliefs. (Summerfield, 1968: 44)

Look. When I read this, the word 'our' jumped out at me: 'Talking about our selves, our language, our behaviour.' That pronoun conveys the notion of *community*.

Jack 'Our language' (*pause*). This reminds me of one of the ideas that Jimmy Britton⁸⁶ presented - that we can think of two wings of English activity. (*Flaps arms to illustrate the metaphor.*) One wing is a tendency towards *participant* use of language, using it to get things done. The other wing is *spectator*, we're reflecting on language, we're working on our representations of reality in order to make sense of the world. Both things go together. And in the centre (*touching his chest with both hands*), moving out to those two wings, is expressive language, the sort of ordinary language that's close to the self, that we use day in, day out. So we've got spectator, participant and expressive, those are the three things. In terms of creativity, expressive language is the kind of generative talk that helps make sense of everything. It's about understanding how having a view of language that's both generative and constitutive makes us who we are.

Judy I like that idea: creativity helps you fly. Individually and together.

The rear screen displays a video of starlings in murmuration.

Sara (*Nodding*) So that suggests that creative English is about making yourself a better person *and* making yourself a more responsible member of *society*.

Paul I'd go further. To really move forward as an individual *and* to move forward as a society you need to use creativity as a *starting point*.

Judy That's interesting, because if we see it as fundamental, the starting point, we also need to remember that it's also about the end result. We haven't yet mentioned the idea of creativity as a product-driven notion.

⁸⁶ James Britton.

Jack's image is perhaps a reworking (or re-remembering) of the Transactional-Expressive/ Expressive-Poetic image of modes of writing discussed by Bullock (1975: 164) (See 5.5.2). Britton was a member of the Schools Research Council, which Bullock references, and was an active member of the committee contributing to the Bullock Report (1975); he wrote the Foreword for the 3rd edition of Dixon's *Growth Through English*.

That's what creativity is for a lot of people, as defined here (*picking up the card with the definition of creativity from All Our Futures (NACCCE, 1999: 30) which appears on the screen as she reads it aloud*):

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

- Tony Yes, the outcome is important, it's not *all* in the process, no (*chuckles*). That's important, but we are looking for an outcome, because you want to know it's real rather than just (*mimics*) 'We're messing around here'.
- Judy Perhaps. But would you accept that 'outcomes' – wretched word! - are not always necessarily tangible? You might live in the creative moment through shared reading or through talking; you might do it through just being together in a safe space and being able to suggest new things.
- Tony True. But another outcome of creativity is new knowledge. I worked in Singapore for a number of years. They realised there that a curriculum based on 'rote learn it, repeat it' resulted in only being able to repeat what they already knew. They realised they needed to be more creative to grow in knowledge.
- Leon And they were right. But why the focus on novelty? People seem to think that creativity is having bright ideas and thinking of new things, but that's extremely rare. Anyone you think about – any painter of the past, any poet of the past you think was brilliant - has built on the work of his or her predecessors. So, I'd say creativity is about development. I think that originality is *not* the most important thing.
- Gill But actually, I remember thinking when *All Our Futures* was published - and I still do think - that their definition of creativity is a helpful one in terms of education. They say it's not got to be original for the whole world, it's got to be original to the person generating whatever it is. If you've never thought of it, if it's new to you, it's therefore original.
- Tony There were one or two quite thoughtful people in New Labour back then, you know. You could feel on their wavelength. Creativity wasn't a bad word. It might not have been put into place often enough or fast enough, but it was seen as a positive thing.
- Phil Huh! It's not now. Although maybe those who are nervous of creativity have a point. Don't forget that creativity can have dangerous outcomes.

The mushroom cloud of a nuclear explosion appears on the rear display screen.

Lights dim for a few second and come up again.

We're not building worker bees

Jack Perhaps the important thing is not to define creativity, but to see what work creativity does – not just discursive work, but what work it does to organise socio-political commitments and understandings. What educational understandings does it help to organise? It's not simply about achieving something.

Phil (*Dryly*) Surely education is about finding out what is inherent in the child and what needs to be superimposed upon it.

Anne raises her eyebrows, questioningly

Lorna I suspect that you are being deliberately controversial, Phil, in advocating a top-down view, given that you spoke previously about the importance of education going beyond the functional and materialistic. I think Jack is saying that creativity is a movement, something dynamic, which suggests that the impact it makes *in* the classroom has reverberations well beyond the classroom.

Anne Education is about opening doors! That's why I think the Nick Gibb statement you showed us is very narrow. (*Quotation appears on the rear screen.*)

Education is the engine of our economy... most important of all, we must ensure that more people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a demanding economy. (Gibb, 2015, n.p.)

It's Gradgrindian. It's only about skills they need to succeed in a 'demanding economy', not skills they need for life, not skills they need to be people.

Judy Considering the use of pronouns again, it's interesting Gibb is talking about 'we,' but using it in a way entirely alien from Summerfield's community-building 'our'. I suppose Gibb is trying to get some sense that we're all in this together, but he's apparently suggesting that there is something which is 'knowledge' and there is something which is a 'skill', bound and tangible, and that both are necessary to generate income. It's alarming.

Anne Exactly! Education should prepare them for work, of course - whether that be become a poet or go and work for a FSTE 100 company - but it's not all of it.

Leon Agreed: an education system does have to educate people for the economic life of the country, but Gibb's definition is not sufficient.

Tony It's fatuous. It's reductionist both about education and about economy.

Sara It's a very capitalist viewpoint.

Doug And it's ironic. Britain is intensely creative, isn't it? The fashion industry, the music industry, film, literature, are of huge import. You do hear government ministers talking about that, but at the same time as they're introducing policies which threaten to utterly destabilise those creative industries.

Paul The emphasis is the wrong way round. The *by-product* of having creative, educated children who have a thirst for information and a thirst for knowledge is a more successful society and a more successful economy.

Sara Yeah. I don't think we should say to students, 'This is what you need to go out into the world of work,' I think there's an argument to be made for education for education's sake. I think there has to be an understanding that education serves a purpose beyond just creating worker drones - we're not all working for the queen bee. Education is much more than that.

Paul (*Nodding vigorously*) Forget getting a good job, forget getting a wage and a house and all the other things that are held out as carrots to students. What about seeing the world in all its colours and variation, what about understanding when people are lying to you and when they're telling you the truth? What about being able to read sincerity in a friend?

He looks around the circle expressively.

These are the things that for me education is about. It's about enabling everyone to take a full and active part in their community - not about being the engine of the economy.

Sara At the moment we are in a position where a lot of people feel quite disenfranchised.

Paul And society is attacking itself and attacking others who have a vital part to play in our society.

Sara A creative education can change society. It can help people really feel that they're not disenfranchised any more.

Pause.

Ruth This may sound naïve, but I didn't realise when I came into teaching just how much focus there would be on money and the economy. I came into teaching for the joy of learning.

Gary And me – and, I suspect, the majority of us here. And I think at our peril should we lose that sense of this being a humane occupation. (*He picks up the card with the Gibb quotation and tears it in two.*) And it's *this* attitude that is causing the crisis we're experiencing and the haemorrhaging of teachers from the profession.

7.2.2: Scene 2: Making sense of policy

Lorna I know we all understand Gary's frustration, given figures that suggest more teachers are leaving than ever before. Yet I noted from my conversations with some of you more - errr – experienced teachers (*smiles from Gill, Leon, Gary, Tony, Phil*) that even thirty years ago there was a sense of distrust within the profession about education policy imposed from above. Could you comment further, Gill?

Gill I always wanted to teach in the way that I had been taught to teach. Then I became Head of English when the National Curriculum was just being introduced - this was the very end of the 1980s – so it was a particularly fraught but interesting time. I was working in a really interesting department, with mixed ability teaching throughout, and fantastic other teachers. Testing was coming in; it was a stressful time. In my department we didn't want to conform, we wanted to do things differently.

Leon I recall how, back then, a colleague and I would chat and worry about how education was going! (*His tone changes from amusement to sobriety*) And then remember the introduction of the National Strategies⁸⁷? They brought in this teacher-led rather fast-paced episodic lesson: objectives, starter, episodes, evidence in writing, plenary. It was really rather deadly.

Doug Part of what I thought I could see happening to English teaching by the Literacy Strategy – that concept that a lesson should be in a certain number of chunks - was what made me run for the hills. Or at least to the freedom of the independent sector: it was like coming back to something I felt I knew.

⁸⁷ C.f. 6.2.1.

Tony But at least back in the 2000s we were moving towards a much more creative curriculum. Granted, there was a sense of imposition, but at least New Labour were beginning to see that there were possibilities that could be developed. Look! (*He reaches to pick up the relevant quotation card, then points to the references to 'creativity' in the quotation when it appears on the screen.*)

Creativity: Pupils show creativity when they make unexpected connections, use striking and original phrases or images, approach tasks from a variety of starting points, or change forms to surprise and engage the reader. Creativity can be encouraged by providing purposeful opportunities for pupils to experiment, build on ideas or follow their own interests. Creativity in English extends beyond narrative and poetry to other forms and uses of language. It is essential in allowing pupils to progress to higher levels of understanding and become independent. (DCSF/QCA, 2007: 62)

But, as you know, that really has all gone by the board.

Phil (*Harrumphing – being deliberately provocative, gesturing towards the quotation*)
That was merely a government attempt to provide token licence for more than rote learning.

Lorna That's interesting. Are you suggesting that creativity was present in the policy documents but not in classrooms of the day?

Phil makes a steeple of his hands and taps his ring fingers together, noncommittedly.

If that is the case, is the 2014 curriculum any different, in terms of opportunities for creativity? We know that the word 'creativity' is not included. Do you feel that its omission is an acknowledgement of the problem in defining it - perhaps it *is* present, in another guise - or is its absence more calculated?

Judy (*Looking directly at Phil; emphatic*) I'm sad that that statement is no longer in the present curriculum and I'm sad that the word 'creativity' isn't in there at all, or any words like it. It's a loss. I think that is a sign of the times, Mr Gibb, and it links in with the direction of travel.

Gill Agreed. The current curriculum is not *supportive* of creativity and that (*nodding towards the DCSF/QCA (2007) quotation*) more holistic approach. I mean, when you look at the work of Newbolt and some of those big reports, they are explicitly arguing for creativity.

Jack Neo-liberals shy away from creativity. They're allergic to it. (*Chuckles*)

Gill So maybe your military metaphor *is* appropriate. (*She glances Jack; he smiles self-deprecatingly.*) Those in positions of power are looking for measurable outcomes, because they're in government for a short period of time. They need results (*snaps fingers*) quickly and are constantly looking for things that are quantifiable and measurable, so education discourse has become very driven. It is becoming dominated by 'impact' and 'outcomes'.

Sara Exactly. Everything in schools has to be formalised, double-checked. It doesn't allow for creativity. The government is looking for levels somehow *proving* ability and attainment, but I think that creativity is separate from ability and separate from attainment. I can talk about the liquorish smell of the tarmac on a hot day, but there's no way you could write a mark scheme for that.

She raises her hands in a gesture of frustration.

Anne (*Sadly*) The system only measures what it wants to measure.

Sara And *because* it's so difficult to measure, creativity is something of an afterthought.

Leon Sadly, however, the data-drive won't go away because the government is worried about our poor productivity. It means that Progress 8⁸⁸ will be valuable...

Phil (*Jumping in dismissively*) ...to those least qualified to have anything to do with education.

Judy Although they imply they have the moral high ground, which is worrying.

Leon (*In a measured way, pressing on with his argument*) I think Progress 8 is with us permanently. There's cross-party political commitment to it. It will be very useful.

He pauses before introducing a contrasting point.

The *negative* of Gove's innovation in the current curriculum is the idea of knowledge is more important than skills. That is such nonsense. There's really very good evidence that that is simply not the case, that it's mistaken. Knowledge is redundant without understanding, being able to apply it. (*Pause*) And even though the English orders include the word 'enjoy', I fear that schools will lose sight of that.

⁸⁸ Progress 8 (and Attainment 8), first published in 2018, are school performance measures introduced to replace the percentage of students awarded GCSE A*-C as a performance measure. Student 'progress' between KS2 and GCSE is collated and averaged (www.gov.uk).

- Gary And it results in a curriculum that is narrow and confining.
- Gill It is quite shocking what gets foregrounded on the schools' websites, what's in your face about spelling, punctuation and grammar for example, before you get to anything that really matters.
- Gary The current GCSE specification, in particular, is crushing. Lethal. Children are jumping through hoops – it's like dog training.
- Gill It means, I think, there are huge possibilities for being very *uncreative* right now and I fear that.
- Gary The trouble is, as soon as you talk like that, people just assume you're part of some sentimental blob kind of thing⁸⁹. But you're right.
- Ruth That makes me feel uncomfortable.
- Sara And the kids feel uncomfortable too!

Pause.

I now find with year sevens is that they're almost afraid of creativity. Particularly with the new Key Stage two SATs⁹⁰ rubric: there's a real noticeable difference in year sevens this year, who had to do the new-style tests, and previous year seven cohorts⁹¹. This year they are almost fearful to try the creative things. In previous years it was (*in an enthusiastic tone*) 'Miss, is it all right if I do it this way?' and they'd try an experimental bit of writing. This year it's much more (*in an anxious tone*) 'Would it be all right if I did this? Will I still get the marks?' I really struggle with that. They clearly *want* to do the creative thing, but they understand what the expectations are of a school, and they don't see a school as necessarily a place where creativity should thrive⁹².

But if I set them a creative homework, they absolutely go with it: they really, really love it. I've had some amazing homeworks produced: the postcards sent to Martha in *Abomination*⁹³; they've written them, made it look like they'd been through the

⁸⁹ Michael Gove derided his critics as The Blob, a giant mutating world-threatening amoeba that featured in a 1950s Sci-Fi film (Robinson, 2014).

⁹⁰ Standard Assessment Tests, sat by Year 6 pupils in maintained schools, used to measure a child's progress through primary school and as benchmark for secondary school.

⁹¹ The revised English SAT comprises a grammar, punctuation and spelling paper and a reading comprehension paper (e.g. www.gov.uk/.../primary-curriculum-key-stage-2-tests-and-assessments)

⁹² I previously cited some of Sara's words in: Smith, 2018a.

⁹³ Young Adult novel by Robert Swindells, published 2007.

post, all that stuff, they're amazing. Yet somehow, there's a marked difference when they're in the classroom, they just can't bring themselves to do it in the same way.

Anne I recognise that. I teach lots of children – mainly boys – who won't write things down in class because they're frightened of it being wrong. They'll *say* it to me in a conversation and then I'll say, 'Yeah, that's brilliant, that's a really good idea, go and write that down!' and only *then* will they write it.

Paul So the same thing is true of those very bright students you get at GCSE, who get fantastic A grades, they can do the analytical essay in the dark with their hands tied behind their back, but ask them to write a story or write poetry and dialogue and they're all at sea because they've been so used to writing what the teacher's told them to write, a PEE paragraph or extended PEE paragraph⁹⁴. They can do *that*, but when it comes to actually telling a story and writing convincingly about feelings or creating a sincere relationship, not a clue!⁹⁵

And I also find it a lot with A level students. I say, 'Right, tell me what you think about this text,' and their response begins, 'Is it about..?' And I say, 'No, no, no, *tell* me; take the chance of being wrong, talk your ideas aloud, take the chance! Stop posing it as a question and tell me what *you* think!'

Doug And it means that A level students adopt a more mechanical approach when writing too. I get that there's a desire for accountability in how marks are awarded, and that having a bunch of English teachers agreeing what was the best and what was not so good – as exam marking used to be - is not acceptable now. But I remember when more clear emphasis upon assessment objectives in curricula was brought in, such that an essay would be judged through the lens of say four or five assessment objectives, each one contributing a mark to the overall result. If there wasn't enough 'context' - to use an awful phrase – then an essay that was otherwise brilliant and insightful and beautifully structured and cogent, and *should* be getting a top grade, might not get a top grade because it had not hit all the assessment objectives.

Pause, musing.

⁹⁴ C.f. 2.3.1.

⁹⁵ I previously cited the exchange between Anne and Paul in: Smith, 2018a.

Although, having said that, there is something creative in meeting the challenges of a particular examination essay structure.

Paul Possibly.

Now sits forward, with an urgent point to make.

I'm going to be controversial here. I'm not of the opinion that our national curriculum or exam system necessarily has to smother our humanism as teachers. I think the greatest danger to creativity in the class is the teacher themselves.

Pause.

Tony Of course. Uninspiring teaching is not just a result of current policy and the exam is not necessarily the killer. You can take a creative approach to passing the examination or a very Gradgrindy one.

(He flourishes an imaginary pen.) It's like sonnet writing! I work better when I write sonnets knowing there are those constraints to the form. You can have the constraint you've got to work to, but you can interpret that creatively.

Doug Yes – having to deliver a brief to a deadline can create some really interesting work and push you into directions you wouldn't perhaps have gone in otherwise.

Gary Sure, but the balance is wrong. We're growing a generation of teachers who have a *mindset* on criteria; at our peril we're losing sight of humane.

Gill Please don't blame the teacher educators for that. There's a tangible disconnect between what we do (*nodding at Lorna, Judy, Anne*) - training new teachers of English - and what they're experiencing in many of the schools they're practising in. And although a lot of our trainees aren't in schools where they're working with the National Curriculum, my sense is that colleagues in schools are under ferocious pressure. I am observing my own trainees teach and they are having to be in line - they are having to fit in.

Judy Me too – it's tragic. In a very data-driven, outcomes-driven curriculum, creative English isn't given the space it needs. It's something I encourage trainee teachers to explore, but I'm not sure it's something that we're seeing in schools. I don't think there's the space and capacity for that for that to happen. It's all 'quick fix' and intense stress.

Gill So can we blame English teachers who might adopt a limited view of our version of creativity and trot out that same sinecure?

Lorna It seems we're saying that, while the teacher is ultimately responsible for what happens in their classroom, the context in which that teacher works is particularly challenging at the moment. While creativity is not antipathetic to exam results, it is particularly hard for English teachers to work as they might wish due to the demands of the current curriculum and, in a market economy, a ferocious need for good grades.

Ruth We're seeing that tension that Newbolt referred to played out (*picks up card as quotation is displayed on the screen*):

Now [i.e. 1921], as then, there is the danger that a true instinct for humanism may be smothered by the demand for definite measurable results, especially the passing of examinations... and if those who are anxious to do justice to English find it so hard to carry out their desire, what is to be expected from those who will remain indifferent? (Newbolt, 1921: 55)

Lorna Sadly, yes. But what seems different now – and especially worrying - is that the situation is such that some students too are becoming fearful of being creative – in Sara's words, they don't view a school as where creativity happens.

Tony (*Thoughtfully*) It seems to me that you start getting *really* creative only when you get out of the box of the teacher and the pupils and you start involving the whole school, other disciplines, go beyond the school. As long as you're trapped in a three-way thing – you, the curriculum and the pupils – your creativity is limited.

Lorna Yet it is the system in which we have to work. How can we square the circle? I'd like to think next about how this can be addressed: how can we create the climate we need to address these challenges?

7.2.3 Scene 3: Creating the conditions: how to resist the policy

Jack To be provocative: 'twas ever thus? Let's take the long view. My research suggests that the picture of what English was like between 1945 and 1965 turns out to be very complicated. In one particular class I looked at from 1946 or '47, there was this working-class Jewish kid – he turned out to be Harold Pinter!

Everyone laughs.

And a kid who became a professor of History at Cambridge! There was a huge amount of talent just in that room. There was a pocket of – to use the word – creativity. You know, kids absolutely galvanised, working well with teachers and doing all kinds of interesting things.

And then in the next room there was a teacher who was doing something straight out the text-book, doing pretty dull things.

Translating these two examples into modern parlance: creativity doesn't simply appear in a 40-minute period with a plenary at the end. It's in the hands of the teacher.

Phil Yes: one aiming for more than just mechanical training in cerebral performance.

Doug I've noticed lots of metaphorical models for teaching these days are mechanical or technological. They're about, 'Here's the tool which we want you to bolt onto this, which will then cause *this* to happen.'

Gary I think that it's probably because a combination of the National Curriculum and a National Strategies approach implied that there's a set way of doing things, and an accountability culture which has - in some schools - reduced Heads of English to simply the people who implement management protocols. They have lost their vocation. We're being de-professionalised.

Paul (*Jumps in eagerly*) Which is why I'm no longer Head of Department. When our new Headteacher was appointed, he wanted a Hitler-like Head of Department. He said, 'Every lesson must look the same; if I go into classes, I want to see every teacher teaching this at the same time.'

I said, 'That's not how English works. Apart from everything else, all our classes are different. They have different dynamics, they have different students, and the teachers should be responding to the students in their class.' But to no avail. So, I stepped down from that role.

Gill I can understand why you did that - although it's a shame, because the profession needs principled leaders. Classrooms are not groups of isolated individuals or clusters of thirty. They are about *relationships* - between the people in the class, and the teacher, and the texts, and so on and so forth.

Paul Creativity can be crushed in a classroom by a senior management team who interpret the word of Ofsted or word of the examination process in a particularly tight and stringent way. To make it work, senior management have to create an atmosphere in which teachers can take chances and not feel they are being penalised by the appraisal process or for the results that their children may - or may not - get. Teachers have to be given the safety and the freedom in which to be vital.

Pause.

Doug I like to think of an English classroom as being a an organic thing, like creating a greenhouse or orangery in which the climatic conditions are such that things can spring to life and grow.

Jack Put another way, you have to see creativity as something that has a *pre-history*.

Lorna You mean by 'pre-history' the soil in which the creative seed is planted, and the tending of that seed once germinated, and the water and sunshine it gets – all those things?

Jack Yes. I can give you an example. I've still got loads of records and kids' work going back to my earliest days in the classroom. I can look at a powerful poem produced by a black kid in about 1984, and by tracing back through the archive of video recordings and sound recordings and my lesson plans and bits of his writing and all the rest of it, I can put together the story of how that poem came to be.

What created that poem was partly the spark – the seed - from the kid, who happened to write poetry in his spare time but wouldn't say anything about it in school; and also the debates and discussions that went on in the class, sometimes organised by the teacher, sometimes not, about race, about identity, a whole load of stuff; and it all came out in the poem. So, you can't glamorise and celebrate his creativity as the moment when the poem was first read and recognised and valued; it came from all that went before.

Creativity comes from young adults being taken seriously, taking themselves seriously.

Phil (*Assertively*) Well, yes, that's all very well in an ideal world. But I'm in favour of a more interventionalist approach. I'm too concerned that leaving such vital

development 'to grow for itself' risks failure under competition, diversion or lack of motivation.

Jack I take your point. But I'm an optimist! Jimmy Britton put it very simply; he said that the greatest discovery teachers have made recently is that children can write; given the right conditions, children have the resources to take control of their own writing.

I have learnt that, as a teacher, you have to give autonomy to kids and show regard for the language that they produce. I know this can easily be parodied and sentimentalised, but I think that at its best, it's a first principle of teaching: that you work with what the kids produce rather than constantly seek to intervene.

Phil OK. But as a matter of expedience? Expedience could drive creative solutions.

Paul It comes back to the teacher creating an environment in which kids can take chances.

Judy ... and fronting up the notion of experiment...

Gary ... and giving students space to get things wrong.

Jack I agree: teacher creativity is in the situation. The situation half creates itself. You are managing what is happening in your classroom, and it's the decision *not* to intervene that can be creative too. It's not easy. It can't be packaged, it can't be planned for in a very specific way.

Gill But I would argue it *can* be on the planned for, or how would new teachers learn? How do we develop? That's why we do small scale research. You learn by doing it yourself, from talking about it with other people, researching your practice. Perhaps we could say it's about doing things differently. Not always majorly differently, just a bit differently, to see what happens.

Jack Point taken; there's an element of preparation. But you have to work with the materials in the moment, in the classroom. It's like orchestrating something. And English teachers that are worth their salt – probably the majority of English teachers – know when it's happening. But now - with the league tables, assessment, all the kind of things they have to deal with in schools, they must ask themselves all the time, 'Can I afford to let the kids go on talking? Can I risk this blowing up? Am I allowed to do this? What's the impact of this?'

Sara I think that teachers today do the absolute best that they can within the limitations they're working under, but if you've got five thousand and one expectations, and none of them really relate to creativity, then you have to do the ones that you're expected to do.

Gary (*Shaking his head in mock disbelief*) I think we will look back on this era in education and think, how did we allow ourselves to underrate teachers?

Paul That's why I am fearful for the death of creativity in education – especially for those just starting out who must toe the line.

Gary Until recently, if you worked in a great English department, you tended to be surrounded by fairly feisty, articulate, vociferous people who read a lot, went to the cinema a lot, argued a lot and drank red wine a lot.

Laughter and nodding.

Yet at the English conferences I speak at now, I've noted a palpable reduction of feistiness and confidence.

Lorna And is that a result of the policy itself, or because English teachers are somehow losing the agency to counter it? The discussion over the past few minutes has been between seasoned, experienced teachers: is it really the case that the new generation of teachers will not be able to develop their own professional autonomy?

Lights dim for a few second and come up again.

Creating an English teacher

Doug Being a creative practitioner is counter-intuitive to a lot of English teachers these days because I think that's not really the model that's taught or encouraged.

Gary Indeed – I think what exemplifies an English teacher is the way they speak, the way they read, the way they explain things, and personal response stuff. But now there's a generation of teachers who were themselves brought through assessment foci and modularity and therefore that's their mindset, and a world of PowerPoint where the teacher sees preparation as buying some pre-package which you put onto a screen for the child can look at. At our peril we're losing that sense of this being a humane occupation.

Gill I agree that *some* teacher trainees coming through who were at school over the life of the previous National Curriculum have lost what it means to enjoy reading and need to rediscover that.

Lorna Yet hang on, there's an interesting theme developing. Five of you are classroom teachers. We've heard that you, Paul, opted to step down as Head of Department; Anne did the same. Doug moved out of the mainstream and into an independent school. Three committed, experienced and resilient teachers changed their role as a direct consequence of their dislike of curriculum-induced pressures in their schools.

But Sara and Ruth are relatively new recruits: they are, arguably, products of the approach you disparage, Gary. But they are not automatons; they are independent-minded, thoughtful, committed and able young teachers. I'm going to embarrass them, but I could suggest that they are models of what we would wish all new English teachers to be.

Sara has spoken forcefully about her belief in a humane, creative English education, and schools as being so much more than an examination factory. She described herself to me as a lifelong learner. Ruth too. They understand that creative approaches in English are worth fighting for in classrooms now and in education policy of the future.

Ruth I was a student at the school I now teach at. Governments change and curriculums change, but the teachers I work with continue to instil that lifelong love of learning into today's students that they instilled in me.

Lorna That's interesting! I don't doubt you, but wonder how you can be so sure of this? And what it looks like in practice?

Ruth (*Smiles, shrugs*) We read! We talk! That's what excites me and that's the reason I teach. That really is it.

Pause.

Sara Something I have been doing a lot of work on in my own practice recently is the idea that you need to be taught the rules before you can break them. There is real import to that; Stephen Fry talks about it in *The Ode Less Travelled*⁹⁶ – he says that you have

⁹⁶ Fry, 2007.

to learn the rules of poetry before you can go on to write free verse or adopt an ee cummings approach, whatever.

Lorna Does that apply to English teaching more generally? Can you only do it 'right' by deliberately doing it 'wrong'? We've already noted that creative teaching is possible, although the context is not encouraging of it; do English teachers need to be actively interventionist or subversive to teach in the way that they believe they need to?

Ruth I'm not sure! But I don't think we can restrict the discussion to English. I often talk about creativity with my friend who's a Maths teacher. He argues that Maths is just as creative – if not more so! – than any other subject, and we've had plenty of discussion about *that!* (*Laughs*)

7.2.4. Scene 4: Imagining the future

Lorna So how should we best respond to the situation in which we find ourselves? What messages do you have for policy makers and - or - teacher educators, in order to develop that broader, humanist vision of education we all seem to espouse?

Gary We need boldness in our politicians. We need bold changes. If I was in charge, first of all, I'd scrap Teach First. Fifty percent of Teach Firsters leave after two years⁹⁷. Unlike Sara and Ruth, they don't get the philosophical intellectual underpinning they need; they get tricks for the classroom largely – cheap gimmicks - they can't invest themselves in the profession.

Jack A good illustration of why teachers need space and advice.

Judy And a good advertisement for university-based PGCE courses.

Gary The second thing that I would do is scrap performance-related pay⁹⁸. Instead, I would build in a system of continuous professional development that builds on teacher knowledge - so if when you've done five years in this school, you then get to spend two weeks working somewhere else, or two weeks in a university department, or two weeks of reading time; and when you've done ten years you get something else - a bit like the Shanghai model where the maximum any teacher in

⁹⁷ This assertion is largely borne out in the official figures www.esriblog.info.

⁹⁸ Introduced by Gove in 2014 (isbl.org.uk), despite concerns (neu.org.uk).

Shanghai teaches is fifty percent and they have the rest of the time to develop, to hone their craft⁹⁹.

Leon It's the same in Finland. And I think they offer even better CPD in Alberta¹⁰⁰.

Gary I think we will look back and see that the lack of proper CPD is the big omission of all government policy. Getting good people, keeping good people, isn't through dangling financial carrots in front of them, it's about making the job more rewarding. Give them more time, more reflection, more opportunity to contribute more widely. I think it's pretty hard to argue that that wouldn't be beneficial to teachers.

Gill Absolutely. It's about researching your own practice. You learn from doing it yourself, from talking about it with other people, however small scale – which is what our PGCE assignments and Master's work tends to do.

Tony Yes – it wasn't until I started working with Creative Partnerships that I saw creativity in a different way. Before that I thought more in terms of, 'It's just getting them to be creative with words', but I realised that it's much more a mindset.

Ruth (*Thoughtfully*) Yes, I do things now in the class I would never have done a couple of years ago. Recently I was doing poetry comparisons with a Year 10 class and just from nowhere I decided that I would get out a ball of string. The students would be poems; they'd each have a post-it note on their head. One would hold a piece of string and make a point about their poem, and to pick up the other end someone else needed to have a point that was either complementing or contrasting the first point. When they were writing about the poems they remembered to imagine the string. (*She laughs with pleasure at the memory.*)

Gill Yes! That's a brilliant example of how you are shifting, even *transforming* your pedagogy through reflection.

⁹⁹ The literature suggests that this is a slightly exaggerated claim ('After the first five years of teaching, all teachers must undergo at least 360 hours of in-service training every five years to upgrade their educational philosophy, skills and capacities. For secondary school Senior Teachers, the amount of training required rises to 540 hours every five years.' (NCEE, 2016: 14)). However, it is clear that the amount of in-service training for Shanghai teachers, both school-based and in specialist teacher centres, far exceeds what is on offer in England.

¹⁰⁰ The literature demonstrates that CPD in Finland and Alberta is well-developed, centrally-funded and highly-valued (European Commission, 2020; Government of Alberta, 2010).

Gary Exactly (*nodding to Ruth*). So, thirdly, Gibb and co need to enable school leaders to give teachers the freedom to make English the hottest subject on the curriculum, as your teachers did for you.

Leon For that to happen, they need to resolve the extraordinary dislocation between what is taught and tested at Key Stage 1, which is not really preparing pupils for what is taught and tested at Key Stage 2, and so on. There's no continuity.

Tony And they need to introduce more humane exams. Not necessarily continuous assessment - I have a lot of sympathy with that approach, but it can be misused (*chuckles*). I've misused it myself with one or two pupils – but a system that can better assess genuine attainment.

Ruth I've heard that in some countries they have an oral exam, and I think that's an interesting way to check students' understanding.

Tony You must be thinking of the International Baccalaureate. Yes, one assessment method used in the IB is a half hour oral examination with an external examiner. 'So let's talk about *King Lear*.' Terrifying in some ways, and expensive - so it has its disadvantages - but a good examiner can see through those who could just talk and those who needed to be brought out. It's got potential.

Leon For that to happen, we'd need to abandon this notion of competitiveness which started under Margaret Thatcher. This competitive model – everybody out for themselves – doesn't work: we've been more or less flat-lining, according to PISA and PIRLS¹⁰¹, since the nineteen-nineties – twenty five years. Much more valuable would be returning to groups, collaboration.

Doug Perhaps in ten years' time we might be looking at a kind of open market in qualifications whereby little consortia of schools are grouping together in different ways to offer alternatives?

A friend of mine who's a Head of English has created his own alternative to GCSE English Literature. He is still running the GCSE English Language - because it would be damaging to pupils' life chances if they didn't have an-Ofqual-approved qualification in GCSE English Language - but his view, and the view of the senior leadership team in his school, is that English Literature is not necessarily a

¹⁰¹ C.f. 2.2.3.

qualification of that ilk and that it can operate on a different basis. They're setting up their own course: it's 80 percent coursework and it's internally assessed, so it is very much going back to a model where teachers who teach students over two years, and who understand their strengths and weaknesses, are able to award those students grades in a rank order that fits their understanding as professionals. I think it's great.

Gary (*Matter-of-factly*) Yes: great for independent schools who have those freedoms. A shame for the 94% of students who don't.

Doug You misunderstand – I think these opportunities should be rolled out for *everyone*.
General nodding, agreement.

Lorna (*Addressing everyone, checking notes made during the discussion*) We're nearly out of time, and I think Doug's point is a perfect place to pause. You clearly agree with him that creative English is a child's right; that such an approach can lead to the development of sensitive, empowered, inquiring individuals who will not become worker bees.

Further murmurs of assent.

I admit to being surprised at the extent of consensus. As you know, when I invited you to take part in this project, I did not know in advance your views on creativity. I had imagined that some of you might be fans of those former English teachers whose publications have recently made waves in the popular education press, yet none of you has argued that 'more knowledge equals more intelligence' like David Didau¹⁰², or castigated discovery-based learning like Daisy Christodoulou¹⁰³, or recommended the 'Core of the Core' approach to reading like Doug Lemov¹⁰⁴. Indeed, the level of synthesis in the discussion is extraordinary, especially given the range of your own educational and professional experiences.

It appears that, for you all, teaching is a vocation, and to fully achieve that vocation – whatever your experience and expertise – one needs professional freedom. The conditions as enshrined in current policy make achieving that freedom difficult today, with the dominance of the test all-enthraling and an apparent attempt to

¹⁰² Didau, 2019: 11.

¹⁰³ Christodoulou, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Lemov, Driggs and Woolway, 2016: 5.

silence the debate around creativity. However, those of you with long professional memories suggest that the National Curriculum has had a contentious history, there has always been push-back, and English teachers have been able to work their way – creatively - around some of the restrictions.

What Ruth and Sara have said gives especial grounds for optimism. Young teachers, brought up within the Curriculum, and trained in schools feeling the pinch, they are – despite the odds – as creative in their practice as possible. They are inspired by the same things that many of you maturer colleagues were inspired by. (*Excerpt from Summerfield quotation is displayed on the screen.*)

"Creative English" is not for me a matter of simply eliciting verse or prose, but rather of establishing a relationship and an ethos which will promote experiment, talk, enquiry, amusement, vivacity, bouts of intense concentration, seriousness, collaboration, and a clearer and more adequate self-knowledge. (Summerfield, 1968: 44)

Perhaps I can sum up by suggesting that the consensus is we need to keep new teachers safe, their heads above water. It is up to them to inspire their students and the next generation of English teachers. And it appears that the feeling here, today, is that we need to continue working creatively and actively towards a curriculum that opens up opportunity, that gives everyone a chance to grow.

I'd like to thank you sincerely for your contributions.

FINIS

7.3. Reflections

The aim of this chapter was to understand how a group of expert English teaching professionals conceive creativity and its place in secondary English curriculum policy. The colloquists were, to some extent, co-readers of the policy texts alongside me; through the discussion they reflected not only on the policy texts but their significance in relation to their own lives.

As expressed above, what I found was in some ways unexpected. The literature surveyed in Chapter 2 (e.g. Yandell, 2003; Cremin and Myhill, 2012; Bomford, 2018; Gibbons, 2019) is gloomy about contemporary practice, seeing it as increasingly reduced and corralled since the introduction of the Curriculum. There is elsewhere concern about the deleterious effect of over-assessment and accountability - particularly given the importance of English to a

school's performance measures¹⁰⁵ – such that English teachers feel so 'overwhelmed... by necessity and responsibility' (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012: 72) that they 'kill creativity' (*ibid*: 90). However, while the colloquists are critical of the Curriculum (DfE, 2014), they indicate that – in their view - it *is* possible to retain some creative agency in the classroom. While I must stress that the colloquists are a small and elite group who cannot be said to represent English teachers nationwide, this could suggest that the situation may not necessarily be as bad as the literature implies (although further research would be needed to assess the extent to which this may be true).

The colloquists' view is that English is a unitary, creative subject, based on, in Phil's words, 'a wider view of personal growth, self-esteem, understanding of self and others and a grasp of what makes us all better and worse human beings' (Colloquy: Phil, 2017: 2). The script includes discussion of the importance of collaborative, exploratory talk; of reading for pleasure; of expressive personal writing. This indicates that the personal growth view traced through Chapter 5 (BoE, 1905-37; Newbolt, 1921; DES, 1959; Bullock 1975) and promoted by Cox (1989) has remained the most popular of the five models amongst English teaching professionals, confirming suggestions by Marshall (2000) and Goodwyn (2016). They implicitly reject the cultural capital being pushed by the Curriculum and, with it, elitist notions of culture espoused by those such as Eliot (Fleming, 2010). As Jack notes, the unitary view of English does not separate language from literature. Rather, there is a sense that it is partly *through* engagement with literature that what Judy terms 'the living of English' (*op cit*) happens.

There remain tensions, of course. Those currently in the mainstream classroom resent being part of the 'system' (Anne, Paul) and are frustrated that creativity is ignored because 'there is no way you could write a mark scheme' for it (Sara, *op cit*). Doug is now based in an independent setting outside of the 'system' (*op cit*), but is yet upset by the impact of the Curriculum on the shape of examination specifications. The teacher educators report experiences similar to Anderson's (2013) when teaching *The Island*, and are dismayed to observe student teachers reducing potentially rich content to little more than feature-spotting. This suggests that even student teachers encouraged to practice creatively by their

¹⁰⁵ English is double-counted in the Progress 8 metric, and triple-counted if both GCSE English Language and Literature are taken together (*op cit*). This means that English contributes more to a school's performance than any other single subject.

University-based PGCE tutors are not always able to enact such practice on their school practice.

This, in turn, leads to frustrations, as the colloquists see that an English teacher's role is in danger of diminishing, echoing Jeffrey and Craft (2004), Goodwyn (2016) and Perryman and Calvert (2020). The older colloquists (Gill, Leon) concur with Stubbs (1989) and Cox (1991) that the erosion of a teacher's autonomy began as far back as the advent of the National Curriculum (and is something they fought against). This suggests that it is the *vehicle* of a mandatory curriculum that they challenge, since Gill and Leon implicitly admire the *content* of Cox's policy in terms of its positioning of English. Doug's experience shows how the National Literacy Strategy, introduced a decade after Cox, further undermined a teacher's professional freedom (as noted by Bomford (2018)); but it is interesting that even after the *demise* of the Strategy in 2010, anxiety remains that teacher agency is ever more limited. Gary is scathing about 'deprofessionalisation', as are the critics (Cremin, 2016; Yandell and Brady, 2016; Bomford, 2018). However, despite the suggestions in the literature (Yandell and Brady, 2016; Perryman and Calvert, 2020) – reinforced anecdotally by the colloquists – that teachers are obliged to teach to the test, none of the colloquists admits to doing so.

This suggests that creative teaching that fosters creative learning (Wyse *et al*, 2014; Reid *et al*, 1993 *in* Banaji and Burn, 2010) survives. What is significant about the colloquists' testimony is that those who remain active in the classroom are *not* necessarily changing their own practice to conform to the accountability regime. Sara and Ruth give examples of both planned and spontaneous practice that is responsive to needs of their learners; and they see themselves as learners too (Craft and Jeffrey, 2004). They understand that learning is iterative. Anne, Paul and Doug may have changed their roles to escape what they found to be unbearable pressures from management, but they did so to free themselves to continue to teach as they wish. Of course, my sample is exclusive: the colloquists' expertise may provide them with unusual capacity; and since the sample consists only of those who chose to remain in the profession, it excludes the voices of those who have left teaching because their creativity is stifled (Goodwyn, 2016; Perryman and Calvert, 2020). However, it does indicate a common determination to be resilient and resist imposed agendas.

Further, Ruth and Sara's experience demonstrates that even teachers who grew up with recent policy and have known nothing but the current National Curriculum professionally are able to teach creatively, which suggests that – contrary to the fears expressed by Gary and others (Green and Cormack, 2008; Cremin and Oliver, 2017) that collective memory of

creative practice is diminishing - it has not disappeared altogether. Perhaps its survival is due to being curated and passed on by Gill, Leon and Judy – the teacher educators. Despite Anderson’s warning (2013), these testimonies suggest that new teachers can learn to work through the challenges of their training year as their understanding of English matures, which gives them the confidence to practice as ‘disruptive professionals’ (Thomas, 2019, n.p.).

In Chapter 8, I move on to consider these findings in the light of the policy documents and so consider further the agency of English teachers.

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Chapter 8: To contest or comply? A consideration of English teachers' creative agency

8.0. Introduction and overview

I began the research for this thesis in 2015, soon after the introduction of the latest National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2014) and before a body of literature on its impact had been established. As I have shown, literature since published suggests that the Curriculum changes are indeed having a significant negative effect on the profession, on students, and on the subject itself – as borne out through the colloquies discussed in the previous chapter - although the colloquies also suggest grounds for optimism, which I discuss further below. To reiterate, this recent literature suggests that a considerable proportion of teachers are leaving; those that stay are under immense pressure, often suffering professionally and personally (*e.g.* Bomford, 2018; Perryman and Calvert, 2020). The wellbeing and overall happiness of British students has fallen dramatically since the introduction of the current Curriculum (PISA, 2019). Indeed, 'for many, the English classroom is no longer the place to enjoy reading and, as noted, fewer now read for pleasure outside the classroom (Videbaek, 2020); numbers signing up for A level English Literature (traditionally a subject for those who 'love' reading) have recently plummeted (Turner, 2019)' (Smith, 2020a: 317). There are already fears that this will have an adverse impact on the subject, as fewer students will go on to study English at University, leading to fewer academics researching and developing English, and there will be commensurately fewer who choose to train to teach.

Those in the field recognise that urgent action is needed. For instance, an international conference involving teachers, English academics and teacher educators was held online in July 2020, its intention to celebrate the diversity of English while addressing its future in straitened times and work out a way forward (www.englishsharedfutures.uk). I hope that my thesis might contribute to the ongoing discussions.

This chapter opens by summarising the findings in relation to the two original research aims: it demonstrates first that curriculum policy originally presented English as essentially a creative subject rooted in a humane, child-centred pedagogy, but that this view has been 'turned on its head' (McCallum, 2012: 18) over the past century so that today's National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) appears *anti*-creative; and second, that representatives of the profession (the colloquists) largely reject the Curriculum and – contrary to fears expressed in the literature - practice creative English where they can. The chapter then moves on to consider new horizons that these findings prompted, as I discuss the relationship between

the policies and those charged with enacting them whilst confined *by* and *within* them – a position further complicated by policy containing ‘paradoxes’ (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012: 96) which remain generally unaddressed. I then discuss why harnessing the memories of teachers as creative agents could secure the tradition of creative English into the future. In reflecting on these dynamics, larger narratives emerge concerning agency and power in the wider sphere, which leads to a discussion of the crucial role of creativity in education as a means of preparing young people for the challenges they face in the future.

Hermeneutics has been central to my inquiry. Concerned as it is with interpretation, contestation and actively looking out for ambiguity as a means of opening things up, hermeneutics led my exploration both of English education policy in England and colloquies with those interpreting and responding to that policy. As a hermeneutist, I recognise that I am part of the process: I view the respective socio-political perspectives of the policy texts and the colloquists from my own situated context. This is especially fitting, given that the project was motivated by my 30 years’ experience in the field of secondary English in England. What I offer, then, is not an outsider’s ‘external’ picture of what is happening; but an exploration and interpretation of what is happening from within, and make my argument on this basis.

The process has involved combing, synthesising, drawing out of inference, and making imaginative connections. The circumference of my hermeneutic circle became ever greater as I sought meaning across documents that span 120 years and colloquists with collectively (at the time of our conversations) over 300 years’ experience. Making links between and across the data – from policy document to policy document, colloquist to colloquist, and policy document to colloquist – has enabled the identification of both points of concurrence and tension.

8.1 Responding to the research aims

8.1.1 From creativity as core to creativity commodified – a response to research aim 1

Here I briefly reiterate and synthesise the key findings of Chapter 5 (which covers policy from 1905 - 1988) and Chapter 6 (which covers the six versions of the National Curriculum, 1989 - 2014) to present the long view of the relationship between English and creativity as it appears in national policy and official guidance.

Curriculum policy from the first Blue Book (BoE, 1905/1912 to the first National Curriculum (Cox, 1989) - Kingman (1988) excepted - presents a view of English to which creativity is essential, even though the term 'creativity' is not used in a secondary policy document until Bullock (1975). These documents conceive of unitary English as a humane subject that involves nurturing personal growth; collaborative practice that celebrates individual contributions; appreciation of the aesthetic through high Culture alongside a recognition of and enthusiasm for everyday culture; experimentation and imagination. It is a very rich practice which, by current definitions of creativity (Chappell *et al*, 2016; Chappell, 2018), implies that English in this broad sense is understood to be a fundamentally creative subject.

The guidance provided through the Blue Books (BoE, 1905/1912) that predate Newbolt (1921), and then those (BoE 1923; 1924; 1927; 1937; DES, 1959) that bridge the gap between Newbolt and Bullock (1975) indicate that this message was consistent. Although the Blue Books rarely feature in the literature in the field today, I believe that they are important in demonstrating that the policy documents *unfailingly* promoted creative English. Far from there being a vacuum before 1921 and between 1921 and 1975, there is evidence of committed and sustained efforts to encourage and consolidate creative practice in classrooms.

The view of English as a creative, humane subject has proved enduring in the field and is largely accepted and promoted by English practitioners today (*e.g.* Fleming and Stevens, 2010; McCallum, 2012; Hodgson and Wilkin, 2014; Thomas, 2019). Yet National Curriculum policy from 1995 (DfE/WO) onwards (DfEE/QCA, 1999a; DfES/QCA 2004; DCSF/QCA, 2007) moved *away* from this position, gradually uncoupling English from creativity. Ironically, this is despite the term 'creativity' became increasingly prominent in the Curriculum between 1995 – 2007 in response to political imperatives (as evidenced by publications such as *All Our Futures* (NACCCE, 1999)), when notions of creativity as collaboration and problem-solving came to the fore. Indeed, creative practice is increasingly proscribed in each iteration of the English Programmes of Study even when the Curriculum orders that frame the English orders promote it and, even more surprisingly, when 'creativity' is advertised as one of the four pillars of the English Curriculum (DCSF/QCA, 2007).

Each of these iterations of the National Curriculum (DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999a; DfES/QCA 2004; DCSF/QCA, 2007) present an increasingly limited view of creativity and

hence a different view of English. They progressively stymie opportunities for language to be explored and celebrated and children encouraged to think, question and imagine. Instead, formal language is foregrounded, Standard English becomes mandatory, and reading is reduced to a skill needed to access the curriculum. In this sense, the loss of 'creativity' from the current version (DfE, 2014) is not as sudden a departure as might first appear.

In dropping the term 'creativity' altogether, today's Curriculum (DfE, 2014) outdoes even Kingman (1988) in presenting English in its least creative manifestation yet: English has become primarily a subject that serves the assessment process. The only nod to creativity that remains is the 'creative writing' of the GCSE specifications, yet this is decontextualised from the creative stimuli of constructive talk and reading for pleasure, and its emphasis on accuracy over content suggests its inclusion is tokenistic. It may be that the Curriculum was written by those who do not understand the unitary view of English and therefore its reliance on creativity; or it may be because the writers do understand and actively reject it, suspicious of creativity's associations with freedom and choice (Whittemore, 1968; Sternberg 1999). That the policy writers remain anonymous means that this is open to conjecture: the educationalists who once enjoyed the 'secret garden' (*op cit*) of education policy, knowing that no senior politician would enter, have perhaps been replaced by policy-makers who bar the way to educationalists¹⁰⁶. The data-driven worlds of the one have become so different to the human relationship-based worlds of the other (Smit, 2005) - even within the context of today's 'dominant audit culture' (Heilbronn, 2013: 31) - that it is difficult to see an opportunity for meaningful dialogue.

8.1.2 – The colloquists' defence of creative English - a response to research aim 2

Considering those policies in the light of in-depth colloquies with expert English teaching professionals provides an impression of whether – and if so, to what extent – the Curriculum orders are enacted by their intended audience; in other words, whether the policy as it exists on the page is brought to bear. The colloquists were drawn from across the field of subject English: the twelve include academics, English teachers, heads of department, examiners, initial teacher educators, past and present. While the interview process meant

¹⁰⁶ The secret garden analogy is one Gove favours. He argued to the National College conference that 'there can be no going back to the secret garden when public and professionals were in ignorance about where success had taken root and where investment had fallen on stony ground' (Gove, 2010) and he justified the use of systematic synthetic phonics for beginning readers by arguing that 'Unless children have learned to read, the rest of the curriculum is a secret garden to which they will never enjoy access' (DfE, 2010: 43).

that they were responding to extracts of the policy documents and related literature (rather than the whole) and that their words may be ‘imperfect, contestable’ (Gardner, 2010: 6) given the reliance on their impressions and memories, a hermeneutic positioning accepts that their collective voices represent an ‘established notion of historical truth’ (*ibid*).

Together they indicate that secondary subject English practised today is not necessarily as limited as the Curriculum (DfE, 2014) might suggest. In this sense, their combined testimony contradicts suggestions (Cremin and Myhill, 2012; Anderson, 2013; Bomford, 2018; Gibbons, 2019) that the subject is in jeopardy. The colloquists maintain a broad, varied, complex, humane view of creative English and, accordingly, those who are classroom teachers seek to practice as creatively as possible within the constraints of the system, and the teacher educators are ‘in solidarity’ (Heilbronn, 2013: 35) in encouraging newcomers to do the same. Those in positions of responsibility (head teachers and those active in subject bodies) seek to promulgate creative practice as widely as possible. Far from being led by the policy, they resist it as far as they can – although, of course, they cannot be assumed to represent the profession as a whole.

Despite this, however, suggestions that the English teacher’s role is becoming ‘deprofessionalised’ (Gary, *op cit*), together with concerns over accountability and the perceived status of the subject, combine to indicate that there remain real and urgent pressures on subject English. It appears that these pressures are directly linked to the demise of creativity in policy: the examination regime denies genuine creative opportunities, reading choice is curtailed. The resistance of the practitioners, perhaps, only goes so far – to what extent is English practice vulnerable if its beating heart, creativity, is suppressed? What might be the longer-term impact of the removal of ‘creativity’ from the Curriculum on English practice? These, and related questions, informed a new research aim: to investigate where the power and agency lies in practice.

8.2. Policy in action: questions of agency

My project, then, inspired me not only to understand how English teaching professionals *interpret* Curriculum policy but to understand how they *enact* it. The journey of inquiry led me beyond my original brief to re-pitch my nomad’s tent (St Pierre, 1997) and be open to new horizons.

I begin this section by arguing that the dissonance between the Curriculum (DfE, 2014) and contemporary literature in the field promoting creativity (*e.g.* Gordon, 2015; Thomas, 2019;

Bleiman, 2020) is potentially unhelpful, particularly to new entrants to the profession. This suggestion is compounded by evidence that current policy apparently views teachers with distrust and attempts to deny them agency.

However, I go on to suggest that all is not lost: perhaps the Curriculum is not as restrictive as it might seem in practice. Since policy-makers cannot control the reception of their texts (Smit, 2005), far from showing ‘helplessness’ (Erss, *et al*, 2014 *in* Erss, 2018: n.p.) in the face of the challenges, some teachers are able to respond in creative ways; and I further suggest - following de Certeau (1984) – that their ability to ‘inhabit’ the policy is actually a *creative* response. They are not, after all, ‘empty vessels’ (Smit, 2005: 295), even if they are ‘silent voices’ (*ibid*) in terms of policy-making: they receive the policy, but might review it in the light of their experience, and act accordingly. For teacher educators, this may mean making explicit the need for what Heilbronn calls ‘double blindedness’ (2013: 35) as they help their student teachers work both within and against the policy. Accordingly, I emphasise the importance of capturing collective professional memory to preserve what is precious, that it might inform the next generation of English teachers. Finally, I argue that a creative education is the means through which our children learn to become agentive themselves, and so are better prepared to deal with the slings and arrows they will undoubtedly face.

8.2.1 The problem of incompatibility: tensions between policy and the professional literature

My reading suggests that such was the influence of the policy documents from the very inception of the subject (BoE, 1905/1912) to the introduction of the National Curriculum (Cox, 1989) that they forged the tradition of creative English: it is their notion of English that is promoted as ‘best practice’ by the research literature today (*e.g.* Cremin and Myhill, 2012; Goodwin, 2016; Bomford, 2018; Thomas, 2019; Bleiman, 2020). McCallum has this conception of English in mind when he suggests that an English teacher should focus on how ‘*creativity and English* link to learning’ rather than how ‘*creativity and learning* link to English’ (2012:32, emphasis original). He and his contemporaries implicitly echo the Blue Books (1905-1937; DES, 1959), Newbolt (1921) and Bullock (1975), and *continue* that tradition by arguing that learning happens best when we are creative - in blunt terms, creativity helps students achieve better grades. Yet such learning is not merely judged in academic terms: it is, as Paul memorably expressed (*op cit*), learning about one’s soul; creativity is the ‘living of English’.

However, as I have shown, this relatively stable view of creative English (up to and including Cox (1989)) was followed by a period of *instability* as Curriculum policy continually changed (DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999a; DCSF/QCA, 2007; DfE, 2014), creativity was sidelined, and the view of what English *is* and what it is *for* became confused. That there are gaps between policy and practice is well recognised (Smit, 2005; Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012; Heilbronn, 2013; Biesta and Osberg, 2014), but it is interesting that, for secondary English, the gap is between the legacy of *former* policy (now adopted and advocated as best practice in the literature) and *current* policy. The ‘planned enculturation’ (Biesta and Osberg, 2014: 316) that today’s Curriculum mandates (DfE, 2014) is, ironically, *counter* to the culture of creative English that had been developed through the policies of the past¹⁰⁷.

This presents a problem: creative English currently has no official mandate in policy. The tradition of creative English is tenacious, as shown (*e.g.* Cremin and Myhill, 2012; Goodwin, 2016; Bomford, 2018; Thomas, 2019; Bleiman, 2020), but this literature is collectively critical of the current Curriculum (DfE, 2014). Policy is therefore out of step with the professional literature; the humane tradition is not being fuelled; teaching professionals are ‘living with contradiction’ (Heilbronn, 2013: 35). New entrants to the profession (and interested others) are thus unable to rely upon the Curriculum to furnish themselves with a deep understanding of the subject in all its richness and complexity, and are confronted by academic and professional advice that is incompatible with policy (and even openly hostile towards it (Yandell and Brady, 2016; Gibbons, 2019)). So where might new entrants to the profession turn to inform their own nascent practice; what – and whom - might they trust?

One solution is to talk to expert subject practitioners, as this study has done, in the footprints of Gardner’s hermeneutic study of History teachers (2010; 2011). Those who have been and are now immersed in the field – who have lived experience of unitary, creative English teaching – are crucial witnesses here. The colloquists’ testimony illustrates that

¹⁰⁷ It is a further irony is that the politicians who initially dismissed Cox (1989), calling for increased rigour and ‘traditional’ content (text-book grammar exercises and canonical literature) (Cox, 1991), are assumed to have been remembering the practice of their own school days. In 1987, 252 British MPs were aged 40-49, with 197 aged 50-59 (Statistica, n.d.). Therefore, roughly speaking, their mean age was 50, meaning they were at secondary school during the 1950s. However, if so, their schooling (whether in the independent or maintained sector) cannot have been informed by policy of the day, since that policy (BoE, 1937) specifically argued *against* decontextualised grammar and an aspic-coated English Literary Heritage for the sake of promoting national pride or instilling ‘cultural capital’. Indeed, the notion of English therein seeks to develop a child who ‘confronts his environment with enjoyment, with self-reliance, and with an openness to new ideas and experiences’ (BoE, 1937: 400), which indicates a tradition of creative English that is arguably radical, progressive and empowering. Here the gap between policy and practice reverses today’s picture.

practitioners have deep knowledge of their subject and can be a powerful force in their own classrooms. Their stories are valuable and, therefore, potentially have power to shape the subject going forward.

Yet before I go on to discuss what can be learned from the colloquists about the power of collective memory and the agency of teachers in more depth, I want to turn briefly to another theme that emerged from reading the policy documents and talking with the colloquists - how the policy documents themselves 'talk' to subject professionals. Considering not so much *what* teachers are advised or told to teach, but *how*, is an indication of the extent to which the policy assumes (or not) that teachers are creative and agentive. This is helpful in adding an additional layer to understanding the documents' notion of creativity in relation to English teaching.

8.2.2 Addressing the Teacher: from creative professionals to grocery boys (and girls)

The manner in which teaching professionals are addressed by the policy documents is a good indication of how they are seen and valued by policies' authors. Put simply, I suggest that the documents written by those who consulted teachers extensively, actively involving them in the creation of policy (Newbolt, 1921; Bullock, 1975; Cox, 1989) are those that show respect to and trust in teachers; those that did not, increasingly come to view teachers as cyphers. Indeed, the colloquists' confidence and agency are remarkable given the manner in which they are addressed by today's policy documents, as I argue below.

The earliest policy documents present teachers as professionals, with authority to make choices: the formal title of the Blue Books series, *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of the Public Elementary Schools* (my emphasis) underlines that they were entrusted to take decisions in the best interests of their students, a point underlined in the Introduction:

The only uniformity in practice that the Board of Education desire to see... is that each teacher shall think for himself (sic), and work out for himself, such methods of teaching as may use his powers to the best advantage and be best suited to the particular needs and conditions of the school. (BoE, 1912: 3)

This indicates that that productivity of learner is based on creativity of teacher: the teacher's role is to respond (creatively) to needs of students.

For Newbolt, teaching is a noble, even heroic calling: teachers are part of an 'army' (Newbolt, 1921: 25) – albeit an army Newbolt states to be underpaid, insufficiently

resourced and inadequately trained. In another powerful metaphor, he presents the teacher as a mighty 'lever', without which it is impossible to 'raise the mass' (*ibid*). The imagery indicates that Newbolt is encouraging his readership to appreciate that teachers should be respected and have power vested in them. The Bullock Report shows a similar respect to teachers. The Foreword, written by the then Education Secretary, requests that 'teachers at all levels will look carefully at the recommendations' (1975: iii), implying a confidence that teachers will act accordingly. The agency is with the teacher to develop their practice in the light of what they read.

This trusting tone changes with the arrival of the Curriculum. As statutory documents, the Curricula speak to teachers in a different way than the non-statutory pre-1989 documents. By its very existence, a National Curriculum does not offer 'suggestions', but obligations: according to one view, the advent of the Curriculum and the associated semantic field of 'delivery' relegates teachers from curriculum innovators to grocery boys (Armstrong, 1988), an exaggerated image which nonetheless emphasises the extent to which teachers' standing had been reduced since Newbolt's day.

It is only in Cox (1989) that is found explicit discussion of the role of the teacher, as he attempts to keep the profession onside after what had been a particularly turbulent time and unsympathetic treatment by the press (Aldrich, 2005). He takes his cue from the Blue Books (BoE, 1905-59), Newbolt (1921) and Bullock (1975), stating that teachers are autonomous professionals, free to make decisions on behalf of their pupils. Cox encourages teachers to go beyond the specified targets: 'we would not wish teachers to feel limited by them' (1989: 54) – which implies that he is advocating that teachers extend their practice wherever possible. He gives advice - 'Pupils should see adults writing. Teachers should write alongside pupils, sharing and talking about their writing' (1989: 44) – but could sometimes be construed as patronising: '*Using sensitivity and tact*, teachers should help pupils to tackle texts of increasing difficulty' (1989: 29, my emphasis). This is a rare example of tension: it is not clear whether Cox is guiding teachers or telling them.

The difficulty in considering the way teachers are addressed is due to the ambiguity of the modal verb 'should.' Is it a synonym of 'ought to' or 'must'? 'Pupils should be taught' is a phrase borrowed from Cox (1989) and used repeatedly in the subsequent Curricula (DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA 1999a). My reading of Cox leads me to construe him to be offering guiding hand when he uses 'should'; yet because the curriculum documents from 1995 (DfE/WO) onwards are sparser, the repeated 'shoulds,' often introducing a series of

bullet points laying down what ‘should’ be taught, suggest that here they are imperatives. While Cox mainly offers advice, his immediate successors appear to give teachers instructions.

The 2007 Curriculum is slightly more nuanced. It uses ‘Pupils should *be able to...*’ (e.g. DCSF/QCA, 2007: 64, my emphasis): such wording implies a more facilitatory teacher role (albeit, as argued in Chapter 6, with limited real licence for creativity). Yet a facilitatory role was something to which Gove objected: in a speech to a teacher conference, he claimed that a pupil-centric policy ‘dethrones’ teachers (*in* Curtis, 2008). His Curriculum returns to listing what ‘should be taught’ (DfE, 2014: 14, 16) and, to reiterate the point, also turns the passive into active, putting the teacher at the front of the sentence: there is frequent reference to ‘Teachers should...’ (e.g. DfE, 2014: 2, 3). But if such wording is intended to ‘re-throne’ teachers by putting them explicitly in control of their pupils, it also emphasises their subjugation to higher powers and policy.

It appears, therefore, that current policy (DfE, 2014) attempts to avoid giving teachers agency. Instead, it dictates. This reinforces the notion that the Curriculum is imposed on teachers by dominant others and such imposition, almost by definition, impedes (or even prevents) creativity; it also helps explain the unpopularity of the Curriculum as presented in the contemporary literature (Yandell and Brady, 2016; Bomford, 2018; Gibbons, 2019).

However, the colloquists’ confident agency – to which I now turn – indicates that if this is the intention, it has not wholly succeeded: English practitioners are able to continue to practice creatively notwithstanding the authoritarian tone of the policy. (It could even be suggested that their dislike of the Curriculum is a reaction to the domineering manner in which they are addressed.)

8.2.3 Questions of agency: how and why teachers are more powerful than they might appear

What the teacher thinks, what the teacher believes, what the teacher assumes – all these have powerful implications for the process, for the ways in which [curriculum] policy is transcribed into [curriculum] practice. (Hargreaves, 1994 in Smit, 2005: 300)

Given the authoritarian manner in which they are addressed by today’s policy documents, and the limitations of the current accountability-led context, I suggest that the colloquists’ confidence and agency in practicing creative English is extraordinary. Here, I respond to Smit’s (2005) call for more research into how policy is translated into practice on the ground

by explicitly combining my analysis of curriculum policy and my discussions with those who practice that policy to ask who *really* has the power in English classrooms if, in spite of the requirements of the Curriculum (and its associated accountability mechanisms), teachers' 'belie[fs]' (*ibid*) lead them to choose to resist the policy to practice creatively, as the colloquists report doing. I argue that the colloquists' agency (and, accordingly, that of others in the field who are able to act in a similar way) is a creative response: through their resistance, they are taking imaginative risks, solving problems. Their actions also suggest that they hold considerable influence, because it is they who control the experiences of their students; accordingly, English teachers in the current climate are more powerful than they might imagine.

As the verb 'enact' suggests, agency is not about what people *have*, it is what they *do* (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015): for policy to be enacted, it requires buy-in from the actors (Smit, 2005). What they do is shaped by 'a configuration of influences from the past, orientations towards the future and engagement with the present' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998 *in* Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015: 626), with the degree to which each of the three is dominant depending on circumstance. As a hermeneutist, I suggest that these influences from the past consist of individuals' own memories – which are 'dynamic... active, shaping force[s]' (Samuel, 1994 *in* Gardner, 2010: 97) - of English, of education, of wider life experience, as well as the tradition of creative English teaching; and that these combine with contemporary policy and context to influence the present.

A 'mismatch' (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015: 624) between teachers' beliefs, wider institutional cultures, and policy means a dislocation between policy and practice. Biesta *et al* imply that the *practice* suffers as a result of *dominant* policy: they suggest that recent decades, with the growth of prescriptive curricula and oppressive testing, have not only deprofessionalised teachers and removed their agency, but that teachers' beliefs and values have narrowed accordingly (*ibid*). Erss advances the 'ecological agency theory' (2018, n.p) to make a similar point, suggesting that teachers who acclimatise to tightly regulated and prescriptive curricula have 'problems of transition' (*ibid*) when freed to move into a more agentive mode.

Perhaps this 'mismatch' (*op cit*) can be applied not just to recent decades, but further back: the earliest policy documents show that creativity was not always enacted in English classrooms. Newbolt (1921), Plowden (1967) and Bullock (1975) successively point to the failures identified in contemporary practice – most often, stale, text-book based lessons –

exactly the opposite of the creative practice that their policy documents strove to recommend. (Indeed, had the recommendations of the previous publications which called for creative practice become commonly adopted, there may have been no need for subsequent documents, or at least no need for the arguments to have been re-rehearsed.) Yet there are probably other reasons for this dissonance, too, beyond the ‘mismatch’ between teachers’ beliefs and policy as identified by Biesta¹⁰⁸.

However, the testimony of the colloquists with recent and contemporary experience does *not* fully support Biesta’s ‘mismatch’ (*op cit*) notion, in that the teachers’ practice does *not* necessarily suffer, despite the restrictions imposed by the Curriculum (DfE, 2014). While Gary does complain about ‘deprofessionalisation’, Paul, Ruth and Sara indicate that they remain in control of how English happens in their classrooms despite the challenges. Rather than experiencing the ‘learned helplessness’ (Erss, *et al*, 2014 in Erss, 2018: n.p.) that might be expected, they robustly defend their practice, and the newer teachers do so as confidently as the more experienced. Similarly, the teacher educators, in the manner described by Heilbronn as ‘wiggery’ (2013: 36) – playful behaviour that undermines the *status quo* without explicitly harming it – encourage reflective practice that prevents their student teachers simply imbibing the orthodoxy.

The colloquists’ accumulated years as classroom English teachers - and, where relevant, their subsequent roles - have provided them with a deep reservoir of professional memory to draw upon and so shape what they ‘think... believe... assume...’ (Hargreaves, 1994 in Smit, 2005: 300). They are secure in rejecting the policies they disagree with and rebutting those they oppose - some ‘covert[ly]’ (Smit, 2005: 305), some more openly (Gary regularly publishes opinion pieces on education policy in the national press and national education press (see biographical details in [Appendix 3](#))). The accreted layers of their professional experience act as a prism through which they can view and critique the policy; as the examples they cite indicate, this allows them to be strongly agentive in their creative practice. The parameters within which they work may have been set by the policy makers,

¹⁰⁸ School organisation was more basic and requirements for teachers’ qualifications and teacher training were lower than today. And even assuming that teachers had access to and read the Blue Books, they may not have experienced creative practice at school themselves, or on their training course, so lacked confidence to experiment. Individuals wanting to try creative practice may have met with resistance within their schools. Those preparing students for exams might have thought it safer to play safe. Resources may have been lacking. There is not room in this thesis to explore these ideas in more depth, but Medway *et al* (2014) would be a good place to start for anyone interested.

but are inhabited by living actors, who take it, shape it, re-create it and find their own way through it.

To consider this notion in more depth how, I now turn to *Walking in the City*, an essay by De Certeau (1984), in which he looks down with a near bird's-eye view from the World Trade Centre onto the streets of New York. The essay is useful in considering the reach and impact of English teachers' agency within policy strictures, and therefore offers a perspective on the designers' intentions and users' actions. Just as the pedestrians de Certeau spies did not design the city plan, teachers did not design the Curriculum; but just as pedestrians can wander through the grid of streets and squares and parks, inhabiting the cityscape in ways the planners might not have intended (or even imagined), teachers can 'inhabit' the Curriculum. This extended image is helpful in illustrating that while planners have power in designing a map, or framework, and may use that power to create apparently rigid structures that challenge the user, they have little control over how that framework is actually used and managed. Teachers may be constrained by the Orders - they must inhabit the Curriculum structure - yet are free to choose any route through it they choose, spend as long or as little time in any one place as they like, potentially finding as they go unplanned opportunities or, as Ball, Maguire and Braun suggest through another place-based image, new 'spaces of avoidance and creativity and different ways of being a teacher and doing teaching – different possibilities of enactment' (2012: 97). It is, perhaps, partly a matter of them manoeuvring tactically through the 'uneven distributions' (*ibid*) of a school's layout, staffing, timetabling and scheduling, and capitalising where they can.

To extend de Certeau's metaphor with a pun relevant to English, teachers might travel by any mode appropriate as they make the city their own. The image, then, implies that the Curriculum simultaneously constrains *and* opens things up - just as the limitations of the sonnet form might inspire the creation of a poem, as suggested by Paul, Doug and Tony (*op cit*). So what is the impact on creative English?

Not all journeys though the city will be true explorations: some will be direct (and possibly uninspiring) trips from A to B, perhaps as envisaged by the planners. The freedom of the journey depends on the pedestrian – on whether she is confident to explore, feels she has permission to do so, has time, resources. It is about her making appropriate choices, knowing when it is necessary or expedient to take the direct route and when taking the long way round might be more interesting and enriching. As Erss notes, it is about the way in which she goes about it:

“It is not only the external structures that shape teachers’ work, but also their own ways of enacting the cultures.” (Erss, 2018: n.p.)

Erss argues that having an external structure such as a Curriculum is actually helpful (and appreciated by teachers) to enable creativity within it. The colloquists’ testimony indicates that they are denizens of the Curriculum city, and can set out with assurance. However, I suggest that it is harder for newcomers to feel acclimatised with just the official map to help them. Any traveller to a new place knows that you need the Rough Guide to get started, and then you need to hook up with locals who can show you alternative routes, teach you the tactics and tell you what the neighbourhood was like before the new ring road sliced through it, before you *really* begin to feel at home.

Accordingly, I go on to argue that preserving the collective memories of those who know well not only the streets of the current National Curriculum for English but its previous layouts - designed by planners with different agenda - is important in ensuring that life and spirit within the city survives into the future.

8.2.4. The importance of protecting reservoirs of professional knowledge

The colloquists’ beliefs have been informed and strengthened through their professional experience. Since new entrants to the profession are unable to rely upon the Curriculum (DfE, 2014) to furnish themselves with a deep understanding of the subject in all its richness and complexity, one solution is that they learn from others who have been and are now immersed in the field. Harnessing the collective memory of English teaching professionals thereby provides not only historical context, but is a counter perspective to the ‘official’ line. Preserving the subject history is vital.

The examples of practice provided by the colloquists are inspired by their own experiences – the anecdotes they share are memories from their own professional lives. They are cumulatively powerful because the voices tell stories that reinforces each other. Bringing their individual voices together in script form (Chapter 7) is more than the sum of the individual parts - it creates an impression of their *collective* memory: it is a composite of many individual images, *bilds*, that create the ‘bildung’ or ‘culture’ (Gadamer: 1975/2004: 9) of English teaching.

This suggests that for creative English to thrive into the future we need to act to preserve collective professional memory so that the culture of creative English is preserved. We also

need to keep the conversation alive so that the meaning of what is passed on is not lost in a communication ‘gap’ (Biesta, 2004: 19). I could go even further, and suggest that it is the *responsibility* of those active in the profession to keep such a view of English alive, to ‘bear... [the] torch’ (Newbolt, 1897: n.p.). As Biesta suggests, ‘one vast resource for achieving agency is learning from the past’ (Biesta and Tedder, 2007 *in* Erss, 2018, n.p). The obligation should not be underplayed: the colloquists’ testimony indicates that the creative, humane tradition of English survives in spite of, rather than because of, the policy and its attendant constraints. To lose the connection now could be particularly damaging, as although developments in teacher education (Morgan, 2014) suggest that new teachers are increasingly critical (in the reflective and reflexive sense) of both policy and their own practice, the restrictions brought about by the iterations of the National Curriculum (DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999a; DCSF/QCA, 2007; DfE, 2014) and accountability framework have created a generation of English teachers who have had little experience of curriculum innovation, of what it is to *make* English rather than *take* it (Bleiman, 2020).

The recording and dissemination of collective memory is therefore an important means of propagating what is valued and ensuring it can continue to grow, despite the arid nature of the policy context. I hope that this thesis contributes in some way to enriching the literature to ensure the cultivation and flowering of that collective memory.

8.2.5 Creating the agentive child

Finally, I want briefly to consider another angle in terms of agency – that of the child. In fact, this thesis would be incomplete without my doing so, as English teaching is self-evidently not an end in itself: its purpose is to contribute to the education – the nurturing, leading, guiding – of the next generation; it is to equip them to respond to the challenges faced by society today (a point strongly made by Paul and Gary (Chapter 7)); it is to ease them ‘to fruition in relation to... a continuously changing world’ (Arendt, 1954: 9).

I have argued above that creative practice in teachers is not about responding uncritically to direction, but having flexibility to collaborate, solve problems, be imaginative with both content and style of lessons, innovate - and have freedom to be radical if need be – albeit within the limitations of the official structures. Through so doing, they ‘grow’ and develop professionally. I also discussed (Chapter 5) the view that children who learn from creative practitioners learn to be creative themselves and ‘grow’ personally. Now, a century on from Newbolt’s (1921) plea for a creative, humane, child-centred English after the crisis of World

War I, I argue for a creative, humane, child-centred English to help teachers equip young people to 'assume joint responsibility for the world' (Arendt, 1954: 10) and respond agentively to the unprecedented issues of the 2020s.

It is not hyperbole to suggest that if our children do not grow up to be agentive adults, the future of humanity is at stake. The pressing challenges facing today's young people are unparalleled (Osberg, 2010; Facer, 2019). Not only do these include the untold consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic but, on a national level, the social and economic fallout from Brexit (Smith, 2020a) in a context of increasing disparity between the rich and poor (Pike, 2014); on an international level, the increased tensions in the Middle East and a play for dominance by the super-powers; and on a global level, the climate emergency, which will have a deleterious impact on every aspect of life if action is not taken imminently (Matthewman, 2010).

Osberg (2010) suggests that creative thinking is crucial to meet these enormous challenges. She advocates an education that encourages a new awareness of culture and history, suggesting that humans need to look at the past and what already exists with fresh eyes, and so be ready to cope with as-yet-unknown risks and forge opportunities. Education should prepare us to know what we can take with us on our journey (and what should be left behind) to enable us to create something 'radically new' to 'accompany us into the future' (2010: 168). For this to happen, schooling should be seen as an 'educational democracy', which allows for 'an experiment with the possibility of the impossible' (2010: 168-9); it is a recasting of Wise Humanising Creativity (Chappell and Craft, 2011: 4).

In an unacknowledged parallel with Newbolt's assertion (1921: 56) that it is English that best provides opportunities to prepare students for 'troubled times' (Facer, 2019: 3), Facer builds on Osberg's argument by emphasising the particular importance of creative English in helping children imagine and articulate the ideas that will enable them to answer these challenges. She emphasises that it is urgent that students are practised in envisaging what might happen, experimenting, and developing flexible responses; and that all process happens through story:

Making, telling, listening to and reading stories in education... is not trivial, rather, it is a deadly serious business of identifying and articulating ideas of the future and engaging with the rich complexities of the present. (2019: 11)

This quotation stresses that all the elements of unitary English (speaking, listening, reading and writing) are needed to equip students for the problems of the world in which they are growing up; indeed, they are vulnerable without them.

I want to add that it is the active nature of such storytelling, the *doing*, that is important - which is why I am concerned by the prohibitive nature of the current Curriculum (DfE, 2014), as discussed above (6.4). Through rehearsing English in school, students develop the agency to take the stories they make off the page and into the world. It is when the stories are acted – enacted, performed - that they will have an impact. Greta Thunberg is an example of a young person who not only has ‘abundant resources of creativity’ (Facer, 2019: 12) to imagine the future, but agency to act.

Ultimately, therefore, it is to be hoped that the personal growth of individuals enabled through child-centred, creative English might lead to the growth of a better future, in a world curated by fair-minded, mutually supportive and caring inhabitants. It should, at the very least, prevent a worse future. Perhaps the arguments of those critics focusing on the important task of maintaining the tradition of radical, creative English in the here-and-now (*e.g.* Bomford, 2018; Gibbons, 2019; Bleiman, 2020) could be strengthened by emphasising that the need is for English not only to be situated at the heart of education today, but to be seen as the basis to all our tomorrows.

8.3 Conclusion: Creating change

This research has enabled a deep understanding of how creativity is presented in national policy and guidance to English teachers, and how English teaching professionals respond to that policy and guidance. I have shown that it is possible for creative practice to be celebrated in English classrooms in spite of the prevailing anti-creative orthodoxy, and that agentic teachers might capitalise creatively on the limitations of the Curriculum. I have recommended that the collective memory of creative English teachers is curated to help welcome and develop new entrants to the profession. I have concluded by suggesting that creative English – through its ability to nurture children to grow into creative, agentic adults - is a source of hope for the very future of humanity. So, having argued for English teachers to be creative, agentic and radical, I now come to making a creative, agentic and radical suggestion.

I propose that the logical conclusion is to invite English teaching professionals to go back to the future and be involved in developing education policy going forward. Ofsted's latest inspection framework (2019) requires that teachers consider and defend their approach to the curriculum design on a school level (Logan, 2018); I hope that this conversation can be opened up on a national level. In hindsight, this is perhaps an obvious suggestion, given my emphasis on the importance of the fields' contributions to previous policy (Newbolt, 1921; Bullock, 1975; Cox, 1989) and my choice of colloquists - to welcome the contribution of subject experts to policy development would be to go full circle and return to the process through which the earliest policy documents were written.

My research has deepened my understanding of the notion that, for policy to be willingly and effectively enacted, it requires 'collective development' (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015: 624) – in other words, it should be an organic process: those who are to enact the policy should have a say in it. To reiterate Smit's (2005) point, the worlds of today's policy makers and teaching professionals are very different. The former is based on data, figures, organisation at a macro level; but the latter concerns people, relationships, the diurnal, and takes place on a micro level. The solution may lie in bringing these two worlds together. If English teaching professionals are able to *co-create* their world, the policies to which they work – or, to return to de Certeau's (1984) analogy, co-design their ideal city - they should be able to develop their practice in the knowledge that their professional investment is valued. Being authorised to do so would indicate a restoration of trust in the experts by the ruling politicians which might lead, in turn, to teaching professionals having renewed confidence in the authorities.

I develop this theme in Chapter 9, in which I make recommendations for future policy and practice.

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Chapter 9 – Creating the future

9.0. Introduction and overview

Inspired by my unease at the removal of ‘creativity’ from the sixth iteration of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) for English in England, my research has focused on the response of expert English teaching professionals to that Curriculum, contextualising their interpretations within the long, intimate association between English and creativity. When I set out, I aspired to help bring about positive change in secondary English education by provoking debate about both the future direction of the subject and the agency of those who will be teaching it, and inform the development of what will be the seventh Curriculum. In this final chapter, I first make some tentative recommendations concerning the content and design of secondary English education in England, then reflect on how what I have learnt through the creation of this thesis might be applied to my own day-to-day work and direct my future research. I acknowledge some of the limitations of my project. I conclude by reinforcing what are, I believe, its main contributions to the field.

9.1. Re-creating policy

I wish to make two key proposals: the first is that the term ‘creativity’ should explicitly be re-incorporated in the National Curriculum for English; the second, as discussed at the end of the preceding chapter, is that expert English teaching professionals should be involved in the creative process of re-imagining and re-writing the policy as part of a principled Curriculum review. Before continuing, however, it is important to stress that it is not necessarily the Curriculum alone that is the problem: as Erss (2018) explains, some teachers find a curriculum structure can be helpful, and the majority of schools (now academies) in England are not explicitly bound by the Curriculum until KS4 (see 6.0). The problem is the combination of the Curriculum and the examination and accountability system to which it is tethered. In the argument that follows, therefore, I call for both the Curriculum *and* the means through which it is assessed to be revised simultaneously. To revise the one without the other would have little effect.

9.1.1 Reconnecting ‘creativity’ and English

I argue it is necessary to work towards putting the word ‘creativity’ back into English policy: as Jack noted (*op cit*) - the inclusion of the term provides, at least, something around which

debate can pivot. Yet, given the contentious history of 'creativity' in regards to English (see 2.3, 6.3, 6.4), any definition needs to be carefully constructed: the most recent attempt at defining creativity in a Curriculum (DCSF/QCA, 2007) is, as I have shown, limited, in that it assumes creativity always to have a *written* outcome; and prior to that, Cox (1989) makes a clear and impassioned argument for creative English without reference to the term itself. It may be that extracts from this thesis could be used to provide a supporting argument, together with the work of others (*e.g.* McCallum, 2012; Dymoke *et al*, 2015; Thomas, 2019; Bleiman; 2020); indeed, perhaps the adoption of 'creativities' (McCallum, 2012: 20) is apposite. However, for the definition to be accepted to serve a purpose in curriculum policy, there would need to be consensus across the field of English education, and between the field and politicians.

This is one of the reasons that I am recommending that policy-makers and teaching professionals collaborate. I am mindful that I am here addressing two constituencies that are, currently, dissociated. Yet it is not only the challenge of coming to an agreed definition of creativity that should draw them together, but the aforementioned multi-layered crisis that English is facing, from teacher attrition (Perryman and Calvert, 2020) to the falling-off of those taking English at A level (Turner, 2019) to the lack of diversity in texts choices at KS4 and KS3 (Smith, 2020b). The time is now to forge a new relationship, that they can work jointly to revise the Curriculum and the assessment regime.

9.1.2 Policy-makers and practitioners in concert: future directions for research and practice

I suggest that research should be undertaken to establish how this collaboration between policy-makers and teaching professionals might be best developed.

One area of inquiry could be to ascertain the value of adopting the consultative process undertaken by Newbolt (1921), Bullock (1975) and Cox (1989) as they sought out expert voices to contribute to their respective Reports. It could be useful to convene meetings between the main English subject associations and allied professional bodies (including NATE; LATE; the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA); the National Association of Advisors in English (NAAE); the English and Media Centre (EMC)), together with established initiatives that promote creative English practice such as First Story, Paper Nations and Teachers as Writers. A potential benefit of this approach is that these groups include active and engaged English teaching professionals at various levels, from experienced to novice.

Indeed, such work was initiated in 2013 through a project called *Looking for the Heart of English*, billed as ‘a national discussion about what really matters in English teaching’ (Heart of English, 2013). Proponents of creative English came together to consider the future of the subject. They included those expert and influential in the field, such as Teresa Cremin, Simon Gibbons and Gemma Moss¹⁰⁹, as well as classroom teachers (*ibid*). The project was designed to inform the current Curriculum (DfE, 2014), but coincided with the flawed consultation process (Wintour, 2012), and it is not clear whether the project’s recommendations were ever received or reviewed by the policy-makers. If they were, there were not heeded. It appears to have been mothballed since. I would like to investigate whether the revival of the *Heart of English* project might lead to genuine dialogue – a conversation in creativity - between the Department for Education and expert English teaching professionals.

There are various models that might be researched towards the creation of a new Curriculum. For instance, one approach would be to dispense with a ‘National’ curriculum altogether and develop an area-based or local curriculum (Facer and Thomas, 2012; Dutaut, 2018). The literature suggests that international jurisdictions are using this approach successfully. For instance, Finland’s National Curriculum is open to local interpretation by schools (Lähdemäki, 2018). Because there are no school inspections and no national testing, teachers are genuinely free to develop a curriculum offer as befits their students.

Additionally, or alternatively, is the notion of a co-created Curriculum. In the UK, Ireland and the United States, local co-created curricula are already proving successful in higher education (Bovill, 2014). The flexibility of a co-created school Curriculum may better be able to meet local and regional needs, a near-literal response to de Certeau’s (1984) call to remake the city through remaking the policy and practices that govern it. Perhaps policy-making on a more human level could result in a more humane offer. It would require careful dialogue – as a hermeneutist I recognise, of course, the complex challenges of understanding the whole context, of reaching a fusion of understandings (Gadamer, 1975/2004) – but it could be that *sufficient* understanding (Kinsella, 2006) might be achieved. A consensus approach could mean that the resulting policy is more likely to be embraced and celebrated in classrooms (Smit, 2005), a happy contrast from the current situation where creativity, where practiced, is seen to be subversive (Brown, 2012) or happens in spite of the policy (as suggested by the colloquists).

¹⁰⁹ As noted in [Appendix 3](#), one of the colloquists was also involved.

An even more radical option to investigate is devolving the Curriculum entirely to teaching professionals, alongside a devolved assessment system – perhaps a revised version of the GCSE consortia model that existed when I joined the profession (Blake, 2019), with technological advances such as anti-plagiarism software used to refute suggestions of unethical practice that dogged this system in the past (Demopoulos, 2005; Beadle, 2014). This might allow teachers to be curriculum innovators and develop a curriculum in which ‘*creativity and English link to learning*’ (McCallum, 2012: 32) according to the needs and interests of their students – learning through which knowledge may *emerge* (Biesta and Osberg, 2008) as learners travel their ‘journey of becoming’ (Chappell *et al*, 2016, n.p).

All of these suggestions are, I suggest, ripe for research. Any change to the way in which policy is made would be a bold step, and therefore the approach would need to be underpinned by rigorous inquiry. An open question, for instance, is what sort of curriculum would English teaching professionals buy into? Yet I urge that this research starts soon. A consensus is emerging that it is necessary to re-create education (Chappell, 2018) so that learners are well-equipped to go on to re-create their world, and English is as central to this effort (Facer, 2019) as it was when Newbolt positioned English as the ‘keystone’ a century ago (1921: 5).

9.2. What my thesis has taught me: my own re-creation

It is poignant to look back over the six years’ work that this project has involved to consider what it has taught me, the effect it has had and will have on my practice, and to which new research directions it might take me.

In some ways, it will not change much: I have always sought to travel creatively within my city (de Certeau, 1984) and am ‘solid with’ (Heilbronn, 2013: 35) my student teachers in encouraging them to do likewise. Yet, in other ways, it has changed everything, because it has reinforced to me that my practice is appropriate, justified and necessary, and has given me greater fire. I now understand myself to be part of a community of practice, a living link to the history of creative English teaching, with a duty to support others forge their own links. The metaphor is not of a single, heavy, restrictive chain, but a mesh of delicate golden rings - flexible, strong. Connected thus to my colleagues past and present, I am a tiny yet crucial part, protecting the heart of English for the future. I hope that the picture I have painted through this thesis is a means of further reinforcing this precious net, of spreading it

wider and, indeed, I have already begun to do so through publications that have sprung wholly or in part from this project ([Appendix 1](#)).

As a teacher educator, I see with new clarity the importance of emphasising to newcomers to the profession that they are now part of this community; and that although they will spend much of their time practising as individuals in their separate classrooms, they are part of a wider body, each a link that strengthens the golden mail. Through sharing my research, especially through emphasising the long history of creativity in English teaching, I hope to give my student teachers the confidence to experiment and take risks in a way that they might not otherwise feel mandated to do.

In terms of consolidating and bolstering links beyond the PGCE programme - I have already established a cross-generational group of English teachers through the Teachers as Writers group (see Chapter 1), but I now hope to extend and develop cross-generational connections further. I envisage that I might perhaps achieve this in a small way through seeking funding to arranging gatherings to which PGCE alumni would be invited simply to talk and share practice; this might become an annual ritual, a means of rewarding a graduating cohort, with those graduates then coming back year upon year to connect with the next generation. The growing community could also be supported through Teach-Meets hosted at the University that might combine formal CPD with informal networking, and through online networks such as Twitter. More ambitiously – and dependent on permissions - I would like to invite the colloquists to a real-life high-profile discussion (possibly supported by one of the national subject associations – and maybe even held in the British Library!) that would encourage others to take up the conversation and confirm their own commitment to the community. By actively encouraging newly-qualified teachers to talk to the experienced in all these ways, I hope that my work will support the maintenance of professional memory by creating and affirming personal relationships between one teacher and another. I hope that this message will also reach a wider audience through forthcoming publications.

As a researcher, I can see how my thesis will underpin applied projects in which I am already involved as well as provide the foundation for new ones. For instance, I have been actively involved in evaluating the *Apprentice of Fine Arts in Creative Writing* qualification (WEB, 2017), established to replace the cancelled A level in Creative Writing, tracking teachers at four participating schools across its first two years. I have yet to publish my findings, but am confident that I will be able to build an even stronger case for the qualification as a result of this study. Another project for the near future looks to consolidate some recent research

with local ITE colleagues on the limited nature of the KS3 curriculum offered by many schools (Kneen, 2020; Smith, 2020b); I hope to work with local teachers to develop the breadth and diversity of the prose, poetry and drama read in class.

Further, I am looking forward to exploring the history of subject English since 1905 in more detail, examining the relationship between the policy texts I have focused on here and publications related to them – text books, examination materials, pedagogy. I want to investigate their context and their authors, as befitting my hermeneutic positioning, and am sure that there are powerful and resonant stories to be told. I would see this as a tribute to colleagues past and present whose work I have found invaluable in the development of this thesis (Shayer, 1972; Dymoke, 2011; McCallum, 2012; Medway *et al*, 2014; Gibbons, 2017).

9.3 A critique: had I but world enough and time...

There are, of course, limitations to this thesis, despite my best efforts to do the topic justice. To start with, I am aware that creativity is a vast research field and that I have only scratched the surface through this project. Had I had longer, and recourse to a greater number of words, I should have liked to explore this field in more depth. As a hermeneutist, I am alert to the vital significance of both context and the dialogic interplay between texts (Gadamer, 1975/2004) and fear having missed key ‘conversations’. For example, I would have been interested in considering John-Steiner’s (1997) and Claxton’s (2006) ideas on collaborative creativity theory more thoroughly, and in investigating the inspiring empirical research of Anna Craft (*e.g.* 2005; 2006); I also look forward to exploring the notions of mini-c and Pro-c creativity in more detail (Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009). I would have like to have considered creativity beyond English, to its wider role in cross-curricular learning (Stevens, 2011). However, it would not have been possible to have read everything on the subject. I am conscious that a researcher has to put a limit on reading the literature (Bell, 2005) at some point and get on with the job; and, guided by my supervisors, I was nevertheless able to enrich my knowledge and understanding through further relevant reading as I went.

Secondly, I am conscious of the predominance of white males in the literature I cite, particularly in section 2.1, where I discuss the contested history of creativity, and in Chapters 5 and 6, where the named authors (Arnold, Newbolt, Bullock, Kingman and Cox) are all white men. This is not to imply that I am unaware of or uninterested in the pressing need to feminise and decolonise the English Curriculum - indeed, I have drawn attention to the problem (Smith, 2020b). Beyond these named sections I have cited many inspirational and

influential women working in hermeneutics, secondary English and creativity post-2000. I would also like to reiterate (see 4.3.1) my regret, in the light of recent Black Lives Matter debates, that none of the colloquists represents the BAME community. I actively promote the Black South West Network and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Educators Network through my PGCE role and am a member of the University of Bristol's Decolonise group. In a future project, I would like explicitly to explore the contribution of people of colour to the debates, which I now recognise as an urgent need.

Thirdly, it became apparent through my research that the colloquists' views on English and creativity are relatively homogenous. While the startling similarity in the views of the 12 expert English teaching professionals adds weight to my argument by demonstrating the solidarity within the field, it might have been interesting to have sought out dissenting voices to probe other perspectives in more depth. I have become aware of a tranche of English teaching professionals who subscribe to a knowledge-based curriculum and are sceptical of creative English pedagogy (Christadoulou, 2014; Lemov, Driggs and Woolway, 2016; Didau, 2019). These individuals may be perceived as experts (their books and blogs are popular¹¹⁰), but they are not involved in subject associations, the literature explored in Chapter 2 and my own professional networks, and so their names did not appear in the lists I developed to inform my sample (see 4.3.1). I hint at their views at the end of Chapter 7, but would like to encourage them to join the conversation.

9.4 Creating a contribution to the field

[Education is] a human event of communication, meaning making and interpretation. (Biesta, 2015: 11)

This research has sought to underline the essential connections between creativity, English and learning because English, thus conceived, is fundamental in enabling the humane education Biesta (*ibid*) describes. English is *all about* language and communication with 'our selves' (Summerfield, 1968: 44), with texts, with others. To decouple English and creativity jeopardises opportunities for genuine conversation (Oakeshott, 1959) and, with it, the development of new knowledge (Biesta and Osberg, 2008) and opportunities both for individuals and society to *make* and be *(re)made* (Chappell *et al*, 2016; Chappell, 2018).

¹¹⁰ At the time of writing (2020), Christadoulou has approximately 50,000 Twitter followers; Didau has over 70,000.

I believe that my project contributes to the fields of both secondary English and creativity by reinforcing these intrinsic connections. My deep historical exploration of English secondary education policy, beginning with the inaugural Blue Book, *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools* (BoE, 1905/1912) underlines the dependence of the nascent subject English on creativity; I go on to show how potentially vulnerable the relationship between English and creativity is now, as manifested in today's National Curriculum (DfE, 2014). I argue that subject English lacking creativity risks becoming 'deracinated' (Bleiman, 2020: 187) or rootless, and this in turn threatens the broader humane conceptualisation of education. My conversations with expert English teaching professionals, however, demonstrate that *they* understand that English is fundamentally rooted in creativity, current policy notwithstanding; and it is their agentic practice (and that of their colleagues and peers) that ensures the survival of creative English in schools. For creative English to continue to thrive, it is crucial to nurture and maintain strong communities of practice that, through collaborative, cohesive effort, may curate and pass on what they know to new colleagues. Thereby, English itself might be recreated to help learners meet the challenges of the future.

As far as I know, mine is the first study to focus exclusively on the history of creativity in subject policy through a past-to-present inquiry. I have along the way been able to make minor adjustments to extant knowledge, such as demonstrating that 'creative' first appeared in a document pertaining to English teaching (Sharwood Smith: 1919, 29), predating the McCallum's (2012) suggestion that it is first found in 1922 (Sampson). More importantly, it is - as far as I know - the first time that representative voices of expert English teaching professionals have been brought together specifically to explore their understandings of creativity and English. I have begun a creative conversation that I hope they, as I, will continue.

Finally, I hope that my work might inspire more hermeneutic research in the field. A systematic study, such as that informed by Kinsella (2006), ensures that hermeneutics is as robust a method as more conventional approaches (Moules, 2002; McCaffrey *et al*, 2012; Rocavert, 2016) and, indeed, Gadamer (1975/2004) suggests that *all* research is actually hermeneutic at heart because all research depends upon communication and understanding. The 'historical consciousness' (Gardner, 2010: 54) of hermeneutics provides a researcher with a heightened awareness of how texts are woven in their contexts, and so contributes to a deep and nuanced reading. Hermeneutics is particularly appropriate for research into creativity (Rocavert: 2016): it involves the imagination and experimentation,

and so is itself creative; it is equally suited to English, given that both English and hermeneutics are intimately concerned with ‘the act of interpretation’ (McCallum 2012: 87). A hermeneutic perspective recognises that knowledge is ever-changing; this thesis, therefore, marks merely a temporary point on a journey. However, I hope that my work may give us pause¹¹¹ to reappraise the importance of creativity to the humane subject of English and to the humane practice of secondary English teaching.

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¹¹¹ Shakespeare (1603) *Hamlet*, Act 3, sc 1.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of publications arising from the research undertaken for this thesis

(These publications are also included in the References).

I include this in response to guidance from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law at the University of Bristol: 'During the term of a research degree the faculty hopes students will publish the results of their research. If this occurs prior to submission of their dissertation, Turnitin may show similarities between the dissertation and any papers already published as a result of the research. We do not wish to discourage research students from publishing their work for fear of being accused of plagiarism to their own papers. To cover this all students should include a statement near the start of their dissertation which clearly lists any publications arising from their research and explicitly stating their involvement in generating the publication' ([Electronic submission of Postgraduate Research Dissertations through Turnitin, 2015](#)).

Smith, L. (2017) *Creative spaces for developing independent writing with English teachers* in: Stevens, D. & Lockney, K. (eds.) (2017) *Students, Places, and Identities in English and the Arts: Creative spaces in education* Routledge: London pp. 42-54

Smith, L. (2018a) 'We're Not Building Worker Bees.' *What Has Happened to Creative Practice in England Since the Dartmouth Conference of 1966?* in: *Changing English* 26 (1) pp. 48-62, DOI: 10.1080/1358684X.2018.1532786

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Appendix 2: Policy texts analysed presented in chronological order

Date of publication	Title, author, publisher	Additional relevant information
	Discussed in Chapter 5	
1905	Board of Education (1905) <i>Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools</i> London: His Majesty's Stationery Office	The Board of Education (BoE) <u>Suggestions</u> series became known as the Blue Books and are referred to as the Blue Books in this inquiry for reasons of economy.
1912	Board of Education (1905/1912) <i>Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools</i> London: His Majesty's Stationery Office	This second edition is unchanged from the first, apart from the addition of a material relating to Needlework and Gardening which do not form part of this inquiry. It is this edition which I use for referencing.
1921	Newbolt, J.H. (1921; this edition 1934) <i>The Teaching of English in England (being the Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the President of the Board of Education to Inquire into the Position of English in the Educational System of England)</i> London: HMSO	
1923	Board of Education (1923) <i>Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools, Revised Edition</i> London: His Majesty's Stationery Office	
1924	Board of Education (1924) <i>Some Suggestions for the Teaching of English in Secondary Schools in England</i> London: His Majesty's Stationery Office	This is the only Blue Book devoted specifically to English.
1927	Board of Education (1927) <i>Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers</i> London: HMSO	
1937	Board of Education (1937) <i>Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers</i> London: HMSO	
1959	Department of Education and Science (1959) <i>Suggestions for the consideration of teachers and others concerned with the work of Primary Schools</i> London: HMSO	Note that the Board of Education has now become the DES. This final edition of the Blue Books focuses on primary education.
1975	Bullock, A. (1975) <i>A Language for Life: Report of the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock F.B.A.</i> London: HMSO	
1988	Kingman, J. (1988) <i>Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language</i> London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office	
	Discussed in Chapter 6	
1989	Cox, B. (1989) <i>English for ages 5 to 16: Proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales</i> London: Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office	The Proposals were accepted and republished as English in the National Curriculum (DfES, 1990)
1993	Department for Education and the Welsh Office (1993) <i>English for Ages 5-16 (1993): Proposals to the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Wales</i> London: DfE and the Welsh Office	Popularly known as the Pascal Curriculum, this version did not become statutory, but its contents influenced succeeding English orders

1995	DfE/WO (1995) <i>English in the National Curriculum</i> London: HMSO	
1999	Department for Education and Employment/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (1999a) <i>English: The National Curriculum</i> London: DfEE/QCA	
2004	Department for Education and Skills/QCA (2004) <i>The National Curriculum Handbook for Secondary Teachers in England Revised 2004</i> London DfES/QCA	The English orders are unchanged from the 1999 version, so this inquiry does not include the 2004 version as a separate policy document
2007	DCSF/QCA (2007) <i>English: Programme of study for key stage 3 [and 4] and attainment targets</i> London: DCSF/QCA	
2014	Department for Education (2014) <i>The national curriculum in England: Key stages 3 and 4 framework document</i> [available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study]	

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Appendix 3: Cast of colloquists presented in alphabetical order

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Summary of professional role (at time of research)</i>	<i>Year of qualification if known / years since qualification (to date of research)</i>	<i>Professional setting (at time of research)¹¹²</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Anne	Teacher of English running a PGCE part-time with a School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) consortium; in charge of recently- and newly-qualified teachers in her school. Former Head of English. At time of interview she had a senior position in a prominent national subject body.	2000/16	Maintained comprehensive	F
Doug	Head of English in independent school, although he spent the early years of his career in a state-maintained school; published award-winning poet. (The former head of his current school provided evidence to Newbolt (1921).)	1997/19	Independent selective mixed school	M
Gary	Headteacher of a successful rural comprehensive school, judged Good by Ofsted and awarded the Platinum Artsmark Award (Arts Council). Regularly publishes opinion pieces on education policy in the national press and national education press. Cited in the Cox Report as a teacher submitting evidence to the Committee (1989: 131). Contributed to the launch of the <i>Heart of English</i> project.	1985/31	Maintained comprehensive	M
Gill	Senior Lecturer in Education; English PGCE programme lead at a top Russell Group university. Member of the Executive Council of prominent national subject body; previously chair of a different national subject body; formerly a teacher of English in three different schools, and Head of English.	1976/40	Russell Group University	F
Jack	Active emeritus member of International Centre for Historical Research in Education, Institute of Education; founder member of London English Research group; attended celebrations to mark 50 th anniversary of the Dartmouth Conference.	1975/41	Ex-Russell Group University	M
Judy	Senior Lecturer in Education; English PGCE programme lead at a post-1992 university, with experience in the Graduate Teacher Training Programme (GTTP), SCITT and School Direct PGCE programmes; former Head of English in inner city school.	1982/34	Post-1992 University	F

¹¹² I have not included information about their region to maintain anonymity, but confirm that the sample includes representatives from across the country.

Leon	Visiting Lecturer and Research Associate at a Russell-Group university. Taught in London, becoming Head of English and Deputy Head; then appointed tutor on a PGCE programme. One of the original Senior Markers in the KS3 National Curriculum English Test.	1971/45	Russell Group University	M
Paul	Teaching and Learning Coordinator of Literacy Across the Curriculum, having stepped down as Head of English. Active member of a Teachers as Writers group. He came into teaching in his late 20s, in c. 2000.	c. 2000/ approx.16	Maintained comprehensive	M
Phil	Principal Examiner and Assistant Principal Moderator for popular examination board. Formerly a teacher of English and, latterly, Advisory Teacher. Previously Lecturer in Education in a red-brick university. At time of interview he had a senior position in a prominent national subject body.	Unknown	Examination board	M
Ruth	Teacher of English in an 11-18 rural maintained comprehensive, judged Outstanding by Ofsted and awarded Gold Artsmark Award.	2014/2	Maintained comprehensive	F
Sara	Raising Standards Lead in English in a city academy, judged Good by Ofsted, having begun her career in a neighbouring city academy. Active member of a Teachers as Writers group.	2013/3	Maintained comprehensive	F
Tony	Former Teacher of English in Zambia, Singapore and England. Established company producing ICT resources for English classrooms; simultaneously employed in senior role within prominent national subject body. Published poet; involved in Creative Partnerships.	Unknown	Retired	M

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Appendix 4: Ethical approval

GSoE RESEARCH ETHICS FORM

It is important for members of the Graduate School of Education, as a community of researchers, to consider the ethical issues that arise, or may arise, in any research they propose to conduct. Increasingly, we are also accountable to external bodies to demonstrate that research proposals have had a degree of scrutiny. *This form must therefore be completed for each piece of research carried out by members of the School, both staff and students*

The GSoE's process is designed to be supportive and educative. If you are preparing to submit a research proposal, you need to do the following:

- 1. Arrange a meeting with a fellow researcher**
The purpose of the meeting is to discuss ethical aspects of your proposed research, so you need to meet with someone with relevant research experience. A list of prompts for your discussion is given below. Not all these headings will be relevant for any particular proposal.
- 2. Complete the form on the back of this sheet**
The form is designed to act as a record of your discussion and any decisions you make.
- 3. Upload a copy of this form and any other documents (e.g. information sheets, consent forms) to the online ethics tool**
at: <https://dbms.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/red/ethics-online-tool/applications>.

Please note: Following the upload you will need to answer ALL the questions on the ethics online survey and submit for approval by your supervisor (see the flowchart and user guides on the GSoE Ethics Homepage).

If you have any questions or queries, please contact the ethics co-ordinators at: gsoe-ethics@bristol.ac.uk

Please ensure that you allow time before any submission deadlines to complete this process.

Prompts for discussion

You are invited to consider the issues highlighted below and note any decisions made. You may wish to refer to relevant published ethical guidelines to prepare for your meeting. See <http://www.bris.ac.uk/education/research/networks/ethicscommittee/links/> for links to several such sets of guidelines.

1. Researcher access/ exit
2. Information given to participants
3. Participants right of withdrawal
4. Informed consent
5. Complaints procedure
6. Safety and well-being of participants/ researchers
7. Anonymity/ confidentiality
8. Data collection
9. Data analysis
10. Data storage
11. Data Protection Act
12. Feedback
13. Responsibilities to colleagues/ academic community
14. Reporting of research

Be aware that ethical responsibility continues throughout the research process. If further issues arise as your research progresses, it may be appropriate to cycle again through the above process.

Name(s): Lorna Smith

Proposed research project: PhD thesis: An investigation into the impact of the National Curriculum (2014) on creativity in secondary English teaching in England

Proposed funder(s): N/A

Discussant for the ethics meeting: Janet Orchard

Name of supervisor: Malcolm Reed

Has your supervisor seen this submitted draft of your ethics application? Y

The purpose of my project is to consider the impact of the National Curriculum (2014) on creativity in the secondary English classroom. As a former teacher and now teacher educator, I am committed to a creative approach to English: I believe that it is the right of every learner to be encouraged to be imaginative, know how to solve problems with confidence and work effectively with others, all traits which are developed through creative teaching. I subscribe to a liberal, humane, child-centred view of education first described by Matthew Arnold. Given that the current version of the National Curriculum has excised all references to 'creativity' (and other words with the root 'create'), I am interested in exploring to what extent today's English classrooms engage in and celebrate creativity. Drawing on a hermeneutic review of relevant literature, including guidance for English teachers spanning the past 100 years, and interviews from experienced teachers, teacher educators and other experts in the field, I aim to consider how a creative approach might be fostered and maintained.

Discussion:

1. Researcher access/exit and 6. Safety/well-being: I know or am acquainted with some of my intended interviewees: I am a member of their professional community. As such, I hope to be able to forge the necessary 'understanding and confidence' (Kumar, 2011: 160) which is necessary for deep conversation.

I will conduct the interviews at a place of the interviewees' choosing to ensure that they are in a comfortable environment that is quiet and where we are unlikely to be interrupted. This will help to ensure that the participants feel secure and supported.

I need to consider how to enter the field and present myself appropriately: I must not be over-familiar yet also need to ensure that the situation is as normalised as possible, something also to be aware of when leaving the field (Yee and Andrews, 2006). I believe that my going to visit the interviewees will then provide a sense of closure when I depart. Further correspondence (e.g. for purposes of member checking) will then be carried out by email. I will alert my interviewees to any publications arising from my project if they request this (I will include a question regarding this on the consent form).

2. Information given to participants: I have already discussed my project with a number of my proposed interviewees, and am pleased that they have expressed interest and willingness to participate. I will (re)explain the purpose of the project when I write to individuals to arrange the interview date/time, and include a statement of intent at the top of the consent form.

3. Right of withdrawal: I will make it clear to the participants, both when setting up the interviews and in the consent form, that they might withdraw at any time and that any data I have already collected at the time of their withdrawal would then be destroyed.

4. Informed consent and 7. Anonymity/confidentiality: As noted, each participant will sign a consent form. This will include a question regarding their wish to remain anonymous. I will explain that my default position will be to anonymise all participants in my thesis; I will also anonymise all participants in any publications arising from the work, unless they express a wish for their names to be used: given the potentially sensitive and political nature of my topic, and the current public debates around the English curriculum, it is possible that some participants will want their views to be fully attributed (I will include a question regarding this on the consent form). For those who wish to remain anonymous, I will need to be careful in ensuring that they cannot be identified through my work and that references to their roles/institutions etc. are suitably vague.

5. Complaints procedure and 13. Responsibilities to colleagues/academic community: With his permission, I will refer my participants to my supervisor, Dr Malcolm Reed, should there be any concerns about my approach.

My participants are mostly from the academic community, so I see my role is to maintain as neutral a position as possible, act as a careful listener and draw out the views of the participants. I will also need to take on board and reflect on any feedback which I receive.

8 - 11. Data collection, analysis, storage and data protection: I will use a series of prompt cards (using quotations drawn from my literature review) in order to stimulate discussion. I will record our conversation on two digital recording devices – my iPad and a digital voice recorder – so that I have a back-up. The devices are discreet and so, I hope, will not impede the flow of discussion.

The iPad is password protected and the voice recorder will be stored in a locked filing cabinet until I have downloaded it onto a secure password-protected computer, at which point the recording on the digital recorder will be wiped. I will transcribe the recordings and save these documents on a secure password-protected computer. Once I have completed my viva (i.e. at the culmination of my project), all data will be destroyed.

12. Feedback: As noted, I will undertake member checking by sending a transcript of our conversation to each participant as soon as possible after the event. I will offer to send them a copy of the completed thesis and to send them any publications that arise from the thesis if they wish (see 1./6. above).

14. Reporting: I intend to publish at least two articles in (a) reputable journal(s) on completion of my thesis and will undertake the usual academic approach to this.

Signed:

(Researcher)

Signed:

(Discussant)

Date:



01.06.2016



01.06.2016.

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Appendix 5: Participant consent form

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CONSENT FORM

An investigation into the impact of the National Curriculum (2014) on creativity in secondary English teaching in England

The purpose of my project is to consider the impact of the National Curriculum (2014) on creativity in the secondary English classroom. As a former teacher and now teacher educator, I am committed to a creative approach to English: I believe that it is the right of every learner to be encouraged to be imaginative, know how to solve problems with confidence and work effectively with others, all traits which are developed through creative teaching. Given that the current version of the National Curriculum has excised all references to 'creativity' (and other words with the root 'create'), I am interested in exploring to what extent today's English classrooms engage in and celebrate creativity. Drawing on a hermeneutic review of relevant literature, including guidance for English teachers spanning the past 100 years, and interviews from experienced teachers, teacher educators and other experts in the field, I aim to consider how a creative approach might be fostered and maintained.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge

	YES	NO
DO YOU CONFIRM THAT YOU:		
• are happy to be interviewed by the researcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• give permission for the researcher to make a digital recording of the interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• agree that the researcher can send you a transcript to confirm the conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HAVE YOU:		
• been given information explaining about the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• received satisfactory answers to all questions you asked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• received enough information about the study for you to make a decision about your participation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DO YOU UNDERSTAND:		
1) that you are free to withdraw from the study and free to withdraw your data prior to final consent		
• 1a) at any time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• 1b) without having to give a reason for withdrawing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) that the data you provide will be confidential and any reference to your data in my thesis will be anonymous , with no link made between your name or other identifying information, <i>unless you express the wish that your name should be included in any publication(s) via the question below.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• 2a) Do you wish your name to be published?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I hereby fully and freely consent to my participation in this study

I understand the nature and purpose of this study. Information been communicated to me via email and an outline of the study is included at the top of this form.
I understand and acknowledge that the investigation is designed to promote knowledge and that the researcher will use the data I provide for no purpose other than research.
I understand that the data I provide will be kept **confidential**, and that all references will be **anonymous** in the resulting thesis by removing all links between my name or other identifying information and the data prior to its presentation. My anonymity will also be preserved in any resulting publication(s) *unless I have answered 'Yes' to question 2a above.*

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Name in BLOCK Letters: _____

Final consent
Having participated in this study

I agree to the researcher keeping and processing the data I have provided during the course of this study. I understand that these data will be used only for the purpose(s) set out above, and my consent is conditional upon the University of Bristol complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Name in BLOCK Letters: _____

	YES	NO
DISSEMINATION:		
• Would you like to receive a copy of the completed thesis by email on completion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Would you like to be notified by email of any publications resulting from this research?		<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have any questions related to your participation in this study please contact me, or alternatively direct concerns to my supervisor, Dr Malcolm Reed, Graduate School of Education: malcolm.reed@bristol.ac.uk.

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Appendix 6: Quotations used as prompts for discussion, as presented to the participants

1	<p>On the purpose of education</p> <p>First, there must proceed a way how to discern the natural inclinations and capacities of children. Secondly, next must ensue the culture and furnishment of the mind. Thirdly, the moulding of behaviour and decent forms. Fourthly, the tempering of the affections. Fifthly, the quickening and exciting of observations and practical judgement. Sixthly, and the last in order, but the principal in value, being that which must knit and consolidate all the rest, is the timely instilling of conscientious principles and the seeds of religion.</p> <p>Henry Wotton (1568-1639) (unspecified writings) in Board of Education (1937) <i>Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers</i> London: HMSO p.8</p>
2	<p>On the purpose of education</p> <p>Education is the engine of our economy... most important of all, we must ensure that more people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a demanding economy.</p> <p>Speech to the Education Reform Summit: Gibb, N (2015) The Purpose of Education available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-purpose-of-education [last accessed 13.07.15]</p>
3	<p>On creativity</p> <p>[C]reativity is a much a decision about and an attitude toward life as it is a matter of ability.</p> <p>Sternberg, 2003 in Rowson, J (2008) <i>Are We Disposed To Be Creative?</i> in Craft, A, Gardner, H & Claxton, G (eds) (2008) <i>Creativity, Wisdom and Trusteeship: Exploring the Role of Education</i> Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press pp 84-85</p>
4	<p>On creativity</p> <p>[Creativity is] imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value'</p> <p>NACCCE (1999) <i>All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education</i> available online at: http://sirkenrobinson.com/pdf/allourfutures.pdf [last accessed 17.03.15] p. 30</p>
5	<p>On creative English</p> <p>"Creative English" is not for me a matter of simply eliciting verse or prose, but rather of establishing a relationship and an ethos which will promote experiment, talk, enquiry, amusement, vivacity, bouts of intense concentration, seriousness, collaboration, and a clearer and more adequate self-knowledge. This will involve us in talk about our selves (sic), our language, our behaviour, our attitudes and beliefs, and, when appropriate, in recording such things in writing. And the teacher's sense of his (sic) role is crucial. If he is prescriptive - knowing what he wants, knowing all the answers beforehand - he will be less effective than if he is prepared to allow the pupils' awareness of criteria to grow for itself in the business of making, modifying, and so on.</p> <p>Summerfield, G (ed) (1968) <i>Creativity in English: Papers relating to the Anglo-American seminar on the teaching of English</i> (Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, 1966): The Dartmouth Seminar Papers Champaign, Illinois: NCTE p.44</p>
6	<p>On creative English</p> <p>Creativity: Pupils show creativity when they make unexpected connections, use striking and original phrases or images, approach tasks from a variety of starting points, or change forms to surprise and engage the reader. Creativity can be encouraged by providing purposeful</p>

	<p>opportunities for pupils to experiment, build on ideas or follow their own interests. Creativity in English extends beyond narrative and poetry to other forms and uses of language. It is essential in allowing pupils to progress to higher levels of understanding and become independent.</p> <p>QCA (2007) <i>English: Programme of study for key stage 3 [and 4] and attainment targets</i> London: QCA p. 63</p>
7	<p>On the components of the English curriculum</p> <p>'Now [i.e. 1921], as then, there is the danger that a true instinct for humanism may be smothered by the demand for definite measurable results, especially the passing of examinations in a variety of subjects, and if those who are anxious to do justice to English find it so hard to carry out their desire, what is to be expected from those who will remain indifferent?'</p> <p>Authors' comment on Revised Code of 1871: Newbolt et al (1921; this edition 1934) <i>The Teaching of English in England</i> London: HMSO p. 55</p>
8	<p>On the components of the English curriculum</p> <p>Does "being educated in English" ... imply knowledge of grammar and syntax? Competence at 'literary criticism' (and what is this anyway)? Ability to produce 'creative writing' (another obscurity)? Knowledge of the dates of authors and the dimensions of the Shakespearean stage? And so on.</p> <p>Wilson, J (1972) <i>Philosophy and Educational Research</i> Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales. p.9</p>

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Appendix 7: developing the written colloquies

Stage 1: extract from 'naturalized' colloquy with Anne

- L Do you ever sleep? {laughs}
- A No, I don't sleep {laughs}
- L That's brilliant, thank you
- A That's all right
- L Oh gosh, you make me feel exhausted [REDACTED]
- A [laughs] Just thinking about all of that if you don't think about it it's fine, yeah
- L You just get on a do it
- A Yep
- L Um, OK, now I've got a number of statements here and what I wondered is if whether you could just pick one fairly much at random really and and [1] respond to it. I've got some prompts if we need them but [1] what I'd love to be able to do just during this interview is talk about one of each colour, but if we don't have time for one of each colour that's also fine
- A OK, OK
- L but preferably [2] after the first one go onto a different colour
- A Ok, that's fine
- L So it's it's completely up to you where you feel like feel like starting
- A This red one's interesting about education being the engine of our economy [1] and there it's most important of all we must ensure that all people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a demanding economy. I find quite [2] depressing, it's a fact, fact, fact Gradgrindian approach to filling them with knowledge. It's the knowledge let's fill your head with it. And it's not [2] it's very [1] narrow [1] It's about skills they need to succeed in a demanding economy, not skills they need for life, not skills they need to be [1] people, but it's just about work, and I don't agree that education is just preparing them for work, it's part of it but it's not all of it.
- L So what would you say the purpose of education is?
- A It's about opening doors. Showing young people what they can do, what they might do, and giving young people the tools and the skills and the habits to do whatever they want to do, whether that be become a poet or go and work for a FSTE 100 company. They're different, and we can't just have one view of education and it's about knowledge and skills when if we have that we we're shoving everyone into the same boxes and not everybody will fit into the same boxes and it's not appropriate to fit everybody into the same boxes anyway. Um so I don't like that statement.

L Yes it's [?]
A No, I {laughs}
L {laughs} It's very interesting! Lovely. Thank you.

Stage 2: the same extract in 'denaturalized' form

L Do you ever sleep?
A No, I don't sleep!
L That's brilliant, thank you.
A That's all right.
L Oh gosh, you make me feel exhausted [REDACTED].
A If you don't think about it it's fine.
L You just get on and do it.
A Yep.
L OK, now I've got a number of statements here and what I wondered is whether you could just pick one fairly much at random really and respond to it. I've got some prompts if we need them but what I'd love to be able to do just during this interview is talk about one of each colour, but if we don't have time for one of each colour that's fine - but preferably after the first one go onto a different colour.
A Ok, that's fine.
L So it's completely up to you where you feel like feel like starting.
A This red one's interesting about education being the engine of our economy. 'Most important of all we must ensure that all people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a demanding economy.' I find [that] quite depressing, it's a fact, fact, fact Gradgrindian approach to filling them with knowledge. It's the knowledge - let's fill your head with it. And it's very narrow: it's about skills they need to succeed in a demanding economy, not skills they need for life, not skills they need to be people. It's just about work, and I don't agree that education is just preparing them for work, it's part of it but it's not all of it.
L So what would you say the purpose of education is?
A It's about opening doors. Showing young people what they can do, what they might do, and giving young people the tools and the skills and the habits to do whatever they want to do, whether that be become a poet or go and work for a FSTE 100 company. They're different, and we can't just have one view of education. If we [just] have [knowledge and skills] we're shoving everyone into the same boxes and not everybody will fit into the same boxes and it's not appropriate to fit everybody into the same boxes anyway. So I don't like that statement.
L Very interesting! Lovely. Thank you.

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Appendix 8: Creating a script from my transcripts: sample of work in progress

Opening the debate – what is the definition of creativity?

Jack 15 What's being contested here? What are the armies that are being assembled? In whose interests? So it's not like I open my OED and find Creativity, it's 'What do people mean by it, what's their investment? What's their agenda?' And I think that possibly it becomes something around which the debate can be developed.

Gill 3-4 People in positions of power... are looking for... measurable outcomes, because they're in power for a short period of time... They need results... quickly and are constantly looking for things that are quantifiable and measurable... It's become very driven. Education [discourse is becoming dominated] by impact and outcomes and results.

Sara 2 [Exactly.] Everything has to be formalised and everything has to be double-checked... It doesn't allow for creativity... The government are looking for levels of attainment... [but] I think that creativity is... separate... from ability and... separate from attainment... I can... talk about the liquorish smell of the tarmac on a hot day... but there's no way you could write a mark scheme for that... So [for many politicians] ... creativity is something that sits away from ability and [is] therefore something [of] an afterthought because it's so difficult to measure.

About personal growth

Judy 6 [But] it's just those moments that you can't measure, you can't necessarily capture, that are absolutely central to being human!...

Leon 3 [And] all those things [that one needs to be human] are sub-texts in creativity! Creativity is.. to do with flexibility and imaginative response to what one's provided with culturally and educationally, so one doesn't sit down and think, 'I'll learn this for the exam.' That's useless. It's the *response* to it: What sense do I make of it? How do I relate it to my own life? How do I relate it to the lives of those around me? How as [I] develop in... age and maturity do I relate it to society around me? All those are elements of creativity.

Judy 2 [Yes,] it's to do with *creating*, which I think people... lose sense of when they think of the word *creative*. What needs to be given time and space in this way of thinking is that you are actually in the process of moulding something; you are in the process of building; you are in the process of taking on new ways of looking.

Sara 6 [That's it!] I think that when we talk about creativity in schools we often think in terms of the Arts of sitting down and doing a nice piece of creative writing, but actually creativity is *thinking*...

Paul 6 ... and making decisions

Leon 9 ... [and using] inference, deduction, comparison.

Anne 2 It's about discovery. [And] understanding that you can't always make sense of everything.

Leon 9 [All these] mental activities underpin creativity... I mean, [look at] Vygotsky, Piaget! – their understanding of these things is robust and they've never been seriously challenged on that.

Ruth 8 [So yes, it's all these things, and] it's about enjoyment and expressing yourself... [But] the last thing I would want for one of my students is to be really passionate about a topic but not be able to express themselves. [So creativity is also what *we're* doing now, it's about] speaking, *communicating* with other people...]

LS **Loma Smith**
Working subtitles generated from my analysis

LS **Loma Smith**
Numbers after colloquists' names refer to page references from the original transcripts

LS **Loma Smith**
Ellipsis indicates a word (or words) cut from the original transcript, yet without detracting from the argument

LS **Loma Smith**
Square brackets indicate words/phrases I have added to generate a more realistic flow to the conversation.

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Appendix 9: Sample responses of colloquists to draft of Chapter 7

Dear Lorna,

Thank you so much for sending me over your compilation of the interviews you undertook. I loved reading through it and would not change anything at all. You perfectly summed up my ideas.

[...]

Best wishes,

[Ruth] (22.10.19)

Hi Lorna!

I'm happy for that [i.e. comment regarding mis-using teacher assessment] to be included. They can't sack me now.

Your interweaving of the contributions is masterly. Maybe you should get a job as an editor with the Beeb, or similar!

Which reminds me, I was interviewed about creativity etc for an arts project a little while ago. It took an hour which was brilliantly whittled down to 15 mins! You might find it amusing... [link redacted]

Cheers

[Tony] (22.10.19)

Dear Lorna

Thanks you very much for this update. I remember our conversation well - you are the only person who has interviewed me in such depth - and I'm very pleased your PhD is now approaching completion.

I'm very happy to be Leon, but if the colloquists are to be unidentifiable it would be safer to replace XXXXXXXXXX with "Senior Marker" in the description. [...]

I enjoyed reading the colloquy. It's a lovely thought experiment - set in the British Library indeed! - and you weave together the comments by the various participants in a lively and plausible way. I'm entirely happy with my contributions to it.

[...]

Best wishes

[Leon] (25.10.19)

Thanks, Lorna - this stuff looks great. By the way, I can't remember whether or not I was working on Dartmouth when we talked? Congratulations on the articles - interesting themes...

And thanks for the update about [REDACTED]. I should get in touch soon.

And Jack is fine!

All the best,

[Jack] (30.10.19)

Lorna,

This must have take you ages; I am impressed by your stamina!

Thank you so much for sharing your work and for moulding our words into coherence. It is, indeed, a creative or recreative enterprise that makes the debate immediate. It makes me want to share it straightaway with others - always the mark of writing that really has something to say.

How does the colloquy form sit within the final whole? I'd be interested to see how the chapters work together.

Maybe we need a symposium too - so that the conversation is framed by entertainments, literature, music and drinking...??

Maybe not!

[Judy] x (09.11.19)

Dear Lorna

Very belatedly, just to say thank you for this. I read the chapter with great interest and, perhaps predictably, particularly found myself aligning with those of 'Gary'!

Good luck with the project. It raised my spirits to be reminded of your work.

[Gary] (05.12.19)

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