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CREATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Towards a common discourse and practice

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Abstract: There has recently been a call for more pedagogic comparative research to counter the dominance of structural and policy led studies. At the same time there is also a necessity to provide alternative comparative research to that concerned with global standardising performance and performativity strategies. The research, on which this paper is based, fulfils both these aims by investigating creative teaching and learning in nine European countries at classroom level using ethnographic methods in a small number of sites for each partner. The research partners share a common discourse of pedagogy that we are calling creative teaching and learning, a common humanitarian discourse and the ethnographic methodology for the research was a strong framework to counter differing cultural approaches to research. The article analytically characterises some significant strategies used by teachers, the creative learning experienced and the meaning that the experiences had for the students involved. We conclude that this research has laid the basis for a common discourse for further research in a comparative approach that will investigate commonalities to build an understanding of international creative pedagogy and investigate differences to enhance the conceptualisation of it.

INTRODUCTION

There is global interest in raising educational achievement levels to benefit future economic development through increasing the skills base and producing an educated workforce to fit the requirements of the knowledge economy. This global activity means that societies are coming to share a common language for articulating educational perspectives, problems and solutions through international discourses and models (Hartley, 2003) that also inform national policy debates (Phillips and Ochs, 2003). Article 149 of the European Union prioritises the development of education, for example;

its establishment of a major department, the Directorate General for Education and Culture. Through the 'Open Method of Co-ordination' (OMC) adopted by the Lisbon summit in 2000 decision makers consider their strategies as a tool to develop common indicators and benchmarks, aimed at improving the quality of education systems by 2010 (Dale and Robertson, 2002). The European Commission (EC) publishes memoranda on the educational policies of the member states, 'A European space has been created' (Mitter, 2004, p. 359); a supra-national status beyond economic, social and political integration into an educational and cultural community. Another example of this global policy influence is the establishment of 'The Organisation for Economic Development' (OECD), which reports on education in their Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)(OECD, 2003). The 3-yearly reports compare levels of achievement in more than forty-five countries so that others can learn from successful programmes and practices and develop a convergent approach to the raising of standards.

However, these developments are contested: there are challenges to the domination of adopting one policy for raising standards (Osborn, 2001); policy borrowing is shown as being dissipated by local cultures (Bouzakis and Koustourakis, 2002); the tests that measure success have been shown to incline pedagogies towards instrumentalism (Mitter, 2004) and local autonomy is dissipated as international standardisations are imposed (Amos et al., 2002; Dale and Robertson, 2002). At the same time a new international creativity discourse emerged at the turn of the millennium (Jeffrey and Craft, 2001) that also challenged the dominance of the performativity discourse embedded in the OECD practices.

The European Commission funded our Creative Learning and Student Perspectives (CLASP) research project with nine partners for a total of nine months research over a twenty two month period from December 2003 until October 2005 to highlight the existence of an alternative common discourse to that of global standardisation. The common factor between us was a set of values concerning education, a prevailing common discourse, with its roots in European educational literature concerning creative teaching and learning derived in the most part from pedagogies which have been part of European educational values since the 19th century, for example; Pestolozzi, and Froebel. Other labels are used by different cultural pedagogies, for example in Denmark, there is a pedagogy called 'bildung', meaning learning by experience and while in Austria there is no such term as creativity in pedagogic theories there are progressive and learning theories similar to the English creativity discourse influenced by Freinet (Raggl, 2006). It is 'the degree of compatibility at the level of values which sets the limits to what can successfully be transferred at the level of practice' (Alexander 2001, p.

518), in this case creative teaching. It was important to identify a common label for the subject matter we were going to investigate, for 'Pedagogy is defined stipulatively as the discourse in which the act of teaching is embedded', (ibid. p.521). The research also filled a large gap in comparative research for there has been a 'neglect of pedagogy in comparative education' (ibid. p.509) and it is argued that future comparative studies of education should place much greater emphasis 'on the process of learning itself rather than at present, on the organisation and provision of education' (Broadfoot 2000, p. 368).

However, the CLASP study was a research project that did not seek, at this stage, to compare differences between the characteristics of creative learning but it sought to identify common features of a particular form of pedagogy, to create something that was 'more than the sum of their parts' (Alexander 2001, p.511) and 'to tease out the universal...by the trading and migration of ideas and practices across national borders...' (ibid. p.513-514). The task of seeking differences between national practices as a comparative analytical approach is important for the identification and development of European creative and learning practices but this task needs carrying out after establishing empirical evidence of the discourse's existence. Consequently, at this stage we identified common characteristics of creative teaching and learning practices defined as involving innovation, ownership, control and relevance.

A teaching innovation results from a new combination of known factors, or from the introduction of a new factor into a prevailing situation. The innovation is owned by the teacher concerned for it may be the teacher's own idea, or an adaptation of someone else's idea into a new teaching situation. The teacher has a certain autonomy and control of the process and she must be culturally attuned to her pupils. Creative acts bring change. They change pupils, teachers and situations (Woods, 1990).

Our interest in 'creative learning', focused on how creative teaching was experienced, adapted, appropriated or rejected by students and what kinds of creative agency is released through creative teaching contexts. Its key characteristics are the same as applied to creative teaching—relevance, control, ownership and innovation.

- relevance. Learning that is meaningful to the immediate needs and interests of pupils and to the group as a whole
- ownership of knowledge. The pupil learns for herself - not the teacher's, examiner or society's knowledge. Creative learning is internalized and makes a difference to the pupil's self.
- control of learning processes. The pupil is self-motivated, not governed by extrinsic factors, or purely task-oriented exercises.

- innovation. Something new is created. A major change has taken place - a new skill mastered, new insight gained, new understanding realised, new, meaningful knowledge acquired. A radical shift is indicated, as opposed to more gradual, cumulative learning, with which it is complementary.

Considering the relationship among these criteria, Woods (2002) concludes that the higher the relevance of teaching to

children's lives, worlds, cultures and interests, the more likelihood there is that pupils will have control of their own learning processes. Relevance aids identification, motivation, excitement and enthusiasm. Control, in turn, leads to ownership of the knowledge that results. If relevance, control and ownership apply, the greater the chance of creative learning resulting—something new is created, there is significant change or 'transformation' in the pupil—i.e. innovation (p. 7)

This paper summarises some of the common features and characteristics of creative teaching, creative learning and the meaningful nature of these experiences for students of this research project. A fuller account can be found in the CLASP Report (<http://clasp.open.ac.uk>) and extensive details of some aspects of each partner's research project can be found in an edited collection of papers from the project (Jeffrey, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The CLASP project was part of a new tradition of comparative research, which aimed to adopt contextual sensitivity and we selected ethnographic methodology as suitable for that approach (Beach, Gordon, and Lahelma, 2003; Borgnakke, 2000). Ethnographic methodology is a 'bottom up, grounded approach, which first locates the empirical cases, taking care to specify the criteria by which they are selected, and then employs a range of theories to portray and explain them' (Woods, 1996, p. 11). Fieldwork is a work of art (Wolcott, 1995) and as with research partner relationships the emphasis is on ensuring the flexibility and freedom of the researcher to use their own imaginative tools.

All the researchers acted as participant observers to interpret contexts and situations and to engage in dialogues with teachers and students concerning their analysis of the focus of their research—creative teaching and learning. Situations were examined in detail and intuitive intentions and strategies were brought to the surface through observation, conversations, reflection and conscious experimentation.

However, we found that ‘shared repertoires’ (Wenger, 1998) took time to develop in a ‘loosely coupled’ (Weick, 1989) project where each partner carried out their own research activity in their own research sites. Our international partners needed a common methodological framework through which they could embed their research activity alongside their common subject discourse, so drawing on Peter Woods’ (1996) ‘Researching the art of teaching’ we constructed a relevant set of common lenses with which to conduct our fieldwork in order to build that shared repertoire. The lenses we devised reflected ethnographic methodology but were directly focused on the project of creative learning—the context, the situational interactions, the students’ cognitive explorations, the students’ subjective reactions and their agency (Troman and Jeffrey, 2005) to assist researchers to construct the ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of qualitative enquiry.

Since these were in-depth qualitative studies with small samples we did not claim empirical generalizability in quantitative terms. However, we argued that the research would produce well-formulated theory in areas less well covered in past research and would be strongly grounded in a wealth of detail concerning learning activities and pupil experiences by evoking moods, tones and atmospheres. These research methods were used in earlier research (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996). These theories may then have more general application and would be available to others to apply to their situations, to test and to elaborate.

In practical terms the research provided new insights into what is possible in teaching and learning both within a country’s National Curriculum and outside it. Primary analysis aimed to identify broad themes and categories and any ‘core categories’ from the rich data. These were saturated, refined and perhaps modified by more data collection, using different methods to triangulate the results. The categories had to be specified in terms of the conditions which gave rise to them, the context in which they were embedded, the strategies by which they were handled, and the consequences of those strategies (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The notions of ‘possibility knowledge’ and ‘shared puzzlement’ (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996) were derived in this way.

The data was inserted into a qualitative computer software programme Atlas-Ti (www.atlasti.com) by the researchers to ensure a degree of analytical commonality between European partners in the research analysis. This sophisticated analytical programme was multi-lingual and had a very good support service and an email discussion list.

Sample

Each partner worked at a university or college and the lead person is indicated below - table 1 - each of whom has at least one publication reporting on their research (Jeffrey, 2006).

Figure Caption 1

As can be seen from this table the research sites ranged from Early Years classes through secondary schools, higher education and adult learning. In quantitative terms this is quite a large sample for an ethnographic study and due to the large number of researchers working in different countries we were presented with a unique situation for an ethnographic project. However, we argue that ethnography is in itself a comparative activity and we used a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to analyse each project's findings.

Although the partners were mainly focusing on creative learning, we agreed that this needed situating within the teaching environment and the partners recorded different strategies used by teachers and schools to stimulate creative learning. Some details of these strategies are outlined in the next section, which will be followed by characterisations of creative learning experiences and the meaning these had for students.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

The research sites were mainly schools and colleges and the policies of the schools and teachers were crucial to the development of creative learning contexts and experiences. In the main the schools and teachers were the instigators of the specific school and class creativity programmes and they determined the processes by which creative learning was experienced. They were also the people who, together with the influence of resources and community partners, constructed the quality of the creative learning environments in which the students and learners worked.

The establishment of real and critical events and strategic external co-operations.

The partner's creativity programmes mainly conformed to the structure of a critical event, which goes through well-defined stages of conceptualisation, preparation and planning, divergence, convergence, consolidation, and celebration. The advantage of using a critical event frame for researching creative learning is that researchers see the whole process of

a creative experience as it develops over time showing how relevance, ownership and control led to innovation and a possible transformation of learners (Woods, 1995). The decision by these schools to create a critical event established a special time period, or project within the school timetable which in some cases was integrated within the rest of the curriculum programme; in others they were treated separately although they often involved the use of other curriculum subjects or directly influenced separate subject study. Secondly, critical events involved a considerable amount of external engagement from advisors, artists, specialist funders, workshop providers, project specialists and visits.

These events included: school environment improvements and analysis; co-ordinated international projects; computer toy constructions for major competitions; business case studies; re-enactments of social issues and local histories and the examination of lives from different cultures. The events replaced the designated curriculum or were incorporated into existing programmes, usually enhancing it, e.g.: designating specialist weeks to a particular curriculum subject across the school, a specific time allocation of a week to a creative project. They also often involved strategic co-operations with external partners and organisations in the community such as dancers, artists, sculptors, actors, environmental workers.

The research sites across the nine partners used specialist programmes, strategic partnerships and community engagement to maintain their creative teaching and learning opportunities in the face of more pan European pressures for instrumental convergence to standardised tests and assessments (Ball, 2000).

An example of a specific common teacher strategy was the creative use of space.

Creative Use of Space

Critical events often involved altering the nature of the space in which the teachers and learners usually worked or the whole group was moved to unusual spaces for the development of creative learning. These alterations of space or the appropriation of other spaces within the immediate environment of the normal teaching site was one of the ways the teachers manipulated programmes to instigate creative learning. The whole classroom or spaces within classrooms were either altered or reconceptualised to assist a more creative practice, institutional rooms were appropriated and used productively to site and enhance creative experiences, the grounds of the institutions were used and developed as centres for curriculum programmes, community visitors were incorporated into projects and virtual space was used to open up the classrooms to the world.

However, designating space for flexibility and ownership by students was not always successful. The Gothenburg sites were specifically designed to create more autonomy for students for studying but not all the students were able to take advantage of the freedom offered them. Those who had not benefited from an experience of individual study programmes or whose home environments were not conducive to study, found themselves alienated from the flexible policy. Those who were more experienced and those with more 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) made the most of the provisions including teachers' time (Dovemark, 2004).

A second manipulation involved adjusting temporal boundaries for time spent on activities beyond the normal length of lessons, for a regular complaint of young participants was the lack of time for creative learning. Whole teaching sessions were abandoned to investigate the effectiveness of the teacher's teaching style and learners' participation. Other examples included ten afternoons given over to the construction of maths games and seats for a playground and weeks set aside for specific curriculum investigations and explorations such as design and technology. There was time for presentations, sharing narratives, learning stories, community visits, regular cultural celebrations and forums to discuss issues and activities. IT-classes were carried out for much longer periods than was normal with extra time allocated for extensive computer access. These special arrangements for extended time periods for creative activities modelled the importance of the critical event for creative learning and the increased interest and commitment that time can give to the value of creative learning.

Modelling Creativity

The teachers across this project were aware of their influence as stimulators for creative learning. As well as providing critical events and appropriate spaces they acted as models for learning, for creativity itself and for creative learning. They drew out students' ideas and celebrated them, invested time in discussion and critique, acted spontaneously, worked alongside imported agents such as artists and workshop leaders as well as joining in the learning processes stimulated by them and they exhibited pleasure from innovatory action.

In particular, they valued visitor's and student's ideas as they drew them out in conversation and discussion. They valued their perspectives and innovative observations thereby affirming the manner in which knowledge was investigated and examined. They also valued the importance of 'having a go' and experimenting with ideas and imagination as well as affirming everyone's contribution to the creation of a dynamic learning environment.

The teachers worked alongside the artists and experts as learners, thus modelling learning itself as a value to them. They took part in virtual explorations, they played roles in the classroom reconstructions of the past and in drama workshops. They took part in the investigation of sounds in the environment, the construction of playground furniture and in mathematical problem solving constructions. They mapped Logo motorised plans alongside learners, worked with groups investigating business case studies, told stories of their own histories alongside those of the asylum learners, contributed new discoveries they had made for themselves during community investigations and engaged with learners in analysing cultural issues such as inter-cultural sexual relations.

They also modelled creative learning by acting spontaneously and changing plans as classroom circumstances altered and they exhibited pleasure in their teaching and learning, an emotional aspect of creative learning (Jeffrey and Woods, 1997). The data showed teachers modelling creativity by being innovative, exhibiting pleasure from creative processes, and investing time in discussion and critique.

CREATIVE LEARNING—CHARACTERISTICS

The young participants were firstly able to bring their own experience and imagination to knowledge based engagements and to learning situations. Secondly, due to the special nature of the critical events and the strategies provided by teachers and schools the young participants were often engaged in more than one specific activity at a time. They were able to call upon the full range of their multiple intelligencies, for example; spatial, logico mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic intelligence, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal (Gardner 1983). One or more of these intelligencies, are according to Gardner, present in each individual and given the appropriate situations they are able to draw upon them to increase their learning capacities. At the same time teachers who encourage the development of a range of intelligencies offer more opportunities for learners to take ownership and control of their learning and to develop intelligencies with which they are less familiar.

Thirdly, the creative learning experience altered the teaching relationships as the participants often developed both learner and teaching roles. As they engaged with small groups or contributed to classroom investigations and discussions the teachers became learners as they worked collectively and collaboratively with the young participants. The young participants became authors of their own learning and began to see their endeavours as a form of worthwhile labour and less a matter of play (Jeffrey

2005). Fourthly, the creative learning experience enabled closer relationships between theory and practice as the students explored possibilities and empirically tested their products and investigations.

The main characteristics of creative learning were the grasping of opportunities to engage in *intellectual enquiry*, the possibility to *engage productively* with their work or activity and the appreciation shown for *reviewing* both product construction and processes.

Intellectual enquiry

The *creative* in ‘creative learning’ means being innovative, experimental and inventive, but the *learning* means that young participants engage in aspects of knowledge enquiry. In particular, we observed a significant amount of intellectual enquiry around *possibility thinking* and *engagement with problems*.

Possibility thinking encompasses an attitude, which refuses to be stumped by circumstances, but uses imagination, with intention, to find a way around a problem. It involves the posing of questions, whether or not these are actually conscious, formulated or voiced. The posing of questions may range from wondering about the world, which may lead to both finding and solving problems; and from formulated questions at one end of the spectrum, through nagging puzzles and to a general sensitivity at the other (Craft, 2002). However, in educational situations it is more aligned with activity and action, and in this way differs from that connected with the American Evangelist, Robert Schuller. It is more similar to Wertsch’s (1998) ‘mind as action’, and recent Early Years empirical research suggests that it involves such actions as posing questions, play and immersion, being imaginative, self-determination, risk taking, and making connections (Burnard et. al. Forthcoming)

It also involves problem finding. Being able to identify a question, a topic for investigation, a puzzle to explore, a possible new option, all involve ‘finding’ or identifying a problem, using the word ‘problem’ in a loose way, to mean other possibilities (Borgnakke, 2004). It is a questioning way of thinking, and puzzling and asking ‘what if’. It is being open to possibilities and having an exploratory attitude. It thus involves imagination and speculation, ‘All creativity is creative thinking’, (Elliot in Craft, 2002, p. 93).

The teachers constructed their creative programmes to consist of open adventures, open tasks and solution seeking activities. *Open adventures* were situations in which learners explored resources, ideas, mediums and patterns. They were given *open tasks* such as investigating techniques, properties, materials or processes.

Thirdly, the teachers constructed *solution seeking* activities where problem solving engaged possibility thinking to find solutions for an outcome. Ideas and strategies were posed, discussed, experimented with and evaluated. The young participants employed a range of possibility thinking features - *manipulation, comparisons, experimentations, framework based approaches, instantaneous ideas* (where they worked intuitively), *risk taking, co-participation, reflection*, (deliberately developing complexity and after reflection extracting more simple outcomes), *acting recursively*, (starting again) and *patterning* (Jeffrey and Craft, 2006)

The young participants were often able to explore knowledge and develop new knowledge within the range of critical events and projects in which they were engaged. They were encouraged to be curious, to show an interest to take risks, to act spontaneously. They adopted searching attitudes, created routes for project development, took initiatives, engaged readily in decision making and adopted experimental trial and error strategies.

Engaged Productivity

Creative learning for young participants also meant an engaged productivity in which they focused intently on the process of their activities and the production of their products, sometimes taking weeks to final presentation. The young participants crafted their innovatory ideas and artefacts over a period of time. They were given the opportunity to select and review ideas from peers and suggestions and observations that floated across their 'workshops' (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996) and those that were identified and examined in plenary class sessions. They crafted their work focusing on purpose and the satisfaction of maintaining control and ownership.

The learners engaged in taking off and taking over. They were full of ideas about how to develop expressions and keen to take control of the techniques and processes. They, quickly bought their own experiences, references and resources to a situation, which they used to control their expressions and constructions. They were not averse to using others' ideas, a form of collective scaffolding. They allowed themselves to be taken over by the role. Taking control of their work opened up the opportunity for young participants to develop their craft.

They were engaged in learning by doing and discovery learning. They used examples to describe the processes of their creations as well as metaphors and analogies. They gradually shaped, fashioned and moulded their products just as sculptors, potters, stone masons, and weavers shape and fashion their works of art. They manufactured physical constructions, literary texts, mathematical patterns and sequences, models, narratives, pictures and aesthetic creations with dexterity and moulded them into

expressions of meaning and representation. Their engaged productivity resulted in high levels of concentration and interest.

Process and Product Reviews

The creative learning process involved standing back to review the stages of production, to decide whether to continue along the chosen path or to alter the compositions and constructions in the light of more creative actions. Then again they began the circular process again of exploring the situation creatively, intellectually engaging with their progress so far and reviewing the next stage. Some projects formalised young participant's perspectives through formal written or oral evaluations which were appreciated by the students and taken seriously by the teachers.

They revisited their products and investigations with a fresh eye and evaluated whether they were achieving their objectives, a process of continuing creativity. They discussed mistakes as a productive part of the process. They looked for different alternatives arising from their evaluations. They reviewed breakdowns in learning situations and reconstructed the pedagogy, they critically analysed and verified relevant theories (Dovemark, 2004) and relished the challenges these reviews posed. They developed significant roles as learnicians—experienced learners who were able to make valuable contributions to evaluating teaching and learning strategies (Jeffrey, 2005).

However, we were also interested in what effect creative learning had on the young participants themselves.

MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

The results of these activities were similar to Peter Woods' (1993) experiences of critical events who found that the:

outcomes for learners included positive attitudes to learning, new found confidences, motivation for learning, enhanced disposition, and skills in listening to others and being listened to, self discovery, realisation of abilities and interests, a 'coming out' of new found self, blending in to previous impenetrable cultures and emotional development (Woods 1993, p. 141).

The young participants responded to creative learning by indicating the extent to which the experience was meaningful to them; the way they felt about the learning experience; the importance it had for their self-identity and their sense of inclusion. The relevance of the experience of creative learning to their 'self' was seen in their subjective reactions—their joy of

engagement and the quality of the authentic relationships they developed towards their work. Their identities—the social character they inhabit (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002)—resulted in feeling more confident about their labour and more confident about their place in the class and school in terms of relationships and belonging through the experience of co-participation.

Ethnography involves researchers interpreting the quality, in this case, of student reactions and interactions through observations and the recording of detailed field-notes as well as talking with them. The evidence for these interpretations and analysis is found in more detailed records of the research in the partner's articles (Jeffrey, 2006). We found that the significant areas for student evaluation of the experience of creative learning were in *self affirmation, social identity, social role and social relations*.

Self Affirmation - Personal Development

Creative learning contributed to the construction and development of the young participants' social identities—those they enacted in social situations (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002) - but they interpreted situations and acted to shape their substantial self (Nias, 1989). Children do not act passively in response to changing circumstances and different social contexts, enacting ascribed roles or accommodating to structural imperatives. Rather they respond actively and dynamically in protecting, shaping and maintaining their sense of self and identity as pupils (Pollard and Filer, 1999).

The young participants engaged meaningfully with learning when they had an opportunity to own the knowledge they encountered or the processes with which they were engaged. The critical events and projects that were specifically intended to stimulate creative learning handed back control and ownership to learners and led to a development of confidence. These situations provided assurances for the young participants that manifestations of their 'selves' as individual and unique learners were valued and safe because personal perspectives, and what might, at times, be seen as idiosyncrasies were acceptable and contributed to the general dynamic culture. In this way they felt able to be creative and innovative. They felt able to act independently although at the same time they appreciated teachers' advice and support. Meaningful engagement meant joy in the process of experiencing knowledge and learning and feelings of being involved in authentic labour in which they worked hard to make things perfect and to develop ownership and pride over their products and processes.

In this process they played with their identities, gradually moulding them and remoulding them according to the learning situation and to the social context.

Social Identity and Belonging

The development of a feeling of belonging, of a social identity was crucial to the development of a positive relationship between self and learning. The incorporation of a learner's life experiences into the development and understanding of curriculum programmes was a major way in which a sense of belonging was encouraged and felt to be important to the young participants. The implication of this strategy and a learner's affirmation of its productivity was that young participants became aware that:

- knowledge arrives in the learning situation from a variety of sources including learners' knowledge,
- the investigation of knowledge was carried out from a variety of perspectives including their own,
- the contestation of knowledge was seen as a legitimate aspect of knowledge engagement
- new or innovative knowledge includes learners' experiences and perspectives.

Learner's valued being included in decisions concerning curriculum direction and pedagogic processes, which established a sense of belonging and having their opinions respected. They enjoyed feeling a 'sense of place' about their learning environment and their inclusion in a place, that for some periods appeared to belong to them, as well as feeling a sense of belonging.

However, where the 'place' was not given over to them or control was limited we observed students decoding positive creative and flexible policies in order to adapt the situation to meet teacher demands. In these situations, participants used their creativity to achieve teacher and institutional approbation and the relationship between participants and the institution and education itself became more like 'mutual instrumentalism' (Pollard and Triggs, 2000) where teachers and learners worked together only to increase achievement productivity levels.

Social Role—Innovators, Creators and Shared Engagements

Where the learning culture was a relevant one in which young participants gained ownership and control over the engagement with knowledge and the processes of learning, learners experienced a social role as contributor and player in the situation as innovator, creator and producer. As well as contributing to the participative culture their role was to take risks and experiment, to have a go and to craft their products to perfection over long periods of time, to be resourceful and to share ideas and possible innovative paths. This increased decision making for learners, between

learners and between teachers and learners. They became appreciators of creativity itself and of each others' ideas, commitments and products. They were allowed to colonise physical space, virtual space through the internet and intellectual space and then to release the spaces for others or others' ideas. Their social role was to add value to the creative learning situation for each other and for the development of knowledge and learning and the success of this was evidenced in their enthusiasm for returning to the critical events, projects and creative learning situations created by both their teachers and themselves.

The development of participative cultures for creative learning built upon the social nature of the young participants. Teaching and learning was an interactive relationship between teacher and student and the creative learning strategies adopted by the teachers in the partner projects mainly focused on shared engagements and a circulation of social relations. The teachers ensured a variety of participative relationships - co-participative, collective and collaborative (Jeffrey, 2005). Where these social relations were reduced the learning became less meaningful and the value for learning became more instrumental and in a reciprocal manner so did the social relations. The emotional benefit of positive social relations was a major contributor to the innovative development of creative learning.

CONCLUSION

The CLASP research has established that there is a common pedagogic discourse across European partners used by those concerned to engage the agency of students creatively in their own learning. This pedagogy reflects the characteristics of creative learning (Woods, 2002) – relevance, control, ownership and innovation. The common practices of creative learning we identified were firstly encountered in teaching strategies where the teachers constructed real and critical events, incorporated external collaboration, were innovative with space and modelled their own creativity for students. Secondly, we identified some characteristics of creative learning – intellectual enquiry, engaged productivity and process and product reviews. Thirdly, we saw how teacher strategies and creative learning became meaningful to students. They gained self affirmation, developed social relations and identities and appreciated being given a social role in pedagogic evaluation. There is obviously much more research that could and should be carried out to add more character to these findings, to add more features and to take advantage of the comparative aspect to sharpen and test these findings in new situations.

The research responded to a greater globalisation of interest in education and to calls for more comparative studies of European pedagogy for, once having discussed our interests, it became clear to the prospective partners in the original proposal that there was much that was common to our pedagogies resulting from historical links and current global sharing of educational knowledge. Our differing cultures, educational histories and language barriers were challenges for the development of European educational liaisons but our past and current commonalities are a sound basis on which to develop substantial common discourses - in this case, creative teaching and learning.

The particular methodology adopted in this research project runs counter to that developed by international comparative studies such as the OECD but it has different objectives in that it is a 'bottom up' approach to comparative research that gradually develops analytical features and characterisations and tentative theories from the wealth of pedagogic activity in schools and classrooms in a micro form of research. The pull towards standardisation, instrumentalism and the imposition of approaches that emanate from the international survey approach of the OECD can be tempered by the inclusion of such methodologies. These qualitative empirical research projects show how cross cultural policies can be both transnationally conceptualised but situationally constituted. The methodology still has to be developed to become creditable and plausible (Hammersley, 1992; Troman and Jeffrey 2005), for it does not gain its validity from international standardised data tools and quantitative based analytical processes. Nevertheless, it can show, in depth, the nature of the educational process in real situations in interactions between teachers and students and between students and the knowledge and learning they encounter. It is a discourse of creative teaching and learning in which teacher and student find the actions and activity relevant and meaningful and we suggest that this conceptualisation of pedagogy had a common understanding across our partner cultures through its basis as a 'humanitarian' approach (Woods 1996; Woods and Jeffrey 2002). The study of creative teaching and learning pedagogy across different cultures is an opportunity to challenge the domination of narrower global educational research and to link teachers, educational institutions and policy makers in a joint effort to base education within a social context and situation.

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Table 1 Research Partner Details

Partner and principal researcher	Research Sites
University of Innsbruck, Austria Andrea Raggl	One secondary classroom and two primary classrooms in separate schools
University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark Professor Karen Borgnakke	One secondary school
The Open University, Milton Keynes, England Bob Jeffrey	Two primary schools and two primary dance projects
St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland Dr. Ciaran Sugrue	Two primary classrooms and one special needs class
Academy of Humanities and Economics, Lodz,	All classes of 18+students

Poland Dr. Renata Figlewicz	
University of Lisbon, Portugal Professor Maria Odete Valente	Three secondary classes
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland Dr. Geri Smyth	One primary school with a specialist bi-lingual unit.
University of Cadiz, Spain Dr. Ramon Porras Vallinjas	One Early Years schools, one primary class and one secondary class.
Göteborg University, Sweden Professor Dennis Beach	Two secondary schools and one adult learning centre