International background

The policy context for the the Creative learning and Student Perspectives was a situation across Europe in which education was seen as the cornerstone of a knowledge-based society, one that encompassed the principle of life-long learning (OECD 2002) and where two significant policy discourses were and still are at the centre of this principle. An international discourse highlights the importance of creativity (Craft et al. 2001) across economic, industrial, government and educational arenas. It notes that creativity is eminently suited to the multiple needs of life in the twenty first century (Seltzer and Bentley, 1999), which calls for skills of adaptation, flexibility, initiative and the ability to use knowledge on a different scale than has been hitherto realised. As manufacturing began to disperse globally in the latter part of the twentieth century, space was created for new forms of wealth production through increased marketing, the growth of service industries, electronic communications and e-commerce market—the 'weightless economy' (op. cit.). Work patterns are also undergoing a revolution in that there is an increased demand for more highly educated, motivated employees who are able to use more autonomy in applying skills in combination with flexible technology and work processes. Although qualifications are still integral to personal success, it is no longer enough for students to show that they are capable of passing public examinations. To thrive in our economy, defined by the innovative application of knowledge, we must be able to do more than absorb and feedback information (op. cit.)

Alongside the creativity policy discourse there is a global interest in raising educational achievement levels to benefit future economic development by increasing the skills base and having an educated workforce who fit the requirements of the knowledge economy and an emphasis on performance-based assessment is a major strategy of this policy. These policies are linked to the creation of a culture of performativity (Lyotard, 1979; Ball, 1998; Ball, 2000), a principle of governance that enables strictly functional relationships to develop between a state and its inside and outside environments over and against the older policy technologies of professionalism and bureaucracy through the institutionalisation of new management techniques and the development of 'mutual instrumentalism' (Ball, 2003; Pollard et al. 2000; Yeatman, 1994; Whitty and Edwards, 1998). Performativity is a technology, a culture and mode

of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change. The incentives are based on material and symbolic rewards and sanctions where the performances of individual subjects or organisations serve as measures of productivity, displays of 'quality' or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement. In short, two complex related policy agendas are discernible in 'the heat and noise of reform' (Ball, 1998, p. 125) and their relationships in ten different education systems was the background to the research upon which this edited collection is based.

The CLASP Project

The broad objectives of the Creative learning and Student Perspectives (CLASP) were:

- to identify teachers' and students' strategies for developing creative learning in educational contexts.
- to examine the effectiveness of incorporating student perspectives into the teaching and learning process.
- to highlight the advantages to be gained for the quality of teaching and learning by examining cross European creative pedagogic practices.

The innovative nature of the project lay in combining two cross-national policy developments, an interest in the expansion of creativity and the effectiveness gained from incorporating student perspectives into pedagogic practices. The combination is reciprocal in that developing creative learning enhanced creative practices and encouraged student commitment.

The research sites for this project varied but the number of schools was kept to a minimum to fulfil the requirements of the project to produce full qualitative analysis over time with a small sample using ethnographic methods. The target groups were students, from age three upwards, and teachers in a maximum of three teaching and learning contexts in each of the ten participating countries.

The target groups for dissemination were schools, head teachers and policy advisors at a local level, educational researchers, policy advisers and student organisations at a macro level.

The main activity was qualitative research for nine months involving fieldwork observations, conversations, interviews with teachers and pupils and development work concerned with creative learning in the educational sites. This was interspersed with regular electronic communication and meetings

with partners to compare, research, record and evaluate our critical analyses, research data and process. The researchers acted as participant observers to interpret contexts and situations and to engage in dialogues with teachers and students concerning their research analysis. Digital photographs were collected as data and used to stimulate discussion and debate with teachers and students. Students were informed of the study's aims and objectives and encouraged to take roles as researchers (Raggl and Schratz, 2004). 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). As a collaborative cross-national project, we needed a discourse through which to communicate a relevant set of common lenses with which to conduct our fieldwork. Although these lenses were specific to this project they can be easily adapted to other projects using a similar methodology (Troman and Jeffrey, 2005).

The co-ordinating partner was The Open University and the main co-ordinator of the project was Bob Jeffrey, Research Fellow of The Open University.

The partners to this project were:

Austria	Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Innsbruck
Belgium	Catholic University of Professional Education of South West Flanders, Kortrijk (Uncompleted project)
Denmark	The Danish Institute for Upper Secondary Education, University of Southern Denmark, Odense
England	The Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The Open University, Milton Keynes
Ireland	St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University
Poland	Academy of Humanities and Economics, Lodz
Portugal	Faculty of Sciences /Department of Education, University of Lisbon.
Scotland	Department of Primary Education, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
Spain	Department of Education, University of Cadiz.
Sweden	Department of Education, Göteborg University

This Open University research project was funded by the European Commission—Socrates Project—Action 6. 1 'General activities of observation and analysis with a grant of €549, 000. We were one of only eight projects funded in 2002 and the average award across the partners was approximately €55, 000. However, this particular programme only funded partner projects with 45.48% of grant as the European Commission expected each educational institutional to match the balance in order to show their commitment to the specific research area. The Final Report was approved in April 2005.

Those benefiting most from the study were students and student organisations, teachers, head teachers, teacher trainers, policy advisors and academics who used the reports to promote student representation, to improve the quality of learning practices in schools and colleges, raise student commitment, develop national, local and institutional creative learning policies, and increase understanding of creative learning. Researchers on the project also benefited as they built a European discourse on creative learning, education in general and education in other countries.

Partner policy contexts
National and local

The national contexts show a significant amount of national and/or local policy change taking place in all the partner countries that affected the subject of this research—creative learning. However, these changes are not necessarily all in one direction or of a similar nature. It is clear that each of the countries represented in the research have different starting points for change.

According to the partner reports new national discourses and policies relating directly to creative and more flexible curriculum programmes have been introduced in the last few years in Denmark, England, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and Scotland. These vary in extent, influence and character, for example: England has extensively incorporated creativity criteria across its national curriculum programmes and funded a national programme of arts and education projects and Portugal has designated part of the school week to include student interests. Ireland renewed its commitment to child-centred education albeit in an individualised form and focused at the same time on achievement levels but Social, Personal and Health Education and Drama was elevated from being a good pedagogical vehicle for learning to the status of a fully-fledged subject in its own right. Denmark has national programmes for youth and upper secondary age that demand integrated curriculum project work and looser and

more flexible programmes have been introduced in Scotland where the New National Priorities include the encouragement of 'creativity and ambition'. In Sweden and Denmark there has been a national new educational vision that describes shared responsibility and a local appropriation of national policy declarations as central for education in the future. It emphasises an increase in delegated responsibilities to the learner (and the local arena more generally), self-determination and freedom of choice for the students who are exhorted to create their own knowledge. However, control in Sweden and Denmark has shifted from steering by rules and directives to steering by objectives and results in which a different relationship to learning is expressed. Learners are now described in national policy texts in Sweden as creative, self-reliant and discerning consumers and producers of knowledge and it is the job of schools and teachers to eliminate all obstacles that currently stand in the way of them exercising their skills and capabilities to the full (Beach, 2004; Beach and Dovemark, 2005b; Borgnakke 2004, forthcoming; Dovemark 2004a; Dovemark 2004b)

We can also report that where there are national initiatives for creative teaching and learning they have generally been placed on top of existing policies of assessment and performativity and in some cases have not materialised as was intended—Dublin, Glasgow and Gothenburg. In Dublin they introduced a new national curriculum alongside new assessment programmes and professional development programmes. These created tensions for schools and teachers as they tried to incorporate new policies, which in some cases conflicted with contemporary policies and practices. The Odense schools, having incorporated new IT-based strategies for teaching and learning, nevertheless used a traditional mix of teaching styles e.g. the classic lecture, the classroom teacher directed style as well as student directed group work and project work.

In Glasgow the emphasis was on achievement and attainment and there was little room for creativity except in the arts and physical education though there were also programmes on learning for life which included references to encouraging creativity as an ambition. This added to the workload and increased dilemmas and tensions. In Gothenburg, as indicated above, there have been national reforms to increase flexible learning and open schooling. However, the school buildings themselves did not lend themselves to this policy and nor did the level of staffing which needed to be increased to deal with more individualised programmes of learning. Consequently, the experience of teachers and student alike was of contradictory policies and experiences resulting in alienation from their own creativity and their own productive life.

Teachers and students had to accept overload if they wished to maintain some creative teaching and learning programmes. They struggled to incorporate them alongside the testing and competitive regimes, a task in which many succeeded (Ireland, England, Portugal, and Scotland). The justification for continual support for non creative learning experiences from the perspectives of teachers and students was the necessity for students to purchase credits for future work opportunities (Ireland, England, Portugal, Scotland, and Sweden) but there were signs that some partners were managing to incorporate creative learning into performativity programmes (Denmark, Ireland, England, Poland, and Scotland).

To summarise, we found evidence of teacher excitement, uncertainty, anxiety, a loss of professionalism and re-professionalisation in national and local reforms of educational priorities for learning. Some partners experienced policy requirements as demanding but they also experienced a release of creative teaching, e.g. Odense, Lodz and Lisbon. Others found opportunities more limited, e.g. Gothenburg.

In spite of the tensions found in these examples it is clear that schools and teachers also manipulated the situation to ensure that their educational values concerned with creative teaching and learning were maintained and in some cases they found that they were able to claim a 'redress of creativity' for themselves and for their schools. The Milton Keynes schools made use of Government funds available for arts and education to develop large school based projects. Teachers used the Scottish programmes, which funded the development of a multi-lingual teaching involving asylum seekers, to engage in teaching that was more creative. In spite of the problem of overload the Dublin research schools used the formal introduction of constructivist policies to legitimate their own pedagogies based in this area of teaching and they felt freer to experiment with ideas such as the transformation of space (see below). The Lisbon research sites took full advantage of the national programme to plan a week of project work and a day of exhibitions and presentations in costume by the students and the Glasgow group challenged their students to plan and fund an outing in response to a curriculum imperative to learn about their environment. The Cadiz schools did something similar with secondary students by encouraging them to document on computer, and in presentations, the biology and history of their environment and one of the Innsbruck schools created an adventure school environment for the students to explore. All these local appropriations give an indication of how schools and teachers enhanced the quality of learning for

their students by adapting national programmes to suit the local context. They, creatively, also found ways of reconstructing the programmes to show how they might be developed in different ways to those anticipated by policy makers.

Social and intellectual objectives

As the project progressed we discovered additional social and intellectual objectives emanating from the institutions and teachers, e.g.: developing autonomy decision making and risk taking (Lisbon); the social development of learners and respect for their perspectives (Odense); ownership of space and relationship responsibility and social obligations to classroom democratic practices, role play and empathy (Cadiz and Innsbruck); the promotion of participatory practices (Lisbon, Milton Keynes, Cadiz, Innsbruck, Odense, Lodz, and Glasgow). However, we also found stratification practices (Gothenburg). Intellectual objectives were achieved by: encouraging possibility thinking, and providing open adventures, open tasking and solution seeking problems as well as intellectual risk taking (Milton Keynes); interdisciplinary project work involving extensive problem solving (Odense and Lisbon). However, constructivist principles, on which much of this teaching and learning was based, were also seen as a barrier to performativity imperatives (Gothenburg).

The papers in this volume represent firstly attempts by institutions and teachers to reconstruct performativity programmes or to provide authentic creative teaching and learning programmes through the implementation of critical events and specialist programmes. In particular, the papers from Cadiz, Innsbruck, Milton Keynes, Glasgow, Odense, Lisbon and Gothenburg represent these factors. Secondly, the articles show the influence of these programmes on relationships between teachers, between teachers and students and between students and in particular the chapters from Cadiz, Innsbruck, Glasgow, Dublin, Odense, Gothenburg and Lodz exemplify this theme. Thirdly, they show the extent to which the students themselves saw the programmes as successful e.g. the chapters from Innsbruck, Milton Keynes, Glasgow, Dublin, Lisbon, Gothenburg and Lodz. These student perspectives were a central element of the CLASP project.

Edited collection themes

Teacher strategies and influences

The research sites were schools and colleges and the policies of these schools and their 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 by students. 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 worked.

One of the major strategies across most of the partners' reports was the instigation of 'real' programmes, similar to 'critical events', (Woods 1993) that were designed to both effect the interest and commitment of students but also to influence institutional and local area policy. These 'real' programmes had, according to the students, a social and educational reality that legitimised their involvement as social beings. There were school environment improvements and analysis (Milton Keynes and Cadiz), coordinated international projects (Odense), computer toy constructions for major competitions (Dublin), business case studies (Lodz), re-enactments of social issues and local histories (Cadiz, Gothenburg, and Lisbon) and the examination of lives from different cultures (Glasgow). These events either were in place of the designated curriculum or incorporated into an existing programmes and usually enhancing it. For example, designating specialist weeks to a particular curriculum subject right across the school, (Milton Keynes) and the allocation of a specific week to a creative project (Lisbon, Cadiz, Odense, Glasgow, and Lodz) They also often involved strategic co-operations with external partners and organisations in the community such as dancers, artists, sculptors, actors, environmental workers (Gothenburg, Milton Keynes and Innsbruck,).

Their creativity programmes conformed to the structure of a critical event, which goes through well-defined stages of conceptualisation, preparation and planning, divergence, convergence, consolidation, and celebration (Woods 1993). The Innsbruck school, as indicated above, prepared the outside environment, with the help of the community as a physical adventure for learners in which curriculum programmes were enacted. The environment was used for learning and stories were told outside. One of the classes in a Dublin school was transformed into a classroom in Victorian times where the children used slates

and worked in silence for the day (Sugrue 2004a) and in the Odense school, the learners worked on a virtual project concerning the Middle Ages. They worked on the project with learners in Iceland and Norway via internet communications. The Lodz adult learners were given management case studies to investigate in groups for a number of teaching sessions and in an unusual twist the students and the lecturer examined the teaching and learning through videos and meetings and together devised negotiated pedagogies. The Lisbon project culminated in a day when all the students dressed up as some of the historical characters they had been investigating in groups and they experienced carnival day. In one of the Cadiz Early Years schools the learners regularly held cultural events such as weddings, divorces, and celebratory meals, initiations such as baptisms, confirmations and differing cultural equivalents. As indicated above the Glasgow learners raised funds for an outing to a well known beauty spot by making and selling cakes and having fairs, booking their own coaches, tours, organising lunches and marketing the outing as well as the learning activities for the day. One of the Milton Keynes schools had a maths and a design and technology week where the whole school focused on a particular theme within these subjects. The week's events included visits to local zoos, football clubs, pizza parlours and other schools and specialists were employed to run large workshops in the school hall or grounds or in the kitchens. Another Milton Keynes school planned a 'sounds in the environment' programme lasting weeks, one class worked with the National Theatre for two terms, another with a specialist dance teacher and a whole school was engaged in renovating the school environment with the help of artists, sculptors and community workers.

The results of these activities were similar to Peter Woods' (1993) experiences of critical events. He 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 a new found self, blending in to previous impenetrable cultures and emotional development' (ibid, see chapter five).

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. The critical event also

involved a considerable amount of external engagement from advisors, artists, specialist funders, workshop providers, project specialists and visits.

A second major factor in establishing a creative learning climate and a commitment from students was teacher enthusiasm and dedication. Formal professional development in IT practices and team teaching was felt necessary in the Odense project and it led to many collaborative practices between teachers and between teachers and students. Alternatively, in the Dublin research sites, creative teaching was seen as a gift and particular teachers were praised for their strategic use of humour, imagination, inventiveness and the ability to merge the formal and informal. In other projects teachers played a vital role as a facilitator and chairperson who modelled respect for everyone's opinions and valued peer learning and insisted on alerting student's to other's authentic labour (Cadiz). They also modelled themselves as students and observers (Innsbruck) as moderators (Lisbon) and they acted creatively in looking for spaces between the dominating discourses of performativity and ineffective top down policies of flexible learning (Gothenburg).

Influences on relationships

A particular outcome of these creative teaching and learning strategies were changes in relationships and innovative developments in interactive engagements. Participatory practices and experiences were observed across the partners but the Lisbon paper, in particular, emphasised the affective and teacher-student relations. The Glasgow project emphasised relevant teacher strategies for the bilingual learners with whom they were engaged as they brought the environment and local culture into the classroom as well as exploring it *in situ*. The Odense project specifically focused on teacher participatory strategies and encouraged relations with other foreign cultures expecting students to collaborate in investigations. One result of this was the support given by the students to teachers in their dispute over teaching cuts through a student strike. The emotional labour exhibited by teachers resulted in higher levels of trust and an exchange of skills took place between teachers and students (Dublin). Young children were encouraged to play a full part in daily democratic decision-making and take responsibility for those decisions at the expense of themselves and in support of others and collective decision-making. They developed relationships by solving their own disputes and closer home and school relations brought a holistic environment to learning (Cadiz). A major feature of the Innsbruck research site was parents as partners, peer assistance

and collaborations between parents, teachers and students acting as co-creators. A different form of close relationship was analysed in the Gothenburg study, that of mutual instrumentalism between teachers and learners to meet external and institutional learning targets. The study examines the consequences of a breakdown of relations for working class students in situations where those with cultural capital dominated relationship space.

Student evaluations

A major part of the CLASP project was to gain some evaluations of the student's learning experiences. The Lisbon project achieved a critical analysis from learners and recognition of peer abilities as well as the development of feelings of belonging from the students. The Glasgow project with bilingual learners showed how they had developed a 'multi-lingual conference' as the basis for creative learning and the general findings from Odense was that the project work carried out by the students and the new relationships established with teachers led to a firmer commitment from students. Students from the Cadiz project evaluated their activities daily, both in terms of how they worked and details of pleasure and discomfort. However, where the learning was not particularly creative or meaningful students tended to blame themselves rather than the school system.

This collection of papers in this volume represents the CLASP research in institutions from early years to adult education including special classes and are published in that order.

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