The Creative University

The experience of being a creative academic in higher education

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

ABSTRACT

There is a widely acknowledged need for higher education to develop creativity among students, but little attention given to the importance of academics' creativity in their work or the factors that might support, encourage and reward it. Indeed, there is a contradiction: that while HE teachers are being pushed to develop their students' creativity they are themselves *discouraged* from being creative by a combination of management, regulation, focus on 'satisfaction' and 'value for money', and disciplinary traditions which combine to create an environment of conservatism and risk-aversion.

This study establishes the context within which academics work, including the general policy drive towards creativity as an essential skill among the workforce discussed against the contradictory background of increasing regulation of HE. It then seeks to understand the qualitative experiences of academics from different disciplines who are for one reason or another attempting to change their programmes.

Two core questions are addressed:

- What factors enable or disable creativity among academics in higher education from their perspective and experiences? and

- In what ways do academics practice creativity?

Within the educational context the site of creativity is seen as effecting change or enhancement in everyday practice. As the study progresses, the importance of *personal values* emerges, as does the often-strained relationship between individual academics and their field and domain.

To explore creativity in depth, I employ experience research approaches, interviewing academics from five disciplines and institutions, building case study narratives around their practice and experience of creativity as they effect change or enhancement in their everyday work, using a mapping method to understand the process they undertook, and the various stakeholder engagements they encountered along the way.

The key findings of the empirical part of the research are that while creativity may be an aspect of everyday practice for many academics, it is often a reaction to negative circumstances rather than planned, rarely considered as creativity but often as survival or coping, and that while the literature describes the role of management and administrative processes to be overbearing, the case studies suggest that they are often absent, which is of greater detriment. Of particular importance is the finding that case study subjects are distanced from their discipline and field, and their creativity is either a response to this or benefits from it.

The research builds on existing work looking at how academics conceive of creativity to instead explore how people experience it, identifying that creativity is not something that exists as an attribute within academics but (potentially at least) within organisations. As such the study should inform approaches to the development of universities as creative rather

than regulated environments that will in turn develop the creative

graduates that government and industry demand.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CETL   Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (2005-10).

CMA   Competition and Markets Authority – has oversight of 'consumer affairs' issues such as the way universities describe their programmes.

DCMS   Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

FTE   Full-time equivalent (a description of the proportion of the working week a member of staff works, so a department might have 1.5 FTEs made up of three 0.5 staff, working half a week each).

HEA   Higher Education Academy (now AdvanceHE although HEA remains in the designation of fellowships, e.g. FHEA – Fellow of the Higher Education Academy

HEFCE   Higher Education Funding Council for England. Dissolved in 2018 and superseded by Office for Students (OfS) and United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI)

HEI   Higher education institution – generally meaning universities but taking in providers of HE-level qualifications. Compare with FEI, or further education institution.

ILO   Intended learning outcome

ILTHE   Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Later merged with LTSN to form the HEA, now AdvanceHE.

KPI   Key performance indicator

LTSN   Learning and Teaching Support Network. A network of discipline-specific centres for pedagogic research and support. Merged with ILTHE to form HEA, now AdvanceHE.

Mooc   Massive open online course

NACCCE   National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1998-99)

NSS	National Student Survey. An annual survey of students completing undergraduate programmes in the UK. Its results are used to provide quality ratings for programmes.
NTF	National Teaching Fellowship, operated by AdvanceHE and open to staff at member institutions.
OFFA	Office for Fair Access (closed in 2018 and work taken over by OfS)
OfS	Independent regulator of Higher Education in England. HE is devolved to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments.
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator, 'an independent body set up to review student complaints about higher education providers in England and Wales'.
PL	Programme leader
QA	Quality Assurance (see Figure 2-9)
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency
QE	Quality Enhancement (see Figure 2-9)
SME	Small/medium enterprise
T&L	Teaching and learning (sometimes L&T depending on institutional preference)
TEF	Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework. This is voluntary and currently English, but with the option for HEIs and FEIs in other UK nations to participate. English providers who choose not to participate are limited in the fees they may charge. TEF rates teaching with gold, silver and bronze awards.
UX	User experience
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment, often referred to in institutions using the name of the platform, e.g. Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard.

FOREWORD: A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Shortly before completion of this thesis, the world was plunged into crisis by Covid-19. At the time of writing I, like colleagues everywhere, am in social isolation, my classes are online, and my students in limbo. All face-to-face teaching has stopped, with universities promising a move to online teaching. This has proved easier to say than to do – developing an online programme takes years, not days. On social media, teachers at all levels are asking each other what technology they should be using and, essentially, how they can teach the things they've always taught in the way they've always taught and assessing it the way they've always assessed it – just online. This and the focus on online teaching rather than online learning is, to me, a clear indicator of a lack of creativity – an inability to deal with the unexpected, to think about problems from different perspectives, and a lack of permission to do things differently. Some of this is down to individuals, some down to institutional and industry expectations, and some down to students who understandably demand assurances that they will not be disadvantaged compared with previous cohorts, or because they do not have access to the technology required. (It's also, to be fair, a result of understandable anxiety and shock).

Optimistically, the crisis offers opportunities: if, as in schools and many universities, assessment is being abandoned in favour of academic judgement, might we now accept that traditional forms of assessment are

unnecessary and judge the wrong thing? If published intended learning outcomes are being suspended in favour of recognition of the breadth of things learned, could we admit that they were simply bureaucratic elements rather than the means to encourage (as we claimed) deep learning?

The coronavirus situation is frightening. But it is also an opportunity to question many of our assumptions and habits. More importantly it highlights the central claim within this thesis: that we need universities and the people within them to be creative, and supported in being creative, but that – as we shall see – there are fundamental characteristics that prevent them being the sites of experimentation, risk taking, and embracing of ambiguity they should be. If nothing else good comes out of the situation, at least we might recognise this, and do something about it.

The data gathering and literature review all took place before the pandemic and there are times in reading it that this becomes obvious – some of the case studies seem like relics of a different age, not ones carried out in 2019. It is easy to question whether it is still relevant; given what I have observed and experienced over the past few months, I believe this focus on the creative university has never been more important.

31 July 2020

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, innovation in higher education has gone from being a euphemism for a process of change to a marker of excellence with many HEIs claiming to be 'innovative' in their teaching, often without much evidence.

Meanwhile, outside HE the related concept (and innovation's necessary component) of creativity is seen increasingly as the means to tackle social and economic problems in a post-industrial age, with education identified as the means to produce the creative workforce to meet the challenge.

Ironically it could be argued that, due to an increase in regulation, accountability and managerialism, the sector least able to be creative, and therefore truly innovative, is education. However, creativity is evident in HE, as this study will demonstrate. But previous studies of academic creativity have focused on what people understand creativity to be, or how people teach it. These are valuable, but do not approach creativity as an often-unconscious process, something experienced as a concrete activity. In other words, while we understand a great deal about teaching creativity, and people's conceptions of it, we know little about teaching creatively (or indeed the many other activities academics undertake alongside, or supporting, their teaching).

At the start of the research process, my research questions were:

- What factors enable and disable creativity within organisations, and within universities in particular?
- In what ways do academics practice creativity when engaged in developing courses/modules and other enhancement activities/processes?

The research process should develop a deeper understanding of the issues that led to the questions, and this inevitably may change the questions and the approach (Wolcott 1992). Similarly, creativity, as discussed below, begins not with answering questions but *finding* and *redefining* them. As such I have approached this study as a means not just to focus on the initial questions, but to probe and explore, pursuing lines of enquiry that may have appeared irrelevant, and challenging the preconceptions that led to the questions in the first place.

Consequently, as the thesis evolves these initial questions are expanded to account for lessons from the literature.

Chapter 1 expands on the points above to place the role of education in developing creativity into context, beginning with James Callaghan's Ruskin Speech and taking us to the Browne Review and other government enquiries into the role of HE.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature in two parts. The first looks at creativity research and various models and concepts, identifying several that together help to understand the practices of academics. The second part turns to the literature on educational creativity to place the theory into a practical academic context.

Chapter 3 looks at the practice of researching creativity and makes the claim that understanding the experience of being creative has been relatively under-researched, describing appropriate methods to capture the reflections of academics who might not consider themselves creative, and yet who are indeed being creative.

Chapters 4 presents five case studies, describing a range of typical activities, but using creativity theory to understand the way in which universities help or hinder teaching as creative practice, while Chapter 5 discusses what findings can be drawn.

A final, short, Chapter 6 offers my personal reflections on the research process and where the journey takes me next.

1.1 The meaning of innovation in HE

Judging from the submissions to the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework many universities boast of their use and encouragement of innovative approaches to teaching and learning (Office for Students 2018). Innovative teaching is seen as an indicator of excellence, value for money, and a means of easy differentiation from competitors – though as everyone professes to do it, often without much evidence (Eales-Reynolds & Westwood 2018) this is questionable.

Two decades ago, Hannan and Silver's study of innovation in Higher Education (2000) depicted innovation as a site of conflict between externally imposed or internal top-down innovation and the motivations of academic staff, and as something discouraged by research-focused

career structures that thwart bottom-up attempts to innovate in T&L. For them, innovation is a euphemism for 'change' at a time of seemingly continual major reform in the sector, resulting in a mixture of fear, opposition and, occasionally, enthusiasm from academics.

The word 'creativity' does not feature in Hannan and Silver's work, nor is it much in evidence in recent TEF submissions: I found that derivatives of 'innovation' occurred 1421 times in 211 submissions almost always in relation to teaching, and while 'creativity' appears 1058 times in 175 submissions it is never in proximity to 'teaching'. Almost all instances related to student outcomes, creative disciplines or locations (e.g. 'we offer courses in East London's creative heartland, home to the Olympic Park' (Birkbeck College 2017: p. 2)). Creativity, which comes across as 'fluffy', is what students do, while innovation, which is 'serious', is for academics, an issue which motivates the present study. This thesis is based on a position that outside of discussions of *student* creativity, academic creativity – the ability to identify and address problems iteratively, through experimentation and risk, and with permission to fail – is not only rarely discussed within universities, but effectively discouraged, by design or accident.

This chapter sets the scene by exploring the role that creativity has in political discussions relating to the economy, the workforce and, therefore, education. A brief overview of the apparent gap in the literature on academic creativity leads to a two-part review of the literature in the next chapter, which further highlights where, and why, that gap exists.

First, however, it is important to address a fundamental question: what do we mean by creativity, and how is it different from innovation?

1.2 Creativity and innovation

The terms 'creativity' and 'innovation' are 'suitcase words' that allow us to pack multiple ideas into a single concept to aid communication (Minsky 2007) and are often used interchangeably (Martins & Terblanche 2003), including at times in this thesis; but it would be useful to attempt a clear, if flexible, distinction between the two[1].

I take the position that innovation is the result of two distinct phases: creativity and implementation (Amabile 1997; Foss *et al* 2013). 'Creativity … is a starting point for innovation' and 'necessary but not sufficient' (Amabile *et al* 1996: p. 1154). When there is no creativity, 'innovation is an engine without any fuel' (McLean 2016: p. 2). Therefore, to foster meaningful innovation, HE needs to foster creativity.

In academia, while creativity has historically been the interest of psychologists, innovation is the concern of economists and organisational theorists (Ford 1995) who see it as an asset with financial value. And though innovation has been heavily researched, 'most studies (of it) do not explicitly discuss or measure creativity' (p. 16) which is intangible, and seen as a form of behaviour and attitude. While innovation is valuable to organisations, the role of creativity is little understood and even frowned-upon. O'Shea and Buckley (2007) illustrate the issue through a series of

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[1] I focus on definitions of creativity itself in the next chapter

contradictory positions summarised from the innovation and creativity

literature (Figure 1-1).

Area	Creativity	Innovation
Purpose	Creativity does not need a purpose in its purest sense. However, in business an idea must be useful and appropriate if it is to be creative.	Innovation is adaptive, and it is undertaken typically in response to unfamiliar, unexpected, or non-routine problems.
Process	Creativity is needed in all steps of the innovation process.	Creativity is the first step of innovation
Scope	Creativity is the remit of the individual.	Innovation is the remit of organisations.
Relationship	Creativity produces innovation	Innovation produces creative ideas.
Determining factors	Individual creativity is needed for an innovative organisation	An innovative organisation is needed to foster individual creativity.
Teams	Creativity in teams is thinking about new things.	An innovative organisation is needed to foster team creativity.

Figure 1-1 Contradictions in models of innovation and creativity (O'Shea & Buckley 2007)

Thus, an organisation that regards itself as innovative risks undervaluing the role of creativity, while one that promotes creativity above practicality risks being unproductive. Some of this is an issue of metrics: it is difficult to measure creativity, but innovation can be quantified. Indeed 'innovation is generally conceived and measured as the adoption (not creation) of some new product or technology' (Coghlan & Brannick 2014: p. 16), an attitude reflected in what few concrete examples are present in TEF submissions. But it also reflects a suspicion of or impatience with creativity, with significant portions of the business literature focusing on utilising ideas, but not developing them.

Creativity is either a mystery that cannot be controlled, or a potential diversion that must be limited. Williams and Yang (1999) note that traditional organisational structures favour rational thinking and decision making, reducing uncertainty by implementing routines. While Keeley *et al* (2013) see creativity as a quality everybody has, what is missing is discipline, and this is what turns creative thinking into innovative practice. Thus, control of what might otherwise be unruly and unpredictable is therefore the main way to get the most out of the organisation, reflected in quality assurance processes, a ubiquitous feature of industrial and now academic practice.

However, this disregard for creativity is changing: in a complex society creativity at an individual and organisational level is increasingly seen as a vital strategic tool for organisations (Amabile *et al* 1996; Choi *et al* 2009; Shalley *et al* 2016).

The idea that creativity, rather than innovation, is something that demands to be understood as a matter of strategic urgency is increasingly obvious from the literature, especially in that aimed at a business or political rather than academic audience (Cox 2006; IBM 2010). But a focus only on the creative product (i.e. 'innovation') risks missing the importance of creativity itself.

1.3 The place of creativity in higher education

1.3.1 The demand for creativity in education

Discussion of creativity within education tends to focus on three key themes (Jeffrey & Craft 2001):

- Economic and political concerns
- Creativity as a vehicle for individual empowerment in institutions
- A means to develop effective learning

Each of these themes covers a range of viewpoints, motivations and contradictions (e.g. politicians simultaneously demand the production of innovative workers but limit the ways in which teachers can do this).

The advent of the knowledge-based economy has seen a demand for creativity as a means to 'provide insight, make new connections, identify potential solutions and communicate them' (Smith-Bingham 2006: p. 11). There is a demand for an adaptable, educated, and entrepreneurial workforce with an increase in policy rhetoric regarding creativity in education (Kleiman 2007a) but this is not a recent development: creativity,

explicitly or implicitly, has been at the heart of educational debates for some time – and not always in a positive way.

The Plowden Report (1967) laid the foundations for a child-centred vision of education, aimed at 'nurturing the moral, aesthetic and creative aspects in children's development, not about "getting the country somewhere"' (Halsey & Sylva 1987: p. 11). For Plowden, creativity required self-expression and freedom, something that jarred with traditional approaches advocated in the resulting calls to reverse 'permissive education' and 'the growth of anarchy' (Cox & Dyson 1971: Black Paper Three; Ekvall 1972).

This reaction against 'fashionable ideas' continues today with a recent Secretary of State for Education dismissing the use of 'teaching methods which have nothing to do with passing on knowledge' (Hope 2013). However, the situation in which we see 'a curriculum so micromanaged and politically charged that the secretary of state can decide which books pupils should read, and vocational, technical and creative education can be downgraded out of existence' (Millar 2016) is the end result of a process that began with Prime Minister Jim Callaghan's Ruskin Speech (1976). Callaghan argued that education was a legitimate matter for public and therefore government oversight, rather than being left to educationalists. The purpose of education, Callaghan stated, in a clear critique of Plowden, is to 'equip children for a lively, constructive, place in society, and to fit them to do a job of work'. He proposed three areas for development: a 'core curriculum', an inspectorate to review standards, and studies to

address 'unease felt by parents and others about the new informal methods of teaching' (Callaghan 1976).

These and subsequent interventions were a response to a 'shift to post-industrial society … on the same order of importance as … from craft to industrial society' (Ford 1995: p. 4) and a recognition of the need to adapt quickly to societal change, and to innovate (Puccio & Cabra 2010). The decline of Britain's manufacturing base in the face of globalisation prompted a need to develop intellectual and creative abilities, and the practical skills to apply them.
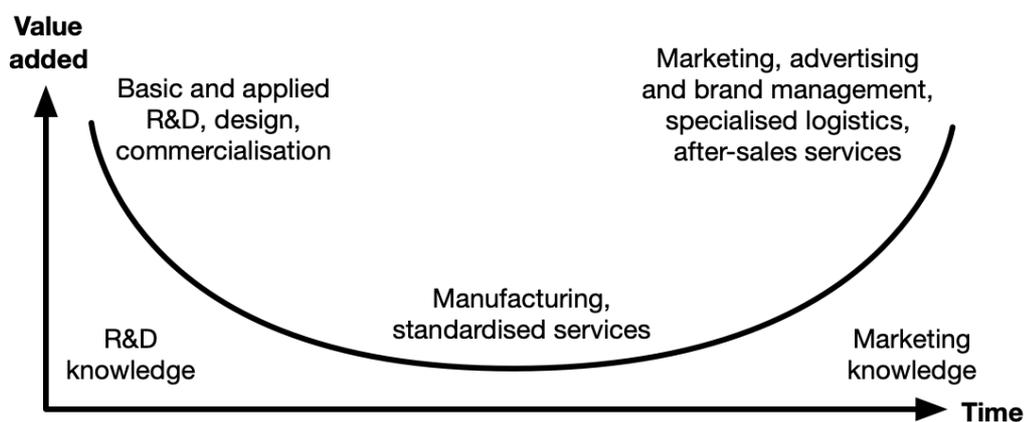
Figure 1-2 The Smiling Curve model of value

1.3.2 The age of innovation

While the 1950s-60s were the age of efficiency, the 1970s-80s the age of quality, and the 1980s-90s the age of flexibility, 'we now live in the age of innovation' (Janzen 2000: p. 3), the impact of which is illustrated by 'the smiling curve' (Ye *et al* 2015). In the industrial era, the manufacturing stage created the economic value, with later aspects such as branding, distribution and customer service contributing only marginally. In the

post-industrial era, value is greatest at the R&D and conceptual stages, and then later in branding, marketing, and customer services (Figure 1-2). These are where 'creativity' is important with predictions that around one third of the workforce will be involved in turning 'latent symbolic value' into economic and social value (Florida 2003; McWilliam & Haukka 2008). This shift was recognised in the Dearing Report (1997) and later addressed directly in the Cox Review of Creativity in Business (2006). In 2007, partly in response to the Leitch Report (2006) the UK government created a short-lived Cabinet-level position, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS 2007). Soo *et al* (2002: p. 145) claim that 'creativity in problem solving is the main driver of new knowledge creation and innovation' and found a positive correlation between creativity and market share and financial returns. In other words, creativity is profitable.

This idea is not confined to the UK. A US Department of Labor analysis of skills necessary for success in the workplace emphasised creative thinking and problem solving (Carnevale *et al* 1990; SCANS Commission 1991) while a later study by leading technology companies made creativity central to organisational success, key to solving complex, multidisciplinary and open-ended problems (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2008). A global survey by IBM found that 'CEOs believe creativity is the most important leadership quality'.

> *Creative leaders encourage experimentation throughout their organizations. They also plan to make deeper business model changes to realize their strategies, take more calculated risks and*

keep innovating in how they lead and communicate. (IBM 2010: p. 3)

Despite this, UK government policy has tended to view creativity as culture (e.g. art, drama, music), or the preserve of the final part of the smiling curve (graphic design, advertising) rather than a necessary component of innovation (DCMS 2001; Smith-Bingham 2006)[2,3]. The picture is muddied somewhat by the 'creative industries' who have attempted to claim creativity for themselves (Creative and Cultural Skills 2015; Easton & Neelands 2015). The Creative Industries Federation has called for the UK government to require an 'arts' qualification as part of the EBacc, linking arts education to well-being and order. But as the then Education Secretary Estelle Morris said: 'I know that Arts and Culture make a contribution to health, to education, to crime reduction, to strong communities, to the economy and to the nation's well-being, but I don't always know how to evaluate or describe it.' (Tait 2005). This need to quantify the impact in order to secure funding has led to an instrumentalisation of culture and the arts that is widely regarded as antithetical to their nature (Frayling 2005).

Creativity is not simply a 'nice to have' but increasingly portrayed as an urgent economic need. One study found that 'The vast majority of CEOs anticipate even greater complexity in the future, and more than half doubt

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[2] DIUS (2007) is a rare counter-example, promising to 'help all young people to be more creative and innovative, to take and manage risks, and to do so with determination and drive' (DIUS 2007: p. 65)

[3] Political discourse has favoured manufacturing even as it represents a diminishing proportion of the economy – something reflected not just in the Brexit campaign but in treasury responses to the coronavirus at the time of writing.

their ability to manage it' (IBM 2010: p. 2). This recognition of complexity dominated thinking in the 1990s as increased global trade, communications, and new ways of operating brought about by cheaper technology and the internet offered challenges but also opportunities, and these required letting go of rationality and risk-aversion: 'Rewards will go not to those with the ability to make "rational" choices in the face of uncertainty, but to those with the ability to take creative action in the face of ambiguity and to learn from the consequences' (Ford & Gioia 1995: p. 5).

1.3.3 Reclaiming creativity in education

The need for, as Tony Blair envisioned, 'a nation where the creative talents of all the people are used to build a true enterprise economy … where we compete on brains, not brawn' (NACCCE 1999) echoes the post-war situation that led to the birth of modern creativity research but, ironically, the new political interest in education as the means to facilitate the transition has led to the implementation of controls that may be characterised as 'anti-creative' even while extolling the need for it. The Secretary of State for Education who, in 1976, had just three powers over schools, today 'has more than 2,500 and is personally responsible for over 5,000 individual institutions.' (Millar 2016).

In 1998, responding to criticism that the school curriculum was becoming too technical and focused on testing (Joubert 2001), the government funded the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE). The committee arrived at a definition of creativity,

aspects of which are familiar from the academic literature: 'imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (p. 30). The need to prevent formal structures resulting in a loss of imaginative ability is a key point in the report (Joubert 2001), though the emphasis on 'value' is reminiscent of the contradictions in Figure 1-1.

Much of this relates to student creativity; the report made a distinction between 'teaching for creativity' ('forms of teaching that are intended to develop (students') own creative thinking or behaviour') and 'creative teaching' ('using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting, exciting and effective') (Jeffrey & Craft 2004; NACCCE 1999: p. 89), suggesting the former be the main focus for government. Jeffrey and Craft (2004) claim this is an unhelpful distinction, calling for recognition of the relationship between creative teaching, and creative learning. By the start of the 21st century the policy focus was shifting to creativity as a set of domain-specific competencies that could be measured (Lucas 2001) – even as creativity research had moved from quantitative approaches to qualitative ones – and on students' creativity, not teachers', whose performance had become highly prescribed and monitored.

Most of the activity above focused on primary and secondary schools but in the 1980s the debate, which saw a restructuring of schools and a fundamental shift in the professional status of teachers, began to turn to universities. The move towards education for employability described in Callaghan's Ruskin speech and more recently in the Browne Report (2010), and a focus on education as central to economic success (and therefore worthy of government intervention) led to demands for 'accountability'

here too, initially to taxpayers and more recently to fee-paying students through discussion of 'value for money' (House of Commons 2018; McRae 2018; National Audit Office 2017). Further accountability through the National Student Survey (NSS), the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and bodies such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), Office for Students (OfS) and the Competition and Mergers Authority (CMA), has added to the need to respond through change to everything from induction and recruitment, curriculum revision through to pastoral support which is increasingly being delivered by specialist departments separate from academics (Binns 2016).

But accountability, as discussed further below, has the potential to limit creativity in education at any level. A core argument in this thesis is that while academics are being pushed to develop creativity in their students, this cannot happen 'if their own creative abilities are suppressed' (Joubert 2001: p. 22). So while the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport could say in 1998 'We must change the concept of creativity from being something that is 'added on' to education, … and make sure it becomes intrinsic' (NACCCE 1999), as Jeffrey and Craft (2001: p. 4) point out, 'the technical and bureaucratic processes which have been employed' limit creativity in both the curriculum, and in its delivery.

1.4 Gaps in research

Given the importance placed on creativity as a means of economic development, and the role of education in this, it might be expected this is reflected in the literature, yet what exists is largely focused on primary and secondary schooling. Kleiman, writing a decade ago, claimed a

'Paucity of research on creativity in higher education' (2007b: p. 18) and although the literature has grown since then, with some exceptions much of this focuses on teaching for, about, or with creativity (Beghetto *et al* 2013). 'Few studies have examined creative teachers themselves' (Bramwell *et al* 2011: p. 228), and 'there is little research focusing on lived experiences.' (Craft *et al* 2014: p. 93), something the present study aims to address.

It is clear that 'Higher education has been slow to examine for itself the idea of creativity' (Jackson 2006: p. 4) and though there has been 'much interest', there is 'scant research' in developing more creative approaches to change in HE (Clouder *et al* 2008: p. 635). The situation has been addressed by the HEA through events such as the conference 'Creativity or Conformity? Building Cultures of Creativity in Higher Education' (Cardiff, 2007) and the Imaginative Curriculum Project (2002-2006), which subsequently led to a still-active online network of academics interested mainly in developing students' creativity (Creative Academic 2018). However, even a decade on, the creativity of academics in their everyday work and in their approaches to teaching and learning, is under-researched.

My own initial search for literature from 2008 onwards (the date of Kleiman's study) proved disappointing. A keyword search of the British Education Index for four variations of creativity, higher education, and innovation, found remarkably few papers, of which even fewer were of interest. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence; the fact that several journals exist about innovation in higher education suggests these

results are misleading. Considering the likelihood that papers might discuss the topic without using those terms (for example, would a paper in a journal on innovation use 'innovation' as a keyword?) using a freer approach (e.g. BEI's 'SmartText' facility) I searched for 'creative teaching approaches', which resulted in nearly 30,000 results. Excluding terms such as *school*, *primary*, *secondary*, *writing*, *practice*, and *arts*, and including *university* eventually reduced this to just 34 – of which only six were of minor interest. A similar search of the Education Abstracts database proved equally frustrating.

However, as the literature review below shows, research is taking place into specific aspects of academic practice such as module development (Binns 2014, 2016), assessment (Falchikov & Thompson 2008), and the impact of university culture on approaches to teaching (Gibson 2010), rather than 'creativity' *per se*. As I point out below, and is evident in the case studies, there is a tendency for people to reject the idea that what they are doing is 'creative', largely because conceptions of creativity are dominated by romantic notions of rarity and divine inspiration, meaning everyday activities such as devising curricula are not considered creative, just part of the job. In other words, searching for literature on creativity, an indeterminate concept, among academics risks missing what might be there.

The literature review below is the means by which potential gaps may be identified and is approached heuristically rather than algorithmically (in keeping, happily, with the topic of creativity), and presented in two parts: the first is an overview of creativity theory, the theoretical framework for

the thesis, which identifies key themes that might be used in the second part to consider academic creativity. For example, motivation, experience, values, processes, and organisational culture all feature heavily, as do the roles of the field (peer groups) and the domain (the discipline within which academics operate). Therefore, examining the process of designing courses with these factors in mind identifies a body of literature that might otherwise have been missed and, in turn, identifies that the gap is not so much that academics' creative practices are not being researched, but that they are not being considered through the lens of creativity theory. Hannan and Silver (2000), for example, examine innovation in universities from an organisational perspective, which is entirely valid. Considering the same evidence using, say, Csikszentmihalyi's system model of creativity offers additional insight: their observation that academics have more connection with colleagues in the same discipline in other universities than colleagues in their own university but from different disciplines, is explained by the concept of 'the field' on whom academics depend for career progression, more so than their internal HR processes.

1.5 Summary

This chapter began with a discussion of the difficulty in defining creativity and its relationship to innovation. It then presented an overview of the political and economic demands for creativity in education but showed that this relates largely to student outcomes. The increasing regulation and evaluation of teachers was presented as something that was likely to limit their own creativity through reduction in autonomy and the use of

performance measures. Finally, a possible gap in the literature was noted: that academic creativity in HE as an experience, rather than in terms of its output, is under-researched and that creativity theory might offer a useful lens through which to re-examine and expand on research into everyday activity and organisational cultures.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Part 1: Creativity theory

In the previous chapter I noted how the literature on creativity in teaching in HE is sparse. However, I took the view that unless an author is specifically writing about creativity, they might not discuss it in concrete terms, therefore it is necessary to look for it in the abstract: the ways in which creativity is demonstrated, the attitudes that drive it, the processes that stimulate or thwart it, and so on. Therefore, the literature review is split in to two parts. In the first I survey creativity theory to identify key themes relevant to the research questions, while in the second I use these to review literature more clearly focused on HE.

This review necessarily meant making decisions about what to include and what to exclude and, as described above, algorithmic approaches (e.g. using keywords and dates as paramaters) proved frustrating given that much of the literature of interest, especially in the discussion of higher education, does not discuss 'creativity' or list it as a keyword. Consequently, a more heuristic approach was taken, which while arguably taking more time, led to interesting connections and chance discoveries.

It has been noted that creativity research has grown rapidly in recent years and, particularly in the field of education, is dominated by the USA with the UK in comparatively distant second place (Hernández-Torrano & Ibrayeva 2020) China, Taiwan, Australia and Canada come next, but the

number of articles is not large. Decisions about what to exclude often came down to ones of culture (the different conceptions of creativity between, say, China and the UK are fascinating but beyond the scope of this thesis) or simply repetition:

However, the growing rate of creativity-related research has much to do with the prevalence of a comparatively small number of prolific authors (Table 1) who are themselves widely cited meaning that while the literature is growing, it might be argued that our breadth of understanding is not. Moreover, much of the research is found in a few journals *about* creativity seemingly read by other researchers on creativity, which often gives the sense of a community talking to itself, and often about itself.

Author	Country	Papers	Citations
Runco, MA	USA	48	1737
Mumford, MD	USA	39	1744
Kaufman, JC	USA	37	645
Karwowski, M	Poland	25	297
Treffinger, D	USA	21	403
Lubart, T	France	20	320
Baer, J	USA	18	933
Davis, G	USA	17	275
Plucker, JA	USA	16	214
Torrance, EP	USA	16	243
Lau, S	Hong Kong	15	219
Glaveanu, VP	Switerland	12	136
Khatena, J	USA	12	82
Niu, W	USA	12	285
Sternberg, RJ	USA	12	744
Chen, HC	Taiwan	11	95
Hu, W	China	11	183

Beghetto, RA	USA	10	311
Craft, A	UK	10	401
Feldhusen, J	USA	10	233
Gralewski, J	Poland	10	131
Simonton, DK	USA	10	256

Table 1: Top creativity authors ranked by number of publications (Hernández-Torrano & Ibrayeva 2020: p. 8)

Within the literature on educational creativity, four key areas stand out:

- The psychology of creativity (personality, thinking styles, biography etc)

- Cognitive processes (how creativity happens, the process, the personal value placed on creativity etc)

- Organisational theory (resources, value placed on it by employers, impact on employees, innovation etc)

- Teaching and learning to be creative (assessment, curriculum, creativity as 'arts', relationship to STEM subjects etc. Dominated by preschool, primary and secondary education)

These four themes are the ones used to structure the discussion below with the first two appearing mostly in Part 1 (dealing creativity theory), and the rest in Part 2 (creativity and higher education). This review is supplemented in Chapter 3 by an overview of qualitative research methods, in particular 'user experience research' which offers a perspective on creativity either missed or glossed over in the core literature.

2.1.1 **Definitions and debates**

Modern creativity research is widely held to have begun in 1950 when, prompted by increased interest from US corporations and the military, the chair of the American Psychology Association, JP Guilford, called for a systematic approach to a topic that had previously been regarded as a general phenomenon, best understood through biographies of rare individuals leading to inspirational and romantic ideas (Boden 2003). This economic need for creativity exists more urgently today (see Chapter 1).

Guilford sought to distance psychology from popular conceptions focused on creativity as an individual, rare, and God-given talent:

> 'It is probably only a layman's idea that the creative person is peculiarly gifted with a certain quality that ordinary people do not have. This conception can be dismissed by psychologists by common consent' (Guilford 1950: p. 446).

However, while apparently able to agree what creativity *is not*, psychologists seem unable to arrive at 'common consent' on what it *is*: ten years after Guildford's assertion, one researcher counted 50-60 distinct definitions (Parkhurst 1999). Today, many papers on creativity begin with what has come to be termed the 'standard definition' of creativity (Runco & Jaeger 2012) which lists two key criteria:

- the outcome must be new or innovative ('novel'), and
- it must be appropriate to the situation.

From there, consensus is hard to find as researchers adopt different stances. Boden (1994) takes a person-centred perspective, calling it the ability to generate ideas, though she recognises that the question of their value is important, something that others view as a socially constructed judgement depending on experts within the domain (Amabile 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 1988), with Amabile claiming something is creative if 'appropriate observers' familiar with the domain 'independently agree it is creative' (Amabile 1982: p. 1001). So creativity is a 'domain specific, subjective judgement of the novelty and value of an outcome of a particular action' (Ford & Kuenzi 2008: p. 66).

Others prefer to omit subjective judgements from their definitions (Bilton & Cummings 2010; Weisberg 2006), instead focusing on the 'skills and dispositions' required for creative outcomes (Sternberg 2007: p. 34). Some step away from the individual entirely to see creativity as 'both an outcome and a process' (Shalley 2008: p. 4) while Drazin *et al* (1999) see creativity not as a process, but the *engagement* in it, and while many see creativity as solving given problems others begin (and even end) with 'creat(ing) the problem to be solved' (Basadur *et al* 1982: p. 45). Following the 'standard definition', creativity must be useful and actionable, influencing organisations (Amabile 1998; Ford 1996) or domain (Csikszentmihalyi 1996) and for many, creativity cannot exist until an idea is communicated to others (Csikszentmihalyi 1988; Rhodes 1961). Creative thinking is not, it seems, creative.

Creativity is not universally valued (Beghetto *et al* 2013; Runco 2014b) and may be seen a s a threat to established orders (Lubart & Sternberg 1998).

But disruption can also be viewed as a must-have, particularly for start-ups in the technology sectors such as Facebook (motto: 'move fast and break things') and Uber (Bhandari 2016; Howard 2013; Stone 2017) - though that disruption is not always viewed as positive and sometimes even harmful (Carrol 2015; Hern 2018).

The question of when the judgement of creativity is made is problematic. Amabile's experiments (1996), typical of the field, involve giving participants a short amount of time to write poems or make collages, meaning that someone who rushed to produce something - anything - would score more highly than someone who crafted something carefully but failed to finish. Creativity is depicted as a performance, summoned on request, and completed to schedule, yet Gilfillan (1970) found that between 1888 and 1913 the average time between the original idea and eventual product of the 'most useful' inventions was 226 years, often because of a delay in acceptance of new ideas rather than difficulty in bringing them to market or for technology to catch up with the vision. The delayed fulfilment and ludic quality of discovery are aspects of creative motivation: for many individuals, creativity is a form of investment, working on and promoting ideas that may not bear fruit for some time, or that may attract career-risking criticism (Sternberg *et al* 1997).

Given that definition is so difficult, Runco (2015) suggests avoiding the noun 'creativity' altogether, instead adopting a modifying adjective of 'creative' – so 'creative writing', 'creative thinking' and 'creative teaching' – which focuses on the application of creativity within a specific domain. It is easier to agree about creative *writing* than it is to agree about *creativity*.

In short, 'standard definition' and Guilford's wishes notwithstanding, there is no 'common consent' on what creativity is.

2.1.2 A widening field of interest

The lack of common consent on definition is problematic, particularly as interest in creativity has spread from its roots in psychology. Psychology is dominated by data because 'What cannot be defined cannot be measured' (Kirton 2003: p. 135). So, instead of focusing on creativity as an abstract concept, we see a focus on numbers: counting the number of ideas generated by subjects, the number of patents, the time taken to generate ideas, or the number of stages individuals go through to produce something.

More recently the dominance of psychology in creativity research has been challenged (see Chapter 3) with disciplines like sociology, business, and education bringing a qualitative approach, and an even looser approach to definition: Plucker *et al* (2004) note that in a sample of creativity literature, only 38% of papers included a definition. Many researchers assume creativity is a unitary concept (Unsworth 2001), regardless of the lack of consensus, and that this hinders our understanding, risks reinforcing popular myths, and means that many researchers believe they are looking at the same thing, when in fact they are studying very different aspects of a broad phenomenon that is contextual and value-laden. Plucker *et al* offer a 'catch-all' definition derived from the many available:

> Creativity is the interaction among *aptitude, process, and environment* by which an individual or group produces a *perceptible product* that is both *novel and useful* as defined within a *social context*. (p. 90 emphasis in the original)

This is unwieldy but useful, as it points to four locations where creativity might be found and understood – the product, the process, the person, and the place – and it is to these we turn next.

2.1.3 The four Ps of creativity

The many scientific and popular definitions of creativity present a problem for systematic study of the phenomenon. However, Rhodes (1961) noted four locations in which the definitions were tested or described.

Person	The individual undertaking the act of creativity
Process	The mental process the person follows to create ideas
Press	The impact of the person's surroundings on their process
Products	The ideas that result

Together these form the 'four Ps' of creativity. These are not separate — they overlap considerably: an individual undertakes (solely or collaboratively) a process and creates a product (an idea, a thing) in a place which has influence on it through culture, resources, structure, pressure etc. Choosing the perspective from which to understand

creativity may produce a different insight. As Kauffman acknowledges (2009), allotting theories to one of these categories is not always tidy, and different authors do so differently (for example Amabile's componential model of creativity straddles all four but is focused on explaining creative behaviour, so here appears under 'Person'). However, it is a useful structure with which to begin the discussion.

Product

The creative product is the most common focus of creativity theory, and is also the focus in education, with creative products – innovations – being the easiest aspect to observe and evaluate and the things that are valued and rated in, for example, TEF. But products do not simply appear – they must come from somewhere. This is examined more fully in the section on process but Csikszentmihalyi's system model of creativity (1996) offers an intriguing theory of how three key social components that combine to produce the product: the domain, the field, and the person. These are particularly relevant to the situation in HE.

The Domain A cultural system and the skills, knowledge, practices, tools and values that make it up. Analogous to an academic discipline.

The Field A social system made up of experts in the domain. These might be esteemed practitioners but also critics, curators, or editors. They are often described as 'gatekeepers'. It is their judgement that determines whether a creative act is accepted into the domain.

The Person   A combination of genetic factors (more important in some domains than others), talents, skills, and experience.
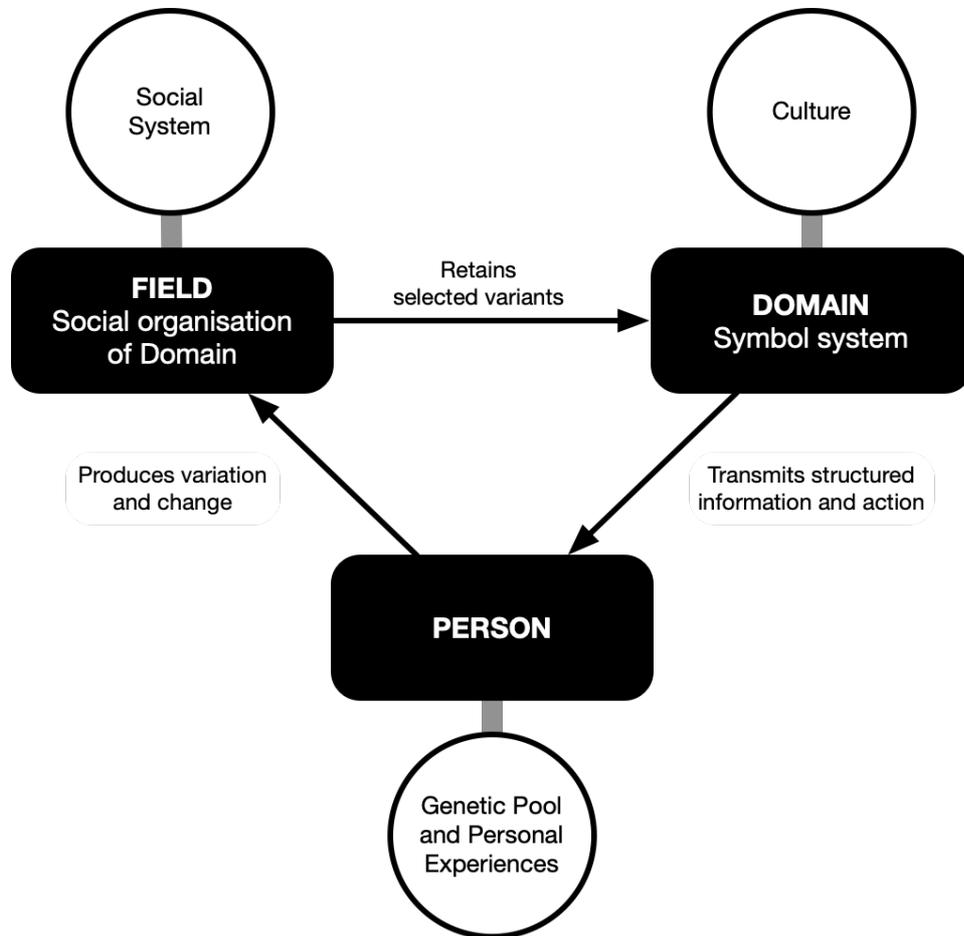
Figure 2-1 Csikszentmihalyi's system model of creativity adopted in thesis cases

The three components are interrelated: a person produces innovations making use of their skills and experience, which both draw on and somehow change or challenge the Domain. These are seen by, and/or inspired by, the Field, who pass judgement and determine which are to be accepted into the Domain. The more experienced a Person is, or the more they understand the Domain, the more likely it is they can be creative, and the more likely they are to be respected by the Field.

The model has been tested empirically: Simonton's investigation of career trajectory (1997) challenges the link between experience in the domain and impact on it, even though field-based hierarchies often reinforce them. Some domains are more open to radical (and early career) change than others which leads to two approaches to creativity (Galenson 2009): *experimental innovators* practice trial and error, making their discoveries late in life and amassing a large body of work that slowly contributes to the domain; *conceptual innovators* make sudden breakthroughs, often at an early age, changing their domain quickly. These ideas do not contradict Csikszentmihalyi's model, but they do alter the relationship between the Person and the Domain, suggesting that the individual's approach to creativity may be more important than Csikszentmihalyi proposes: experimental innovators seek to change the domain via the Field, while conceptual innovators directly challenge both Domain and Field. If an experimenter operates in a slow-moving domain, they are more likely to be seen as misfits.

Everyday creativity

Csikszentmihalyi's emphasis on domain-changing creativity is an example of 'Big-C' or 'culturally and historically specific' creativity (Sawyer 2012: p. 209). This focus is common in popular culture and education, and contributes to 'problematic beliefs and stereotypes about the nature of creativity' (Beghetto & Kaufman 2007: p. 74), in particular that creativity is a rare gift. It requires recognition by the field or by society, which is 'a poor criterion for creativity' (Runco 2015: p. 296), and must be seen to change the domain.

Emphasis on domain-level novelty risks devaluing or ignoring everyday or 'little-c' creativity. Here the individual need only create something that is novel to them, rather than to the domain to be judged creative. But as much of this activity is only visible to the individual, it is difficult to evaluate (Sawyer 2012).

While Runco (2014a) finds the distinction between Big-C/little-c creativity a false dichotomy that creates a hierarchy, Big-C/little-c distinctions are important to consider because they reflect or even shape the way in which people talk about creativity. It is common for people to claim not to be creative, or to dismiss their own work, with the reason likely to stem from our tendency to canonise 'Big-C' achievements against which everyday creativity pales (or in the context of earlier points and the research questions, focus on ground-breaking 'innovation' rather than minor modifications to practice). This is a key concept I will return to in Part 2.

Process

Product-oriented approaches to understanding creativity are common because it is relatively easy to engage in empirical research on tangibles. But this risks 'fossilising' a dynamic process (Beghetto & Kaufman 2007) and ignoring the creative potential that exists before a final product emerges. Process is harder to research empirically as it does not lend itself to direct observation outside laboratory conditions (something considered in more detail in Chapter 3). Although creativity is often depicted as messy and undefined, the attraction of an abstract model of the creative

process has led to many attempts to describe it as a sequence of stages or episodes.

With the psychological origin of most creativity research, much of the focus has been on how people think during creative episodes, and how that thinking changes as the nature of the task changes. Wallas (1926) reviewed the writings and speeches of eminent creative individuals to develop a four-stage linear model of the creative process which remains highly influential today (Sawyer 2012).
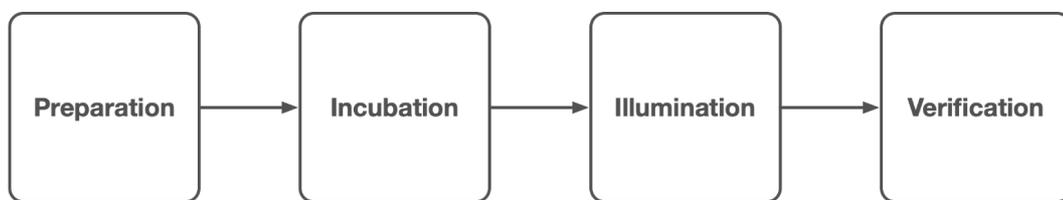
Figure 2-2 Wallas's four-stage model of the creative process

Preparation   'the stage during which the problem was "investigated in all directions,"', a period of conscious, regulated thought. Reliant on education, knowledge

Incubation   'the stage during which he (sic) was not consciously thinking about the problem'

Illumination   'the appearance of the "happy idea" together with the psychological events which immediately preceded and accompanied that appearance'

Verification   Putting everything together and deducing the consequences

The idea of a stage-based process has since been tested, developed, and challenged with some arguing for the extension of the model to include problem finding (Amabile 1996; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi 1976; Osborn 1953) or, more prosaically, 'mess finding' (Isaksen & Treffinger 1985), something which shifts the role of the Person from passive recipient of tasks to active investigator – highlighting the role of motivation, discussed further below.

Some stage-based models fail to reflect the complexity and iterative nature of the creative process (Lubart 2001) and subsequent adaptations and alternatives have tended to add sub-processes. Mumford *et al* (1994), for example, break the problem-finding stage in to three discrete steps: noticing that something is not right (problem finding), expressing the problem (problem posing) and describing it in detail (problem construction).

The key argument against such abstraction is that it is misapplied; Lubart (2001) expresses irritation with the way models are used in creativity training (such as that popularised by Edward de Bono and others), believing that they risk focusing on specific and discretely applied skills at the expense of the ability to combine them heuristically to fit the situation.
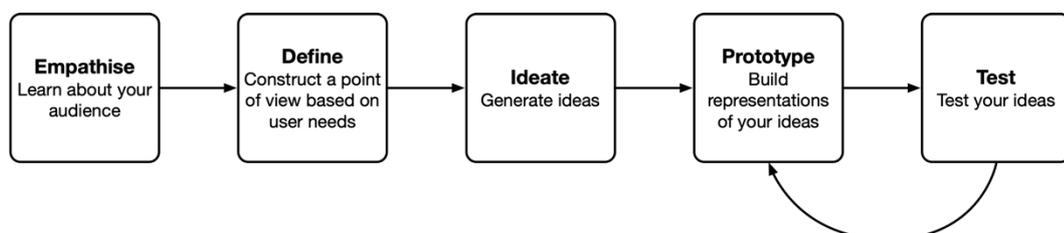
Figure 2-3 Design Thinking (Brown 2008)

Stage-based models focus on solving a problem, but this assumes it is easy to describe, which is often not the case. One group who regularly tackle complex and poorly described problems are product and service designers in situations such as healthcare and government (Brown 2009; Brown & Katz 2011). Design Thinking, an abstraction of their process, has five stages: understand, define, ideate, prototype, test. What differentiates it from other models is its focuses not on 'problem solving' but 'problem understanding' with a recognition of *wicked problems*, a 'class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values' (Churchman 1967: p. 141), a description which seems to fit many of the issues faced in HE. By focusing on a problem from the perspective of the people facing it, and recognising the inherent complexity of many problems, Design Thinking emphasises the need for empathy on the part of the people tackling them. To this end, the process is iterative, not linear, and promotes an experimental approach in which failure is expected and seen as an opportunity to iterate and improve. The main method for doing this is the prototype.

Prototypes are the embodiment of a thinking process, or an aid to thinking itself, focusing on specific aspects rather than the whole problem (Kelley & Littman 2001). Prototyping creates value that is missed if there is too much focus on the finished product. Innovation, according to Schrage (1999), is 'more social than personal … a by-product of how well or poorly I played with others' (p. xvii) and prototyping is 'the single most pragmatic behaviour an innovative firm can practice' (xviii). He calls this 'serious

play' with prototypes as 'conversation pieces' that help 'discover what you yourself are really trying to accomplish' (xix).

However, this requires open minds and tolerance for works-in-progress, something potentially lacking in HE where QA-based approaches borrowed from manufacturing focus on limiting variation and on efficiency and value, and this approach means that creativity is only valued when it produces novel and effective solutions that align to organisational requirements. In this deductive model the requirements come first (Droz 1993): the 'solution' has already been found and often by means such as analysis of market demand and other data, or targets and key performance indicators. Prototyping in the modern sense of the word is not problem-solving but problem-identification and understanding. It may not solve a problem at all but reveal new, potentially more interesting ones. It is inductive, 'serious play' which, rather than being time wasting, has been shown to shorten development lifecycles.

However, this 'playful' approach is 'anathema to managers educated to believe that predictability and control are essential to new-product development' (Droz cited in Schrage 1999: p. 83), hence a preference for less empathetic, more algorithmic approaches with little 'waste'.

Person

Stage-based models of the creative process imply that creativity is a linear process (Sawyer 2012). Though some, like Design Thinking, are iterative in nature, the idea that creativity is a finite and predictable process with a beginning and an end is a common inference which may lead to some of

the frustrations with or suspicions of creativity expressed elsewhere in this study.

Wallas's four-stage process was widely accepted in 1950, but is psychologically superficial, relying on dramatic narrative rather than testable hypotheses that can be identified, measured, and validated (Lubart 2001). Psychologists' interest has consequently led to an increasing number of theories about the way creative people think, and what behaviours result in creative results such as the Five Factor Model of Personality (Soto & Jackson 2013) offering the possibility of 'a grand unified theory of personality' (Digman 1990: p. 418). Of these, 'openness to experience' is the trait associated with creativity (King *et al* 1996) signified by imagination, empathy, willingness to try new things and cultivate many interests, curiosity, and liberal or unconventional values (Sawyer 2012).

However, there is something dissatisfying about considering creativity as the result of behavioural preferences and attempting to identify those most likely to behave creatively – just because somebody is open to new experiences does not mean they will actively seek them out or be very good at them. If product and process-focused approaches to creativity are concerned with 'what' and 'how' and 'when', there is surely a need to understand not 'who' is creative as an exclusive set, but 'why' anybody might act in creative ways.

Earlier, I noted that Csikszentmihalyi's model does not explain why creative people might act against their own interests by opposing the field

and domain they seek to change, something not accounted for in the five factor model. Runco (2014b) suggests they are driven by firmly held beliefs and while standard definitions of creativity involve economic or transactional value, they miss the importance of alignment to personal values. In other words, for those engaging in creativity, behaviours and styles of thinking are values made manifest. So, someone who values autonomy will appear to steer away from conformity and tradition.

Amabile's Componential Theory combines considerations of how and why people are creative (1996) identifying three essential components of:

- Domain-Relevant Skills (expertise),
- Creativity-Relevant Processes (creativity skills), and
- Task Motivation.

A fourth component, Social Environment (discussed below), was added later (Amabile 2013). Skills and expertise determine the person's capabilities within a given domain, but it is task motivation that determines what they will actually do and how they will go about it (Amabile 1997).
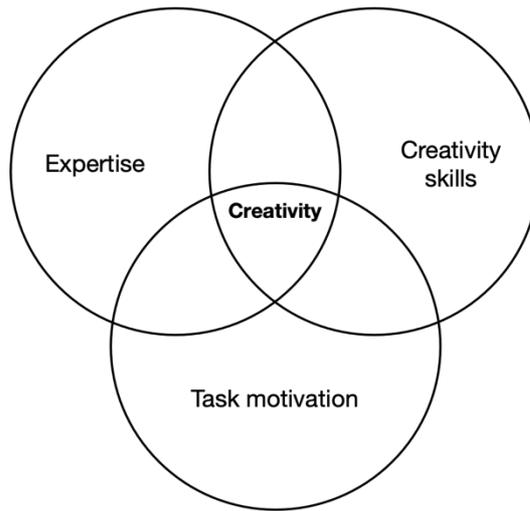
Figure 2-4 Amabile's Componential Model of Creativity (1996)
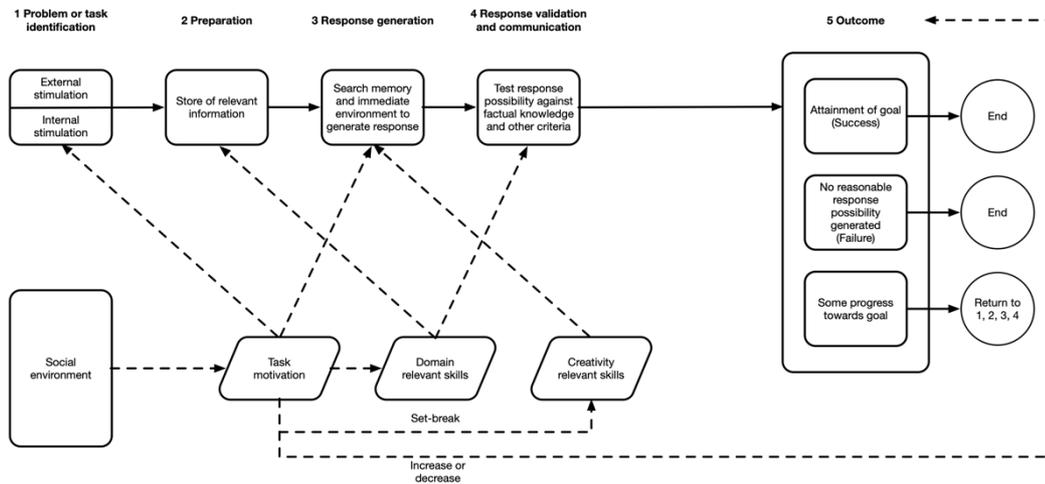
Figure 2-5 Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity showing its relationship with the creative process

Amabile recognises that the importance of certain skills and attributes varies throughout the creative process and as such offers a useful means of uniting considerations of process and person. Her extensive work on the evaluation of creativity brings product-based approaches into the mix, and her addition of environment completes the four-Ps. It is not a grand unifying theory of creativity, but it is satisfying in its scope. Most

importantly, Amabile also demonstrates the positive contribution made to creativity by 'the motivation to work on something because it is interesting, involving, exciting, satisfying, or personally challenging' (Amabile 1997: p. 39), and highlights the negative contribution from extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation includes having no control over the task (i.e. being told what to do, particularly if the reason is unclear or conflicts with personal values), financial rewards or penalties, targets and performance evaluations, and promotions and awards. These may motivate someone to find a solution to a problem, but it is unlikely to be creative and indeed Amabile's experiments show a decrease in creativity when a reward is contingent on doing the task. 'A cash reward can't magically prompt people to find their work interesting if in their hearts they feel it is dull', while 'When people are intrinsically motivated, they engage in their work for the challenge and enjoyment of it. The work *itself* is motivating.' (Amabile 1998: p. 79 - emphasis in the original). There are important caveats to this principle: when cash rewards are offered as a bonus rather than payment for work done, there is no diminishment in creativity (though no increase, either). It is the perception rather than the fact of reward that affects creativity (Amabile 1997). The effect an extrinsic motivator has depends on the initial intrinsic motivational state, the form the extrinsic motivation takes, and its timing.

However, while intrinsic motivation largely comes from within, Amabile shows it is stimulated - or thwarted - by the social environment within which the individual operates, the 'place', or 'press', which forms our fourth 'P'.

Press

If creativity is complex enough when considered as a solo activity, it becomes more-so when considered within organisations. Although the figure of the lone genius dominates popular narratives (see for example Bohn (2019)), much creative work is carried out in teams or within organisations and thus within an environment of resources, constraints, deadlines, and managers. Rhodes calls this the 'press': the resources, the culture, the physical environment and the pressure. The work environment is a vital factor in supporting the creative work of the people employed there (Amabile 1997).

Creating an innovative organisation is not simply a case of hiring people with the appropriate aptitudes. There are two broad forms of creativity mechanism —individual and organisational — and while high levels of both kinds lead to high levels of innovation, organisational mechanisms have the greatest impact (Bharadwaj & Menon 2000), one of the most important being leadership (Puccio & Cabra 2010). But leadership often, though not always, equates to management and 'management and creativity are often seen as contradictory terms' (Davis & Scase 2000: p. 2); creativity requires freedom, while management implies control. The importance of creative leadership, or at least leadership in creativity (not quite the same thing), is an abiding aspect of the various reports cited in Chapter 1. The work of Amabile *et al* (2004) continues to be influential in identifying the behaviours required for leaders to foster a culture of creativity, and those that should be avoided:

Positive
- support for employees' actions
- addressing people's negative feelings
- constructive and positive feedback
- regular contact and guidance
- asking for ideas and opinions

Negative
- checking on work status too often
- lack of clarity on assignments
- changing assignments/objectives too often
- lack of interest in work or ideas of others

Yet while the role of the organisation and its leadership is vital in cultivating creativity, individual motivation is still paramount and there needs to be an alignment between what an organisation does, and how the people within it feel when working there – and, indeed, outside work.

Although Florida (2003) notes that the creative work environment extends much further than the organisation's walls, and that creative people gravitate towards cities that are diverse, tolerant, and open to new ideas with a thriving and authentic social scene (something that universities themselves contribute to both passively and actively), the workplace itself is still dominant[4]. While an abiding myth about creative organisations such as Google is that they foster their creativity through employee perks (free food prepared by chefs, sports facilities, table tennis, and juice bars) as a result, other businesses have assumed the key to creativity and

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[4] This remains true even if we work from home more post-pandemic, and is likely even more important.

productivity is to mimic these factors through architecture and interior decoration instead of 'foster(ing) positive emotions, strong internal motivation, and favourable perceptions of colleagues and the work itself' (Amabile & Kramer 2011: p. Loc 51). This begins with offering 'meaningful work'.

The concept of meaningful work is effectively an extension of Amabile's work on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation - the task being set must appeal to something within the individual but also be of benefit to someone else rather than the individual doing the work. It must not be frustrated by, for example, bureaucracy, lack of resources, or lack of skills and expertise. Earlier, Amabile and Gryskiewicz (1989) undertook a study of R&D scientists to examine the creativity-stimulating factors outside of the componential framework and largely outside the control of the individual (i.e. part of the 'press'). They identified eight aspects:

1. Freedom
2. Challenging work (positive challenge)
3. Appropriate resources
4. Supportive managers
5. Diverse and communicative co-workers
6. Recognition
7. Sense of cooperation
8. Organisational support for creativity

They also identified four constraints:

1. Time pressure

2. Too much evaluation

3. Emphasis on the status quo

4. Organisational politics

In 2011, writing for a broader audience, the eight supports were distilled to just four: clear goals, autonomy, help, and resources (Amabile & Kramer 2011).
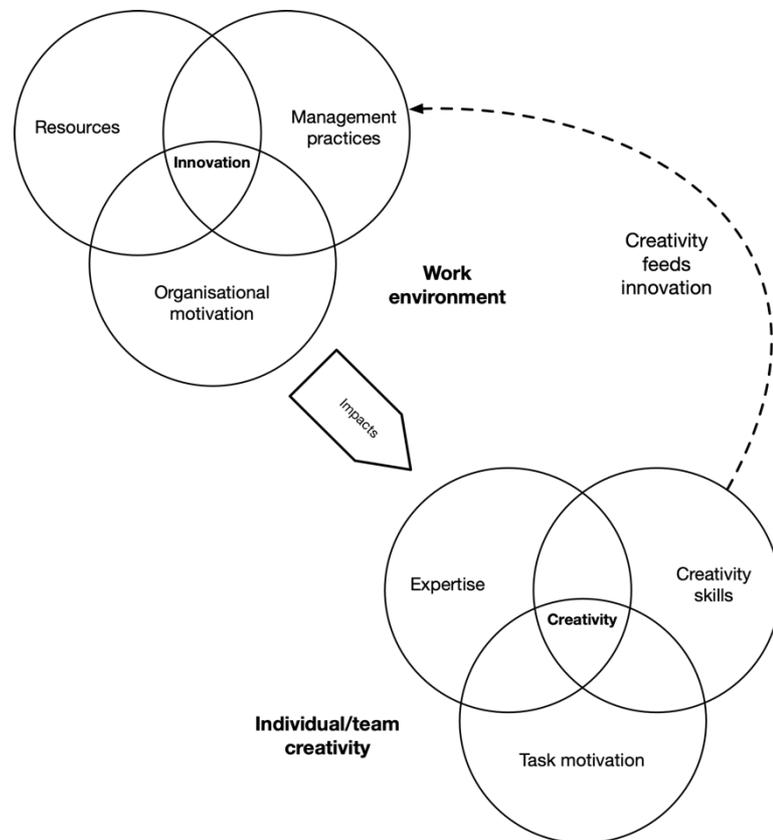
Figure 2-6 The creative work environment (Amabile 1997)

Yet this list misses a crucial factor: there needs to be, in this model, an 'organisational motivation to innovate' (Amabile 1997: p. 52) which must come primarily from senior management (see Figure 2-6). This is then

interpreted and practiced throughout the rest of the organisation. Elements that feature in this orientation towards innovation are pride in, and enthusiasm for, the potential of the organisation's members, explicit value placed on creativity and innovation, attitude to risk, and a non-defensive strategy for the organisation's position. Establishing organisation-wide mechanisms for innovation, open and active communication, reward and recognition for creativity, fair evaluation, and support for 'failure' are described by Amabile as primary supports. Competition within the organisation, strict control, and too many formal processes are cited as barriers toward creativity and innovation.

Resources include sufficient time, employing people with necessary expertise, funds for creative work, and appropriate training. The third component is management practice which includes setting clear goals but allowing autonomy in going about them, clear planning and feedback on projects, and enthusiastic support for the work of individuals and the group. While groups should be balanced to provide a broad range of skills, they should trust each other and communicate, but also challenge ideas constructively and share intrinsic commitment to the work.

2.1.4 Summary of part one

This section offers a broad overview of selected aspects of creativity theory which relate to the situation found in HE, discussed further below.

Csikszentmihalyi's system model suggests that creativity is the result of an interplay between individuals, the field from whom they seek acceptance or respect, and their domain. But applied to HE this model

raises questions as academics balance the need to progress through teaching, administration, and research, and simultaneously gain acceptance within their department, university and broader discipline as well as with students at different points in their academic journey, while also establishing themselves as someone with new ideas. This conflict seems unlikely to foster creativity, cultivating instead a form of reactionary conservatism: one wins the respect of senior colleagues by showing them respect, not challenging them. Consequently, it would seem that to be creative within such a system, individuals need to position themselves in opposition – a risky stance to take. Simonton, Taylor and Galenson offer insights into the less domain-subservient role that individual approaches can take through experimental and conceptual approaches to innovation. Thus, creativity is not always radical 'Big-C' (at least when viewed from outside) and may instead reflect a personal triumph over local problems.

Discussions of the creative process are common in creativity research and attract attention in the wider world because they promise a simple algorithm of 'how to be creative'. However, they are abstractions of complex processes and it will be interesting to see whether the HE literature describes working practices (e.g. developing a new module) in similar ways and whether they are equally oversimplified. Additionally, the prospect of algorithmic approaches in institutional policies would be an indicator or creativity-limiting practices. The most compelling aspects of process-based literature are the need for time to understand the problem and its context, iteration, testing, and learning from failure.

Additionally, the description of prototyping as a social activity is compelling: is there evidence in the literature of academics collaborating in their creativity and of developing prototypes, or is their activity a solo one, going all-in on a solution without properly understanding the problem or testing the ideas?

It is apparent that popular conceptions of what makes someone creative are irrelevant (except in that they may limit people's belief in themselves by suggesting it is inherent or the result of ingrained ways of thinking) given that a work environment and the nature of the work itself can neuter even the most naturally creative individual, and that process models may abstract a process until it is meaningless and algorithmic. More interesting is what drives creativity particularly as it seems to carry significant risk. Being creative appears to require a certain amount of political skill and resilience; Amabile's componential model usefully unites different aspects to show how, depending on the stage they are at or the environment they are in, individuals draw on different skills and personal attributes. It also hints at the importance of colleagues of different types to supplement skills and knowledge and move ideas forwards.

Finally, it is clear that a creative, highly motivated individual could succeed in one institution but fail in another depending on a number of factors outside their control. Within HE one might expect to see this evident in external regulation, quality control, and relationships with immediate colleagues and students. However, if an organisation invests in

the appropriate structures, resources, processes and leadership then a culture of creativity might be the result – it cannot simply hire creative people and expect innovation to be the result. Instead, it should attract and retain creative people in the same way certain cities and districts (e.g. Manchester, Bristol, Brighton, Glasgow, and parts of London) have over time attracted creative communities through liberal attitudes, ready resources, and tolerance for difference. What evidence is there that this exists, or could exist, in HE? And, importantly, there must be an alignment between the values of the organisation and those of the people who work there, and a respect for the autonomy and experience of individuals and teams.

Following Part 1 I now have a number of sub-questions to investigate in the HE literature:

- How is creative activity cultivated in HE at national, institutional and departmental levels?

- How is creativity perceived and valued by academics, managers, students and institutions?

- What is the relationship between creative academics and their field and domain?

- What is the role of prototyping, iteration and problem-understanding in creative practice?

- What is the role of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and particularly of personal values?

These are investigated in Part 2.

2.2 Part 2: Creativity and higher education

2.2.1 Introduction to Part 2

Having looked at creativity theory we turn to the literature on academic practice as creative practice. Given the political imperative for education to cultivate creativity in students, it is worth asking if universities are themselves creative and, if so, in what ways. The distinction between innovation and creativity is blurred here, as described earlier; we see that academic practice tends to be described in terms of innovation, with 'creative' being reserved as a label for student activity. More significantly, we find that the relative absence in the literature of creativity is due to 'little-c' or 'pro-c' creativity not being viewed as creative at all, and a surprising lack of dissemination of everyday creative and innovative practice.

Picking up the themes from earlier, the review examines the motivation for creativity, and its constraints and supports; the role of personal values; the 'press' (resources, support, and the existence of multiple quality processes); and leadership. As well as carrying these ideas forwards, another aspect emerges: the positive impact of creativity on staff wellbeing and the student experience. Meanwhile, the question of whether creative practice in HE is domain-specific is discussed in terms of the sharing (or imposition) of 'best practice', and the relationship between academics and the competing domains/fields of discipline, HE and practice emerge as less 'tidy' than suggested by Csikszentmihalyi.

Part Two concludes with an overview of the module/programme design process as described in several texts, contrasting algorithmic and formulaic approaches with the observed 'messiness' of actual academic practice.

2.2.2 Academic creativity in HE

We have seen above how creativity has been identified by government and industry as an essential attribute of a modern workforce and organisations, with the role of education simply the production of that workforce (Hitz 2020) and the need for creativity for many of those roles highly doubtful (Graeber 2019). Yet somehow, HE is not considered an autonomous sector in its own right which might also require creativity, but a service to the rest of the economy, driven by the needs of industry. Recognising that the same social and economic forces that act on 'industry' also act on universities, which are 'workplaces, and organisations with an interest in innovation in a more instrumental, economic sense' (Whitworth & Benson 2007: p. 2) it stands to reason that universities should not just produce creativity in the form of graduate attributes, but be creative in the way they operate as economic actors themselves.

This section of the literature review looks at whether universities are operating creatively and what might be preventing them from doing so.

What do we mean by creativity and innovation in HE?

Creativity begins with a problem, but the drive in HE towards innovation as a metric means it often takes place without an agreed purpose other than to be seen to innovate.

Although there is little evidence of literature on creativity in HE, there is a great deal on innovation, though this is often theoretically weak (Walder 2014) and, based on a number of infrequent reviews over the past twenty years, tends to occupy the 'little-c' end of the creativity spectrum. Hannan and Silver's product-focused taxonomy of innovation (2000) reflects contemporary reactions to a rapidly changing HE landscape with a focus on potential uses of computers, and methods for assessing growing student numbers and dealing with a perceived skills-deficit among non-traditional students (Figure 2-7).

- Making use of computers
- Skills
- Team projects
- Student presentations
- Interactive seminars/lectures
- Work-based learning
- Problem-based learning
- Resource-based learning
- Distance Learning/Open learning
- Peer tutoring/mentoring/assessment

- 'Others'

Figure 2-7: Hannan and Silver's taxonomy of innovation in HE

Fifteen years later, in a more critical approach to innovation, Walder finds her Canadian colleagues listing computer-based innovations less prominently and observes that something should only be considered an innovation if it relates to pedagogy rather than the tool: 'making a PowerPoint presentation from a lesson available online is not pedagogical innovation' (2014: p. 199). Although Kleiman (2007b) finds that academics are often reluctant to claim anything as creative that is not 'earth shattering', innovation and creativity in HE often result in evolutionary rather than revolutionary outcomes (Smith-Bingham 2006), something that is reflected in the activities of early recipients of the National Teaching Fellowship (discussed further below), who tended to work on local-interest projects such as the development of teaching materials (Skelton & Higgins 2002).

While the 'product' still dominates the literature, interest in the experience of creative academics and their motivations has increased. Walder describes activities rather than outcomes, noting a desire for novelty, reflection, improvement and an interest in human relations. The concepts of 'novelty' and 'change' are particularly interesting; here, novelty means 'surprising' rather than simply 'new'—there is an element of delight and playfulness in the examples cited which, along with reflection and improvement, contrast with Hannan and Silver's commentary. Meanwhile 'change' is a much more positive concept, and there is a strong notion that

adaptation and temporary change are more strongly embraced, with creativity a continual rather than a one-off process.

Another attempt at classification (Bramwell *et al* 2011), this time focused on creativity rather than innovation, produces four categories of outcome that offer an even less product-focused approach to understanding the results of creativity in HE: *Observable products* include comparable items to Hannan and Silver's taxonomy, but recognises that the production of, for example, websites points to a creative engagement beyond the purely pedagogic. They also note other outcomes such as the quality of student work and higher grades – in other words, the end result of the creative product rather than the product itself. The category of *learning and personal development* extends beyond students' learning to consider the positive effect on academics as they develop new skills (e.g. videoconferencing), practice existing skills (writing) or interrogating their subject and their practice (scholarship). Meanwhile, categorised as *connection* creativity is found to lead to better relationships with students and colleagues, and improved motivation in both students and staff.

Thus, we can see that when we talk about creativity/innovation in HE the literature suggests interest has shifted from a purely product focus to one of process, motivation (or driver), as well as broader impact on people (organisations, staff and students), showing that creativity produce benefits that might not be captured or rewarded through current systems of product-focused evaluation.

While the theoretical literature suggests creativity is a response to, or identification of, a problem, a notable feature of HE is that the need to be innovative often precedes the problem. Because creativity is poorly represented in the literature (Bluteau and Krumins (2008) and Deverell and Moore (2013) being rare examples of papers making a clear link between creativity and innovation) it is necessary to include discussions of innovation and attempt, where possible, to infer aspects of the creative process from them, a point I refer to later and in the final chapter.

The literature on educational innovation (Walder 2014) includes sub-categories, some of which are suggestive of a creative approach: 'adjustment, improvement, development, study/pilot project. Experiment, or even modernisation, reform or renewal' (Walder 2014: p. 196). Hannan and Silver's taxonomy of innovation is of its time, and product-focused, with 'making use of computers' the most frequently occurring example (2000: p. 151). This is followed by a concern with student skills, then specific approaches to assessment such as student presentations and group work. Notably, there is no explicit mention of innovation in curriculum, assessment (other than peer/self-assessment) or student support. Later, Walder (2014) finds her Canadian colleagues listing computer-based innovations less prominently and with some cynicism, as well as offering a useful criterion for evaluation: 'an innovation is only pedagogical if the thinking that created it is pedagogical. A technological innovation is not necessarily a pedagogical one' (p. 198). Walder suggests that this distinction is the result of early over-promise, and perceived threats to the status of academics being usurped by technology: 'making a

PowerPoint presentation from a lesson available online is not pedagogical innovation' (p. 199). This does not stop one submission to TEF2 listing 'innovative use of PowerPoint' (Hartpury College 2017a: p. 4) in its successful bid for gold status (Hartpury College 2017b). Walder also points to an issue with the pedagogical innovation literature: it is often theoretically weak. Innovation in HE is often a response to local concerns. In the early days of the National Teaching Fellowship (discussed further below), fellows tended to work on: 'solutions to specified teaching/learning problems, the development of teaching materials, textbooks and computer applications, and improvements in delivery methods' (Skelton & Higgins 2002: p. 11). Again, technology-related activities dominate, reflecting emerging media and tools.

Between 2005-10, 73 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) engaged in diverse activities that appear to range from local issues to more general interest, including:

> *the development of new curriculum content; diagnostic and evaluative tools and toolkits; support materials for staff; new e-Learning and communication systems designed to exploit the potential of Web 2.0; piloting of new approaches to teaching and learning (e.g. use of peer tutoring, active and inter-active learning approaches)*
> *(HEFCE 2011: p. 4)*

Walder's study of Canadian academics results in seven distinctive descriptors of innovation *activity* rather than *outcomes* (Walder 2014):

1. Novelty
2. Change
3. Techno-pedagogy
4. Reflection
5. Improvement
6. Application
7. Human relations

The notions of 'novelty' and 'change' are particularly interesting; here, novelty means 'surprising' rather than simply 'new' - there is an element of delight and playfulness in the examples cited, which along with reflection and improvement position innovation more towards the definitions of creativity discussed above. Meanwhile 'change' is a much more positive concept than in Hannan and Silver's work, and while it might be radical there is a strong notion that adaptation and temporary change are more strongly embraced than in Kleiman's observations, discussed below.

Not all pedagogical innovation is proactive or positive, for example the availability of, or mandated shift towards the use of technology, and the desire for easily reportable metrics, has driven an increase in the use of multiple choice questionnaires (MCQs) in assessment 'consistent with a superficial treatment of subject matter' (Falchikov & Thompson 2008). This is offset, however, by a student-experience-led approach to innovation that has seen work on assessment via, for example, presentations and peer-based evaluation, and 'an aspiration to encourage students to see the

learning environment as a collaborative one rather than a competitive one'
(p. 8)

Another attempt at taxonomy (Bramwell *et al* 2011: p. 233), this time focused on creativity rather than innovation, produces four categories of outcome that usefully advance product-focused taxonomies:

Observable products

These include comparable items to Hannan and Silver's taxonomy, but also the production of websites and plays which point to a creative engagement beyond the purely pedagogic. They also note other outcomes such as the quality of student work and higher grades - something not included in other product-focused descriptions.

Learning and personal development

As well as students' learning, creativity has a positive effect on academics' personal learning as they develop new skills (e.g. producing websites), practice existing skills (writing plays) or interrogating their subject and their practice.

Connection

Creativity leads to better relationships with students and colleagues

Motivation

Improved motivation is identified in both students and staff.

Thus, we can see that the literature suggests interest in innovation in HE has shifted from a purely product focus to one of process, motivation (or driver), as well as impact, even if this is not evident in TEF etc.

Drivers of innovation and creativity in HE

Universities are professional organisations which, according to Mintzberg (1989) are like an ocean liner: 'extremely stable at the broadest level and in a state of perpetual change at the narrowest' (and difficult to turn quickly (Gooley & Towers 1996)). However, from the 1980s onward a shift took place in HE from evolutionary development of teaching by individual academics toward change guided or directed by institutional or government policies and strategies with the pendulum swinging almost entirely towards external drivers (Hannan & Silver 2000, 2002; Smith 2011) and policy-driven programmes including Enterprise in Higher Education, the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme and the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (Skelton & Higgins 2002). In the thirty years since 1988 £1 billion has been invested in such large-scale teaching enhancement schemes, although that funding has now largely dried up (Kernohan 2018).

Programmes such as the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS), the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the network of Centres for

Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) were a continuation of this, albeit less thematically directed. NTFS, which continues today, 'recognises, rewards and celebrates individuals who have made an outstanding impact on student learning and the teaching profession' (Higher Education Academy 2017). NTF status brings with it funds to support development projects yet while these initially were determined by the fellows themselves, they have since become more closely aligned to institutional aims (Clouder *et al* 2008).

The HEA is descended from the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) and the LTSN[5], both established in response to the Dearing Report which recommended:

> *a professional Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education […] to accredit programmes of training for higher education teachers; to commission research and development in learning and teaching practices; and* to stimulate innovation. *(Dearing 1997: p. 371 Emphasis added)*
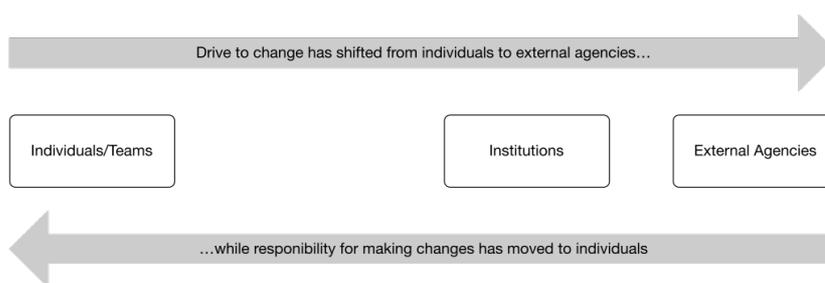
Figure 2-8 The shift in drivers and responsibilities for change

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[5] The HEA also subsumed the National Coordination Team for the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF)

The long-term impact of NTFS, HEA and CETLs is discussed further below. While it is possible to see programmes such as NTFS as enabling innovation, it has been argued that although the drive has moved from the individual to institutional/external sources, responsibility for carrying it out has conversely shifted from government and institutions to individual academics (Clouder *et al* 2008). This is potentially counterproductive: innovation in HE is best achieved when the need for change is intrinsic, not extrinsic (Eraut 1975; Hannan & Silver 2002), an observation supported by the creativity literature. Furthermore, there is a sense of 'initiative-itis', a seemingly endless array of projects related to topics of the day. Gosling and Hannan (2007) found that academics involved in initial bids for CETL funds saw little connection between the process and institutional T&L strategy, suggesting the key motivation was institutional status and income. For others the issue has personal consequences for those academics who find themselves disagreeing with approaches for which compliance is non-optional (Skelton 2005: p. 12):

> *Although temporary comfort can be found in living according to the expectation of others, following such a path is ultimately alienating, since in doing so one becomes dislocated from one's self.*

Academics' attitudes to creativity

Regardless of the origin of *innovation* in HE, there is a general consensus that *creativity* is 'a powerful engine for creative teaching across all disciplines' (Craft *et al* 2014: p. 91), and academics generally agree that creativity is positive for individuals, society and education (Edwards *et al*

2006; Jeffrey & Craft 2001; Oliver 2002) bringing self-fulfilment and self-appreciation (Bluteau & Krumins 2008) as well as increasing self-confidence in areas where skill levels were low, creating excitement and energy. But otherwise creativity is largely seen by academics in the literature as a student output, reflecting the policy concerns, TEF submissions, and directives discussed above, rather than an aspect of their own work where it is seen as ubiquitous and taken for granted rather than a quality or culture to be nurtured or highlighted (Craft *et al* 2014), something implicit and unrewarded (Jackson 2006) and not worth talking about.

Studies of academics' conceptions of creativity result in a range of definitions that echo those found in the creativity literature. It is 'newness' (Edwards *et al* 2006), or breaking with tradition (Oliver 2002), making new connections or reformulating old ideas. It is felt to be discipline-specific with little transfer of creativity from one area to another (Oliver 2002).

Importantly, creativity is bound up with feelings as well as behaviours. Edwards *et al* describe the excitement of creativity and the aesthetic satisfaction in useful results while the hard work demanded by creative approaches sounds similar to Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'Flow' in which individuals become 'lost' in the moment, unaware of the passage of time as the challenge of the task is balanced with their abilities in a way that stretches but neither bores, nor frustrates them (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, 1997; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre 1989).

Yet all is not as positive: many academics have expressed or reported negative attitudes to creativity (Clouder *et al* 2008; Dawson *et al* 2011; Gibson 2010), with it being associated with 'unnecessary work' (Craft *et al* 2014: p. 93), being taken out of comfort zones, lacking the time and space to be creative, or predicting resistance from students to new ideas (Edwards *et al* 2006). Perhaps most worryingly, creativity has been described by academics as a threat to 'established systems and norms' (Kleiman 2007b: p. 105) - it seems that every aspect that is described as a positive can also land in the negative column.

Consequently, creative teaching is often not valued (Clouder *et al* 2008; Dawson *et al* 2011; Gibson 2010; Hannan 2001; Hannan & Silver 2000). According to some analyses, this reflects 'academic cultures that place higher value on critical analytical thinking' and where creativity is perceived as an artistic endeavour (Jackson 2006: p. 2). Many younger academics see research, not teaching, as the key to career success, with innovators saying colleagues considered innovation to be 'unnecessary, too time-consuming or threatening' (Hannan & Silver 2002: p. 8), a situation that can lead to the hindering of new approaches (Bramwell *et al* 2011). Winning over critical colleagues is important but potentially a diversion or disincentive, and creativity is 'difficult and risky' without support from others; innovators need to feel security within their community/culture (Hannan & Silver 2002), yet early career academics who are interested in teaching 'feared negative evaluations if they did things differently. "When I am secure I am willing to be as crazy, as creative … as I can be"' (Bramwell *et al* 2011: p. 233).

Conceptions of creativity

Kleiman (2007a) conducted a phenomenographic investigation into academics' conceptions of creativity, developing three categories, later expanded to five (Kleiman 2008).

1. Constraint-focused
2. Process-focused
3. Product-focused
4. Transformation-focused
5. Fulfilment-focused

Constraints come from two directions: 'the system' and student expectations. Resources essential for creativity, including time, are widely perceived to be insufficient (Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Clouder *et al* 2008; Gibson 2010; McWilliam & Dawson 2008). However, while 'the system' (management, unsupportive colleagues and administrators, processes) is portrayed as being anti-creativity, responses to this in the shape of 'resistance to compliance and orthodoxy' (Kleiman 2008: p. 212) are in themselves a form of creative expression (Edwards *et al* 2006; Oliver 2002). These positive aspects of constraints are discussed further below, but Bramwell *et al* (2011: p. 235) describe the effect in somewhat poetic terms: 'the heart of (academics') creativity lay in their ability to combine their personal characteristics, particularly intrinsic motivation and values, with the demands placed on them by the communities in which they lived and worked'.

Constraining creativity

Kleiman identifies 'Systems and processes … designed specifically to exclude or oppose' characteristics of creativity. Creativity exists 'despite rather than because of the surrounding environment' (2007b: pp 41-42). Hannan and Silver (2000) earlier depict a scenario that appears by accident or design to claim to value innovation but that removes the opportunity for creativity, while Deverell and Moore (2013) suggest that 'creative practice is alive and well amongst teachers in higher education but … it is greatly restricted by a perceived lack of organisational legitimacy' (p. 164)

Investigations in to the factors that constrain academics in areas such as curriculum design and module/unit development (Anderson & Rogan 2011; Binns 2016; Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Goos & Hughes 2010; Kinman 2001; Norton *et al* 2010) identify a number of themes. Binns's recent research into module design identifies eight key constraints:

1. Workloads and time
2. Resources
3. Class size
4. Institutional validation processes
5. Marketing
6. Institutional time-scales and cultures
7. Subject expertise
8. Student needs

The principal constraint cited by academics is 'workloads' (Binns 2016; Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Jessop *et al* 2012; Kinman 2001; Laurillard *et al*

2013). Despite the demand to be innovative in order to make courses more relevant or distinctive (Anderson & Rogan 2011), Binns found that academics were prevented from being able to do what they would like, not because someone was stopping them (though this issue comes up later) but because there was no time to invest in developing ideas. This was even observed of academics supposedly seconded from other roles to allow them to work on CETL funded projects and who instead had to attend meetings, cover for colleagues, or mark work (Bluteau & Krumins 2008). Most 'innovation' is negative in origin, focused on developing coping strategies, e.g. assessment practices responding not to the needs of students but to the need to assess increasing numbers and to provide feedback within institutionally mandated limits (Jessop 2015). Attempts to develop curricula collaboratively are also compromised as timetables and other commitments prevent teams meeting for the amount of time required (Bartholomew & Jenkins 2009).

Time is just one resource, but others that affect the work of academics include 'financial, material and human resources' (Anderson & Rogan 2011: p. 72), their lack being cited by nearly 60% of respondents to Kinman (2001). Even staff who are fully resourced might find their efforts frustrated as money to facilitate secondment to a project might not be used to replace staff, who subsequently continue in their old role or pass the burden of their creativity on to colleagues (Bluteau & Krumins 2008). Binns identifies the (non)-availability of resources as a major factor in the design of modules. One area of significance is the frequency with which modules are written or delivered by academics who are not specialists in

an area. The desire for 'research-informed teaching' is thwarted as early career staff are drafted to deliver introductory content or to replace staff on modules that reflect research interests no longer present in the department. The need to market courses to students who have an undeveloped sense of the discipline also bears heavily on academics' ability to be 'brave and bold' (Binns 2016: p. 825), particularly when there is pressure to recruit – this issue also comes in to play when considering what might get past validation committees (Bartholomew & Jenkins 2009; Binns 2016).

Student responses to creativity

Students' attitudes towards creativity are notable, particularly given current debates on 'value for money'. Although there is evidence of improved relationships between creative academics and their students (Bramwell *et al* 2011), Kleiman's subjects reported a clash between academics' personal desire to do something different (e.g. move away from lectures, or increase independent approaches to learning) and students' expectations of how the subject is taught. Students often express a desire for predictability, and an inability to cope with novel approaches (Oliver 2002) and even though students are regularly asked for feedback, they are felt by some to engage in the process in a 'superficial way' (p. 12), and focus on immediate issues rather than the 'big picture'. Actual or anticipated negative student comments may prevent creative approaches (Herckis *et al* 2017) but this potentially limits the student experience with evidence that creative teachers experience strengthened connections with their students, and improved student motivation (Bramwell *et al* 2011).

Creative academics were observed 'using sensitised pedagogical strategies, driven by an awareness of student perspective and relationship' (Craft *et al* 2014: p. 91) while 'Creativity emerges spontaneously through the relationships and interactions of teachers with their students in highly specific and challenging situations' (Jackson 2006: p. 1). It may be difficult convincing students that a non-standard approach is beneficial, but it appears to be worth pursuing despite concerns. Herckis *et al* (2017), researching academics in the USA, observed that while some avoided being innovative for fear of 'looking stupid' in front of students (Matthews 2017), more generally reluctance is due to a desire not to waste students' time experimenting if existing approaches are known to work, and that positive student feedback is important because it suggests approaches are working, rather than because their performance evaluations are based on it.

The creative product and process

Kleiman's second and third conceptions align with the process and product focus in the 'four Ps' model of creativity. Kleiman found that while the creative process was largely seen as being purposeful, i.e. leading to a product, there was a description by some of a process being engaged in for its own sake. Academics with a product focus are reluctant to describe anything not 'earth shattering' as creative (Kleiman 2008: p. 214) with several respondents relating creativity to significance. Here, although usefulness is seen as important, it is outweighed in evaluations by novelty, or 'good creativity' (Oliver 2002: p. 4), and in contrast to standard definitions of creativity where usefulness is essential.

In the fourth conception 'learning and teaching is experienced as an engagement in a process that is transformative either in itself, or is being undertaken with the intention (implicit or explicit) of being transformative' (Kleiman 2008: p. 214). In other words, creativity does not just effect change in things or others, but in the people being creative. It is at this level that Kleiman observes an acceptance of both chance and risk; serendipitous creativity seems more important, more valued, than planned creativity (but may be prevented by constraints). In the work of Bluteau and Krumins (2008) there is a sense that academics approach the creative process with a belief that success is required to justify the investment, but that over time engagement in an iterative and revealing process becomes more fruitful than the end product.

At the final and highest conception, academics describe creativity as personally fulfilling, that there is a '"buzz", something powerful and important' being experienced (Kleiman 2008: p. 216). This idea that creativity is a means of personal fulfilment deserves further consideration. Is being creative fulfilling in itself, or is it the means to achieve another objective (e.g. challenging orthodoxy) that is fulfilling? Or more simply, is it the process or the product (or both?) that fulfil?

Oliver's suggestion that creativity is value-driven underlines this point: creativity for its own sake is questionable if it does not connect to a separate achievement. The pursuit of, say, confident students or employability, may be what drives creativity rather than the pursuit of creativity itself, something supported by the observations of Bluteau and Krumins.

Positive constraints

Creativity depends in part on the ability to reframe situations so that 'problems' become 'opportunities'. What some see as cages within which they are trapped (e.g. learning outcomes, modularity), others might see as scaffolding around which we can build (Baldwin 2003). This theme of positive constraints is reflected in the literature and challenges 'a romantic fallacy that polarises … creativity and bureaucracy' (Tosey 2006: p. 36); it is the perception of constraints that results in 'taking away the unknown, the adventure, the discovery, the risk'. Once this happens, 'education becomes a routine and programmed affair'.

Creativity requires a deadline, condition, focus or purpose (Smith-Bingham 2006) or something to act against, as is evident in the first of Kleiman's five conceptions of creativity. But the sense here is one of conflict and resistance. Indeed, being creative can be described as the need to 'resist' constraints and 'survive' (Craft 2001). Creativity oscillates 'between empowerment and critique, abstraction and practical realisation, time for reflection and pressure for delivery' (Smith-Bingham 2006: p. 14).

Rather than bureaucracy being the death of creativity, 'it remains possible to pursue a creative agenda for change within a performative network - even if doing so requires one to become a skilled juggler' (Clouder *et al* 2008: p. 648) along with 'support from administrators in overcoming or redesigning rules and processes' (Bramwell *et al* 2011). Or as Amabile would put it, creativity requires a problem to solve, constraints to work within, the creative skills and subject knowledge to use to good effect, and the supportive culture within which to be creative.

What is important is how the 'problem' aligns with academics' personal values which, in turn, determine whether they are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.

Intrinsic motivation: personal values

In discussing motivation in Part 1, I emphasised the connection between intrinsic motivation and personal values, a catch-all term that, like innovation, is applied quite liberally and imprecisely. Trowler (2008) notes that lists of 'values' used to describe a culture are likely to be limited.

As noted of the general population in creativity research, creative teachers are open to ideas, and willing to take risks when intrinsically motivated by working in areas that connect with personal values (Bramwell *et al* 2011) - it is these that motivate creativity rather than the urge to be innovative. Value-driven creativity is at its best when 'goal-directed', for example in driving particular types of learning (Oliver 2002) but often the focus is on making best use of a given or imposed resource, e.g. a VLE (Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Fill & Ottewill 2006; Russell 2008; Upton & Cooper 2006). This might then be classed as externally-driven and value-free, but may also be exploratory, an opportunity to break out of traditional constraints (Edwards *et al* 2006) and do things differently.

Values are often shared, and shaped collectively, an example of social practice (Trowler 2008) but individually may conflict with those of colleagues (the field, in Csikszentmihalyi's model). Although Hannan and Silver (2002) compare 'internal' innovation positively with institutional and national initiatives, they found that academic peers do not always

welcome such innovation. So while our developing understanding of pedagogy has contributed to a challenge to 'orthodox teaching and learning' that is difficult for educators to ignore (McWilliam & Haukka 2008: p. 654), when colleagues are the source of the orthodoxy, then regardless of the empirical evidence supporting an action, values, particularly if allied to a sense of moral purpose (Edwards *et al* 2006) can become a block as much as a driver of creativity. Personal values, such as high worth of direct contact with students, may also lead to conflict with institutional or external demands, such as timetabling, performance indicators, or workload modelling, something Ball (2003) defines as 'values schizophrenia'. The response to this may be creativity (i.e. given a situation, how do we make the best of it?) or resistance (how do we oppose it?), and while the many forms this takes may themselves be classed as 'creative', may not be valued as such by management.

Extrinsic motivation: rewards and recognition

While we saw above that extrinsic motivation such as financial rewards can impede creativity (Amabile 1997, 1998), for academics recognition appears to be an important motivator, with a preference for promotion (i.e. status) rather than certificates and trophies which could, in some cases, be alienating from peers (Ramsden & Martin 1996). Hannan and Silver reported (2000) that institutional promotion processes at the time acted against, and therefore discouraged, anyone who focused on teaching and learning. However, awards linked to funding can lend an air of legitimacy to pedagogic innovation, particularly in research-oriented institutions (Smith 2011, 2012; Walder 2014). Bluteau and Krumins (2008)

found that CETL participants were least motivated by financial rewards, even though their managers saw it as a priority. Despite the preference for recognition through promotion, institutional and national awards have flourished and in TEF2 submissions were a common form of evidence for teaching excellence with all institutions in one sample having established award schemes (Beech 2017).

The effect of creativity on academics

For academics, creativity is a transformative phenomenon (Kleiman 2008), 'a very personal act (that) gives you a sense of satisfaction and achievement when you've done it' (Jackson 2002: p. 1). This effect is not limited to individuals but observed at the institutional level (Jeffrey & Craft 2001).

Much of the focus of research has been on 'teaching creatively' but creativity helps individuals cope with the everyday demands of the job (Jeffrey & Craft 2001; Kleiman 2008), which are not limited to teaching. Creativity contributes to academics' personal and professional development as they learn new skills (e.g. with web-based technology), engage in existing skills (writing, performing), or through interrogating their practice and their subject (Bramwell *et al* 2011).

Creativity is not always positive: it may be 'a difficult but rewarding process, which can prevent stagnation and mental starvation' but it requires a 'firm core identity' otherwise it can be 'deeply risky' (Joubert 2001: p. 22), especially as creative academics are likely to encounter frustration in dealing with processes, finding resources, and gaining

support, not just from colleagues, students, and managers, but from administrators and other support staff. Personal values are an important factor in the formation and expression of that core identity (Bramwell *et al* 2011). Countering the idea above that non-promotion rewards lacked personal value, National Teaching Fellows reported a validation of 'teaching identities' (Skelton & Higgins 2002: p. 15) while CETLs similarly enabled some academics to 'validate' their interests and ideas (Clouder *et al* 2008).

However, in a study of the literature on academic burnout, Sabagh *et al* (2018) found values conflicts were major contributors to illness and staff turnover.

The challenge then is how to ensure that these validating effects are made available to all, while avoiding the negative effects of thwarted ambition and ideas.

2.2.3 Evaluating creativity and innovation in HE

The creative process normally involves one or more periods of evaluation by the individual(s) concerned, while the finished product must also be evaluated to determine its novelty, usefulness, and domain-changing potential, usually by external evaluators (the domain and field in Csikszentmihalyi's system model). However, the literature on academic creativity reveals a range of extremes of evaluation. The importance of evaluation and, in particular, its timing and purpose, is recognised when it comes to student creativity: evaluation is important, so outcomes can be judged against the original intent. But suspension of criticism is an

important aspect of the creative process - it is important to suspend judgement so promising ideas are not discarded too early. The discussion above reveals a sense that academics are nervous of showing their ideas too early in case of being shut down by colleagues, teaching committees, and even external examiners (or the 'fear of looking stupid' (Herckis *et al* 2017)). The choice of what is evaluated is revealing: Binns's taxonomy of constraints shows academics are regularly evaluated through workload models, utilisation of resources, and validation processes, not to mention NSS, TEF and module evaluations, but these are elements of audit cultures which 'do not accommodate creativity … or long-term impact' (Smith-Bingham 2006: p. 14), aspects which do not appear to be evaluated much, if at all.

At a national level evaluation is often absent altogether. Early NTF projects escaped any real evaluation of their effectiveness (Skelton & Higgins 2002). CETLs were only evaluated formally at the end of the scheme (Clouder *et al* 2008; HEFCE 2011) and while the HEFCE report puts a positive spin on things, it is clear they did not have quite the hoped-for impact.

Reviews of schemes such as NTFS and CETLs are characteristic of an approach that prefers to launch initiatives and then review them at the end (if at all), meaning it is too late to fix things; meanwhile institutional approaches favour too cautious an approach which stops things happening, or limits their potential. Both approaches work against iteration and require quick results.

Of note is a lack of interest in the long-term impact of innovation, or of dissemination.[6] Creativity is supported if there is interest in disseminating the innovation that results from it (Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Hannan & Silver 2002). Yet early NTFs were hampered by a lack of networking, with a predominance of low-level action research which was 'under-theorised and insufficiently related to previous work in the same field, leading to problems of "reinventing the wheel"' (Skelton & Higgins 2002: p. 11) and concerned only with immediate local concerns rather than wider issues, meaning that the projects could not be generalised to other contexts. CETLs, on the other hand, had a greater emphasis on dissemination and networking both within and beyond the host institutions, and consequently enhanced collegiality (Clouder *et al* 2008), suggesting their approach is more effective than investing resources in one individual. This networking led to support for projects that would not otherwise have been pursued due to 'conservatism within the department' (p. 643).

This failure to connect is explained not by academics' unwillingness to do so but by the temporary nature of the challenges they face. Recalling that institutions and external agencies now largely drive the innovation agenda (Clouder *et al* 2008), it is understandable why Hannan and Silver identify a problem with the sustainability of innovation, as priorities shift, leading to projects being shelved. The push is for quick, high impact changes rather than slow and deliberate enhancement. But innovators in

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[6] Related to this is the issue of preservation of project outcomes: the archive of HEA subject centre work seems to have largely disappeared and in working on this literature review many potentially useful leads to HEA, Jisc and institutional projects resulted in a '404 Not Found' error. Later, during revision of this literature review, several HEFCE resources disappeared as its role was transferred to the Office for Students.

HE 'create, adopt, adapt'; 'The sort of changes that teachers in HE make on a daily basis… are not usually innovative, but may become so if they amount to a significant shift in focus, direction or method' (2002: p. 5). These shifts often happen unnoticed over time, but an institution that decides, say, 'this year is going to have a feedback focus' which is then replaced by a 'VLE focus' is less likely to enhance provision than one which simply creates an atmosphere conducive to everyday creativity.

Generic approaches to innovation: the problem of 'best practice'

Within several fields, notably business, medicine, and law, the concept of 'best practice' has gained popularity as 'a superior technique, methodology or tool that has proven to lead reliably to a desired result in a specific situation or context' (Thota & Munir 2011).

However, taking a practice developed in a specific situation or context and applying it to a different context is problematic. Kaner *et al* (2002), writing from the perspective of software testing, propose several principles for context-driven approaches.

1. The value of any practice depends on its context.
2. There are good practices in context, but there are no best practices.
3. People, working together, are the most important part of any project's context.
4. Projects unfold over time in ways that are often not predictable.
5. The product is a solution. If the problem isn't solved, the product doesn't work.

Differentiating between 'context-aware' and 'context-driven' approaches, the former sets metrics and KPIs as measures of success, while the latter might use them as points of reference or comparison. Kaner and Bach later expanded on their principles with the statement that:

> *Ultimately, context-driven testing is about doing the best we can with what we get. Rather than trying to apply "best practices," we accept that very different practices … will work best under different circumstances. (Kaner & Bach 2012)*

Within education the failure to evaluate innovation is evident in a tendency toward adopting generic approaches or 'best practice' measured via (for example) NSS results or resulting from projects such as those described in TEF submissions, regardless of local or disciplinary context. Yet 'No one size fits all – learners and tutors have different needs and disciplines have different traditions and concepts of knowledge and creativity' (Martin *et al* 2009: p. 6). This is as true within departments or institutions as it is between disciplines as a single department may harbour multiple cultures, even between similar courses and within them (Trowler 2008). Ashwin (2008) observes that discussion of teaching, learning, and assessment tends to view them as self-contained processes, but this disregards issues of structure and agency. For example, earlier research I participated in identified student conceptions of outcomes-based assessment (Shreeve *et al* 2003, 2004), but only among students on a particular course at a single institution, and while later experience suggested the findings had some validity in other institutions, there were elements that were specific to that context. Our findings were useful for

understanding other situations, or building awareness of the range of student conceptions, but if they had formed the basis of an institutional policy, the consequences could be negative. Haggis (2003) observes the dominance of concepts such as 'deep' and 'surface' learning and suggests that 'current policy and funding imperatives seem to be encouraging the development of a strand of theorising … that is arguably very narrow' (p. 89). This theory is often applied institutionally through generic teaching and learning strategies and policies (Mathieson 2011), when it is best utilised via a context-driven approach.

Aside from issues of T&L, the concepts of equity, transparency and student experience are sometimes used to enforce conformity between courses, with the worry of complaints from students and the role of the Competition and Mergers Authority potentially overriding the requirements of the subject (Grove 2016; Which? 2014). Universities have in some cases adopted 'blueprints' (e.g. University of South Wales (2014)) that dictate everything from the number of learning outcomes in a module to the number of assessment points, hours and types of contact, and the weighting of assignments, regardless of the discipline or the expertise of staff. Nicoll and Oreck (2013) point out the irony of attempting to encourage autonomy in learners by removing it from teachers by enforcing conformity and calling it 'best practice'.

This is not to say that there is no room for approaches that cross disciplines, or to adopt initiatives from elsewhere, and there is evidence that, for example, abstract approaches to module development are the same regardless of the discipline (Bennett *et al* 2016). But the development

of teaching, learning and assessment is a socially mediated process heavily influenced by disciplinary and departmental traditions and expectations (Hannan & Silver 2000; Oliver 2002; Trowler 2008) which suggests it fits with Csikszentmihalyi's system model of creativity and with which generic models and 'best practice' would arguably interfere.

Organisational culture

The application of generic approaches, or the conflation of 'standards' with 'standardisation', is an aspect of organisational culture, itself a core component of the 'press' in the four Ps model of creativity. Trowler (2008) notes that organisational culture is often described through singular, overly generalised descriptions of universities as 'managerial' or 'collegial', with everything consequently being understood by reference to that. Instead, it is 'slippery', with distinct cultures coexisting, and the balance altering over time. Culture does not just operate at an organisational level but at local, even individual levels.

Trowler prefers the term 'regime' when discussing T&L approaches at the workgroup level as a deliberate attempt to subvert the consensual overtones of 'community of practice'. A regime, in the French sense of the word, refers to the rules and technical limits, as well as hinting at conflict and resistance which, to borrow a term from computing, are 'features' of the system, not 'bugs' to be ironed out. 'Focussing at more macro levels tends to emphasise structure, determination, and regularities' (p. 54) while in fact individuals are more powerful than this suggests.

Within the literature discussed so far, descriptions of organisational cultures emerge, or can be inferred, with the most common being 'managerial' which sits in opposition to an almost utopian desire for a more collegiate approach (another term which is often used but rarely defined).

However, perceptions are important and while studies of organisational culture may identify many in play at any one time, academics - like most people - are unaware of the nuances and may believe themselves to be operating within a culture defined 'elsewhere'. The key attributes emerging from these discussions are notions of managerialism and performativity, realised through activities such as quality assurance, and generally described as limiting. It is to these aspects we now turn.

Managing creativity in universities

Despite evidence to the contrary from other sectors (Bilton 2012; Davis & Scase 2000) there is a strong sense in discussions from HE that 'creativity cannot be organised … hierarchical organisation, inflexible bureaucratic rules and mountains of paperwork can kill it' (Perutz (2003) cited in Smith-Bingham (2006: p. 14)). Yet even highly creative organisations such as Pixar make use of regular status reports and meetings to ensure projects are progressing, and to contribute to creative work (Catmull 2014). But in Pixar's case there is permission to take what might turn out to be cul-de-sacs, and tolerance - even welcoming - of problems and mistakes. Pixar Shorts are created purely to allow new talent to develop, or to try new techniques and technologies (Pixar n.d.). This approach is not generally

replicated in HE where policy makers like linearity with needs assessment before resource allocations, and continuous evidence of steady progress towards a defined and immovable deadline and/or metric, the predicted value defined in advance. But 'creativity does not operate in this way, and value might only be realised later' (Smith-Bingham 2006).

A perception of a bureaucratic and corporate university culture (McNay 1995) dominates much of the discourse in the literature, as well as in contemporary debates in the media (e.g. Anonymous 2018; Fazackerley 2018). The broad range of specific complaints are commonly wrapped in simple terms, e.g. 'managerialism' (Skelton & Higgins 2002) and a response to the desire for HE to show an economic return for both government and students (Scott 2018; Which? 2014). This limits individual creativity as directives drive actions (Hannan & Silver 2002; Winter *et al* 2010) and 'accountability and performativity are not usually conducive to risk-taking or creative problem solving' but instead encourage a 'blame culture' and 'conservative practices' (Clouder *et al* 2008: p. 637). Performativity leads to individualism rather than collegiality.

Much of the discussion about the impact of organisational culture is based on impressions, perceptions, and anecdotes with incompatible arguments. For example a sense of conflict is apparent, because as the creativity literature points out 'creative ideas often threaten those who have a stake in the existing order' (Lubart & Sternberg 1998: p. 64) or who are focused on, for example, external scrutiny as 'Creative traits can challenge any structured or regulated system where standards are valued over risk-taking' (Kimbell 2000: p. 208). Yet as shown above, the existing order is

desired as much by other academics while management often express frustration at the reluctance to change, which in turn might lead to a directive-led approach. Some external commentators see this as a fault of a *public-sector mind-set* which 'suffers … from an innovation deficit' and where 'entrepreneurship and risk-taking are discouraged' (Leadbeater 1999: p. 51) but contradictorily, 'managerialism' is seen as a result of moves towards a *private-sector mind-set*. And while some feel bureaucracy limits creativity, organisations such as Ideo, Pixar and Apple, arguably among the most 'creative' companies at the time of writing, work within strict regulations, tight specifications and deadlines, and demonstrate that creativity might be facilitated by appropriate bureaucracy. What matters is whether the bureaucracy is geared towards creativity or against it.

Management tends to fare badly in literature in which they or their processes are seen as deliberately obstructive. Hannan and Silver cite multiple examples of resistance - even hostility - towards innovators who are seen as 'dangerous' (2002: p. 1) particularly if they dare to innovate outside official requirements or frameworks, but managers themselves might tell a different story, with some expressing frustration at academics' unwillingness to be creative or seeing everything as a 'managerialist plot' even if all that is asked is to move offices (McWilliam *et al* 2008: p. 252), an issue of translation described too by Trowler: 'the message sent is not always the message received; indeed it is probably rarely so' (2008: p. 48)

Quality assurance

Most of the discussion of organisational culture and the evaluation of creativity has so far focused on internal aspects. Some of these are contextual: what is seen in one university or department may be unique, and abstract terms such as 'managerialism' risk failing to understand the nuances of a situation and overgeneralise. However, as noted above universities are not the autonomous institutions they once were, and aspects of their culture are shaped by external demands and a growing call for 'transparency'. One manifestation of this is 'quality assurance' of which there are several overlapping external processes, each bringing their own burdens including subject-based teaching quality assessment, institutional audit, research assessment, professional, statutory and regulatory body accreditation, and external examiners (Harvey 2005). The state-based statutory evaluation of quality was established in the UK by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (Filippakou & Tapper 2008). The later introduction of NSS, OFFA, TEF, the OIA, OfS, and the expanded role of the CMA has added to this list, as did conclusions of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education which established many administrative requirements such as programme specifications (Dearing 1997).

Despite the high level of opinion on this topic, empirical research on the impact of QA in its various guises 'is sparse and lacks depth' (Greatbatch & Holland 2016) with three broad types: opinionated or theoretical studies that predict the effects of systems; anecdotally-based evaluations of

systems; and evaluations based on systematic data collection, with a need for more of the latter (Harvey & Knight 1996).

A common conclusion of this literature is that QA processes are a resource drain, with Harvey and Knight (1996) noting that:

> *teaching quality audits inhibited innovation in approaches to teaching because they diverted academic staff time towards administrative tasks rather than seeking to bring about a change.*
> *(p. 4)*

While external bodies have acquired responsibility for QA, the task of carrying it out has fallen on institutions and individuals, producing a 'corporatist control model … with academics operating the quality mechanisms on behalf of the quasi-state' (Filippakou & Tapper 2008: p. 92). One vice-chancellor claims 'quality assurance could even damage quality, because it can divert people away from quality enhancement' (*ibid*), a distinction explored further below. Although there is an increased role for external bodies, 'institutions are clearly responsible for their own quality standards, and the purpose of institutional audit is to ensure that they have in place the appropriate procedures to achieve this' (Filippakou & Tapper 2008: p. 90). None of the bodies listed appears to dictate what those procedures are, which leads to the conclusion that much of the burden is self-imposed.

A typical rationale behind QA is accountability, compliance and even control, with encouraging improvement a 'secondary feature' (Harvey & Knight 1996). Kinman (2001) identifies a particularly ironic example,

replicated by Binns (2016), of the impact of QA processes: that while results might 'tick the boxes' it does not meet academics' own criteria for quality, with some even telling Binns that they felt 'regret and shame' at both what they were unable to do, or what they ended up doing (p. 822). In eLearning, an area where one might expect high-concept innovation, in fact we see old models simply replicated online (Laurillard *et al* 2013) as quality assurance limits experimentation with models that lie outside past experience, and creativity limited to 'lone rangers' (Bates 1999) who adopt a range of strategies to survive (Whitworth & Benson 2007).

The development of quality frameworks has had an impact on assessment strategies with a reduction or even elimination of formative assessment (Jessop *et al* 2012; Knight & Yorke 2003; Yorke 1998). Jessop *et al* (2012) found that the influence of QA processes on assessment practices goes even further, with formal documents and processes constraining academics to a narrow range and weighting of methods (e.g. University of South Wales 2017), and resulting in over-assessment. Reported fears over the role of the CMA in ensuring that universities deliver what is promised (Grove 2016; Morgan 2015), and the need to report statistics on contact and assessment for TEF and Unistats seem to have led some institutions to over-specify detail (e.g. assessment methods, type of teaching sessions, number of hours, and session content), 'deplet(ing) the energy and creativity of programme leaders and their teams' (Jessop *et al* 2012: p. 152). This desire to pursue accountability has been linked to an erosion in another key aspect of creative performance, trust in scholarly expertise (All European Academies 2018).

Creativity does not always follow clear timelines, particularly when the problem being tackled is 'wicked', but QA processes follow timetables for activities such as annual review, minor modifications and approval of new programmes or modules. While deadlines are common in creative endeavours and may be a positive constraint, Binns cites these as a restraint on reflection and creativity as the QA calendar does not align with delivery, with one respondent noting that they were expected to review a module and submit proposed changes before it had been taught. The deadline for new course approval results in a diary filled not with reflection and discussion, but 'deadlines, compliance with process and the set piece occasion (of) the Approval panel' (Bartholomew & Jenkins 2009) and the perceived hurdles actively discourage voluntary writing of new modules or enhancement of existing ones. Course documents are written for an internal, but variable, audience, rather than for students or the staff delivering them. One coping strategy, and an example of creativity caused by constraints, is to write module descriptors as broadly as possible (Binns 2016; Coria *et al* 2010) thus 'balancing institutional standardisation with departmental discretion' (Yorke 1998: p. 102) but also to ensure that future resource issues can be accommodated. In this sense, innovation is seen as a 'necessary approach' simply to ensure delivery rather than 'any great educational desire or aim to do the best for us and to do the best for students' (Binns 2016: p. 824).

However, despite the generally negative attitudes towards them, quality systems arguably have less impact on innovation than the established curriculum, teacher attitudes and practices, and institutional policies

(Christie & Jurado 2009; Horsburgh 2010), with QA an easy villain often found in descriptions of HE culture (Trowler 2008), with a significant gap between the intention behind QA and the perception held by many who encounter it (Newton 2010). This suggests that QA processes have a political and social effect as much as a practical one, which may explain the lack of empirical impact research: understanding the true effect quality systems have is difficult 'because it is impossible to … map causal relationships' (Harvey & Newton 2010) but certainly easier to take complaints on face value.

Quality enhancement and quality assurance

This discussion of QA depicts the concept of 'quality' in overly negative terms and while few would suggest HE should not be high quality, the term evokes apathy at best, hostility at worst. Quality should be viewed as a transformative force that cannot be considered in terms of isolated factors such as assessment or teaching (Harvey & Knight 1996), and holistically, focusing on (to borrow from Barnett (1994)) 'the what might be' rather than the 'what is'. This is the distinction between 'quality enhancement' and 'quality assurance'.

Filippakou and Tapper (2008) identify a shift in discussion from quality assurance to quality enhancement (QE), signalled by the creation of the HEA in 2004[7], with QAA establishing the quality framework, and HEA helping academics and departments to enhance the student learning

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[7] The HEA became 'AdvanceHE' on 21 March 2018 following a merger with Equality Challenge Unit and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (Johns 2018).

experience by encouraging freer, more creative approaches than might be considered under a QA-based approach.

Although the distinction between QA and QE is contested, they are generally considered in ways that might be described as at opposite ends of a spectrum (Figure 2-9). A university that focuses too much on QA, that – as one registrar told Filippakou and Tapper – does not 'leave any scope for people to do anything other than follow absolute rules' or uses committees to govern 'with a rod of iron and say you know this is what you are going to do and there's no discussion about it' (p. 92), will not permit creativity, or experience enhancement.

Quality Assurance	Quality Enhancement
Focus on teaching	Focus on learning
Teaching as individual "performance"	Learning as "social practice"
Focus on monitoring/judgement	Focus on professional development
"Top down" implementation by managers not active in teaching	Active engagement of senior staff and teachers during implementation
Inflexible, non-negotiable approach based on "standards"	Flexible context-sensitive approach based on building professional knowledge
Little acknowledgment of the link between teaching and research	Seeks to establish links between teaching and research, through reflection on practice
May undermine professional autonomy through monitoring and surveillance activity	Respects and values professional autonomy
Focuses on the teacher as an individual practitioner	Seeks to increase collaboration between teachers and across disciplines
Emphasis on documentation	Emphasis on discussion

Figure 2-9: Quality Enhancement and Assurance compared (Swinglehurst et al 2008)

Discussion: curriculum development as creative practice

The literature suggests that course development is an area of tension, with abstract models proposed as an algorithmic way of working which contrasts with the complex and iterative social interactions that take place at departmental level. Pressures on academics mean that 'programmes' give way to collections of modules, with academics working solo on developing individual components, often in areas with which they are unfamiliar, and working to an increasingly tightly defined template created to satisfy institutional quality processes. While algorithmic approaches are a threat to creativity (Amabile 1996), individuals are aware that they are not only writing for a bureaucratic audience (validation panels) but potential students who may or may not understand the concepts described, and with an eye on student evaluation and comment, as well as for peers who bring their own values and beliefs to the process of approval. More broadly there are disciplinary concerns to be accommodated or challenged. While some of the models discussed are offered by their authors as a way of helping busy or new academics navigate the course design process ('here's how you *might* do it'), institutional versions are used increasingly as requirements ('here's how you *must* do it'). The discussion above suggests that academics working on new courses or modules they have initiated see the guides as starting points or benchmarks against which to check their work, while academics under pressure might use them as sets of instructions. Increasingly, academics are being expected to use them as rules, with quality assurance focusing on these rather than content or course philosophy. The comments

from academics quoted by Binns and others suggest that decisions about what and how to teach, and when and how to assess learning, are increasingly being driven by non-academics, with staff in QA roles determining whether an assessment method is permissible, and estates, IT, and HR decisions shaping the delivery of the curriculum to ensure maximum use of facilities, regardless of the learning needs of students.

Considering this in the context of the creativity theory discussed in Part 1, it seems to support the claim that universities are not providing support for, or encouragement of creativity, and that this will likely have a negative impact on staff morale and student experience. This position is tested in the rest of the present study.

2.2.4 Discussion of part two

So far, we have seen that HE has primarily been concerned with innovation, originally as a euphemism for 'change' and more recently as a synonym for 'excellence'. It is also touted as a means to 'do more with less', a response to a rapidly shifting funding model. Over the past few decades the drive for innovation has moved from individuals to institutions and government, but responsibility and risk is still at the individual level. This presents an issue of academics' motivation to be creative.

The role of creativity in the innovation process is largely ignored though there is evidence of a growing interest in the topic, particularly in terms of academics' conceptions of the term. This is reflected in a change in typologies of innovation which have moved from a product to a process

focus. But the product – the VLE, the use of PowerPoint, the entrepreneurial curriculum, the peer assessment – is still central. This explains the apparent gap in the literature: creativity is evident in academic practice but is rarely discussed, and so it must be found in writings on the product where the creative process is rarely discussed as papers move from a statement of the problem to a statement of the solution, ignoring the complex process in between, or the knowledge and experience on which the process is based.

Academics value student creativity but appear to consider their own creativity un-noteworthy, a diversion from what matters for progress, externally stimulated, undervalued, unsupported, or not worth the hassle. However, those with positive approaches view it as highly satisfying and stimulating. And while there are a number of conceptions of creativity there is a common frustration with complex constraints including resources, peer attitudes, and student responses. However, constraints are a necessary element of the creative process and can be spurs to creativity if the academic is intrinsically motivated to overcome it (e.g. 'how do I maintain high quality contact with students despite increasing numbers?').

Academic creativity, as in the general population, is the result of aptitude and personal values rather than an urge to innovate. However, these values can conflict with colleagues, the discipline, or the institution and creativity may manifest itself, or be viewed as, resistance. Creativity can be transformative for individuals and institutions but requires resilience in

the face of constraints and suspicion – creative academics may feel exhilarated but face struggles to realise their ideas and adhere to their values. This is because institutions and government subject academics to constant evaluation which leads to a self-imposed conservative approach to enhancement as creative ideas are rejected or not proposed for fear of rejection. Meanwhile, institutional and government initiatives are often poorly evaluated, and have short lifespans through lack of dissemination and a focus on quick results.

The impact of Quality Assurance is much discussed but poorly researched and while there is evidence that QA has a negative impact on creativity, there is support for the idea that the perception is more influential than the intention, with institutions, internal panels and course teams over-interpreting external requirements and creating more arduous processes than necessary. Changing the emphasis from quality *assurance* to quality *enhancement* seems to be one way of encouraging activity that aligns with models of creativity.

2.3 Synthesis

The literature review has taken a semi-structured approach to understanding the landscape of creativity theory generally, and the practice of creativity in HE specifically. Through this it has been possible to establish a number of areas to be explored further where the literature raises interesting questions, or where the findings of others are worth investigating further.

While the creativity literature can be understood as an interplay between four components (product, person, process and press) the emphasis in HE is firmly on the product – the 'innovation'. This is seen as a marker of excellence and quality regardless of its impact, but which is rarely evaluated, and appears to have little impact beyond the immediate site of its creation, if that. Innovation requires an organisational culture of creativity but the way in which HE is regulated both externally and internally is unlikely to encourage it except as a means of coping or rebellion. There is little evidence in the literature of iteration, experimentation, or tolerance for and learning from failure, instead a perception of a blame culture that acts against any urge to do anything differently.

Creativity is a process, not a spark, but in the literature the emphasis is on developing abstract models of the creative process and the list of ingredients that appear to make it work. A side effect of this is that it creates concepts of 'best practice' that might be applied regardless of the often-subtle differences not just between institutions but within departments. In short, the literature paints a gloomy picture: certainly, creativity is happening, but it is unnurtured, unsupported, and potentially damaging to careers or reputations. Is this an accurate picture of what is going on?

The educational literature on creative process is sparse, due to the emphasis on the end product, but by shifting the focus to understanding how those products are created (e.g. curriculum development) and

applying the lens of creativity theory, it should be possible to identify some key factors such as motivation, the role of personal and disciplinary values, the availability of appropriate resources, the role of QA, and the time needed to iterate and improve.

The original research questions are still relevant, but they have expanded to include these specific aspects which offer a framework around which to probe further through the use of case studies. Embarking on research into individual experiences of creativity risks getting lost in the many differences and nuances that are likely to emerge. Consequently, it is useful to establish a few landmarks to direct us (without discouraging the occasional wander to look at something interesting) and the literature review has provided these.

Original questions	Key factors	Expanded questions
What factors enable and disable creativity within organisations, and within universities in particular?	Influence of field and domain especially beyond the institution.	How do factors such as the field, domain and person interact to inform, shape or inspire creativity?
	Too much focus on short term innovation (product) without fostering creativity (process)	Where does the inspiration to be creative come from? Is it intrinsic or extrinsic?
	Extrinsic motivation a 'creativity killer'	
	Organisation culture needs to foster creativity (enable experimentation, provide resources, offer support and feedback) and not limit it through excessive regulation of activities	Is QA and managerialism a dominant factor and does it support or discourage creativity?

In what ways do academics practice creativity when engaged in developing courses/modules and other enhancement activities/processes?	Collegiate environment is essential – trust, respect, support.	What process do academics follow when being creative? (is there 'a process' at all?)
	Ownership of curriculum is important – evidence that individual academics 'conform' to consensus and adhere to tradition.	
		What contributions do skills, attitudes and resources (including colleagues) make, if any?
	Perception of management and procedural control is high – however academics create their own limiting environment.	
	'Best practice' restrains rather than inspires. Often non-transferable.	Is the experience of being creative a positive or a negative one for academics in HE?
	Lack of time to develop ideas – often responding quickly to events rather than planning.	
	Algorithmic approaches stifle creative approaches.	
	Quality assurance approaches are risk averse.	
	Little evidence of evaluation of creativity/innovation – activity valued over impact.	
	Departmental structure does not align to support development of teaching but 'control' of functions (e.g. finance, IT, HR, QA)	

Table 2: Development of original research questions following the literature review (summary)

At this stage, then, my research questions might be expanded thus:

How do factors such as the field, domain and person interact to inform, shape or inspire creativity?

Csikszentmihalyi's system model suggests these are an essential relationship (1988; 2014). Hannan and Silver (2000) note the stronger connection between academics and their discipline than with their department or institution – is the influence from universities affected by that from peers?

Where does the inspiration to be creative come from? Is it intrinsic or extrinsic?

Amabile (1998) claims extrinsic motivation and evaluation 'kill' creativity, while being intrinsically motivated is an important positive factor. Innovation in HE has shifted from being 'bottom up' to 'top down' and increasingly externally driven from government and agencies/validating bodies etc (Hannan and Silver *op cit*). Is there evidence of intrinsically motivated creativity?

Is QA and managerialism a dominant factor and does it support or discourage creativity?

An institutional culture of creativity is essential, with the whole organisation being geared towards supporting efforts through provision of space, time, appropriate resources, and leadership (Amabile 2013; Bharadwaj & Menon 2000; Puccio & Cabra 2010) . The ability to experiment, iterate, test, and improve without judgement is important. But the literature suggests that, at least perceptually, the role of QA and

management is a negative one, and academics are heavily constrained (see, for example, Binns 2016).

What process do academics follow when being creative? (is there 'a process' at all?)

Work in HE points to processes being shaped by QA requirements and timetables, and growing use of templates and algorithmic approaches which might limit creativity. Just as importantly, peers may discourage creativity through the use of group/disciplinary values and norms (Ball 2003; Edwards *et al* 2006) or by adopting approaches that limit the scope of creative academics to make changes or have ownership of their teaching (Binns 2016). At a glance, there does not appear to be much support for the existence of a 'creative' process, simply one that 'produces'.

What contributions do skills, attitudes and resources (including colleagues) make, if any?

The creativity literature suggests certain traits among creative individuals (e.g. tolerance of risk and failure, enjoyment of ambiguity etc). There is some evidence that academics in the early and later stages of their careers are more likely to exhibit these traits, but they are dampened by institutional requirements, the expectations of students and colleagues, and the requirements of career tracks (Binns 2016; Herckis *et al* 2017; Kleiman 2007b; Oliver 2002). Resources (e.g. time, the right spaces, staffing, funding) are a limiting factor but a marker of creative individuals should be the ability to improvise and 'seek forgiveness not permission'.

Is the experience of being creative a positive or a negative one for academics in HE?

Discussions of the impact of being creative suggest it is fulfilling and transformative – but this appears constrained to those being creative. Colleagues, managers and students can appear less positive even though the impact might be objectively beneficial to them.

If creativity is a response to extrinsic motivators it might be negative – a coping strategy or done out of duty or command. If it is intrinsic, then there should be a different attitude to the experience. However, given the point above, is creativity always a 'good' thing? Might someone's fears about another's creativity be justified? Are creative academics always altruistic in their actions or is creativity sometimes selfish?

2.4 Reflection

The literature review has been revealing to me as a researcher and as someone who would categorise myself as creative. It has usefully contextualised many of my own observations and actions but it has also challenged them (for example that latter point about whether one's creativity might be selfish rather than altruistic) and suggests an approach to original research that might tease out the different strands without spreading myself too far; each of those sub questions might be a focus in itself but the final one, on the experience of being a creative academic, is one that potentially draws in the others in a way that does not assume each is equal. Just as 'best practice' cannot reflect the variation in circumstances between programmes and institutions, it seems unlikely

that every academic experiences the same conditions, motivations or situations in their work. Therefore, an approach is called for that is open to each of the points above, but which allows for, and acknowledges, the variation in experience. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCHING CREATIVITY: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter moves from *what* has been written about creativity to discuss *why*, and *how* it has been researched. In doing so, I position my research interest as reform-driven, adopting a case study approach that sees creative acts as a unique and personal though often collaborative experience that may be understood using 'experience maps' as an investigative and interpretive tool to develop case studies from which theory can be built.

3.2 The role of investigator subjectivity

Although my research could be described as 'about' creativity, it is also about education, as well as (like most PhDs) about research itself. But qualitative research is not simply a form of enquiry but can be 'moral, allegorical, and therapeutic' (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: p. xiv), aimed not at producing knowledge but changing a situation (Flick 2007). This may be intentional or accidental - a researcher might effect change in their subjects' thinking or practice simply by provoking reflection - and it is difficult to be truly objective and removed from the topic being studied. This is particularly true in pedagogic research carried out by educators which often comes from the observation that 'Things are not right, or as good as they could be' (Wolcott 1992: p. 15). Wolcott suggests that the research process should develop a deeper understanding of the issues that

led to the questions, potentially changing the questions and the approach as it progresses.

Wolcott proposes a simple typology of educational research:

- Reform driven
- Concept driven
- 'Big' theory driven

and O'Donoghue (2007) suggests most educational research is reform-driven.

My research derives from observations that organisational culture may limit academics' creativity, and that this is 'not right'.

3.3 Approaches to researching creativity

3.3.1 An expanding, messy, domain

Kuo (2011) reviews the literature to suggest a general direction of creativity research since 1950, breaking it down in to four overlapping phases of changing focus:

- Personality
- Cognition
- Stimulation
- Social Confluence

We have experienced a broadening of interest from psychology to other disciplines which has seen psychological perspectives outnumbered by those from business, social sciences, and education (Kahl *et al* 2009) with a

shift in the 'aspect' studied (a trait, a process, or a product), the social 'level' (individual, group, organisation, culture), and 'approach' (empirical versus theoretical, or qualitative versus quantitative), along with increasing exploration of creative products and group creativity. However, reflecting the concern of Plucker *et al* (2004) and Unsworth (2001) this brings a reliance on different definitions of creativity between disciplines to the extent that, regardless of similarities in method, with researchers in different disciplines coming to internally valid but externally debatable conclusions (like the allegorical blind men describing an elephant). In short, creativity research is expanding, but messy.

3.3.2 Approaches to researching creativity

Plucker and Renzulli (1999: p. 35) identify five psychological-cognitive categories of creativity research methodology, which are positivist in nature, seeking to describe the way the world is, and to produce predictions of behaviour in controlled, idealised, conditions (O'Donoghue 2007):

1. Psychometric
2. Experimental
3. Biographical
4. Historiometric
5. Biometric

Most creativity research is quantitative, with psychometric and experimental approaches the most common (Long 2014). Psychometric

approaches see creativity as a personality trait that can be measured, resulting in, or making use of, creativity scales such as the Torrance Test. Experimental approaches also measure creativity but using highly controlled activities designed to reduce complexity, isolating and manipulating single variables such as motivation. While experimental approaches have contributed greatly to the discipline, they are resource-intensive to carry out, and their single-variable focus leads to criticism that they fail to see creativity holistically, enforce unrealistic constraints that change the nature of the task, or are evaluated by non-domain specialists (Dunbar 1995). Additionally there is a trade-off between internal validity and generalisability (Runco & Sakamoto 1999). Amabile's experiments, for example, presented subjects with a creative task and a finite time to complete it. The results are valid and much replicated but ignore factors that cannot be controlled such as inspiration and spontaneity. Because experiments emphasise immediate rather than remote determinants, the results need to be tested in 'real world' contexts. For example, Amabile's early work on motivation led to the still widely-repeated assertion that extrinsic motivation 'kills' creativity, yet her later work in organisational settings found that certain forms of extrinsic motivation can support (though not enhance) it.

Historiometric approaches also produce measurements of creativity but deduced from historical sources, an approach that led to Wallas's stage-based model of creativity. Because this approach focuses on the 'greats' and Big-C creativity or, done poorly, perpetuates romantic stereotypes

(Runco & Albert 2010), it is open to criticism. When done well, for example Simonton's work on creativity and age (1997), it is revealing.

Biometric approaches look at physical changes in the brain to understand how it works under certain conditions, e.g. performing a 'creative thinking task' (Beaty *et al* 2018). This is a developing and fascinating field, requiring highly specialised resources and approaches.

Biographical approaches appear similar to historiometry, but while that is quantitative (number of ideas, time spent on a problem) and past-focused, biographical approaches are qualitative and often based on living subjects, resulting in narrative case studies such as those by Csikszentmihalyi (1996). These case studies are often used to generalise to theoretical positions but tend to focus on eminent individuals and Big-C creativity (Plucker & Renzulli 1999).

My approach falls under the qualitative creativity research strand. Case studies are the most common form of qualitative inquiry in to creativity (Long 2014). Gruber and Wallace (1999) criticise other approaches as seeking 'the magic that makes creativity happen', instead preferring to 'ask how creativity works: what do people do when they are being creative? How does the creative person apply available resources to do what has never been done before?' (p. 94). Defining a creative case, they add two criteria to the 'standard definition' of novelty and value: *purpose* and *duration*. These criteria are useful for defining a case though they are arguable: purpose seemingly diminishes the role of serendipity or the unexpected, while the idea that meaningful creativity only happens over

lengthy periods (for them, creativity takes 'months, years, or decades')
appears to favour Big-C outputs. However, the concepts derive from
Gestalt theory which challenges the idea of creativity being a flash of
insight, instead being the result of experience – not necessarily related to
the problem at hand – and 'direction of travel' in thinking (Ellen 1982).
Thus, the criteria allow for little-c creativity but underscore the role of
events that happen before the apparent 'act' (for example Darwin's 'Big-C'
theory of evolution owes much to his upbringing, his working conditions,
and his relationship to his workgroup, not just his observation of birds'
beaks and a 'light bulb moment'). Such Gestalt approaches are interested
in the structure of situations and how the subject responds to them,
delving deeply into a few cases for insights into individuals, which
contrasts with approaches associated with those who clinically analyse
many examples of specific problems to identify generalisable norms.

3.4 Selecting an approach

A few qualitative approaches suit my research questions that are
concerned with the variations as much as connections between the
experiences of academics in different disciplines and different institutions.
Phenomenography explores several people's experiences of a specific
issue to find the 'invariant structures of a phenomenon' (Hancock &
Acgozzine 2017: p. 9) and holds appeal due to its focus on individual
experiences, and my own experience of it (Shreeve *et al* 2003, 2004).
Ethnography is the investigation of social groups to understand beliefs,
values and attitudes – less relevant when exploring individual practices.
Grounded theory, which is concerned with specific, everyday situations, is

an inductive approach to understanding a process or action. Case studies are a means of empirical investigation of contemporary phenomena situated within real-life contexts and particularly useful when that context cannot be controlled by the researcher (Robson 1993; Yin 2009). They are especially useful 'when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin 2009: p. 13), as is the case in everyday creativity which is not always (arguably rarely) seen as a separate activity and just 'part of the job' of being an academic - e.g. developing courses, adapting teaching strategies, responding to unexpected situations, or accommodating new policies and processes. Furthermore they are useful where the investigator has little control over events, or where 'events' or the matter being investigated. Yin argues that case studies benefit from prior theoretical propositions, which 'guide data collection and analysis' (*ibid*.) Sources might be observations, interviews, documents, and the use of multiple sources allows for an element of triangulation. Langrish (1993) takes a less positivist view, describing case studies as a 'biological' research process aimed at developing taxonomies, the principles that underly them, and observing the effect of time (in other words, the 'end' is the desired goal of a process which may change, not a phenomenon in itself, something that distinguishes case studies from 'physics' approaches. It is the process that is important in this approach).

My research questions suggest a set of process-focused case studies would be appropriate, focused on individuals and their organisational context to identify a number of themes. These would sit well within the tradition of creativity research described above. One feature of case studies is that they

are not generalisable to whole populations as subjects are not representative samples of the population, but they are generalisable to theoretical propositions (Yin 2009) and the data may highlight themes inferred from the literature (as above). None of this, of course, should close down the opportunity of revelatory insights. Like Gruber and Wallace, I seek insight into how individuals respond purposefully and over time to problems within their environment. This is based on an interpretivist 'biological' (Langrish 1993) stance that creativity happens within a social system that might be group-based or institutional, local or dispersed, or a complex combination. It is affected by the accumulated experiences and beliefs of those being creative and is often the result of apparently 'non-creative' pursuits (i.e. setting out to write a new course rather than 'to be creative'). Gruber and Wallace accuse dominant models of reifying creativity itself and I am drawn back to the suggestion from Runco (2015) that we focus not on 'creativity' as a noun but as an adjective (e.g. 'creative writing'), focusing instead on 'what creators do' (Gruber & Wallace 1999: p. 111) particularly for the duration of the project on which they worked and their unique experience as they see it. In short, creativity is not a product, a press, a person or a process but an *experience* that takes in to account all four but is not limited to them. This leads me to a specific form of enquiry not evident in the creativity literature to date: user experience research.

3.5 Experience research and case studies

User Experience (UX) research has its roots in the field of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) where it originated as research in to usability

of technology (Bargas-Avila & Hornbaek 2012; Vermeeren *et al* 2015). This transformed over time in to concerns about how users felt about their experience, and from computing into other areas[8] e.g. government and health services (Downe 2020; Stickdorn & Schneider 2011). The aim was now to design for emotions and experiences rather than simple usability, including the recognition that a more complex task can be more engaging. This required a different approach, shifting from the analysis of quantitative data to creative and generative studies (Vermeeren *et al* 2015). Roto *et al* (2011) define UX as 'the experience(s) derived from encountering systems', hence its applicability to the proposed research.

Experience research (UX), which is an immature and developing area (Lallemand *et al* 2015) has similarities to Critical Incident Technique (Gremler 2004) used, for example, by Douglas *et al* (2008) to examine the student experience, using free text responses to questionnaires and, as the name suggests, focusing on the experience of a single incident or moment in time. UX, though, often focuses on the experience over a longer period and consists of different categories of experience. For example, prior knowledge or hearsay leads to 'anticipatory UX' that might colour subsequent experiences. During an encounter there is 'momentary UX', followed by reflection on the experience ('episodic UX'). Finally, there is 'cumulative UX'. At each point the user's reported experience will differ and be unique. For example, a friend might feel anticipation before a roller

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[8] NB The term 'user' is a hangover from the HCI roots but is employed to mean anyone involved in a process or system (voluntarily, consciously, or otherwise). So, a voter is a 'user' of the democratic process, a cancer patient is a 'user' of the health service, and a student is a 'user' of teaching and learning. The more generic term 'stakeholder' is often used rather than 'user' to describe the range of passive-active participation, and 'experience design' rather than 'user experience design' to distinguish from HCI (however, 'UX' remains a common abbreviation).

coaster ride, exhilaration during it, and elation afterwards; I will experience fear, terror, and finally relief. UX research seeks not just to understand feelings, but the interaction with and role of various 'touchpoints' with, for example, booking systems, helplines, queues, websites, and staff – and in my case, university bureaucracies, colleagues, external bodies, and students.

Three factors affect this: the context (e.g. social, physical, task, technical); the user (motivation, mood, ability); and the system (user perceptions, flexibility, responsiveness, reputation of the 'owner').
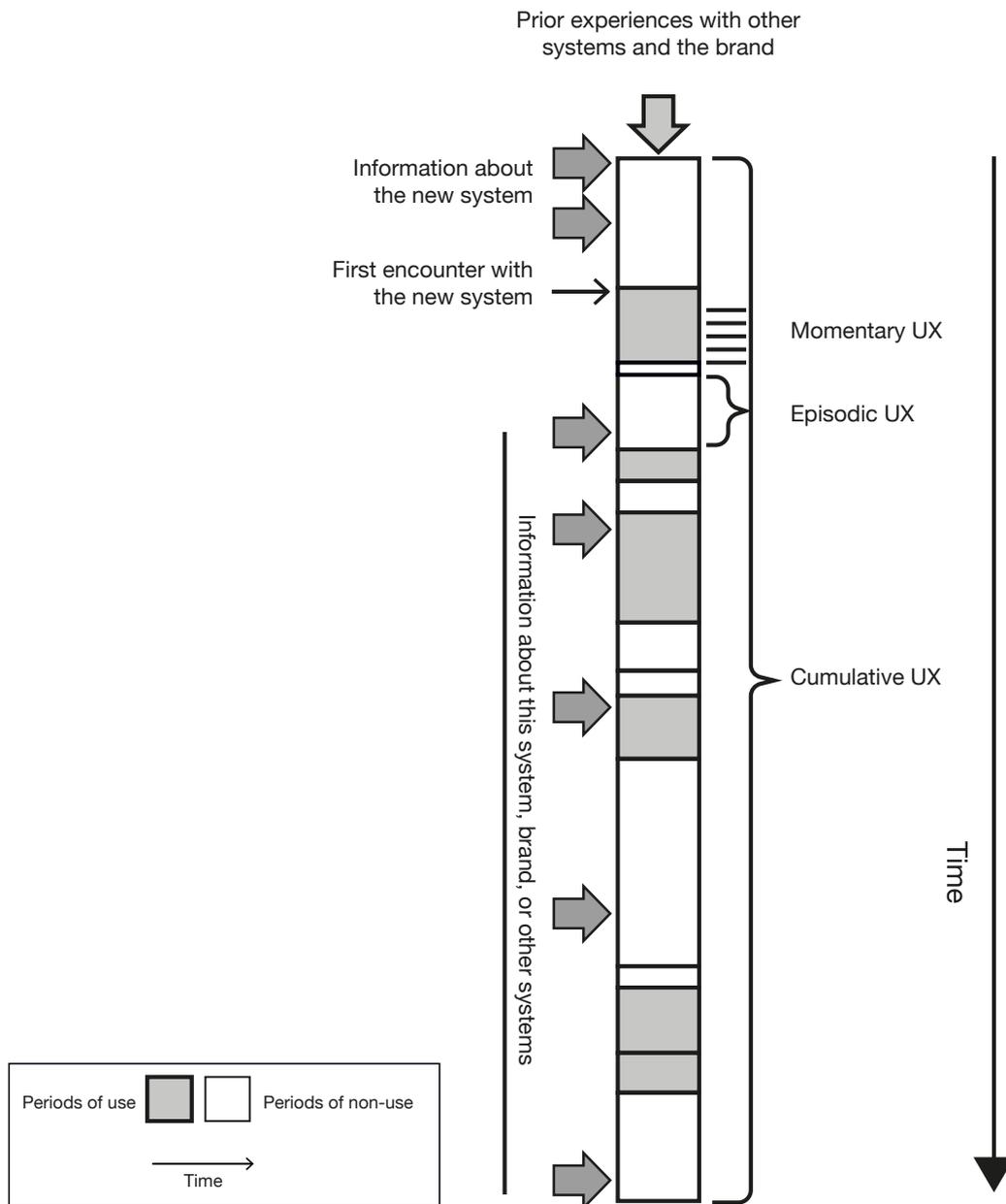
Figure 3-1 Diagram of the longitudinal nature of UX (adapted from Roto et al 2011)

Researching the experience of being creative

As with creativity research generally, HE-focused interest (predominantly concerned with student creativity) has shifted from an individualist approach to a social one, and from positivist large-scale studies to interpretative ethnographic and small-scale qualitative investigations. The

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old 'genius view' that only a few individuals are able to change paradigms and challenge convention has given way to a 'universal view' of creativity in which everyone can be, and should be creative (Jeffrey & Craft 2001).

Previous academic-focused studies (e.g. Kleiman 2007) have focused on conceptions of creativity or innovation. However, I would argue that few academics go about their work thinking about being either creative or innovative, but with a task in mind: planning a module, writing a course, doing minor modifications, enhancing internationalisation etc. Rather than ask them what they think creativity means, I want to map the process they follow as an individual experience, and then apply creativity theory to understand what is going on.

While psychometric approaches measure stable traits, they fail to measure the effect that non-stable events have on people. For example, a divergent thinker may fail to be creative if worried about health or family issues, or if working under threat of redundancy; situations influence the subjective experience and this needs to be understood. However, data collection methods such as questionnaires and interviews assume that recollection of events is reliable and objective and captures the complexity of multiple dimensions within any experience.

Previous work in this area has explored values and attitudes, or framed experiences in narratives that influence the responses. Interviews are commonly used to study academic creativity (Binns 2016; Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Kleiman 2007b; Smith 2012) but prompts can establish a context for the responses: Smith opens with a request to define 'what

(creativity/innovation) means to you', Kleiman begins by asking for 'a description of a particular creative moment or event in relation to learning and teaching', while Binns begins otherwise unstructured interviews by asking how institutional processes affected attempts to develop modules. Smith's respondents begin by describing innovation as new, challenging, or improvement, and this sets the agenda for the rest of the interview – having selected those descriptions anything they offer as innovative must match them, and anything that does not is presumably labelled as 'non innovative'. Similarly, Binns's opening question establishes the subject as working against the institutional structures and cultures.

While the creative product is easy to observe and evaluate, the creative process is difficult to study empirically as it is affected by the act of observation, or the activities may be simulated, artificial, or specific. Amabile (1996) and Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976), for example, asked subjects to carry out creative tasks in strictly timed laboratory conditions; Patrick (1937) and Goor and Sommerfeld (1975) asked subjects to think aloud as they worked; and Gustafson and Norlander (1994) devised an experiment to explore the effect of alcohol on effort and thinking during early stages of the creative process.

Because of the time-based nature of the creative process, and its often random or stop-start sequence, it is difficult to always be present, or when something interesting (potentially not revealed as such until much later) happens. Herckis *et al* (2017) used anthropological techniques to sit in meetings and read email chains between academics at Carnegie Mellon University but this was resource-intensive, and the final research has not

yet been published. Diary techniques, which ask respondents to reflect on events almost immediately have been used to study everyday experience, but these also suffer from issues of interpretation as subjects convey thoughts and feelings in a private/public and literary format. The 'Experience Sampling Method' collects data by prompting subjects to respond to questions at random intervals to discover 'How do people spend their time? What do they usually feel like when engaged in various activities?' (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi 2014: p. 21). Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) provided subjects with pagers that would receive prompts to self-report using a standard form on the objective experience (e.g. where are you, what are you doing, who are you with?) and subjective experience (e.g. how are you feeling?). Perry (1999) and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) both used interviews after the fact and Moriarty and Vandenbergh (1984) used a survey to identify the process followed by advertising creatives. But these methods are problematic as participants find it difficult to talk about creativity or to describe it, surveys are inflexible, and in the ESM example subjects often did not respond to the prompts. And as Csikszentmihalyi found, people entering 'Flow' will be acting unconsciously, therefore recollection will be affected, and the prompt may even break it if mistimed.

3.5.2 Change as a proxy for creativity

A common theme in much of the research discussed in chapters 2 and 3 is the focus on creativity itself as a concrete rather than abstract concept, something that exists within a person, that is the result of certain character traits, that can be taught, or even counted. However, personal experience

suggests this is not a helpful approach when discussing creativity with most people, who often reject the notion that they are creative or that it is something that can be taught or evaluated. This presents issues for anyone wanting to study creativity – how to do so without overcoming these potential attitudes?

In effect, creativity is surrounded by what Douglas Adams described as a 'somebody else's problem field', or SEP, which 'relies on people's natural predisposition not to see anything they don't want to, weren't expecting, or can't explain' and therefore ignore, or claim ignorance (Adams 1982).

Gruber and Wallace (1999) argue that as creativity is the result of the interaction between complex factors it is problematic to study creativity as a 'thing' and instead 'avoid as much as possible the reification of a quantity called "creativity" in the belief that it is more fruitful to ask what creators *do'* (p. 111, emphasis in the original). This approach suggests a case-study-based 'sideways' look through the SEP to reveal what is there but not necessarily recognised (and possibly even rejected) by subjects.

My focus is on academics' everyday creativity, the things they do in response to a range of problems or opportunities from the minor (a student having trouble submitting work to a VLE) to the major (an institutional reorganisation) and which they might approach without necessarily thinking they are being creative even though, by textbook definition, they are. In deciding how to do this I took my lead from Hannan and Silver who equate change with innovation, and opted to use 'change' as a lens through which to identify creativity, rather than

'problems' as I also wanted to look at the role of agency – change can be something an individual seeks to do, or it can be something imposed from outside – and avoid the negativity implicit in the word 'problem' while steering clear of discussions or judgements about participants' creativity as a reified entity.

3.5.3 Participatory research using visual methods

Participatory research sees the researcher producing data *with* subjects rather than collecting it *from* them. This brings responsibilities: a need to avoid patronising subjects, and to select methods that 'build trust and rapport between researchers and participants' (McNaughton & Smith 2009: p. 103). Visual and creative (as in the creation of artefacts) methods are 'effective ways to address increasingly complex questions' (Kara 2015: p. 3). This can be particularly useful in the case of 'insider' research. Mannay notes that in interviewing subjects about a topic with which she was familiar some questions were viewed as unnecessary by her subjects because they believed she 'already knew the answer' (Mannay 2006: p. 21). Visual techniques, however, offer the advantage of defamiliarizing the research context for both researcher and subject. In my own work, visual methods provided a startling realisation for a programme team approaching a rewrite of their course: asked to 'draw' their course, each produced a very different, and partial diagram highlighting that nobody (including the programme leader) knew what was happening outside their own area of responsibility (Baldwin 2016). A simple visual task identified that what was believed to be familiar was, in fact, strange.

Traditional linear and verbal approaches to research rely on recall and the ability to articulate narratives reliably. They also give control to the researcher who is consequently an 'intrusive presence' (Mannay 2016: p. 45). But visual techniques allow participants to jump back and forth more freely as details are remembered, allowing a more natural form of storytelling than interviews. However, while it might be argued that in an interview the audience is the interviewer, with visual artefacts the problem of the 'imagined audience' is a factor as they 'can change and play important roles in what is said or left unsaid' (Luttrell & Chalfen 2010: p. 199). Consequently, it is important that participants understand how their productions will be viewed and by whom (e.g. would their contribution be recognisable to managers or peers?).

Visual approaches are not an end in themselves: Mannay argues they should be used alongside traditional methods such as interviews and observations, and that we should not be led by technique. Visual techniques may lead to discomfort (Abrahams & Ingram 2013) if the participant believes they cannot draw, even if ability is not a requirement. Additionally, collage, Lego, or plasticine modelling may work well with one group or individual but not another who may see such approaches as juvenile or (particularly when working with academics) methodologically questionable. Clearly, a flexible approach is required with the ability to fall back on alternative approaches where necessary, remembering that it is the data and its meaning that is important, rather than adherence to a tool regardless of circumstance.

3.5.4 Data collection methods

UX research makes use of a range of methods. Bargas-Avila and Hornbaek
(2012), analysing 66 empirical UX studies, identified several methods,
which highlight strong links with ethnography:

Method	Frequency	Method	Frequency
Questionnaires	53%	Probes	9%
Interviews (semi-structured)	20%	Photographs	8%
Video recordings	17%	Collage or drawing	8%
User observation (live)	17%	Psychophysiological measures	5%
Focus groups	15%	Body movement	5%
Interviews (open)	12%	Other methods	27%
Diaries	11%		

Table 3: Frequency of data collection methods in 66 UX research projects (Bargas-Avila
& Hornbaek 2012)

Storyboard interviews method

My interviews were semi-structured using storyboarding as a means of
encouraging participants to reflect and structure their thoughts.
Storyboards are a way of conveying information and ensuring that a
sequence is placed in the correct order (Fleury 2012; Sova & Sova 2006).
Reason *et al* (2015) note that storyboarding clarifies the variable path that

experiences take within a formal structure (for example in my study, while course development has a defined process through to validation, the reality of that process is messy and iterative). Patton and Economy (2014) note that this approach need not rely on conventional notions of drawing but could involve the use of sticky notes with words or phrases that are arranged to form a narrative as a discussion takes place. Han (2010) used this method to allow participants to alter their sequencing as they spoke which facilitated deeper recollections and reflected changing roles and relationships. This produces a shared understanding during the discussion rather than a subject's words being recorded, transcribed and interpreted later, thus focuses on 'telling stories, not writing stories' (p. 3) and overcomes some of the weaknesses of questionnaire-based CIT (Douglas *et al* 2008; Gremler 2004).

3.6 Choosing case studies: sampling

Selected cases were from a range of Scottish HEIs including Russell Group, HE/FE colleges, Post-92 and specialist institutions. Individuals were identified via conference presentations, institution websites or by recommendation, based on their activity and interest in creativity in HE (e.g. presenting an innovation, nomination/success in a teaching award, or role). This led to a variety of projects and contexts being discussed, which meant that there was little commonality between the cases other than at the abstract level: individuals attempting to make a change to their teaching. Subjects were given the option of selecting the project to discuss which led, in one case, to a discussion of a project being developed at the time rather than one that had been completed. Although I aimed to select

as heterogenous a group as possible to sample a variety of experiences, all the subjects ended up being white and female. On consideration, I did not feel that these were variables that needed to be controlled for, and this had not occurred in the literature as a vector of significance, so discounted it other than to be open to subjects mentioning gender in the interviews, which nobody did. There may be significant points to make about the role of women and minorities in non-management positions in HE but that is beyond the scope of this thesis. The cases also represented a range of points including early, mid and late career. The disciplines represented come from the 'hard-applied' and 'soft-applied' points in the Becher–Biglan typology (Neumann *et al* 2010) which was not intentional but is a factor worthy of consideration in later discussions as the domain is enlarged through the presence of practitioners rather than purely academic. All subjects were recruited via email and are referred to through pseudonyms.

	Case Study 1 (CS1)	Case Study 2 (CS2)	Case Study 3 (CS3)	Case Study 4 (CS4)	Case Study 6 (CS5)
Pseudonym	Julia	Verity	Zoe	Lee	Jennifer
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Career status	Early career teacher but experienced in technical research roles	Mid-career	Early-mid career with previous related industry experience	Late career	Early career with mixed non-related non-academic background
Domain	Medicine	Linguistics	Animation & FX	Enterprise	Curatorial Practice
Institution type	Russel Group	19th Century research-	Post-92 university with strong	Post-92 university with strong	Russel Group co-delivering

	focused university	emphasis on employer-led curricula	emphasis on employer-led curricula	with specialist institution

Table 4: Summary of data sources (more information is provided in the next chapter)

3.7 Analysing the data

Interviews were recorded and transcribed, as well as being captured visually 'live' using sticky notes. Ideally an experience map is co-created with the participant: as they speak either they or a facilitator writes key points on cards and arranges these on a timeline, separated in to 'swim lanes' to depict different aspects of the experience (e.g. interaction with managers in one lane, interaction with policies in another – see Figure 3-2). These can then be rearranged during the conversation as the mapping sparks reflection.
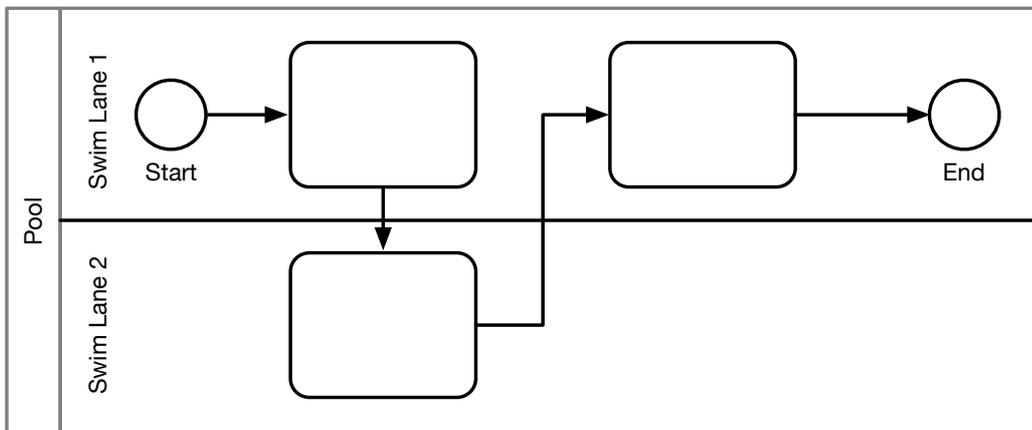
Figure 3-2: A swim lane diagram depicting the relationship between different stakeholders and processes.

Subjects reported that this process was helpful to them, in particular subjects 1 and 5. Notes were entered into a table using headings based on

the Csikszentmihalyi and Amabile models, and the maps were 'cleaned up' in to more easily understood diagrams.

The original maps were far messier less readable than anticipated, but this reflected the nature of the conversations.
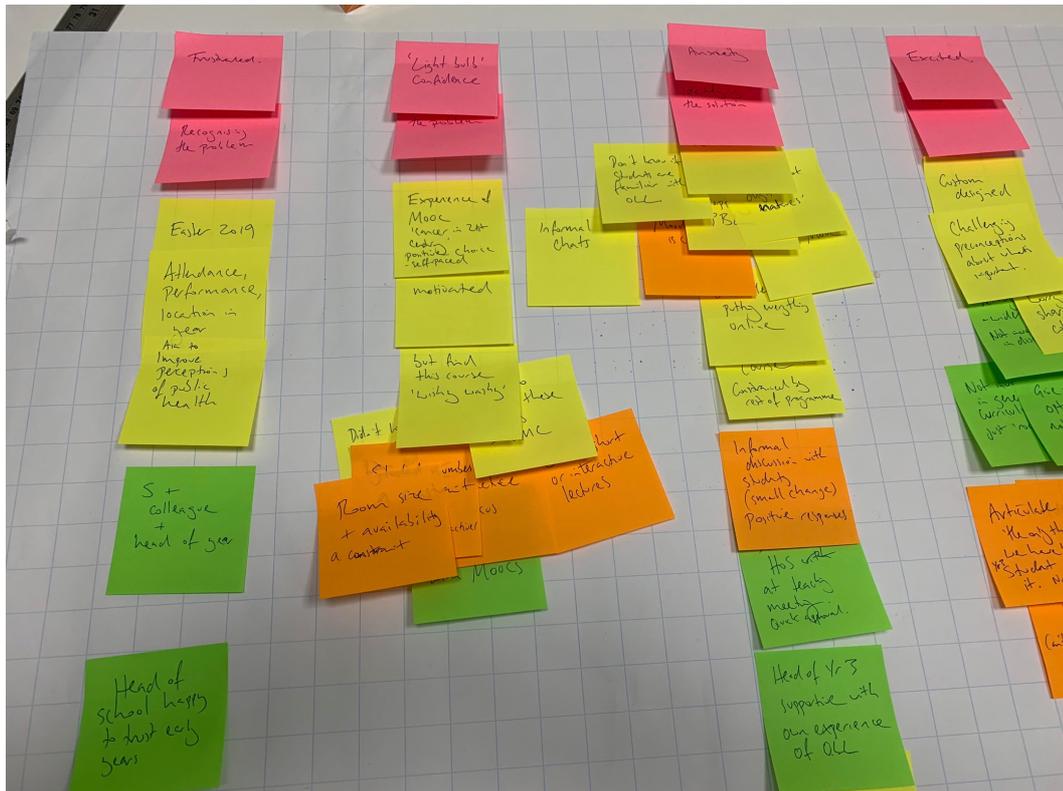
Figure 3-3 The original map from Case Study 1

UX research is partial: subjects made claims that might well be contradicted by talking to others or by analysing policy documents. In one case (CS2) the claim that no video resources of the type she needs exist was checked out of curiosity and found not to be true. However, what interests me here is not what the 'truth' is but what subjects experienced, what *they* believed to be true. In this case, CS2 used her firmly held belief

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that she had not seen any video resources to justify the decision that it was up to her to make them, and this led to the process discussed below.

The journey maps created during the interviews were structured around a process model for ease of reading and positioning although it quickly became clear that the abstract concept of a linear timeline did not reflect the actual messiness of the process – something that was predicted – and while an interim stage was to tidy up the map the next stage was to apply a certain amount of artistic license to create a map that illustrated the fluidity (or otherwise) of the process as described, using the transcribed interviews to guide this. I use the term 'artistic license' cautiously as it suggests embellishment, but I want to make a point about the connection between this process and most forms of interpretation of data. Trowler's statement that 'the point of social theory is to simplify and, to some extent, essentialize reality' (2019: p. 22) applies here too but the point of a journey map is the interpret *a* reality, making it simple to understand by identifying key moments, but the interpretation is layered: the subject's reality is one interpretation, the researcher's is another.

An early plan to colour code post-its was abandoned during the first interview as the subject proved very talkative, something that was true of the others. Few of the subjects paid any attention to what I was writing, or was even particularly curious, which defeated the purpose of mapping and interestingly is not the normal behaviour experienced in this process. This meant that using the subject to perform the initial analysis at the time of the interview did not happen as planned, however the conversation

provided plenty of opportunities for reflection on their part and my belief is that the nature of the subjects led to a more reflective monologue than might be experienced in other groups. The interview format, with which they were all familiar, undoubtedly encouraged this approach. Murphy and McAra (2019) used a number of mapping techniques with different socioeconomic groups in Moray, Scotland but combined it with a workshop format to encourage discussion; this format would not have been appropriate to the questions being investigated but demonstrates how the choice of approach shapes the response.
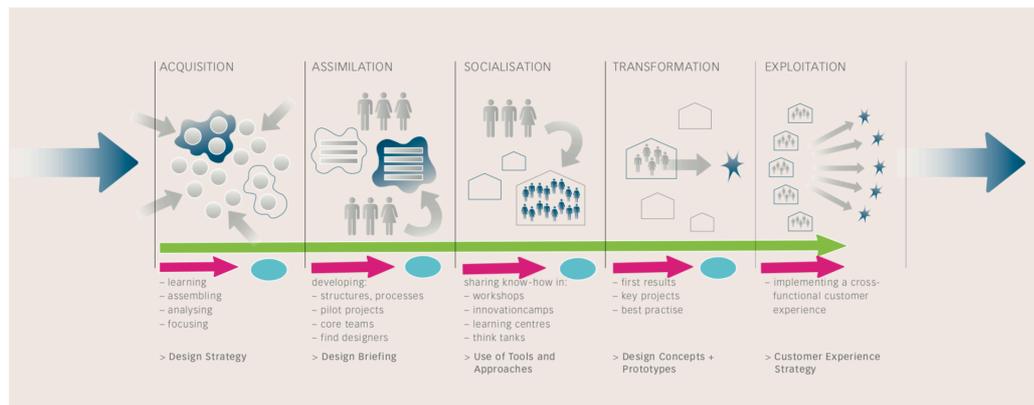
Figure 3-4: An example of a process map using categories from the literature to code responses (Acklin 2013)

Using Csikszentmihalyi's and Amabile's models as the source of key themes to develop the maps made analysis of data simpler than a more textually-based coding system, meaning I was able to identify key portions more quickly than previous experiences of transcript-based approaches, a technique applied when studying design management case studies by Acklin (2013) who worked to pre-defined categories (Figure 3-4). Time saved in this aspect was reinvested in iterative mapping and

rumination to develop a deeper understanding of the subjects' experiences and to identify important similarities and differences. The graphical approach to mapping meant that aspects of each case study became clearer as their number progressed. For example, in CS1 the issue of support from management seemed interesting but not particularly insightful. As each interview took place, I was able to look again at the CS1 map and refine my understanding of what it revealed and, in turn, feed forwards into the interpretation of later and future maps. However, to ensure that I did not fall into the trap of allowing emerging patterns to affect my later observations, I refrained from making these refinements until all interviews had been carried out.

	Before		Recognising the problem		Understanding the problem
Action	Ran block for several years	Networked externally	Shared experience with Tim		Informal student feedback
	Networked internally	Worked elsewhere	Discussed with Head of Year		Used perceptions
Stakeholders	Self	Students	Co-deliverer ('Tim')	External contributors	Students
			Head of Year	Colleagues in other years	Key stakeholders missing
Organisation			Head of School		No organisational input

Figure 3-5: Detail of CS1's map showing that key stakeholders (e.g. students) were missing from the early part of the process

The mapping process was especially useful in identifying visually not what was there, but what was missing: for example (discussed below) key stakeholders such as managers and students, though mentioned, often had no effective role to play in the experiences, represented by gaps in their 'swim lanes' (Figure 3-5). Similarly, the expected presence of documentation in the form of handbooks, regulations, accreditation requirements, and approval documents was not realised. Other studies, discussed earlier, make clear that these things are essential aspects of academic life but the focus on academics' *experience* rather than the expectations placed upon them usefully reveals them (at least in these cases) to be far less prevalent than the literature suggests. Indeed, reflecting on this as a former deputy head of school and director of teaching and learning, it does explain my frustration at colleague's apparent lack of engagement with documentation that was clearly important to someone, if not to them.

In analysing and subsequently writing up the case studies I made use of key themes from both Csikszentmihalyi's and Amabile's models which also provided a structure for the interviews, discussing in turn the context within which the individual works, their recognition and understanding of the problem they faced, the proposed change and the work environment. Next come discussions of the field, the domain, and the person (the subject), and finally an evaluation of the creative process they followed and their summary of their experience with a focus on emotional state as a means of indicating their engagement or otherwise with the process. Each of these represents momentary, episodic and cumulative

experiences (see above) which can be represented visually as in Figure 3-6, as well as narratively through the case study structure.
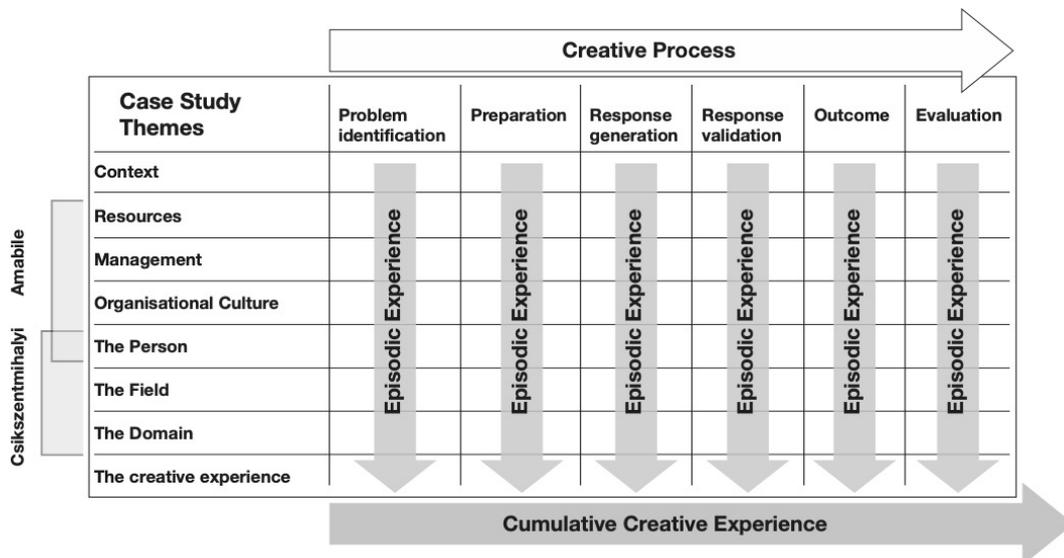
Figure 3-6: Case study themes derived from Amabile and Csikszentmihalyi models, producing episodic and cumulative experiences.

3.8 Ethical considerations

It is important that interpretivist research of this nature is beneficial to the community of organisations, groups and individuals from which the subjects are drawn and that any starting positions or biases are made clear and opened up to challenge by the researcher (Angen 2000). I arrived at this study with my own set of expectations and opinions and was mindful of the danger that these would lead me to identify evidence to support these rather than challenge them. To have done so would not be useful to my subjects, even if my views coincided with theirs. It was also important not to take advantage of my being 'on their side'. The interview process is fraught with potential for lulling a subject into a sense of security – the presence of the recording device is soon forgotten and indiscretion likely. This 'siding' with the subject (or them with me) was a point on which I

reflected regularly, especially as in each case I felt I had heard a description of a scenario I too had experienced: being able to introduce change because colleagues did not value my area as in CS1, being critical of the direction of travel as in CS2, being asked to make changes that demonstrated a lack of understanding of the subject by management as in CS3, seeing a valuable aspect of the curriculum transformed into a service course as in CS4, and being plunged in to a role without training or support as in CS5. Identifying with subjects encourages a level of sympathy (as distinct from empathy), and adds an interpretive layer and this might in some cases be useful in drawing out more, but if it leads to oversharing, or results in the researcher telling their own story rather than the subjects' then this is problematic. I was conscious of the attitudes adopted by the subjects: CS1 appeared pleased to be asked to talk about her work, while CS2 seemed to use the opportunity to vent on various issues. CS3 was the calmest of all subjects – our interview took place in a public space though out of earshot of anybody else but her revelation that she had resigned her post and was working her notice likely contributed to her detachment. CS4 started the interview in a 'conspiratorial' way which is difficult to describe, taking me in to her confidence and claiming to be aloof from the goings on in the university and to have just returned from a workshop she said was lacking in value, but then revealing that she had enjoyed finding out what was going on and learning a great deal from it. The interview was in a shared office and a colleague was present for much of it, but this did not seem to have an effect on the discussion. She was not playing to an audience, and the 'audience' seemed to be uninterested in what we were discussing. The interview with CS5 was

potentially most problematic as she is a colleague (albeit one with whom I have minimal though friendly interaction). The biggest issue for her was one of discretion in talking about others, and she was careful to emphasise topics she wanted me to treat with caution with which I believe I have complied.

Anonymity is another important aspect of research but in some cases it is difficult to maintain. Hannan and Silver (2000) name the universities they looked at, meaning that individuals and groups are easily identifiable. This has the added advantage for later researchers to compare then with now (one of my subjects comes from a university they examined). Mannay (2016) discusses at length the issues surrounding insider research and while she treats her subjects anonymously, it would be easy to use the author's biography to identify them (or perhaps worse, misidentify others). In my case studies I have used pseudonyms in place of real names, and not named the universities, and in later discussion I refer to them largely as numbers (CS1 = case study one). Each subject took part in the research willingly and with full consent, and I explained how I would deal with anonymity. There is an added level of anonymity through obscurity, in that a thesis of this nature is unlikely to be widely read, or by anyone who might indulge in the sleuthing required.

The more important issue however is not with the subjects but the people they refer to. Each discusses the attitudes of others, from direct colleagues to managers and support staff. Because my focus is the subject's reality, I am not 'interested' in fact checking, however in writing up the case studies I have been careful to ensure that the way in which others are

discussed is fair or cushioned with caveats. That being said, I do not believe there are any controversial claims made, and the subjects were quick to rein in their few examples of hyperbole. Should any of this research be utilised for other purposes, e.g. journal articles, I would ensure a further level of anonymity by, for example, not mentioning the discipline within which subjects work.

Having described the background and choices behind my chosen approach, the next chapter presents the individual case studies. However, I will return to the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the methods at the end of the thesis.

3.9 Generalisation, validity and reliability

While case studies cannot normally be generalised to describe the world, they can be generalised to add to theory and should be usable by other researchers to add to their own knowledge base. This generalisation is only possible if it is informed by theory, and where 'each case is viewed as an experiment, and not a case within an experiment' (Rowley 2002: p. 20). For these case studies, validity was established as described in Figure 3-7.

Tests	Case study tactics
Construct Validity	• Participants reviewed the data collection through the use of 'journey mapping' techniques and were encouraged to change or add to the narrative being developed.

	• Multiple sources of evidence were not used as the research is focused on the individual's experience of the creative process, and not seeking to establish a 'true' story of what happened.
Internal Validity	• Pattern matching through textual analysis and themes derived from theory. • Explanation building • Time series analysis through timeline-based journey mapping that also allowed for iterative processes to be highlighted.
External Validity	• Multiple case studies are equivalent to multiple experiments • Case study choice allowed for some literal and theoretical replication between cases. • A hybrid holistic/embedded approach was used with the participant's narrative being used to 'embed' within the process and avoid superficiality.

Reliability	• Supporting documentation was gathered (e.g. course descriptors), evolving drafts of journey maps captured using photography, institutional 'biographies' analysed before and after interviews, and interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Figure 3-7: Case Study Design - checking for validity and reliability

CHAPTER 4: EXPERIENCE CASE STUDIES: FINDINGS

Case	Pseudonym	Topic	University	Notes
CS1	Julia	Using eLearning to Improve Student Engagement	University A	
CS2	Verity	Making assessment more 'realistic'	University B	
CS3	Zoe	Rewriting a programme	University C	Zoe does not work with Lee
CS4	Lee	Designing a Cross-Disciplinary Service Course	University C	Lee does not work with Zoe
CS5	Jennifer	Rewriting assessment criteria across institutions	University A and Specialist Institution 1	Programme jointly delivered by two institutions. Jennifer is employed by University A but the programme is delivered in Specialist Institution 1.

Table 5 List of case studies

In this chapter I present the five personal experience-driven case studies, which cover three universities and one specialist institution. In this chapter I use pseudonyms for each subject to preserve anonymity, but in later chapters refer to them as CS1, CS2 etc to help the reader 'place' each one, as well as to reduce the level of subjective attachment. Some interviews were conducted at the subject's place of work (CS2, CS3, CS4) with the others being carried out at mine, at the suggestion of the subjects and to fit with their other plans.

Each case study is presented with a 'swim lane' journey map which provides an abstract representation of the post-it note sheet that was produced during the conversation.

4.1 Case study 1 Julia: using eLearning to improve student engagement

Figure 4-1: Julia's experience map

4.1.1 The context

Julia is a lecturer in a medical school at a Russell Group university. Although she is in the middle of her career, her route in to her first substantial lecturing post means she is classed as early career. She has been in her current post for six years and was previously a research assistant and a lab technician at another university. However, she originally studied at her present institution, offering insights in to teaching practices that inform her criticism of current methods. She is not a medic, and although she now classifies herself as having a research interest in medical education (MedEd) her background area of interest is reproductive health.

She teaches pre-med classes in year two of a five-year programme. At the time of our interview she had just finished delivery of a four-week block on 'keeping people healthy' which she characterised as 'deliberately vague' in comparison with students' other experiences which are more specific, focusing for example on the heart or lungs. This block instead takes an holistic look at reproduction, development and public health, introducing students to the idea that where you are from, how you are brought up, and who your parents are, has a significant effect on your health.

A typical week consists of four or five lectures, a one-hour PBL session for which students should do some preparatory research, and workshops on diverse topics such as breastfeeding, smoking, STDs etc.

Students on the programme are motivated and meet high entry standards. The school is low on league tables but has a reputation for small-group teaching and PBL, and an emphasis on self-directed study rather than more traditional lecture-based approaches seen at some schools.

4.1.2 The problem

The block takes place immediately after the Easter break and immediately leads into the exam period. Some years there are several bank holidays (this year there were three) which eat into time available. Attendance at lectures drops off as the block progresses, particularly as content moves to statistics, but labs and workshops are well attended. PBL suffers as students are not as prepared as they need to be.

Students are preoccupied with their first examinations and so are revising for those instead of preparing for this block. Workshops and small-group approaches are highly valued by students, but the subject, while valued by the block organisers, is seen as less important by medical staff who teach into it, and by medical colleagues generally.

Imminent increases in student numbers present further challenges to the established delivery pattern. There is no option to move the block earlier in the year.

4.1.3 Proposed change

Julia and her colleague have proposed a mixed form of delivery, providing lecture-based content online and thus freeing up time both for

students to prepare for their PBL sessions and for revision for examinations. Attendance is now only required for five hours a week.

The changes were still in the development stage at the time of interview, with implementation planned for Easter 2020.

4.1.4 The work environment

Resources

Julia is given time in her workload to develop the curriculum, something she says she utilises, but her comments that she has long been frustrated at the poor student engagement with this course suggest she has been unable to do this effectively.

The school's resources seem geared towards specific forms of delivery, namely lectures and seminars. Although known for its PBL this is not reflected in the available resources with only ten suitable rooms being available for 100 students. This means ten groups of ten (Julia prefers a maximum of eight students per group) and an imminent increase in numbers means an increase to 14 groups.

Allocation of space is tightly controlled meaning this four-week block can only run immediately after Easter, which in turn contributes to many of the issues of student engagement. But this also presents advantages as the first five weeks of the year are teaching-free enabling the creation of materials.

There is a digital development unit in the medical school, which is enthused by her plans for the course. In addition, Julia has access, serendipitously, to a student intern who has been through the course and is making an enthusiastic contribution to the creation of learning materials. However, this is not aligned to the student's own ambitions and while it may help Julia, it is not clear what benefit it is bringing the intern.

Management practices

The school operates within a university which requires assurances in terms of resource use, timetabling and ILOs, but also within a discipline that is used to flexibility due to staff being practising medics who may need to reschedule, cancel, or substitute without notice. This results in a difficult situation where on the one hand Julia needs to plan but on the other is working with external contributors who cannot commit in advance. When pressed she admitted that one of the consequences of her plan would be to gently 'let go' of historic contributors who were unable to change their approaches, 'Some individuals who we wouldn't be devastated (to lose)', and instead let in newer colleagues who might be more open.

Because the proposed changes did not require a change of ILOs, a light touch approach was permitted with the Head of Year proposing it at a meeting where there were no objections other than a question about cost implications. However, as the interview progressed, Julia described sniping from the 'usual people' (see The Field below).

Organisational motivation

The two motivators of note are an increase in student numbers, with an inevitable impact on Julia's course which relies on small-group teaching, and an institutional concern with league tables, which resulted in a drive to improve student perceptions of what was done with their feedback.

4.1.5 The field

Medicine is a conservative field, even though it is engaged in cutting-edge practices. There is a clear hierarchy and a sense of expected deference which at the medical school level this presents itself as a split between the early, non-clinical courses and the later 'more important' clinical years. This results in a lack of engagement with what colleagues do in early years, but a ready criticism if they feel the students they inherit are not adequately prepared, and a defensiveness and blame culture if student feedback is poor (Julia noted that she and colleagues in years 1 and 2 were blamed for poor NSS scores in year 5). Julia's own position within the field is complicated by her status as a non-medic, and her route in to, and focus on, teaching and pedagogical research. While there is a strong pedagogical community in medical education, her interests mean she feels better networked within the wider university and beyond than within her own school.

There is an advantage to this: Julia is largely left alone by more traditionally minded clinical colleagues, despite background criticism and scepticism.

Her own head of year seems supportive of her proposed changes and another head of year offered to provide input based on their own experience of online learning. The strongest resistance to change seems to come from students who, while vocal in saying what they think could be improved, are less welcoming of change if they are not convinced it will help them pass their exams, which dominate their approach to learning. Students ask for change but are then resistant when it happens and are felt by Julia to be attracted to a school that is 'different' but on arrival switch their concern to passing exams.

4.1.6 The domain

Tradition is strong in medicine, with a reliance on methods of delivery that have not changed much – Julia was an undergraduate at this university and recognises many of the same materials from her own time, even down to the dates on slides not being changed. Moreover, even though her colleagues tend to believe that what worked for them should work for others, Julia and colleagues are not convinced this is true.

The curriculum is governed by the General Medical Council (GMC) but this is a light touch approach with a competencies-based approach to approval of programmes rather than a detailed specification of what should be taught, how, and when.

Julia is largely unaffected by criticism, nor is she seeking validation – she does not believe there is a risk to her career in what she is doing, or any advantages. There may be some recognition in the wider MedEd community, but she does not appear motivated by that. She is sure,

however, that it helps to be well-embedded within her school, admitting that she would not have attempted anything like this earlier in her time here due to a lack of confidence. She also reports that colleagues who attempt to make changes too soon are criticised as only being interested in promotion, even though she says they may have been brought in specifically to do those things.

4.1.7 The person

Julia is clearly confident and driven by a sense of purpose – in this case, a desire to improve student engagement with a course she views as valuable, given her own background in reproductive studies and her emerging interest in pedagogy. Thus, while her motivation can be seen as intrinsic, it is also driven by a defence of her specific subdomains within the larger one of 'medical education' for which she counts on an external network of like-minded individuals within and outside the university, rather than on her colleagues in the school. There are extrinsic drivers (increasing student numbers, low student engagement) but these are not motivators in the sense of forcing or requiring the action. Her confidence in part stems from experience outside the university, so bringing an external perspective rather than simply relying on what has been done before (something she is very critical of), and from her six years in the school which allows her to do things, or make use of connections, that she would not have had earlier. Newer colleagues are, she said, generally viewed as career-focussed by some colleagues if they attempt to make changes. She, however, does not seem motivated by career or esteem at all.

In this example, Julia is part of a small team of two, both of whom have identified several problems and what they feel are root causes. Creativity generation seems limited, however. This may be a result of her colleague seemingly jumping to the conclusion that the solution should be online delivery. While Julia seems enthusiastic, her own prior research indicated that it was not the panacea her colleague made it out to be, and her own level of knowledge in this area is low ('I've never used a Mooc'). She and her colleague are heavily reliant on the digital delivery unit and a student intern to provide practical, though enthusiastic, support.

Julia is unaffected by criticism from certain sources, prepared to take a calculated risk and be the first to admit if it hasn't worked – and then to fix it for next time. She is not arrogant enough to believe she has all the answers, or that her own limited knowledge of eLearning is a problem. 'Nobody is under the illusion it's going to be perfect first time'. However, she acknowledged, as a result of the mapping process, that her own communication of the proposed changes was lacking, and that her expectation that external contributors would engage with enthusiasm or not at all might have been naïve. Following the interview, she stated she would attend to this immediately. I took from this that while she claims to ignore criticism (though not constructive critique) she has acted in a way to defend herself from it by excluding those she predicts may be most vocal.

4.1.8 The creative process

Although it is possible to describe Julia's process with reference to a classic model of creativity, there is a distinct lack of consideration of options with Julia, led by her colleague, arriving at eLearning early on. This seems to be driven by several factors, one of which being personal interest in eLearning rather than a directive to do more of it. As Julia said, one of the motivations was not just to make the course interesting for students, but for herself. The preparation phase seems mainly to have consisted of practical options such as dropping parts of the course (the bits that Julia thought were most valuable), moving it to another part of the year (impossible), or putting it entirely online which students (and Julia) resisted. The mixed mode approach was therefore a compromise and 'there is no Plan B – except to revert to the old approach'.

There were no real time constraints on spending longer in the response generation phase, and indeed some medical colleagues questioned the pace (though as Julia said, they always do). Julia talks about frustration being a key motivator and this may have led to a sense of urgency in what might be described as a rash decision – albeit one that has been gestating for a while with the problem identification stage lasting several years.

4.1.9 The experience of being creative

Julia said 'I don't really consider myself to be a creative person. I don't really know why … I think it stems from school where you're told you're not creative […] I can't draw, I have no art skills whatsoever […] I think creativity is making something magical but deep down I know it's not.'

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Frustration is the most obvious aspect of this experience – although Julia described problems in inanimate terms (lack of rooms, poor scheduling, large class sizes) as she became more comfortable with me she became less discreet (though always professional) and vented frustration with long-standing staff employing old materials that had not changed since she was a student, staff sending other people to deliver their lectures, and an inability of some colleagues to reflect a changing world (for example in banning students sharing materials with one another via social media as they see it as 'collusion'). Deciding to do something about it led to a high level of anxiety during the preparation phase, as she and her colleague discussed the various options available to them. Her 'light bulb moment' came in the response generation phase, a 'glimmer of confidence that we could make a change and it might work'. As the idea was explained to others, her emotional journey came down to earth as the 'reality' of having to do it became clear but at the time of our interview, having only just completed the previous academic year, Julia describes herself as 'excited'.

4.2 Case study 2 Verity: making assessment 'realistic'

	Before	Recognising the problem	Understanding the problem	Identifying a solution	Implementation	Evaluation	After
Action	Assessment in previous form; Networked internally; Networked externally; Worked elsewhere	Personal observation; Used perceptions	Personal observation; Used perceptions	Spoke to edTech team; No 'how might we' insights; No search for models	Issues worked around; Plan B (do it as before); Built system in Moodle	No formal mechanism; Rely on 'gut' to evaluate	Self-esteem most important; Possible esteem gain externally; Moving on to other projects
Stakeholders	Self; Students; Future practitioners	Key stakeholders missing	Key stakeholders missing	External provider of video	External contributors; Key stakeholders missing	No apparent interest in formal evaluation – felt it worked as anticipated	No reward/recognition
Organisation	No organisational input/oversight or awareness						
Skills/ Knowledge	Attended PGCert modules			University processes; University politics	Low personal skill level; Low pedagogical knowledge; Determined to self-improve	Engagement with external pedR	"Bank" skills
Emotion	Hesitant (lack of role clarity)	Excited	Excited	Nervous	Enjoyment	Anxious	Indifferent

Figure 4-2: Verity's experience map

4.2.1 The context

Verity is a programme leader on a speech therapy programme in a research-led university. The subject she teaches 'doesn't change' – while the domain itself is actively researched, the undergraduate curriculum is largely fixed. But while there is not much freedom in terms of curriculum innovation, she feels able to make changes in how it is taught and is highly critical of colleagues in academia generally who are content to keep things as they are, identifying inefficiencies and old-fashioned approaches. She is especially keen to examine how technology can be used to make things more efficient and more engaging.

4.2.2 The problem

Students on Verity's course are required to demonstrate their ability to make a phonetic transcription of a subject's speech in order to be able to practise as speech therapists with children. Previously this has entailed a lecturer speaking in front of a class who then make the transcriptions accordingly. Verity does not feel this is realistic, but it is not practical to bring a child in to an examination to perform in front of thirty students. In addition, she believes that even though students may pass this exam, there is strong anecdotal evidence that practitioners 'lose' the skill quickly. Hence, she sees a need to improve its realism despite the practical constraints.

4.2.3 **Proposed change**

Verity developed an online examination in which students individually (but simultaneously) watched a video of a child repeating words as in a real-life assessment. The students transcribe the words manually on paper and these are collected in and assessed as normal.

4.2.4 **The work environment**

Resources

Verity finds space during her normal working hours to work on this and other projects, although it is not viewed by her as an essential use of her time. Some of the issues she identifies could be solved through changes to the course structure and timetable but because this part of the curriculum is not viewed as essential, it fits in around more fixed or important aspects, one of which is a mandatory professional placement which requires two days a week of student attendance.

She says the university does not allocate resources or importance to teaching development but there are ad hoc peer groups of academics interested in, for example, online learning and play-based learning. A series of short courses is available as part of a PGCert in Teaching and Learning, the importance of which has been increased within the university, at least as a mandatory requirement. Verity was not required to attend these but did so out of interest and found them valuable.

The university has an educational technology team, but they are largely preoccupied with keeping the Moodle-based VLE running and

encouraging staff and student engagement with it. There is interest in online examinations, but only as a means of assessing large numbers of students quickly via multiple choice questions (MCQs). Most resources are allocated towards programmes that bring in the most money – Verity's programme recruits well but is small, and not a 'headline' programme. Although the technology team were helpful, they did not see her proposal as a priority, and it did not fit in to established ways of doing things. There were errors in delivery with student logins and browser compatibility with video codecs, which seemed related to the IT systems being closed to initiatives such as this.

The change Verity initiated was restricted by several factors. For example, when asked about the possibility of building a collection of specially recorded videos, she listed a number of limiting factors, all of which would be surmountable with the appropriate support but none of which is available. However, Verity sourced her video from a colleague's research project and is attempting to establish a network of teachers in the subject from around the UK with a view to developing a larger, shared, resource.

Management practices

Verity described a university entirely uninterested in teaching and learning but viewed this largely positively, because it gave her freedom to make changes, so long as they only affected her and nobody else.

Her own role as Programme Leader is administrative, with no mandate for enhancement of teaching and learning, and in theory it is a rotating

post. She is PL because nobody else wanted the role, and she does not envisage being able to drop it at the end of her term. Management roles in her school are also temporary, meaning no one has responsibility for T&L or a reason to take an interest.

While there are obvious freedoms associated with this approach, it means that Verity is acting alone for much of the time and is frustrated by many colleagues' lack of motivation to change practice. She also engaged in her project without reference to anyone in management, not because she felt they may prevent her, but because experience told her they would not be interested and would not be able to help.

Organisational motivation

The institution, according to Verity, is motivated by research. On the day of the interview, Verity had received that year's NSS results and was largely happy with them. However, she did not feel that the university saw them as important and struggled to think of anyone who had been challenged on poor teaching evaluations. Efforts to enhance T&L seemed focussed on efficiency (e.g. mass examination via MCQs) but Verity painted a picture of an institution focused on research and large-scale student recruitment.

4.2.5 The field

Verity works in a small, close-knit department of 6.2 FTEs, of whom three (an unusually high proportion) are teaching fellows. Verity describes her team as 'like-minded' though largely focused on their own teaching. Her

colleagues are freely borrowing from her changes, but she made them on her own.

Within the wider academic community, there is a sense that this discipline is unimportant, a sure recruiter of a small number of students, but not a money-spinner or reputation-enhancer. Consequently, Verity is left alone to do what she wants so long as she does not trouble anyone, spend any money, or cause any complaints.

Her managers are disinterested, engaged in their own problems, and students are focused on achieving their qualifications. However, Verity is very proud of her recent nominations for teaching excellence including a recent win for a student-nominated award for 'most enthusiastic teacher', though it is telling that she appears not to have received much recognition for this among colleagues and wondered if it might annoy some of them – though she was mildly amused at the prospect. She is competitive and critical of bad practice and if she wants recognition it would be for delivering best practice. However, this is not driven by ego: 'I want everything to be good. It annoys me – if (only) people shared what they did…' In other words, she feels the field is uncommunicative and too easily satisfied.

4.2.6 The domain

The Domain appears little-changing; Verity depicted a discipline that does not change very much, and where there is little to distinguish between programmes. It is regulated by two bodies: the Healthcare Professions Council (HCPC) accredits the course so students can practice after

graduation, while the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) determine the content of the curriculum. While this is a slight limitation, there are no particular debates apparent into what should be in the curriculum and though the content is effectively controlled, RCSLT recommends a number of student-centred teaching approaches such as practice-based learning, small-group teaching, and simulation.

Verity made her changes without consideration of them being domain-changing and feels it unlikely that anyone would be interested. But she is certain she is answering a need within the practice of speech therapy even though it is seen as unimportant in academia – this suggests there are two sub-domains in operation: speech therapy as a practice, and speech therapy as an academic discipline. Verity originates in the latter but once she began teaching rather than researching has moved firmly to the former and now views what she teaches – and how she teaches – through a practice-oriented lens.

4.2.7 The person

Verity is impatient and energetic. A recent convert to pedagogy she is quick to criticise bad or inefficient practice though she refused to criticise any individuals, only the circumstances in which they found themselves. For example, managers are unhelpful but because their situation means they have no time or motivation to be otherwise. Her criticisms are often about processes and systems. In that sense she seems to be striving for better, less wasteful, and more liberating, engaging ways of doing things.

She draws on several skills to achieve her creative ambition, most important of which is her determination. She can persuade others to help her, even though she still feels uncertain of her right to do so. For example in dealing with the educational technology team, she faced what might be termed 'negative support' – nobody said 'no' but there were plenty of 'what if' scenarios put to her such as 'what if students accessed the internet during the online exam? They might cheat'. Verity's answer to that was to tell students a white lie (that internet access was being monitored) to discourage them from doing it.

Verity sees rules as something to challenge, resulting in newly-created VLE logins for students so they could take the online examination, and manually updating incompatible web browsers rather than asking IT to do it for her. She is aware of her limitations but recognised that some of her issues with Moodle were because it is not designed to do the things she wants to do, rather than because she is 'bad at it'. She uses this to fuel her ambition, wondering what might be possible with better tools rather than working within the limitations of the existing ones.

Talking to Verity it is easy to see how she might get her way when a slightly different approach would meet resistance. Her motivation is focused on student learning and their ambitions, so problems she encounters are dealt with because they impair students, not because they impair her.

4.2.8 **The creative process**

Verity did not follow a typical creative process. The problem she tackled was not a 'problem' in the normal sense of the word but an intellectual challenge. She admits there was 'nothing wrong' with the old way (although there clearly were areas that could be better) and there is a wider issue with low pass rates for this subject that an observer might suggest would have been a better focus. In that sense, Verity could be criticised for being self-indulgent here, but it is also an example of intrinsic motivation. Thus, as in CS1, there is no 'response generation' – the solution had already been determined with alternatives, such as getting in actors or videoing a series of child therapy sessions, dismissed quickly.

While making use of the technology learning support team, she was driving their activity, pushing them in to areas with which they were unfamiliar and, based on her description, uncomfortable. Her solution is one that suits her and possibly other small programmes but does not fit in to a model that is scalable across the university, so her activity may have had an impact on resource availability for others.

Most interestingly, considering Verity's stated interest in supporting students (and her recent award from students for doing just that) she did not consult with them at any stage, instead relying on her knowledge of their needs and abilities to deliver something she thought they would enjoy and which would assess what she sees as an important part of the course and their future practice.

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As the project has concluded any views to improvement are largely technical: improving logins, ensuring browser compatibility, and adding extra time between questions for students to turn their notebook pages. She has already moved on to the next thing – a creative trait of sorts but not necessarily a useful one: Verity seems to get bored once she feels she has solved a problem to a 'good enough' degree. However, this seems driven in part by the lack of engagement with others within her department or the wider university who may provide encouragement and motivation.

4.2.9 The experience of being creative

Figure 4-3: A solo activity

The experience map shows an obvious lack of engagement with (or by) others. This is a solo activity both by necessity and by design – Verity knows she is on her own and digs in.

As in Case Study 1 there is a clear sense of frustration driving Verity's experience but with what she perceives as the lack of motivation in others to change things that are, in her words, 'inefficient'. She considers herself creative, when asked, but compares this with her husband who is a graphic designer – she's 'not that kind of creative'.

Her colleagues, managers, and support departments are not holding her back; instead she feels they are holding students back, and she is motivated to show people how things can be done differently and better. The fact that nobody stands in her way is enabling and compared with others' experience it seems almost ideal. But this is a lonely road: Verity is acting alone, affecting (to a large extent) only her own practice, and finding it easier to disseminate her work to external audiences than internal ones.

The only time her enthusiasm dips is when she needs to rely on others. Her interaction with the educational technology team was positive but their guardedness over security, and IT's failure to keep PCs up to date and open for experiments such as hers, were signs to her of a lack of enthusiasm for student-centred approaches, or a lack of a coherent technology strategy in the wider university.

When she is engaged in her activities, Verity is excited – in our conversation we talked about games and puzzles, and the ludic quality of certain activities that can be engaging, and I got the sense that Verity goes about her work like an enthusiast goes about building model railways, or renovating a car, or just completing a cryptic crossword. For a time, she is

lost in the flow and when she is finished, she is looking for the next project. In this respect, Verity is not a 'completer finisher', to borrow from Belbin (2010): finished and good enough is better than perfect but never done. Straining the game metaphor somewhat, she is also the sort of enthusiastic player who reads the rules after she has tried to work it out herself, if at all. She is frustrated that few academics seem to engage with pedagogic research but admits that she only discovered it herself quite recently and had not looked at it to investigate other people's experiences of doing the sort of thing she was attempting. In that sense there is a lack of reflection and an impatient drive which are not typical of many creative people. Verity belongs in the disruptive 'move fast and break things' category and is fortunate to work in an environment that permits this approach, albeit purely through institutional indifference.

4.3 Case study 3 Zoe: rewriting a programme

	Before	Recognising the problem	Understanding the problem	Identifying a solution	Implementation	Evaluation	After
Action	Networked internally; Worked in industry	Personal observation; Wrote 10,000 justification; Industry expectations	Personal observation; Spoke to QA; Competitor analysis; Read QA handbook and old docs	Wrote draft documents; Established mentoring scheme	Submitted validation documents; Ran for two years	Module evaluations improved; Teaching award nominations; NSS improved; High employment rate	Resigned; Asked to begin again
Stakeholders	Self	Students (as graduates); Employers; Immediate colleagues	Employers; Colleagues	Students; Graduates; Employers		Employers; Students	Self
Organisation		Quality Assurance; Management; Cognate Disciplines	Key information unavailable; Management unavailable	Quality Assurance; Management unavailable	Quality Assurance; Management; Validation Panel	Management	Management
Skills/ Knowledge	Attended PGCert; Diplomacy; FHEA; Working to specs	Networking; Persuasion; Diligence	Attention to detail	University processes; University politics			Diplomacy
Emotion	Apprehension	Optimism Humbled Excited	Bored	Bored	Hopeful Nervous	Happy	Relieved

Figure 4-4: Zoe's experience map

4.3.1 The context

Zoe describes herself as a 'relatively youngish academic' in a post-92 institution formed by the merger of two vocational training and technical colleges. She moved in to teaching after working in industry firstly in architecture and then more recently in visual effects (VFX). She became a programme leader 'accidentally' and runs a four-year undergraduate programme in animation/VFX that is mostly populated by students who enter directly in to third year having completed an HND elsewhere. Her programme has been subject to many changes, including twice being moved from one school to another as the university seeks to reorganise itself.

The origin of her students presents problems of preparedness for academic study, and there is no input and little connection to the main feeder programmes. NSS scores are low, but recruitment is good and mostly local with few international students and, as such, is not an important source of income. However the global market in VFX/animation is projected to increase substantially by 2020 (digital.vector 2019) meaning this is an area that should be of growing international interest, particularly in Asian markets where many of the production houses are situated.

4.3.2 The problem

Two years prior to the interview, Zoe and her colleagues were informed that their programmes were due for revalidation and directed to undertake this to certain specifications. Zoe's programme was be repositioned as a technical rather than a creative programme with a focus on technology-based production skills rather than development of story ideas, characters, scripts and art direction.

For Zoe and her colleague, this presented a challenge to the discipline which traditionally did not separate 'creativity' and 'production' – while animation companies might farm out aspects to production houses, often in Asia, the demand in the UK, north America and other similar markets is for 'all-rounders' who can develop ideas and produce them. However, the feeder programmes largely focus on technical production, meaning there is a mismatch in what Zoe and her team believe is needed, and what students are capable of, and interested in doing (something which also contributed to low NSS scores, attracting the further attention of management). Additionally, there is local competition in creative animation and VFX from universities nearby including four internationally renowned art schools. Finally, the relocation of her programme into a faculty more focused on computing adds to the pressure to focus on a technical curriculum: 'we are the anomalies, we're the only creative programmes in the university'.

Zoe was directed to rewrite the programme and avoid mention of 'creativity' within module descriptors and titles, and to shift from a four-

year BA to a 2+2 BSc – a major repositioning but also one that, for Zoe, moved the programme far from what she believed students needed, and industry wanted. As well as this, she was told to look to 'best practice' in other programmes in her university with higher NSS scores such as the use of examinations rather than projects.

Thus, the problem is two-fold: rewriting a programme to suit management requirements, while delivering a programme that was true to the discipline.

4.3.3 Proposed change

Zoe and her colleague developed a series of modules that were designed to 'get the creativity back', effectively resisting management's move towards technically oriented programmes. An essential aspect of this was the introduction of a mentorship programme, with fourth year students working with third years to help them integrate into the BSc, and industry mentors working with fourth years to help them appreciate the need for a less purely technical, more creative approach to their subject.

4.3.4 The work environment

Although operating in what are euphemistically referred to as 'challenging times', the university seems to be doing well with healthy recruitment, positive showings in teaching and research league tables, and investment in new buildings and facilities. Based on this interview with Zoe and CS4 in the same institution, the university is seen by staff as adopting a market-led approach with decisions being made based on

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pursuit of KPIs rather than qualitative judgments of student or staff experience.

Zoe is well-connected within the university, largely thanks to her PGCert which she undertook willingly, and which furnished her with a good network of contacts. She is active on committees and groups and might be described as 'plugged in' to what is happening. However, there are areas of opaqueness: the role of Programme Leader is not well-defined and does not appear to be a point on a career track, with responsibilities and deadlines that are not defined in any documentation or calendar. Consequently, the imminent revalidation was a surprise to her and other PLs when it was announced.

Management seems to be conducted via direction rather than facilitation, with tasks set and no support offered in their completion. A Quality Assurance department exists but appears not to publish much in the way of guidance; Zoe described having to ask for copies of the previous validation documentation in order to understand what was required. However, in her day-to-day interaction she described the QA team as helpful.

4.3.5 The field

Zoe's programme sits uncomfortably in its new home, alongside mainly computing-based, engineering and built-environment subjects. Its position here seems to be a result of its use of computers for the production of animation and VFX, but this is not a programming course, the workflows are very different and 'internal politics mean that some departments are

not as friendly with each other as they should be'. Fortunately, Zoe's background in architecture means she straddles different cultures and feels at ease working with colleagues from other departments, able to respect their approaches and 'speak the same language'.

Externally, the worlds of animation and VFX are not regulated but there are strong industry voices such as Screenskills, the sector skills council for this area which tends to have a focus on vocational training and 'approves' but does not currently 'validate' these programmes (Screenskills n.d.). Instead Zoe and her colleagues make use of industry contacts to gain support for their ideas.

4.3.6 The domain

Animation and VFX are subjects with undeveloped academic communities that tend to sit within schools of art, design and media. As such they might best be described as subsets of a larger domain of creative disciplines within which exist many traditions and tensions. Animation is a broad area, given that animators can be writers, directors, art directors and producers, as well as often making the end-product themselves in a range of media from painted cells to physical and computer models. As such it encompasses many different sets of skills and knowledge – a loose alliance of styles, approaches and tensions. This means there is a large community but little cohesion, and one which embraces new technology but fiercely defends tradition, especially in terms of training.

4.3.7 **The person**

Zoe is the youngest of the academics interviewed for this study but brings a variety of external practice-based experience not seen in the others, with the exception of Case Study 5 (also a younger academic) which adds a level of externality to her observations, as well as a particular set of skills: 'Having worked in architecture at the time of the credit crunch and in the animation industry you learn a lot of soft skills and (these) were the most useful' compared with academic skills. She was asked to lead a revalidation process for which she felt unprepared, but noted that other, more experienced academics, were in a similar situation. She points out that her father was an academic 'so I (had) a healthy awareness there's a lot of politics', and she relied on her ability to be diplomatic: 'Diplomacy and being collegiate are the most important things. Knowing which battles to fight… knowing where the change can take place took a little bit of understanding, but I'd been here a few years before this process'. This latter point is key to Zoe's experience as she has taken time to build a broad network and ensure (not entirely by design) that she is known and trusted by others to whom she felt comfortable sending documents for comment.

Unlike her peers in this study, Zoe was keen to find documentation to help with the development of new modules but disappointed at what little was available. She believes her experience as an architect and in animation/VFX means she likes specifications but where others might see these as limiting she views them as a creative brief (Baldwin 2003).

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However, despite the success of the revalidation, Zoe feels hers 'is not an enjoyable role. It should be more rewarding than it is'. Consequently, at the time of writing, Zoe was working her notice and preparing to move to another part of the UK to teach in a specialist art school.

4.3.8 The creative process

This is seemingly the most straightforward of all the case studies: a challenge was set with the motivation being entirely extrinsic. Strict limits were placed on what might be done, and expectations were clear, with a fixed deadline, rules, and a formal evaluation process. The extrinsic nature of the motivation should have, in Amabile's words, 'killed creativity', however the contradiction between what she was asked to do (remove the 'creativity') and what she believed was needed (more creativity) meant the motivation quickly became intrinsic.

> 'I don't think anyone would sit down and go "yes! I choose to do a validation event" but it was definitely done in the best interests of the students – having come from (the art school where she studied at undergraduate and masters level) and industry you could see things that needed updating and changing, things that weren't working, and being a relatively youngish academic you've got just enough energy to do it. I didn't really want to do it in the first place but knowing I'm doing it is a case of "how can I make the best of it?" It is an opportunity. If we're doing this, how do we do it properly?"'

The preparation phase consisted of a largely fruitless search for key documents and processes, and discussions with a like-minded colleague to identify ways to meet the challenge but satisfy personal requirements. Using knowledge and awareness gained on her PGCert and through her fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, Zoe found examples of similar modules in other universities, either by asking colleagues elsewhere directly, or via other means (some were happy to help, others secretive).

Time was short, especially given the continuing requirements of the role of PL and lecturer. Interestingly, while Zoe is critical of how long things take in academia compared with industry where decisions are made and project completed quickly, she wishes she had had more time for this project.

Zoe worked closely with a single colleague, taking the opportunity to avoid working with colleagues whom she describes as resistant to change. Moreover, the way in which staffing was handled meant that there was no coherent team, with individuals delivering components to more than one programme each year. 'Because there were just two of us, we were able to map a clear sense of progression from year to year' transforming what was expected to be a technical writing exercise in to one of philosophy. Rather than isolating colleagues, the majority were 'incredibly happy that they didn't have to do it'. The only complaints came from two module leaders who were unavoidably absent during the process.

Management did not handle the process well, informing staff via consultation events that were announced at short notice, being unable to confirm the date of validation events, and without anyone taking ownership – there were three different heads of department during the process.

Zoe looked at the university's Quality Handbook but 'there wasn't a huge amount of guidance' and only one person she spoke to had been through a revalidation before. Feedback was sought from the QA team with the main advice being to cut down on the number of assessments. There was also conflicting advice on assessment due to a misunderstanding of the expectations of the discipline: 'a lot of our assessment is coursework and broken down into presentations and group work', all things that were poorly understood by colleagues in other departments. Zoe was able to use her exemplars and feedback from employers to convince management and peer reviewers of the need to maintain these aspects.

The validation of ideas relied largely on experience and 'gut instinct': 'we felt we were making the course better' but generally 'it was kind of like going in to the dark, fumbling around, asking "is this what's expected?", finding documentation and digging for information that wasn't there'. Documents were swapped with other PLs going through validation with the focus being not on the content but on the process – were learning outcomes phrased correctly, were the contents correct?

Once approved the new programme was implemented on a gradual process so that new students took the new modules while existing

students continued on the old ones. However, some module leaders decided to introduce the new versions immediately without having to gain permission.

When I asked how the changes had gone, Zoe laughed: 'this summer we were told they want us to do it again because the overall school strategy has changed … we're going through a "university refresh" now'. But more immediately, Zoe reports that NSS scores have gone up in all programmes subjected to revalidation except in one where what she terms 'management-directed upheaval' was highest (this is the subject of CS4). Other data points include improved module evaluations, a high rate of graduate employment, and student-led teaching award nominations suggesting 'we're clearly doing something right somewhere'. Asked whether measures such as NSS matter, Zoe says that management feel they do but, in her experience, they do not affect recruitment, nor are they an accurate measure of student satisfaction post-graduation. She says former students keep in touch, bring in cake, act as mentors – 'you know you're doing something right when that happens'.

4.3.9 The experience of being creative

As Zoe makes clear above, this was not a positive experience, with apprehension being the dominant feeling at the start: 'I had a feeling I'd be involved quite heavily … and wasn't sure what it involved… (So, I) decided to make it positive: let's make decent changes.'

Subsequently, having decided with a colleague to seize the opportunity to strengthen important aspects, the emotion became optimism, 'lots of

ideas, "ooh, we can change this"', though this did not last. The opportunity to change a programme was 'humbling in a way. It can be exciting, initially, and that slowly descends into part frustration, part stress, not quite boredom but … it gets quite tedious …with a lot of backwards and forwards… It was a drudge' with management and QA asking for occasionally contradictory changes without explanation. When delivering the document for approval the mood was apprehensive again: 'we've tried our best, guys.' While Zoe was mostly hopeful, 'we were expecting some kind of pushback'. This did not come at the time but is now being reinforced in a second revalidation – one for which Zoe will not be present.

4.4 Case study 4 Lee: designing a service course

Figure 4-5: Lee's experience map

4.4.1 **The context**

Lee is a Senior Lecturer in a business school in the same institution as CS3. Unlike other case study subjects, she teaches into degree programmes from across the university in a 'service teaching' role in which one department delivers modules for one or more others. In this case, Lee's subject is entrepreneurship and business development, something she has been teaching throughout her academic career, and practising as a partner in a family business.

Lee describes how, when she started there twenty years previously, in her department 'it was normal to change, but it was being driven at our level. The biggest difference is it is being driven at a corporate level now. And that's where resistance (from academics) begins to occur. From an operational point of view, we conform to change … but that's not how it started off'. She cites the example that previously she and colleagues could identify an opportunity to establish a programme and run it, but today she cannot because 'I don't have the authority, or the freedom … those decisions are made for us and then we resource (them)'. As a result, she no longer suggests new programmes 'because there wouldn't be any point. It's a closed door'. The cause of the shift is an attempt to 'position the university and strengthen its brand and identity as a university … for the common good. But equally all its resources which are now minimised have to be working towards that single goal. It's strategic management, it's a very corporate form of leadership as opposed to an academic form … where you had these pockets of expertise and they were allowed to flourish'.

There has also been a significant shift in the attitude of students, and particularly their openness to risk. The subject Lee teaches could be said to have uncertainty at its core but 'failure is not an option, and the levels of anxiety in students now where […] (they) can no longer cope. Everything has to be yes, no, black, white'. This is unlikely to produce good entrepreneurs: 'we need students who can cope with failure … they are very, very risk averse'.

When she began teaching, she covered entrepreneurship but is now being asked to deliver 'employability' into other programmes in the form of business development because if students are not in graduate roles soon after leaving 'that's a sign of institutional failure'. Consequently, many of the changes Lee is being asked to introduce or adapt to are responses to external measures of quality. Her expertise 'has been reshaped to deliver the entrepreneurial mindset for employability'.

4.4.2 The problem

In 2011, the department offered a menu of over 100 modules that could be taken by students from across the university, often tied to academics' individual research interests. There were issues of duplication and efficiency with this model leading to a demand from management for a major overhaul. The timescale for the change was very short: it had to be in place for the next academic year (2012/13). As well as colleagues within the business school, the changes had to be carried out by visiting staff and lecturers from students' 'home' departments, presenting an issue of coordination and collaboration. The task came with some explicit metrics

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for evaluation such as improvements in graduate employability and related NSS scores.

4.4.3 Proposed change

The proposed change had already been decided by management (Lee refers to them as 'corporate' throughout our discussion). The task she was given involuntarily was to reduce the expansive module offer to a single 'spine' progressing from first to fourth year, but which would be relevant to students on a diverse number of programmes from journalism to law. Other than this, no other details or constraints were given.

4.4.4 The work environment

At a university level the environment is identical to that of CS3. A key difference is that the department does not have students of its own. This means Lee and her colleagues might be teaching journalism, business, engineering or architecture students. Despite the potential for a lack of identity, she describes a close-knit community of academics who have been in post for some time and who have collectively experienced a lot of cultural change which appears to have tempered a solid and mutually supportive, if weary, community.

Lee's descriptions convey a sense of an organisation that leads through commands rather than consultation, and she takes a great deal of time discussing how she and colleagues feel their experience and expertise has been eroded by a move towards a market-led approach and the measurement of results by satisfaction surveys. There is an irony in how a

senior member of staff in the business school criticises the business practices of her own university. She and the organisation share an interest in community development and ethical practice, but there is a clear hint in our discussion that she feels her own community within and beyond her department has been adversely affected.

4.4.5 The field

The way in which Lee's academic life is geared towards internal service teaching means the field is effectively internal, which she describes as a triangle of management, academics and students and a relationship described in blunt terms.

> 'It's about power. Where does (it) lie? Does the power lie with the student? Does the power lie with the academics? Does the power lie with the administration? … I think academics are at the bottom … students have a very loud voice and have quite a lot of power, and they know that.'

The impression management gets of her area through NSS is 'middling': 'they're not 100%, neither are they falling over, but the student voice is important. They want … more looking after. They want it when they want it, so (the culture is) becoming a bit service orientated'. Lee believes students see NSS as a mechanism to complain, rather than feedback on the quality of their teaching. Similarly, internal 'happy sheets' (as she calls them) include questions and comments she describes as 'bizarre', quoting a complaint that 'we were not prepared properly for the exam… there's not an exam in the module. (…) 30% of students said they didn't receive

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their mark within three weeks of the end of the module, but I know for a fact they were released within three weeks. It's very frustrating when there's false information being used to beat you up'.

Lee recalls a time when she had more respect and credibility with students but now describes students lining up at her door to explain to her why her marks are incorrect and then putting in complaints when she refuses to reconsider. She also recounts examples of parents appearing at her office. 'There is a problem. Executive has power. Students have power. Academic don't. That affects the credibility of academics in their eyes.'

Students are not open to change: 'they live in real time and want guarantees. Most of them are working part-time, some full-time… for them this is not a scholarly activity, doing an undergraduate degree, it is ticking a box… "tell me what I need to do, and I'll go and do it". That's what they want.'

The internal nature of the Field in this case is strongly evident in our conversation – there is little discussion of a world outside the university, which is surprising, given the employability focus of Lee's work, and explanations for this become clear in the discussion below. This turning-in of the departmental perspective is in strong contrast to Lee's research work which is oriented towards rural communities but which has suffered recently both by becoming divorced from her teaching (something that affects her colleagues as well) and by lack of time due to the pressures of teaching across such a broad range of programmes.

4.4.6 **The domain**

Entrepreneurship in its purest form is fragmented between business, social science and economics, with Lee identifying with the latter, but the shift in university position means she is being moved away from her 'home' discipline towards employability and career development. In her university, entrepreneurship is considered as 'an essential pillar' by the university but not necessarily by students or their home departments. There is a difficult balancing act: journalists need to understand how to use and develop their networks and social capital to operate in a freelance career. Meanwhile, 50% of her business and supply chain management students will be working in SMEs – 'they're not going to be brand managers for Coca-Cola… they'll be working on trading estates, writing emails, doing this, doing that, and emptying the bins' and subsequently 'we are catering to prepare most of them for these types of roles.' Additionally, the identity of the university means there is a focus on social enterprises, and third sector working. 'We teach (social enterprise) across (all programmes), because it's absolutely fundamental to our values, who we are – that's the corporate machine'.

4.4.7 **The person**

Lee has been at the university since 1995 after a career in enterprise and business development in a management company and a bank. She is also a partner in a family business, giving a practical insight to much of what she teaches. She describes herself as late career with, she says (though perhaps exaggerating its imminence), an eye on her pension.

At the start of the interview Lee displays a sort of weary bravado – she is the most experienced and long-serving of all my subjects and initially keen to suggest she is aloof from the politics of university life, claiming that she avoids all committees due to resource and time management, but later admitting she considers herself 'very plugged in' to groups and networks in the institution. On the day of the interview Lee had just attended a required refresher training course for doctoral supervision, and while she felt aggrieved at having to spend the time refreshing something she sees as second nature, she admitted that it was an opportunity to get insights in to other schools and meet people. The department has a low turnover of staff and most have been there for a long time; Lee believes she has a reputation as a safe pair of hands which results in things being 'dumped' on her, 'they know I'll deliver what's asked'

Despite the cynicism that comes through from the interview, Lee is not as negative as she might appear. She describes herself, unprompted, as creative, finding delight in the opportunity to make things different, and boredom at the idea of things staying the same. Teaching methods 'are where we can have the fun'. She describes a 'corporate architecture' as 'suffocating' but says that underneath that 'there's actually a lot of freedom. And that's the only place to get your sanity'.

Lee demonstrates a high level of resilience and empathy. She describes not taking things personally when they go wrong and emphasises her diplomatic skills and ability to gain consensus. Even when she is describing behaviour that threatens to disrupt her work, she offers a

counternarrative that puts the behaviour in context, suggesting an ability to see things from other people's points of view.

4.4.8 The creative process

'I was given the poisoned chalice'.

Lee's statement is direct and shows the level of the gap between the demands of 'corporate' and the desires of herself and her colleagues. In theory, the extreme extrinsic nature of the task should have 'killed creativity' and while this is evident in the response of some in the department, this is not true of Lee. 'I did have an idea of … what it should look like. (…) That's where my own personal creativity lies. I enjoy thinking up these… that's my own entrepreneurial side, creating, coming up with something different.'

Lee's description of past experiences in which she and others could suggest new courses based on experience and knowledge of demand is a long way from this approach and her biggest challenge was gaining agreement on the need to change due to the shift in power relationships occurring at the time. 'There was huge resistance to this … people believed there was no need for it.' The new model meant that their own modules in which they had invested a great deal of time, and 'things that they believed in', were being 'ditched'.

The demand for a spine-based approach is not new: other universities, including one in the same city, have similar models, and this was seen by management as best practice to quickly tackle 'employability'. Lee was

aware of other practice through involvement in national subject networks, and QAA advice on the delivery of enterprise (Quality Assurance Agency 2018a). In addition, Lee carries out review work for the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, meaning she is aware of various approaches, but this level of knowledge was not widespread among colleagues.

Lee cannot remember her own response to the proposal. 'There was an element of fear' but also 'I have a really good idea for this, I know how to make it work. The biggest issue was how to take people with me.' Despite having what she considered an answer in mind, Lee adopted an outwardly consultative approach. 'It would be a nightmare' simply to propose it without letting others suggest their own ideas: 'It just wouldn't have worked'. 'I called a number of open meetings with the message "I'm really sorry, I understand, we have to move forward, let's put all our ideas into this and shape something from a more collaborative way forward"'. A concept document was circulated via email with a rationale and suggestions for what might be included, drafted as a paper with academic credibility rather than a strategic management plan.

Lee asked colleagues for their ideas, and examples of current practice that people felt they should keep. 'What can we take out, what has to stay, and what new ideas can we bring in?' Discussions were largely positive, and Lee began to see her role as shaping an overarching architecture with scope for contextual delivery and freedom. 'I felt we had to have confidence and trust in colleagues, that they would do what they believed

was the right thing to do … they know what they're doing … it couldn't be prescriptive so really the design was a scaffolding more than anything else'.

Students were not included in the process, largely because it took place over the summer.

Discussions of elements that needed to stay quickly highlighted the difficulty of the task. For example, placements were important for marketing, but for journalists there needed to be a focus on freelancing. There was no pushback on this, or a challenge to colleagues to explain why anything was essential: 'there comes a point where it would be … corrupted if individuals felt their voice hadn't been heard and they then had to teach on it'.

Lee describes this as 'the psychology of getting on with people', something she says she learned at school: 'it's a survival skill. You have to get along with people and sometimes that means compromising…. It was more important that people were agreeing and moving forward … because everyone was resistant to (the initial idea) … it had to be an incredibly collaborative process'.

As the process continued and detail was required, divisions between groups became apparent as each wanted to deliver the same content in different ways. However, as Lee points out, the spine models meant that it was possible to do this. The challenge was 'how do you prepare seminar materials for (a journalist and an events manager) when they have a

completely different understanding or knowledge?' This is an aspect of which Lee is proud: you don't have to teach things the same way; a lecture covers the broad theory, while a subject-oriented seminar contextualises it within students' disciplinary perspective and addressing their preferred approaches.

Lee took it upon herself to develop seminar materials for colleagues who 'didn't have time to write things. They needed to be able to walk in, pick up, do it' but they also needed to be able to adapt and make it contextual. Lee would talk through it with them, at the same time offering several choices of approach – their own or ideas from other disciplines. Ultimately 'they would craft their own approach to it'. The design of the material allowed for modifications, but also people were able to do their own thing. 'A lot of it was about communication.'

Lee was goal oriented, not concerned about the path people took so long as the destination was the intended one. There were informal 'friendly' meetings of anything between five and twenty people, including colleagues from different disciplines. Lee drafted a module descriptor based on conversations and shared it with colleagues for comment. She believes that everybody felt able to contribute and everyone was driven by the recognition that there was no option but to come up with something everyone agreed with. 'There came a point where everyone thought this could work'. Lee felt everyone needed to feel they had ownership over how they did things, even if they had no ownership over the decision to do it.

At some point, Lee utilised her network and shared the developing plan with other enterprise educators for critical friend-type comments. However, the plans were not shared with anybody from industry 'because I knew what industry wanted because I spoke to them a lot of the time anyway' when running existing modules.

Management largely left Lee and colleagues alone because she felt they were happy so long as they believed their requirements were being met. However, this lack of involvement meant some of the more creative ideas had to be reconsidered and plans fell afoul of internal politics: a large showcase event was modified as the university's estates department imposed a large charge for the use of the required space. Other ideas that came to nothing include the use of experts to feed into seminars as there was no budget to hire the appropriate visiting lecturers, meaning tutors often had no experience in the subject they were discussing.

When it came to the first run for the new spine there were 'pockets of brilliance and pockets of crap'. Some things needed more planning as they were more complex than anticipated, for example consultancy projects needed a tight schedule of networking events in the first two weeks of teaching. Lee notes that the lack of administrative support means academic staff are working in areas where they have little expertise and this is reflected in poor NSS scores for course organisation, especially given their programme of study is made up of individual modules delivered by different departments.

Despite the issues, the collaborative approach worked. Lee says the outcome

> 'delivers on the pillars the university wants it to and from that perspective it works. It does encourage social mobility, it does develop transferable skills, it does encourage an entrepreneurial mindset. It does all those things without a doubt. Where it fails is … the way it's resourced creates pockets of problems. Some of the pockets have tutors who are still resistant to it. They don't scupper it, but they do encourage their students' voice to say "it shouldn't be in our programme"'.

She cites a third-year module in which students are challenged to test the validity of their ideas by engaging in trade which in some cases results in real income. Over the past few years she says second and third years have generated over £50,000 through trading within an academic module, demonstrating a high level of innovation and enterprise, and of academic underpinning. However, despite its success it did not satisfy everyone, with journalism students 'hating it'. Another example involved students connecting with peers in New York to develop an import/export business. 'The learning was enormous', including dealing with Scottish items being held up in US customs. A 'real world approach' existed within clear academic boundaries but 'we did take quite a bit of risk … students enjoyed it, they bought in to it. It was fun.'

Asked how she knew the model was successful, Lee cites as evidence the number of organisations and charities involved, and the funds being

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raised rather than academic metrics, because they are part of the remit based on the university's 'pillars of values'. But module evaluations suggest otherwise: 'media students hate it. Supply chain management students hate it. They complained that the charity they worked for hadn't thanked them'. However, business management students 'really enjoyed it'.

These evaluations have little impact on iterative planning – staff are expected to address concerns raised on 'happy sheets' and there are changes every year to respond to dissatisfactions but this is sometimes counterproductive: 'last year there were complaints there wasn't enough information and now this year the complaint is there's too much information…' There seems little point in too much tweaking given the uncertainty over who might teach individual components, the complexity involved, and the lack of admin support to implement them. Lee believes the university can trust the staff involved to adapt and do the best they possibly can in the circumstances.

4.4.9 The experience of being creative

Lee does not believe her role in the changes damaged her reputation with colleagues. Having experienced the loss of her own modules over time she 'understood how difficult it would be for colleagues who didn't want to do it'. 'I knew they didn't want to do it but equally I knew we had to do it. So, we had to find a way that kept as many people as happy as possible'.

But the journey has been an emotional one with an initial element of fear, but also anger. Lee describes herself as someone who does not ruffle

feathers, and she is clearly angry at what she terms a deliberate decision to 'put the unruffler in a position … (someone) who would actively smooth rather than ruffle. […] I was pretty much put in a very awkward position. I wouldn't do that to someone.'

When I point out that during our conversation her mood visibly changes when she describes the process she went through she admits 'I did enjoy it, because I like doing creative things … if you let me do something different, that's much more fun than doing the same thing every day. I enjoy design, because I am more of a creative person than anything else. … I enjoy new ways of designing and creating something. That's fun.'

During the process, at the moments when things started to look like they might work, and feedback was positive, Lee talks of a sense of relief as the chance of conflict was reduced and which she had clearly been anticipating. When running the new structure, the feeling was one of exhaustion, but helped by a collegiate approach, even from those who were resistant to the change – the resistance was good natured 'because we've all known each other for so long – we have been through 15 deans. … nobody tries to stuff anybody else, there's no sense of academic snobbery here. We all feel we've been run over by an articulated lorry.'

While there is a sense of relief, there is, importantly, no sense of achievement, particularly as the project is not finished due to the pockets of 'friendly' resistance from colleagues and resulting negative reactions from students. Lee's reputation within the institution has been enhanced,

and she has been asked to run sessions internally based on her experience of developing the model, but she has not applied for promotion 'because then you get given things you don't want to do'.

Lee volunteered, unprompted, a description of herself as creative, and she described this as problematic for others who became nervous when she would say 'I've got an idea'. She describes the process she went through as personally creative but notes that for some it was more 'destructive' as it meant losing something rather than making it. She describes a demand from management to be creative but bemoans the lack of freedom: 'we don't have the environment for it… the line goes out and they reel it in and they completely wipe out the environment you need to be creative. That said, you can be creative in a very, very, tiny, tiny, small scale where it doesn't bother them too much and you're bearing the risk.'

4.5 Case study 5 Jennifer: rewriting assessment criteria

	Before	Recognising the problem	Understanding the problem	Identifying a solution	Implementation	Evaluation	After
Action	Prior experience outside domain; International experience; Networked internally; Background in law	Ambiguous role as PL; Spotted issue with assessment; Shared by co-PL and EE	Used perceptions; Looked at other disciplines	Simplest option chosen; Waited for 'approval' from EE; No 'how might we' insights	Shared docs with co-PL; Shared docs with co-PL	No formal evaluation; EE approved; 'It worked'	'Not finished'; Possible esteem gain internally
Stakeholders	Self	Managers (disinterested); External examiner; Students; Co-convenor	Students; External examiner; Colleagues in cognate areas; Co-convenor	External contributors; Students		Students; External examiner	No reward/recognition
Organisation		No organisational input (beyond calendar for amendmnts)	No organisational input	No consideration of radical alternatives; Calendar constraint on range of options	No organisational input; Corporate needs; complicated plans; Some disciplines permitted to opt out	No evaluation carried out	
Skills/ Knowledge	Multidisciplinary; Organised; Not constrained by tradition; Connector	University politics	Multidisciplinary		Organised		
Emotion	Lacking confidence		Pressure (working with co-PL); Relief (talking to EE)	Intellectually engaged	Encouraged	Happy	Eager; Optimistic; Confident

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Figure 4-6: Jennifer's experience map

4.5.1 The context

Jennifer is in her first lecturing post and is programme leader on a practice-based masters degree in a Russell Group university (the same institution as CS1, though a different school). Although she claims a lack of experience, she has acquired a substantial amount of varied non-HE experience in several countries, demonstrating a level of independence and breadth that clearly has a bearing on the way she views her role, her programme, and her students. However, she has never taught on a programme before or had the opportunity to learn from someone else in a similar role.
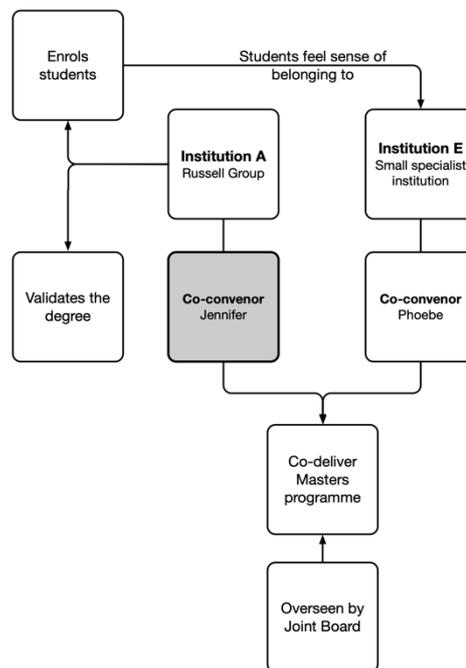
Figure 4-7: Case Study 5 relationships

Her situation is different from the other cases in that she is 'co-convenor' of the programme with another academic (Phoebe) who is based in a

nearby specialist institution. Although its degrees are validated by the university, and this particular programme is 'owned' by it, Jennifer notes that the students see themselves as members of the smaller of the two partner institutions. This situation brings an aspect of complexity that sets this case study apart from others (see Figure 4-7).

The programme she inherited is clearly defined in terms of the type of delivery, with a set number of lectures and workshops, but the content itself (speakers, assignments, subject focus) changes every year in response to students' developing interests.

4.5.2 The problem

Both Jennifer and Phoebe recently took over the programme and inherited several issues, many of which can be assigned to its dual ownership by institutions that operate differently at cultural, organisation, and procedural levels.

The programme had already gone through a major modification prior to Jennifer's arrival, with a reduction in 'over assessment'. Students opt to undertake a traditional dissertation or a practical project for their final assessment but the external examiner pointed out a disparity between two choices for the final assessment, suggesting that dissertation students might be treated more harshly than those who undertook a practical project due to the published assessment criteria. The examiner was also critical that student grades were dominated by As and Bs, with relatively few Cs. Jennifer is certain the final grade was a true reflection of the grades awarded for individual components, but the mathematics meant a

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level of 'averaging out'. In addition, she told me 'we've just got amazing students' and explained the process of assessment, moderation and review, and the input of the external examiner himself, which she felt demonstrated the robustness and fairness of assessment. 'The marks rested where I think they were meant to rest … things feel very robust'. However, the issue of fair treatment of non-traditional dissertations was one that the two co-convenors recognised and felt that the examiner's observation gave them the opportunity to tackle it.

4.5.3 Proposed change

Jennifer spoke of the traditional 'idea' of a dissertation that incorporates aspects of form and academic convention, from the style of language to the way in which references are presented. The assessment criteria had been written with this in mind before both co-convenors were in post, and there was a feeling that this was to facilitate smooth progression through the approval process where anything non-traditional might attract comment and debate.

The solution Jennifer and her colleague arrived at was a form of negotiated submission in which students would write a proposal and discuss it with them first. This would broaden the categories of submission and ensure parity in expectation and effort between, say, a fully curated exhibition supported by an essay and reflection, and a book or critical dissertation on an element of practice. In effect, the assessment criteria were being adapted to the students' goals (within reason) rather than the students' goals being adapted to the assessment criteria.

4.5.4 **The work environment**

Jennifer is based within an Art History department in a school which also includes several performance-based disciplines including theatre and music. As well as teaching on her own programme she contributes to others which, though sitting within her school, are quite different in subject matter and approach, meaning that she has quickly built a broad network beyond her own discipline.

The situation in which Jennifer found herself when taking on the role was complicated by difficult circumstances surrounding her predecessor, and a lack of transparency which led her to question her position. She also inherited what she describes as a 'hostile' external examiner relationship which she believes overreached the normal expectations. These combined to make her first six months in post very difficult. Fortunately for Jennifer, her colleague Phoebe provided a level of certainty, treating her with parity and ensuring the role was genuinely shared.

Having studied and worked across several disciplines, Jennifer is at home in a university where she is able to network with colleagues from different schools, and relishes being in a school which is itself diverse. Conversations cover everything from work ('problems with publishing') to leisure ('what's on in [the city]'). This has led to invitations to teach on programmes in other schools where her skills in curatorship have a level of relevance that might not have emerged without this activity. Jennifer describes her immediate colleagues as being ones that either 'mine down or work across' and notes that she is one of several who work in

interdisciplinary ways (for example textiles and chemistry connecting for research into restoration and preservation of historical artefacts). She is not comfortable working on her own and is happy working in a typical lecture theatre one minute and then being in a lab with scientists or a studio with artists. Despite her history of travelling and international residency, Jennifer claims to be settled in her new role and sees it being a long-term post citing a 'professional respect' within the university.

However strong Jennifer's connections across and beyond the university, she recognises that 'strangely' the connections within her own discipline are less well-defined: 'I probably find more like-minded people within film and television … everyone's so busy … we get along, everyone is really nice…'. She puts this down to the physical location ('we work in closed off little rooms'), practices ('lots of distance working'), and varied timetables including working at different campuses, all of which fail to foster the close working relationship that casual socialisation with those that are nearby at crucial moments supports. She describes only one subject-based colleague as a friend but has a good social network among other disciplines.

When discussing the institution's openness to change, Jennifer says that 'As big and unwieldy as (it) is, I do think there is enough consultation … I feel heard' on topics such as better working practices, work/life balance and stress, efficiency, and shared resources. More specifically she cites conversations about decolonisation of the curriculum. There is funding for

exciting projects in progressive topics, and Jennifer has built on her previous African links to develop a fully funded project.

However, she describes her specialist partner institution as 'administratively challenged' having observed 'lots of people trying really hard, and then the systems just don't support it' with administrative tasks falling on academic staff 'and then burning them out'. She contrasts practices between the two as one of 'finding new ways of working together' with her own institution encouraging collaboration across disciplines but the smaller one reinforcing silos and inward focus. 'I see over the fence, and there are moments I have to be over the fence and bear the brunt of various administrative affairs' that are not required in her university, citing the process for bringing in visiting staff and reporting for immigration status as being handled 'far more zealously' in the smaller institution than the larger.

4.5.5 The field

As the discussion of the domain suggests below, the discipline is inherently conservative in approach, relying on a strong sense of tradition enhanced by the dominance of a small number of gatekeeper institutions. Passing through one of these ensures that certain expectations are kept about everything from the canon to the manner in which it is discussed. As Jennifer's comments on decolonisation show, there are ongoing debates around a number of subjects and a sense of a growing gap between modern students' expectations and some parts of the field's responses. This is rather different from the consumerist attitudes reported

in CS4 – here the students' engagement with the discipline (rather than their lack of engagement) is driving the discussion. This is particularly so on Jennifer's programme which is based around student exploration of topics of their own choosing, with aspects such as the lecture programme built around the varying interests from year to year (which leads to the issues with visiting staff processes described above, as Jennifer's university operates a responsive model while the partner institution, which hosts the speakers, adopts a predictive one, requiring speakers to be cleared the semester before they are booked to appear). Jennifer describes the approach to her programme as being to 'comfortably make you uncomfortable' and says this is clear in recruitment materials and in interviews, meaning students are aware that this is not a traditional programme.

4.5.6 The domain

History of Art is a discipline that has long undergone conversations about not only curriculum, but teaching, learning and assessment (e.g. Baldwin 2005; Piper 1973; Pollock 2014). Jennifer cites the example of visual tests in which students memorise artefacts and key details, then recite them in exam conditions, a technique that forms the focus of student complaints but is seen as a requirement by academics brought up in the traditions of the domain. Meanwhile, Jennifer describes distinct camps when it comes to approaches such as blended learning, with some colleagues refusing to use the VLE while others embrace it, and ongoing debates over whether copyright issues prevent the recording of lectures which take place without anyone apparently checking what the answer is.

However, Jennifer's specific focus of curatorship occupies a more liberal wing of the domain. She mentions the uncertainty, the collaboration, the international dimension of curatorship practice, and always needing 'a Plan B', and describes a profession that fully embraces new ways of presenting things to the public. It is concept driven, 'malleable, porous, challenging. If it's something that's just toeing the line, I think that's a waste' she says. Ethics and sustainability are evident in the discipline now, thinking about the origin of artefacts as well as the resources taken to transport and display them. In short, she is describing a practical aspect of art history far removed from the more sedate academic approaches of some of her colleagues within the wider discipline, including within her own institution. Her graduates do not go on to work in institutions such as national galleries, but operate in artist-led, workspace environments. In this approach, Jennifer's programme has carved a niche along with a few others compared with more traditional places such as Courtauld Institute of Art. She does not describe this as rivalry or in ideological terms, suggesting that her approach may be at the fringe, but it is welcomed. Jennifer says most international student recruitment is through recommendation, hinting at a developing reputation for the programme, but she is keen to find out what exactly it is.

4.5.7 The person

Jennifer's undergraduate degree is not in a related discipline, although during our discussion it was obvious that it influences her approach to her work which is logical and inquisitive, relying on evidence rather than gut reactions. When discussing the difficult circumstances of her arrival in

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post it is clear this still affects her, but she approaches it rationally and gives ready credit to colleagues for their role in helping during a difficult period. There is a clear contrast in her career path with the other case study subjects with non-academic roles in Africa, a change of discipline for her PhD, and a return to Africa for a post-doc project before being recruited to her current role.

Jennifer sees her career as developing in her current institution, but not within the PL role even though she claims to 'love' it. While she has no immediate plans to move on from the job, her ambitions focus on research and building research networks in disciplinary and geographical areas not currently associated with the domain. Research is the key to her career progression, regardless of her love of the teaching.

4.5.8 The creative process

Approaching this project, the initiating factor was both extrinsic (the examiner reporting on perceived issues) and intrinsic (Jennifer and Phoebe mindful of the need to be more flexible in the form of submissions). The solution (negotiated submissions) appears to have been arrived at very quickly and is not in itself innovative ('learning contracts' have a long history (e.g. Richardson 1987)) and thus are likely to have been an obvious development. The PLs did not undertake any research on practices in the domain beyond their own school – for example, they did not investigate what similar programmes in other institutions did, or models from other disciplines. Instead their focus was internal, looking at what colleagues within their own school did perhaps with an eye to being

different from their existing practice, but fitting in to accepted bounds. However, when pressed Jennifer could not explain why their review had been limited other than time constraints which meant that intended discussions with colleagues had not happened – and this is an important factor in this case as the changes needed to be implemented within two semesters to be able to brief students and staff before the final third semester began. Time was the only real resource required for these changes and while Jennifer admits that they were 'rushed', they could not have waited: 'this term would have been harder if they hadn't been done… we should have started a bit earlier' but the lack of availability of the external examiner (see below) was an unavoidable issue in developing the plans.

Lack of time was not the only reason discussions did not take place: Jennifer felt she and her Phoebe were good constructive critics and able to speak openly, bouncing ideas off one another and bringing different experiences to bear. Jennifer spoke of potentially feeling lost if her colleague was unavailable for some reason but was confident that she would be able to turn to others in her home department, her line manager, and academics in a cognate discipline if the need arose. However, having her 'other half' meant there was no need to do this. Skills-wise the two complemented one another well: 'Phoebe enjoys the fine detail, I enjoy working with language … turns of phrases', and while her colleague's ability to navigate institutional requirements is something she believes will come to her 'with time', Jennifer values the ability to be able to explain dry concepts in a way that makes sense to people. Phoebe has also

noted that since her arrival there is less formality, a bigger emphasis on communication and 'opening up' among students and staff, and a sense of personalness that matches the description Jennifer gave of her relationship with colleagues across the university.

As a shared programme, it is overseen by a Joint Board at which the examiner's comments were discussed along with proposed changes. However, Jennifer says this was not an in-depth experience, only briefly discussing the idea of changing the assessment criteria. More useful was the opportunity to share the problems of being a PL for a shared programme with others in the same situation and discussing problems such as monitoring student projects that are offsite. This opportunity does not arise very often. Beyond this, no support or advice was offered by the board, and there was no review process beyond reporting on ongoing actions.

In this case study the external examiner clearly played an important role – he had pointed out the issue of parity of treatment of different forms of submission in his previous report, effectively 'giving permission' for Jennifer and her colleague to tackle an issue they had observed for themselves. But during our interview it became clear that Jennifer felt the examiner was going beyond his duties in his oversight of the process. While the official guidance on the use of external advice provides a broad definition of the role of examiner (Quality Assurance Agency 2018b), Jennifer's experience was uncomfortable (he was 'a tough cookie' and 'difficult') and she described his input as one of approval rather than

advice, with examples of 'overreach' that undermined her colleague and predecessor. The examiner was not from an academic background being a curator from overseas and was out of touch for a significant period during the changes due to personal circumstances. The response from the examiner was the central 'risk' reported by Jennifer, not knowing if he would approve or not and nervously waiting for his response. Combined with his temporary absence there was an associated risk that the changes had been left until too late in the year to be completed. However, there was never any doubt in Jennifer's mind that they were doing the right thing and while she describes the changes as effectively being two new lines of writing added to what occurred previously, it is clear that they represented a fundamental rethink of the nature of assessment and of the programme philosophy.

Because there were no amendments to learning outcomes or curriculum, there was no need to have any of the changes formally approved by committees. Students were not formally consulted but were kept informed of the planned changes, the role of the external examiner, and the rationale which was described as a way of helping them undertake a broader range of final projects. Jennifer described positive relationships with the cohort of 18 students and two reps which suggests a level of informality that ensured positive discussions which might not have taken place in a more formal approach.

Although there was no formal piloting of the new criteria, the two programme leaders kept three students in mind during their discussions,

asking themselves how their different submissions would fare given what they knew of their plans, and which aspects of their work would be rewarded (e.g. taking a 'bold' risk that might previously have led to a poor grade) or compensated (e.g. being reflective to the extent that project management suffered).

Overall, Jennifer believes the changes worked but 'I don't see it as a full stop. I would say we're 92% of the way there.' Two categories need 'fine tuning' to reduce overlap between them, and there is a plan to examine whether the number of categories has led to a flattening of grades (the external examiner encouraged a broader use of all grade bands to ensure more Cs and Ds, but Jennifer is certain the distribution was a fair representation of the quality of submissions). Generally, Jennifer is keen to keep her practice and programme under constant review: 'I just think we never need to go stale and just keep an eye on everything'. Evidence that the changes worked comes from professional judgement, and positive comments from the external examiner. But because each cohort changes so much from year to year, Jennifer is reluctant to compare grades to determine if they point to a positive impact, a point that separates her from her external examiner who emphasised the need to achieve a 'spread' of grades.

4.5.9 The experience of being creative

At the time of the 'hostile' examiner's suggestion that a change was needed in assessment, Jennifer's initial reaction was calm, 'we didn't feel anxious or any sense of pressure': they had plenty of time as nothing was

required until the third semester. However, there was a self-questioning of 'have we not been fair?' which they quickly answered positively, but this was replaced by a worry that the perception of others was that they had practiced partiality to some students. Jennifer's response was particularly negative because it reinforced her perspective on the examiner, and she felt as though his points were aimed at her as a young, inexperienced academic. There was a conflict between the anger at being in effect slandered in the way the point had been expressed publicly, and agreement with the general principle that assessment should reward a range of submission types.

During the process of working on the changes with her colleague she describes 'riffing' on ideas, sharing documents by email and meeting up for discussions, something she calls a 'pleasure'. Returning to the examiner, receipt of a positive email from him led to sense of relief after a period of tense waiting. Using the end result to discuss student work was useful and while the meaningful discussions about students' work continued, there was greater agreement over grades with less time spent haggling.

At the time of the interview, a few days after the exam board, Jennifer said she felt eager, optimistic, and confident. Completing these changes has answered some of the issues of ambiguity about her programme leadership role and focused it away from 'poring over a course document' and translating to practical aspects.

Jennifer considers herself a creative person 'in most of what I do'. She goes on to describe without prompting 'novelty, giving birth to something, growing something, nurturing … a feminine way to the way I work … creating a fecund environment for growth'. She agrees she is not averse to taking risks and that her career to date is a testament to this. But while she recognises a creative element to the changes we discussed, she says it was 'embedded in a very bureaucratic structural … form', suggesting she does not see it as a creative process at all. But for students it ultimately provided 'a strong foundation for creating something new or unusual, something that contributes to the field, something we have not seen'. The creativity for her was in 'translation' of dry bullet points into an inspiring brief for students.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter I discuss the key issues raised by the case studies and connect them to research questions and the literature review (illustrated in Figure 5-1) to identify areas where they add to, or challenge earlier ideas of creativity and its practice in HE. In the final chapter I reflect on the efficacy of the research methods, and the researcher, in identifying these.

Original questions	Key factors from the literature	Revised questions	General observations from the interviews
What factors enable and disable creativity within organisations, and within universities in particular?	Influence of field and domain especially beyond the institution.	How do factors such as the field, domain and person interact to inform, shape or inspire creativity?	Subjects appeared distanced from their field – immediate colleagues or wider field.
	Too much focus on short term innovation (product) without fostering creativity (process)		Several appeared to be operating in areas that were undervalued (e.g. social medicine, contemporary artistic practice, enterprise).
			High levels of support from outside the immediate work environment (e.g. industry) or other domains.
	Extrinsic motivation a 'creativity killer'	Where does the inspiration to be creative come from? Is it intrinsic or extrinsic?	Few obvious attempts to learn from others (e.g. through literature, looking for good/existing practice)
			Two subjects initiated their own changes (one to cope with changing circumstances, one to address an identified issue), two were forced to, and the fifth was a mixture of self-identified and prompted by the external examiner.
	Organisation culture needs to foster creativity (enable experimentation, provide resources, offer support and feedback) and not limit it through excessive regulation of activities.		Intrinsic motivation can often be a defensive response to external drivers.
			Managers were often absent or disinterested, which enabled subjects to proceed without interference.
		Are QA and managerialism a dominant factor and does it support or discourage creativity?	In two cases changes were initiated by management against wishes of subjects but they were subsequently left alone and with little guidance.

In what ways do academics practice creativity when engaged in developing courses/ modules and other enhancement activities/ processes?

Collegiate environment is essential – trust, respect, support.

Ownership of curriculum is important – evidence that individual academics 'conform' to consensus and adhere to tradition.

Perception of management and procedural control is high – however academics create their own limiting environment.

Organisation culture needs to foster creativity (enable experimentation, provide resources, offer support and feedback) and not limit it through excessive regulation of activities.

'Best practice' restrains rather than inspires. Often non-transferable.

Lack of time to develop ideas – often responding quickly to events rather than planning.

Algorithmic approaches stifle creative approaches.

Quality assurance approaches are risk averse.

Little evidence of evaluation of creativity/ innovation – activity valued over impact.

Departmental structure does not align to support development of teaching but 'control' of functions (e.g. finance, IT, HR, QA).

What process do academics follow when being creative? (is there 'a process' at all?)

What contributions do skills, attitudes and resources (including colleagues) make, if any?

Is the experience of being creative a positive or a negative one for academics in HE?

No consistent process.

Low levels of evaluation evident from institution, domain/field or the subject themselves.

Lots of 'reinventing the wheel' evident due to failure to engage with pedagogical literature and the academic community.

Personal experience is important to each subject – each defines themselves by this (e.g. industry experience, outsider status, professional practice).

Some of the activity was highly risky with the potential impact falling on students rather than the academics.

All subjects demonstrated strong personalities and expressed personal values that drove or protected them.

Role of personal values appears crucial to each case.

Being well networked is a clear advantage and more likely to bring support and assistance.

Most of the subjects noted that they were operating out of their comfort zones and had to acquire skills along the way. In one case, the solution being pursued (eLearning for medical education) came from a position of no experience.

Generally negative experiences but with moments of optimism and then relief. Notable that none of the cases were particularly 'positive' in origin.

All examples were 'big' projects – even CS5 which did not require much change. The effort involved arguably made them bigger than they needed to be if the approach had been different.

Figure 5-1: Development of insights from original questions, literature review and interviews

5.1 Factors enabling/disabling creativity

Three key factors are evident from the case studies that contribute at an institutional level to the enabling or disabling of creativity among academics.

Factor
1 Creative academics may experience a degree of separation from their domain/field, and/or operate in undervalued subdomains.
2 Creativity is enabled by uninterested or preoccupied managers and institutions but limited through their lack of involvement.
3 There is a lack of time and support for idea generation, experimentation, and iteration.

5.1.1 Separation from the domain
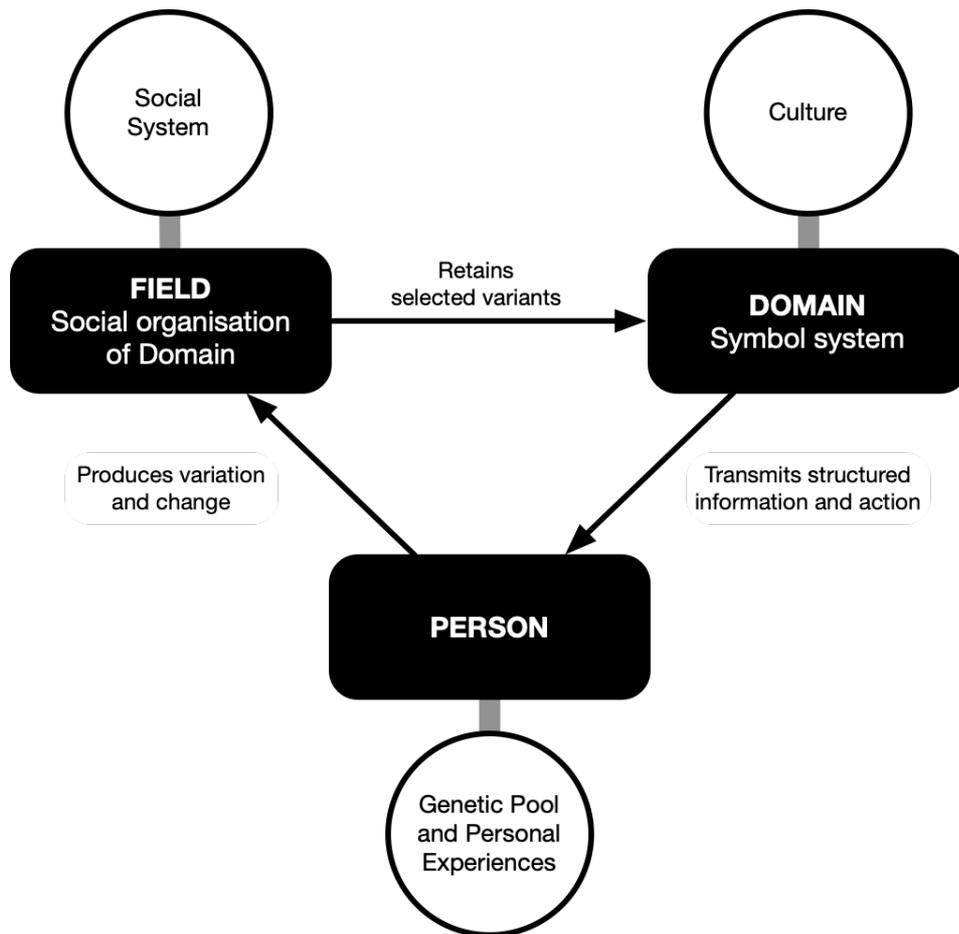
Figure 5-2: Csikszentmihalyi's system model of creativity

Csikszentmihalyi's system model of creativity emphasises the interrelationship between field, domain and individual as a motivator of creativity (the desire to be accepted by the field, or to change the domain), a source of creativity (thinking or practice by the field or domain that stimulates evolutionary or radical change) and ultimately the arbiter of creativity (it needs to be accepted by the field, implemented, and change the domain in some way). In this model the individual is not simply an actor but a director, with their personal experiences being key to creative motives. In this study I was expecting awareness of current and evolving

practice within the domain to figure highly, and for subjects to be motivated in the ways described by Csikszentmihalyi. This was especially the case given the observations of Hannan and Silver (2000) regarding the constraints on innovation caused by research-focused career paths and disciplinary (or domain) loyalty. However, in each of the case studies there was an element of involuntary or voluntary separation from the home domain and its field. CS1 and CS2 experienced a level of hierarchical separation as colleagues did not perceive their areas of interest to be valuable. This derived partly from their focus on teaching but also because their curriculum focus was seen as settled, with both pointing out that the exciting developments were happening elsewhere. In medicine, research and surgical practice are more prestigious than social medicine, and this message is communicated to students who are encouraged to focus on those areas. In linguistics, the practice of language therapy has, according to CS2, not changed much in the last two decades and she described herself as a practice-oriented individual within a research-oriented department, determined to ensure they turn out good practitioners while her colleagues are less invested in what happens after graduation as they are judged on research outputs. For CS3, her location in a computing department caused the isolation from her home domain of animation/SFX practice, and for CS4 by the dispersal of entrepreneurship education via its diminished status as a service subject to other disciplines. CS5 defines her interest differently from that of her colleagues (contemporary rather than historical practice). It was not entirely clear if her immediate colleagues were uninterested in her focus or whether she was uninterested in theirs, however the result was the same.

The result of this separation is analogous to the observations made by Darwin in the Galapagos Islands: the separation from domain and field *facilitates* evolutionary and even revolutionary change, but it also *necessitates* it as a means to survive. CS1 and CS2 felt able to make changes because they believed colleagues viewed them as inferior and left them alone, but they also felt threatened and pressured to improve their situation. CS3 and CS4 were clearly under threat and responded by the application of creativity to adapt to their situation but also (especially for CS4) to adapt the environment to suit her preferred situation. CS5 did not feel threatened but certainly felt more able to evolve her domain by utilising the distance between her and her cognate colleagues and their practices.

5.1.2 Uninterested managers and institutions

Given the descriptions of management evident in the literature (e.g. Filippakou & Tapper 2008; Harvey 2005; Harvey & Knight 1996; Jessop *et al* 2012), I was expecting a greater role for certain departments (especially Quality Assurance), strict processes (e.g. for approval of changes), and domineering line management. However, supporting the suggestions by Christie and Jurado (2009) and Horsburgh (2010) that management and QA requirements are exaggerated in the literature, they were largely absent here unless I brought them up; even when discussed, their direct role in creativity was minimal. Indeed, in some cases it is arguable that a greater presence might have helped with the creative process.

CS1 initially described her manager as helpful and supportive, by ushering the proposed changes through what was a very informal process, but as we spoke the more it appeared that her proposal passed because it was of little interest to those hearing about it. CS2 was less guarded, insisting that management had more important things to concern them which allowed her to do what she wanted. She claimed not to discuss her ideas with her head of department not because he might stop them but because 'what would be the point?'

CS3 and CS4 had a different relationship with management who initiated the changes they were asked to make with little explanation or engagement and with requirements that were difficult for them to accept. This fits descriptions in the literature of management involvement but in both cases, there was no follow-up, no scrutiny of work in progress, and no real involvement in refining the eventual results which were accepted without much comment. CS3 experienced several changes in direct line management with no continuity.

Subjects increasingly described feeling lost or uncertain during the creative process. It is telling that this was often a self-criticism as in 'I didn't know what to do' rather than 'nobody helped me'. CS1's proposed change was not a minor one and represented an unusual way of teaching on a programme that had remained largely unchanged for some time. It is not unreasonable to expect a prestigious medical school to approach it with some care, investment, and interest. CS2 was also making changes to the way in which her course was assessed. In my experience at other

universities, something like this would require a certain level of approval and testing, even in the most experimental of environments. Here, the lack of management involvement at even an informal level led to a highly risky approach, and a lack of resource-based support that would have helped everyone. CS3 and CS4 complained about being asked to do things without being told the criteria on which they would be judged. For CS3, the judgement would come at the end, too late to make any changes, while for CS4 there was regular reporting to management, but feedback was limited, largely because the people offering the feedback had no domain-level knowledge of her subject and so focused on structure rather than content. For CS5 the lack of involvement of managers and other departments such as QA meant young and inexperienced staff were being led, inappropriately, by the external examiner to whom managers seemed to defer at the final approval stage despite a lack of pedagogical experience on his part and guidelines on the role and responsibilities of the examiner.

This finding presents a more complex picture than that suggested by Amabile (1997) where lack of manager interest is seen as an inhibitor of creativity. While it certainly affects the efficacy of creativity as shown above, it is notable that it also created the situation that allowed academics to initiate their projects (CS1 and CS2), or ensure their own ideas were not squeezed by management directions (CS3 and CS4).

5.1.3 No time or culture for experimentation or iteration

The 'four Ps of creativity' (Rhodes 1961) feature to one extent or another in each of the case studies. Although the format of the interview began by asking subjects to describe the product (the change or enhancement they had made), and then teased out the relationship between the other three elements, it was clear in the conversations that in those cases where the change was initiated by others (CS3, CS4 and CS5) the end product was the key focus with little interest from those others in how they were produced. CS3, for example, was told to rewrite her programme with a set of strictures (most clearly, remove the 'creativity') but was left to work out for herself the best approach to do this, and to understand the expectations in terms of process. CS4 was given a set brief; how she got there was of little interest to her briefers. CS5, while a willing participant in developing a new approach to assessment, had three 'clients': the two partner institutions and her external examiner. The lack of a formal or even informal process meant that the examiner was providing effective deadlines during the project, with an immovable institutional deadline looming in the background.

Most importantly, there is little time given to developing a deep understanding of the problem being tackled. This is true of the individuals concerned and is discussed in the next section, but it is particularly problematic at the institutional level in each case. CS1 is facing a number of issues that affect the student experience, and the cohesion of the whole programme, with the result that her area of interest appears largely irrelevant, something that has to be done to 'tick a box' but that is not

valued by colleagues or, eventually, students. This appears to be a significant issue, but it is one she and her colleague are tackling alone, rather than being encouraged by others. Instead she is attempting to make a radical change in a short space of time, relying only on her personal understanding of the problem. The same issue occurs in each of the case studies: a reliance on individuals' prior experiences and *in situ* understanding rather than time to understand and define properly the issues being faced. A radical change such as that planned for CS4 seems to derive from a structural understanding of the university in which a combined, cross-disciplinary service course fits a timetabling and physical resource model, but without any apparent modelling of what this would mean in practice, and how it affects learning and understanding of the subject. It is a cultural change as much as a structural one, but the understanding of this has been gained in its implementation rather than in the planning stages of the creative process.

In each of the case studies, lack of time occurred repeatedly as a factor affecting academics' responses to their situation, or the way in which they approached their work. Aspects such as idea generation and experimentation did not take place in the way suggested by process models of creativity, and there was little opportunity or desire for iteration. In every case, the 'solution' was arrived at quickly and often seemed to frame part of the problem description (E.g. Instead of noting that linguistics students lack practice in transcribing children's speech, CS2 noted that students need to watch videos and be assessed online. The solution then became the problem, whereas it might have been one of

several possible approaches). Exploration of different options, or of existing practice, was limited in all cases, with some subjects claiming not to know where they might find examples of what others had done. For both CS1 and CS2, there is a substantial body of experience in HE that might have been useful to them but for both they were 'reinventing the wheel' unaware it already existed. CS2's solution to her problem was creative by the standards of her department, but not the discipline itself (Cherney 2008; Oosthuizen 2019), and despite her assertion to the contrary, there is a library of video case studies available for language therapists to use (Cox 2011), and a literature on the method (e.g. Cox & Lum 2004), all of which could be found (as I did) via a simple search online. CS3 was keen to look at other models of programme structure in her domain but was pressured to mount an internal defence of her discipline and its ethos given the time allowed. CS4 was able to bring her knowledge of current industry and HE practice to bear on her work, but as the structure of the new model was predetermined by management the purpose was to make it work rather than examine and recommend alternative approaches. CS5 had a deadline based on the current academic year, both in terms of delivery of the amended course and the committee calendar for approval, which curtailed her investigations.

The lack of connection with other institutions and the colleagues within them is similar to the local-interest focus identified by Skelton and Higgins (2002) in their overview of National Teaching Fellows in the early days of that scheme. There was also a lack of engagement by subjects with subject associations. Even though some subjects mentioned being HEA

Fellows, none used their fellowship and the networks it offered to develop their ideas. The reason for and extent of this varies: CS2, for example, networks both internally and externally but does not seem interested in repeating other's work or building on it. CS1, by comparison, despite being interested in pedagogy, expresses ignorance about where she might find examples of similar work. She attributes this to a simple lack of time, rather than a lack of interest, which is also true of CS5.

In all cases there was no attempt to test or prototype the proposals before implementation. In CS1 the change was still to be introduced at the time of interview, but it would not be tested in advance. Similarly, for CS2 the first test of the new assessment system was an actual examination, with technical issues being discovered and fixed while students waited. CS3 was able to give drafts of her proposals to others but the focus was on 'will it be approved?' rather than 'will it work?' and a lot of time was spent explaining project-based assessment to colleagues who only understood exams. CS4 and CS5 also tested their solutions 'live'; for CS4 it might have been possible to pilot the model in one department or across a few programmes, but management dictated that it should be a 'big bang' change. CS5 might have considered looking at previous students' submissions to see what effect the new assessment criteria may have had but did not consider it.

Another aspect of the creative process missing in the case studies is the use of iteration to improve an idea, even after a solution has been implemented fully. CS2 was uninterested in fixing issues with her solution

and had already moved on to the next challenge. CS3 faced having to begin the rewriting and validation process from scratch before the outcome from the first revalidation had been evaluated (but resigned instead). CS4 is keen to build on the first experiences but has found that time, physical resources, and staffing make this impossible, with all effort focused on 'firefighting'. CS5 is the most open to tweaking the criteria she wrote with her colleague and has identified areas to look at again.

Based on subjects' reported experiences, each institution in these cases is failing to provide a culture of creative change. Bharadwaj and Menon (2000) point out that for organisations to change they should not rely purely on individual creativity but provide formal processes that promote creative behaviour. Puccio and Cabra (2010) suggest that leadership is a 'potent variable' in creating this environment. None of the cases took place within a formal framework; even CS3 and CS5, which both took place against a background of approval processes, happened in a procedural limbo. CS3 had to find out for herself what requirements she had to meet – there was, for example, no assigned liaison from the quality office or registry to work with her, and successive heads of school took no formal role in guiding the process that she and colleagues were required to undertake. CS5 had no more than a date to have changes approved by, with no support offered by her institution. Lack of clarity on assignments and lack of interest by management in the work are common here, resulting in a lack of 'meaningful work' (Amabile & Gryskiewicz 1989) even in self-initiated change such as CS1 and CS2. Although both these subjects described 'freedom' in what they were doing and a lack of

pressure, I would argue both would have benefited from at least some form of interest and support from managers or, at least, input from a critical friend.

Together, these issues lead to a conclusion that each of these five case studies, while demonstrating creativity, took place in an environment that was not itself creative and therefore 'succeeded' despite, rather than because of, the institution. We can only guess what the results might have been if each organisation's 'motivation to innovate' (Amabile 1997) had been matched by its creative culture.

5.2 How do academics practice creativity?

Factors evident in the behaviour of creative academics

1   Self-initiated change is recalled as 'Big-C' rather than 'little-c' events.

2   Creative academics build on personal experience, but not shared practice from the literature.

3   Support is sought from outside the immediate work environment and other domains.

4   Solutions often require the application of new skills or exploration of new areas of knowledge/practice, though this might limit the scope of what is attempted.

5   There are low levels of evaluation and a reliance on gut instinct, with little time for reflection.

6   Strong personalities and values drive creativity.

7   High levels of intrinsic motivation are evident, even if only as a form of 'defence' against an extrinsic push to change.

8   Academics report generally negative experiences of being creative, punctuated by optimism and leading to eventual relief at success or conclusion.

Figure 5-3: The creative academic: factors evident in the five case studies

There are eight key observations regarding the experience of being a creative academic drawn from the five case studies (Figure 5-3) and while no claim can be made that these are representative of academic practice generally, they offer points that might be investigated further to establish whether these aspects might be found more widely.

5.2.1 Big-C and little-c creativity and change

Kleiman's finding that academics seemed reluctant to claim as creative anything that was not 'earth shattering' (2007a) is reflected in this study. Subjects were not asked to discuss something they deemed creative, with the term only being introduced towards the end at which point the focus was not on whether they thought the product was creative but whether they considered the process they followed to be creative.

The point made by Smith-Bingham (2006) that innovation and the creativity that underpins it is not necessarily 'radical, disruptive and paradigm shifting' is underlined here. The five case studies represent quite different examples of creativity in academic practice but are by no means typical of every form of creative practice one might have expected to see. For example, none of the subjects described a scenario regarding individual students (e.g. changing a form of assessment due to a disability), making a change to a class because of a room booking error, changing the topic of a lecture to reflect a news story. Instead, they focused on 'big' changes, ones they could recall at once when asked, and which were similar to the taxonomy of innovations found by Hannan and Silver (2002). On reflection, the decision to let subjects choose their incident is likely to have led to this result but it does demonstrate that, even though the word 'creativity' was not used in the invitation or initial questions, the word 'change' might also have 'Big-C' and 'little-c' aspects with a change being conceived as something major. In retrospect using words such as 'enhancement' or even 'tweak' might have been a better way to proceed. It would be interesting to research in future if little-c

changes are more or less affected by issues such as QA, work environment, personality and so on.

5.2.2 Importance of personal past experience

The gestalt theory of creativity suggests that people use their experiences and thoughts to form a sense of what is possible, in response to a perceived problem (Gorny 2007). In this approach, creativity is not the result of a flash of inspiration but of experiences often unrelated to the problem at hand, combined with a wider 'direction of travel' in thinking among groups or organisations (Ellen 1982). This approach to creativity is evident in four of the case studies, and in no examples was the problem at hand approached in what might be termed an objective, 'scientific' manner as might be suggested by the educational innovation literature discussed above. This helps to explain why each subject arrived at their solution so quickly: they were aware, even if at a low level, of ready-made answers. CS1 embraced an approach that made use of eLearning although her own experience of it was limited, because she was aware of its use in other contexts. CS2 appeared highly motivated to modernise her department and not be left behind others where online examinations were in use. In her case, she was additionally motivated to do it better than, and differently from, disciplines that she believed were more favoured by the university. CS3 appealed to thinking from industry to build a case for preserving aspects of her programme's delivery, assessment, and values. CS4 recognised that as much as she regretted the direction of travel in the delivery of her subject, it fitted within the bigger picture and that her (and her colleagues') energy would be better spent swimming with the

proverbial tide than against it. CS5 is the exception and one explanation for this underlines the role that the gestalt plays in creativity in the others: CS5 is new in post and new to the problem. She brings with her no preconceptions either of existing or developing practice. There is little to push against, and she is subject to few influences. She does, however, recognise a 'bad gestalt' (Gorny 2007), or a situation that is broken and, therefore, a problem that needs to be fixed. Her approach is similar to others and returns us to the role of domains and sub-domains, and their related fields.

Each of the subjects had an interesting backstory, and while some authors (e.g. Clark 1987) suggest that this has no bearing on the discipline, creativity theories and the experience-based approach to this research place great importance on what happens before the creative act. Early biographical approaches to understanding creativity focus on key moments in the life of individuals, but more recently interest has broadened to look not so much at what has shaped an individual, but the results of that shaping: so prior experiences are important but so are values, principles, skills, and experiences. CS1, CS2 and CS5 all arrived in their current post via circuitous routes: CS1 and CS2 were researchers in cognate areas to their current curriculum focus, and both describe themselves as recent converts to pedagogy after focusing on research, which leads to a high level of critique of existing practice. CS1 was a student at her current university and on her return years later expressed shock that nothing much had changed. CS2 brought a practice-oriented view of linguistics to her teaching which revealed mismatches between

assessment and what she believed they should be aiming to have students do. CS3's industry experience clearly influences her approach to teaching her subject and her response to attempts to force change on the programme, but her portfolio career including a period in architecture means that she understands the importance of structure and specifications. This meant she could argue her case but using language that others understood and appreciated. CS4's role as a director in a family firm is a major contributor to her view on entrepreneurship not just as a concept in itself but as a mindset. She is the longest-serving academic in this study and has spent her entire academic career at one institution, meaning she brings a knowledge of her department's history and uses personal anecdotes to illustrate her belief that student attitudes are changing. Her experience also brings a level of pragmatism which influences her approach to the task she was given. CS5, despite being the youngest of the subjects, brings a varied background including the study of law, international experience, practical experience of her subject, and a willing embrace of uncertainty. Like CS3 she makes use of the multiple perspectives and does not see disciplinary boundaries in the way others might, happily engaging with colleagues in other departments and looking at what they do.

5.2.3 The influence of domains and sub-domains
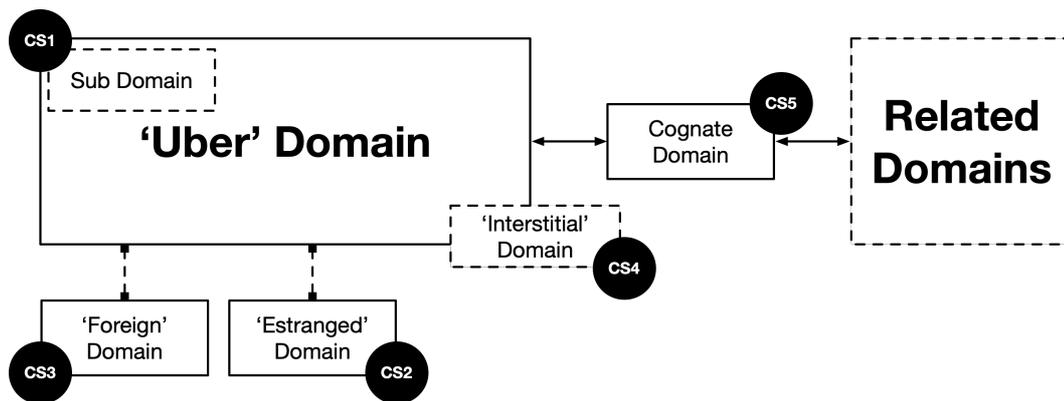
Figure 5-4: The domain ecosystem?

Each of the case studies was notable for the distance between the individual and their domain and field. It is clear that the concept of a domain as described by Csikszentmihalyi is too abstract, especially in HE where an academic may simultaneously belong to the domains and fields of practitioner, researcher, and teacher, each with its own habitus, as well as potentially occupying a particular tradition within their academic domain. CS1 and CS2, for example, both identify strongly as researchers-turned-teachers and use this to distinguish themselves from their colleagues and to explain tensions that might exist in their relationships. Less obvious from the outside, but clear to the subjects, is the existence of subdomains (such as the socially-oriented medical practitioner working alongside clinically oriented colleagues in the overarching domain of 'medicine', and the language therapist working in the domain of 'linguistics'), cognate domains (CS5's curatorship of living artists sitting alongside academics focused on past practice), and estranged domains (animation and computing for CS3) (as speculated in Figure 5-4). To a

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large extent, this tension provides creative impetus but also leads to a sense of operating 'under the radar' and in secret. In several case studies, it also leads to individuals seeking ideas, support, and feedback from entirely different domains or fields. CS2 appears to have a stronger relationship with pedagogically minded colleagues from other disciplines than those in her home department (even though she is the programme leader). She describes a level of freedom in the discussions she has with these other colleagues that she would not get from those in more immediately cognate areas. CS3 seeks support from elsewhere in her university rather than her department and as a result, builds a strong network and a positive reputation that serves her well. CS5 describes how she spends much of her time with colleagues in performance-related departments rather than her immediate colleagues in art history and identifies more strongly with them as she views curatorship of living artists as a type of performance. Stepping outside of the home domain brings exposure to a range of practices and thinking or alternative forms of habitus that might not exist in their disciplines.

5.2.4 Time constraints lead to shallow understanding

The literature identifies that resources are a significant limit on creativity in HE (Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Clouder *et al* 2008; Gibson 2010; McWilliam & Dawson 2008). While Amabile's model recognises time as a key resource, it is the way it is spent that contributes most to the creative process. The typical process model suggests individuals and groups spend time trying to understand a problem and then explore potential solutions

before selecting one. These processes are absent to some extent in each of the case studies.

CS1 and CS5 demonstrated the deepest understanding of the problem they faced, at least for students, while CS2 and CS4 described the problem from the perspective of their disciplines, and as one of strained relationships. CS3 and CS4 were tackling problems caused by others, rather than existing ones they saw themselves. In all cases, there was no attempt to understand the problem other than by rationalising based on their own experiences. Students, the key stakeholders, were uninvolved and in CS1 and CS2 there was a level of secrecy to activities based on assumptions about what colleagues or managers might say.

This lack of rumination was reflected in the arrival at potential solutions. CS1 was able to list alternatives to what was eventually tried, such as shifting the course to a different time of year or reducing the amount of simulation. These were quickly dismissed, which was understandable but which, if approached differently, may have led to alternative approaches (the constraints generating creative responses). The solution of eLearning seemed to be a foregone conclusion led by her colleague. CS2 also arrived at her solution quickly with alternative approaches dismissed. CS4 had her solution presented to her.

The absence of exploration of alternatives is notable: creativity depends on the exploration of alternative, and variations on, ideas – so-called 'divergent thinking' – and its absence is a major weakness in each of the cases discussed here. Additionally, there was no evidence of piloting

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ideas, even through inference from the work of others. For example, as already mentioned, CS2's approach to video-based case studies had been attempted by others and accessing literature or speaking to colleagues in other institutions may have helped her avoid some of the issues she encountered. Additionally, being able to show what others had done to her internal technical support department may have helped them help her better. Testing the eventual solution 'live' on an examination without trying it first with a small group to reveal issues represented an enormous risk.

In some of the cases, the lack of exploration and prototyping is a result of deadlines presented by the institution and/or the academic year. CS1 began work on her idea immediately after the prior year's presentation and had nine months to complete it. CS2 set her own deadline, while CS3 and CS4 were given very brief periods to complete their work. CS5 was tasked with making her changes in time for the beginning of the third semester of her Masters programme which, given the scope of the changes and the lack of committee scrutiny should have been a generous amount of time, but the project relied on one person (the external examiner) for approval and he was unavailable for some time. Yet while the root cause of the lack of time and the lack of a culture of exploration and experimentation lies with the organisation, several of the case studies had no real desire to undertake such activities. CS2 was the clearest on this – once she had decided on the plan, nothing could get in the way.

5.2.5 Skills do not limit ambition, but may limit results

The skills, knowledge and experience of individuals are a contributor to the vision and success of a creative act, something emphasised in Amabile's componential model. These skills may be abstract such as openness to new ideas, and being comfortable with risk, while others are more concrete such as the ability to carry out a key procedure. Someone might be creatively minded with an exciting idea for a phone app, but if they have little or no programming skills, or they lack experience, their ability to realise the idea is severely limited – it remains just an idea. In Amabile's model, this would be mitigated by being part of an environment where skills can be shared or developed through collaboration in a team.

In each of the case studies, existing skillsets, and experience – or rather, lack of them – appear not to be a factor in shaping what subjects do: each proceeds with their plans despite having little to no experience in important aspects. CS1 lacks experience with eLearning and practical skills but possesses the enthusiasm to 'give it a go' and relies on her colleague's apparent experience to make up for her own lack. She has access to an institutional resource in the shape of an educational technology team based within her school. CS2 is similarly learning as she goes, more independently than CS1. She also has access to a specialist team, but they are less of a resource than in CS1, with their own institutional commitments. Here, the subject's enthusiasm and self-motivation mean she sees a lack of skills as a challenge to overcome rather than a reason not to proceed. CS3 and CS5 both profess to a lack of

experience and worry that this means they may make mistakes. However, both are motivated to the extent that they find ways to overcome this: CS3 makes connections with colleagues in QA to find answers to her questions, and with programme leaders in other disciplines who confirm her apprehension is not unique to her, which gives her confidence. CS5 is driven by a creative vision and buoyed by her relationship with her co-convenor and supported by her extended network within her university. CS4, who of all the subjects has the longest period of experience in her role, talks openly of how she makes use of skills she has been developing since being 'in the playground' at school, in particular people skills.

So, each of the case studies has personal attributes that contribute to their creative thinking and support them through an often-difficult process, as well as a readiness to develop the skills where they are lacking. However, it is obvious that in most there are skills gaps that limit the ambition or effectiveness. In CS1 the subject appears to be less in control of the project than she would like to be because she is not aware of what is possible either technologically or feasibly. CS2 seems unwilling to learn from others' experience and as a result is starting from further behind than she needs to be, and while she believes she is being ambitious others are further ahead. Similarly, CS5 is limited in her ambitions by a lack of experience but in her case, she is also unsupported by her institution(s) who could be more involved in her plans.

5.2.6 Lack of evaluation and reflection

The impact of time constraints on the preparatory and exploratory stages of the creative process is discussed above. Time constraints are also a factor in the final stages too, leading to a lack of evaluation and reflection on the success or otherwise of the change and, importantly, to a lack of iteration to improve it for next time. However, time is not the only factor here, with most subjects expressing a general lack of interest in any form of evaluation either from themselves (particularly CS2) or from the institution. CS2 was the firmest on this, seeing little worth in objective evaluation. She had not collected feedback from students or considered running a control group. Neither did she compare outcomes from the cohort undertaking the new online test with earlier groups, relying instead on her own memory. However, even this was revealing, in that the failure rate was still high, suggesting the change had not had the effect she had hoped for. Rather than trying to understand why this might be the case, she had already moved on to another problem, leaving her change to continue in its current unfinished and unsatisfactory state. The other subjects were less personally uninterested in evaluation, with each experiencing a lack of institutional interest. CS3 was exasperated that her changes had not been given time to have any effect before her university decided to rewrite programmes once more, and she had decided to leave rather than see her changes through. Although there had been no evaluation of the changes she made, she pointed to a number of indicators that the direction of travel was positive: improved NSS scores, improved module evaluations, a high graduate employment rate, and student-led nominations for university teaching awards. However, she felt these had

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not been considered by management before they decided to impose more changes, and that she was not being trusted to know what she was doing. CS4 felt certain that depending on which measurement was used, the changes that had been introduced had not been successful, but by the key measure (the changes had been made) they had, and these were the ones that mattered to management. Similarly, while CS5 hoped that her changes might continue to be tweaked, there was no institutional interest in what happened next as the action arising from the examiner's comment had been completed. CS1 had not yet implemented her planned changes but had not considered how she might evaluate their success and was not expecting to be asked to report on them to management.

This lack of evaluation also meant a lack of dissemination. CS1 and CS5 were unaware of opportunities to tell people what they had done (which mirrored their lack of awareness of what others had already done). CS2 prepared conference presentations but was uninterested in feedback from others. CS3 was not encouraged to see her work as something she might publish, and CS5 saw her work as personally very important but of little value to her career. CS4, however, had written up her work as a book chapter although it took my questioning to get her to reveal this.

Despite this, it would be wrong to suggest that there was no interest in dissemination on the part of the subjects. Most had not thought there would be any interest but, more importantly, the work they were carrying out was just one of many tasks on which they were working, and the problems they were tackling were temporary in nature – an aspect that

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leads to a sector-wide lack of interest in anything that is not high impact (Hannan & Silver 2002) and a reluctance to disclose details of innovations in a competitive landscape typified, and increased by, processes such as TEF or QA systems that encourage 'conservative practices' (Clouder *et al* 2008: p. 637) and, by extension, encourage keeping quiet about anything vaguely rebellious. While discussing the changes here as case studies imbues a sense of scale and importance, for each subject there was no spotlight and no pause in other activities. Thus, the lack of interest in disseminating their work to others is an indicator of its overall lack of special status, including within their institutions where audit cultures do not reward or take note of such activities (Smith-Bingham 2006).

5.2.7 The role of personalities and values

Unlike psychological approaches to creativity, I did not attempt to undertake a formal profile of the subjects, relying instead on personal judgements based on the interviews and also less-tangible aspects such as emotional response, choice of language etc. Each of the five subjects was different, but reflecting on the interviews I was struck by how clearly each expressed a sense of personal values and vision, a personality aspect of creativity emphasised by Runco (2014b) and observed in academics by Bramwell *et al* (2011). It is values that motivate creativity rather than the urge to be creative but while the best creativity derives from a set goal (Oliver 2002) the most common focus in HE is making do with a less than ideal situation (Bluteau & Krumins 2008; Fill & Ottewill 2006; Russell 2008; Upton & Cooper 2006). This is true of the case studies, but values play a part in the motivation, often articulated through concern for students. All

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were highly motivated by protecting their subdomain or making the case for it (particularly CS1, CS3 and CS4). CS1 talked of how her students might be very interested in her non-clinical approaches to healthcare but were being distracted by examinations and the imminent change of pace on their programme, and by the 'sexiness' of clinical training which her clinical colleagues were also promoting as more important. CS2 saw her students as future practitioners and so favoured an approach that emphasised the practice of language therapy rather than the theory of linguistics. Consequently, she believed she had their best interests at heart even though she admitted they did not share them 'yet'. CS3 was defending a form of creative practice that she felt was more fulfilling for her students than the computer-based practice her university favoured, while CS4 constantly talked about modern students being more demanding in seeking quick returns on their fees and wanted to protect them from themselves. CS5 wanted to capture the excitement of curatorial practice in written form and avoid the dry results of traditional dissertations.

Each of these emphases is different but two aspects are clear: either the better interests of students are tools to protect or promote certain visions of their domain in the face of external attack or indifference, or students are seen as a group who cannot yet know what is best for them and academics are fighting against apathy or complaint to protect what they value, and feel their students will eventually thank them for. It is notable, though, that students were unrepresented in the creative process, often because the bulk of it took place outside term time.

5.2.8 Intrinsic motivation as a defence mechanism

We have seen how intrinsic motivation is seen as a key part of creativity, but in these case studies, the source of motivation is not easy to determine. CS1, for example, appears motivated by her belief in the importance of non-clinical social medicine and her desire to educate a generation of medics who value the role it can play in prevention and treatment of illnesses. But the more we spoke the more it became clear that some of her colleagues' attitudes towards her part of the curriculum, and the change this produced in students as examinations began, presented a threat that was a stronger motivator than her own beliefs. CS3 and CS4 both responded to an external impetus to change and in both cases, they disagreed strongly with the initiative. Yet rather than 'kill' creativity the extrinsic motivation inspired an approach that was moved by a desire to preserve the things they valued. CS3 achieved her goal by building her network of support, learning to speak the correct 'language' of quality assurance, and benefited from management uninterested in details. CS4, however, was unable to prevent the changes but her creativity was employed in making them work as best she could while maintaining the dignity and self-respect of the affected colleagues, a theme she returned to repeatedly in our interview. CS5 expressed a prior interest in implementing changes to assessment and so the extrinsic motivator of criticism from the external examiner and a resulting action from senior management aligned with her own ideas and effectively gave her permission to do something she might otherwise have not felt able to. CS2 cites the move towards MCQs as a primary motivation to develop an alternative approach that meets her own demands but might also satisfy

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management's, before being told to follow 'best practice' from engineering.

What is apparent from the case studies is that the divide between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is not as clear cut as implied by Amabile. Notably, none of the subjects appeared interested in how the activities we discussed would affect their careers. CS3 had used the experience to initiate a career change by moving to another institution, but only CS5 discussed her career ambitions openly, and these were research-oriented; she could not see how her work on changing assessment might contribute to her eventual career goals.

While Amabile revised her earlier and simpler maxim that extrinsic motivation kills creativity so that where it *reinforced* values and beliefs (as in CS5) it has a less negative effect, in these cases extrinsic motivation inspired creativity because it *challenged* those values. Kleiman (2008) found that creativity is not only constrained by institutional culture and resources, but is the direct result of these constraints as 'resistance to compliance and orthodoxy' (p. 212) or simply coping. Or, to repeat the prosaic description by Bramwell *et al* (2011: p. 235), 'the heart of (academics') creativity (lies) in their ability to combine their personal characteristics, particularly intrinsic motivation and values, with the demands placed on them by the communities' in which they work.

5.2.9 The experience of being a creative academic

Finally, and returning to the core of my second research question, is the experience of being a creative academic positive or negative? Bluteau and

Krumins (2008) describe the creative process for academics as 'a self-fulfilling journey that enables the materialisation of increased self-appreciation and value'. Edwards *et al* (2006) describe the excitement of creativity felt by academics but this is not supported in these studies unless the definition of 'excitement' is broad and not entirely positive (after all, when certain elements become excited, they tend to explode). When subjects were asked to describe their process as an emotional journey, the overall message was shared: initial trepidation at the scale of the problem and the prospect of making a change gave way to excitement over moving ahead. During the process, the general sense was one of nervousness and stress about the suitability of the solution (except for CS2 who never doubted it) and the effort involved in completing the necessary work in the time allowed. Finally, each subject shares a sense of relief – nothing even approaching jubilation, simply relief that it is done followed, in most cases, by the reality that other problems beckoned.

The lack of joy, delight, excitement, or pleasure in being creative is a significant factor in all these projects. Disappointingly, while the negative comments found by researchers discussed in the literature review (Clouder *et al* 2008; Craft *et al* 2014; Dawson *et al* 2011; Gibson 2010) are easy to assign to stereotypical 'complaining' academics, it is a concern that they can also be found in individuals who, in other circumstances, would be creative foci within their institution. Each enjoyed the reminiscing and admitted that looking back they got a sense of achievement, but during the process itself their overall emotional state was generally negative. This

is unlikely to have led to best results and shows a key issue with the role of creativity in Higher Education.

However, it should not be forgotten that despite the negative experience during the process, at the end of the interviews each reflected on an increased level of self-confidence even if it had been acquired in negative situations.

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 Rethinking Csikszentmihalyi

Approaching this research, I had assumed that Amabile's process model would be the key guide to organising my thinking and understanding the cases I collected, with Csikszentmihalyi's system model simply being a useful guide to understanding relationships. But as my analysis progressed it became clear that the creativity I was discussing with subjects was less about a process and more about relationships (or lack of them) with others. Of course, we should not confuse 'the model of reality with the reality of the model' (Lane 2000: p. 79): abstract models of creativity such as Csikszentmihalyi's or Amabile's are useful for abstract understanding, but their abstraction means they rarely reflect the complexity of individual cases, something shown by journey mapping and experience research. Amabile's model suggests linearity with experience, skills and knowledge all key variables. While linearity is difficult to find in the examples studied here, the impact of skills, knowledge and experience at different points is evident in the cases, but the variety found in just five case studies demonstrates the value of

approaching the topic from an experiential point of view to avoid an overly positivistic conception of the phenomenon.

The most important finding arising from this study relates to the system model proposed by Csikszentmihalyi. His focus on domain-changing effects emphasises Big-C creativity at the expense of everyday, little-c creativity and while academic research, and the promotion and rewards it leads to, push academics toward domain-level ground-breaking discoveries, the issues dealt with in everyday teaching and learning situations require small-scale, modest, little-c changes, which do not change the domain but essentially keep it running, like tuning an engine. These changes are unrewarded and unrecognised, often even by those involved. Moreover, they are often undertaken secretly, individually, and sometimes nervously, rather than openly, collaboratively, and confidently. While my emphasis up until now on the domain is reflective of the weight subjects gave to this, it is important to recognise the role of the field in shaping the culture that makes up a domain (Martin 2003). The domain is inanimate – it is a body of knowledge and practices – and considered as the 'discipline' it is notable that the subjects discussed their place within it, or questioned which discipline they actually belonged to. Yet it is the field that is made up of people and while less was said about immediate colleagues than the abstract domain (perhaps out of a sense of politeness and professionalism – though as the interviews progressed all subjects became more candid) the relationships that exist between members of the field play an important role in subjects' creativity. For authors such as Bourdieu (1990, 1993) a field is not an homogenous mass, as might be

inferred from a simple reading of Csikszentmihalyi's diagram, but a system of hierarchies. Indeed, Bourdieu's field (*le champ*) is more like a battlefield or playing field than a meadow (Thomson 2008), constituting teams/armies, ranks, rules of engagement, score keeping and settling, and winning and losing[9]. Each field contains specialist subfields operating on a complex set of relationship but each contributing to a sense of private space designed to keep strangers out, and to establish a sense of distinction from other fields (Bourdieu 1984). Some of the subjects described this openly, most obviously CS1 and CS2, but while Csikszentmihalyi's model, which separates the symbolic aspects (the domain) from the social organisation of the field, suggests that creativity is a way in which individuals can progress through the hierarchy or at least gain recognition, none of the subjects I interviewed seemed interested in this, at least from the perspective of teaching and learning. CS1, for example, expressed regret at her position within the hierarchy, but mostly because of the impact she believed it had on students and, ultimately, society, as social medicine was not given the status it deserved and therefore health-related issues that could be prevented were instead being treated. She did not seek to gain acceptance by the wider field, instead she wished her subdomain would gain greater prestige. Even though the case studies here are few, this issue of relationship between individual, field and domain leads to a questioning of Csikszentmihalyi's model, explained by his focus on Big-C creativity which is domain-changing and rare. I would suggest in these cases it does not reflect how creativity happens but

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[9] And behind the generals, masses of ordinary but forgotten people keeping everything sharp and clearing away the mess.

rather what prevents it, and the subjects share a sense of frustration at this which leads to a certain amount of self-isolation from both field and domain. One explanation of this is that Csikszentmihalyi's model does not fit pedagogical practice and this would explain why the domain (or discipline) factored so heavily in the interviews. Trowler (2019) notes that disciplines are widely considered to be the 'central force in generating practices … in teaching' (p. 99), an essentialist position which suggests the field is shaped by the discipline rather than shaping it, and quotes the view of Clark (1987) that the characteristics and experiences of individuals are insignificant. The tribes and territories that form around disciplines are the result of this core set of practices, knowledge, and culture within each discipline (Becher 1989). Ashwin (2012: p. 103) admits that it 'seems possible' that such factors are 'highly significant' in shaping experiences of teaching/learning interactions for academics and students. However, in creativity theory, the individual and their background, values, and skills are of great importance. There is an apparent contradiction in the view of teaching and learning as a domain-led practice and the view offered by seeing it as a creative one which reveals a more complex interplay between the creative academic, their field, and their discipline.

The isolation expressed by the subjects in this study can be understood in this context and is illustrated in Figure 5-4. CS1, for example, approaches medicine as a social practice, one that is based on individual circumstances, contexts, and politics. However, the dominant approach to medicine is scientific, based on hard facts, objective observation, and (for the most part) accepted and settled treatments. Each approach requires

different types of teaching, and different types of learning, but just as her module is beginning, with its focus on empathy and divergent thinking, her students' attention is turning to memorisation for entry in to the 'important' part of the programme. Her discipline is medicine, but it is not the medicine her colleagues understand or value and so she is disconnected (though still 'within' the 'uber-domain'). If she were based in a social medicine department, she might not experience these tensions – but then would there be an impetus to be creative? CS2 positions herself firmly outside her colleagues' domain (she is 'estranged') both within her own department and more widely (she contrasts her assessment needs with the mass approaches she feels are favoured by the institution, for example). In both these cases, the individual's backstory is entirely relevant as it shapes their attitudes and values, and these are clear in their approach to teaching and learning. The issue is rather different for CS3 who is based in a non-cognate department with a culture of teaching that is fundamentally different to her own discipline: exams rather than projects, large group rather than small group teaching, set problems to solve rather than vague topics to explore. She is in a 'foreign' domain to that of her colleagues. CS4 has seen her discipline dissolve during her time in the institution, becoming an 'interstitial' (perhaps even 'vestigial') domain that exists in the gap between others. Rather than simply seeking to preserve a discipline, it is the means by which her values and beliefs are articulated (as demonstrated by the fact that she is willing to try an alternative approach rather than simply insist on keeping her domain separate). She is less wedded to the discipline in the sense discussed by Clark and more concerned with the values it represents. CS5's focus on

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living artists means a distinct set of methods from those of her colleagues whose time is spent in archives and literature, rather than in studios and exhibitions of new work. The tension is different from that of CS1 – respectful and friendly – but it is there and is relieved by avoiding the issue of reconciling different approaches in similar disciplines and instead finding similar approaches in different disciplines. Her domain is cognate to her 'home' domain but also to others and this means she identifies as much as 'performing arts' as with 'art history'.
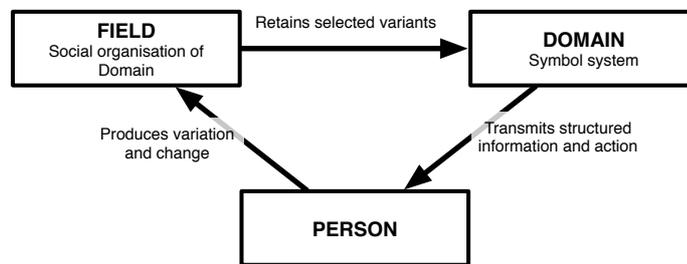

Figure 5-5: Csikszentmihalyi's system model
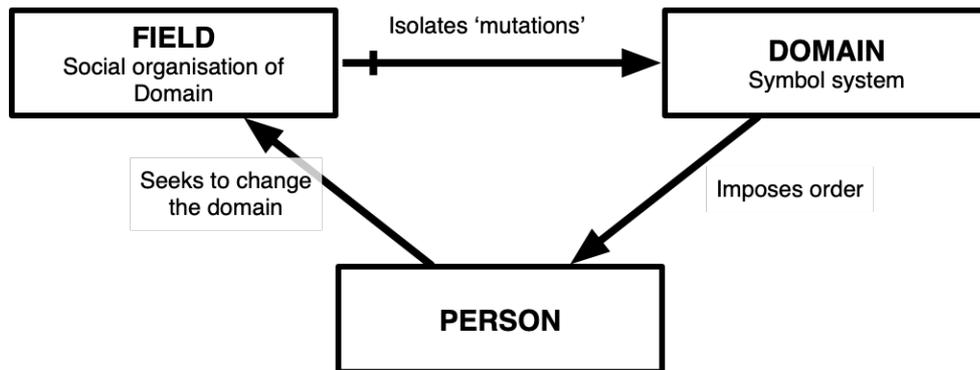
Figure 5-6: Csikszentmihalyi's model through subjects' eyes?

From the point of view of the subjects, Csikszentmihalyi's model (Figure 5-5) might be described more accurately as shown in Figure 5-6 where the role of the field is to support the status quo through isolating mutations in

the form of new or challenging ideas. The consequence is that the subjects occupy a subdomain, or one entirely separate from the domain within which they are expected to reside and seek *ad hoc* and temporary fields to provide topical support (e.g. technical expertise for CS1 and CS2 and procedural advice for CS3). The additional difference in this model is that, certainly in the five cases described here, the lack of dissemination of their work means there is no development of their new domains, and the sessional nature of the field means a poor social structure within which to become established, and to develop a legacy.

5.3.2 Putting creativity ahead of innovation

This thesis began with a discussion of the long-running policy imperatives from government and industry to nurture creativity among students, which is seen widely as an essential requirement for national and corporate success. At the time of writing, much has been made in the media of the innovation taking place in the medical field due to the global pandemic and this has been used by the UK government as a reason to divert funds away from arts and humanities subjects at degree level and instead invest them in STEM subjects. Understandably, this has led to much criticism from those who see this as a lack of understanding of the economic and cultural importance of these 'less important' areas. At the same time, as observed above, there is an increasing gap between our understanding of what it takes to nurture creativity and the conditions in which universities, and academics, find themselves.

For example, we know that creativity requires flexibility, risk-taking, opportunities to learn from and tolerance of failure, time, resources, experimentation, clear shared or respected values, and trust. However, as the literature and the case studies show, these elements are often lacking in universities, or exist despite pressures that might otherwise quash them. Education at all levels has become increasingly regulated, while other sectors of the economy have become less regulated. Curricula are inflexible with universities under threat from the CMA should anything in programme descriptions differ from what was published, regardless of the merits of doing so (Julia, Verity and Jennifer were all operating at the edge of what might be deemed acceptable here, as though their changes appeared to be enhancement-led, they potentially clashed with published descriptors – Jennifer's reliance on her external examiner for 'permission' shows a concern with this, while Julia and Verity were proceeding because their managers appeared uninterested in this aspect of their role). With the increasing regulation comes increasing central control of academics in the guise of quality control, as seen in the cases of Zoe and Lee who both found their subject expertise overridden by centrally-made decisions that favoured conformity over difference and predictability over surprise. In both these cases the response was creative – Zoe found ways to get around the problem by building networks within and outside the institution and relying on lack of interest from management to scrutinise what she was doing; Lee meanwhile used her creativity to make the best of a bad situation and keep as many people happy as possible, even though she believed what was being asked of her and colleagues would be detrimental to students. The conflict here is in differing definitions of

quality – as something that can be controlled, measured and assured, or something that can be enhanced. One leads to creativity as a coping mechanism among academics, the other leads to creativity as a means of innovation (case studies 1, 2 and 5). It is arguable whether universities can be expected to produce creative graduates if the people tasked with doing so are themselves prevented from being creative.

As well as producing graduates with certain attributes linked to creativity, universities have increasingly emphasised, or been expected to demonstrate, innovation as a measure of their own 'excellence', but the threshold for what counts as innovative has not been established resulting in claims of questionable merit. To be innovative *occasionally*, we need to be creative *constantly* but in focusing on metrics and quality assurance, and on careers that reward rare Big-C creativity and general conformity to the cultures and practices of field and domain, the conditions for creativity are limited. Management attention has turned to measuring outcomes and chasing quantitative measures of quality which should, by definition, be evaluated qualitatively. As a result, there is little interest from institutions and their inhabitants in everyday creativity. However, among academics with strong personal values or a sense of disciplinary identity, this absence of interest is not seen as a lack of support but a lack of interference which creates an ideal condition for experimentation and problem-solving. Academics who feel isolated from their domain, or who might actively look to differentiate themselves from it, are incentivised or even required to employ creativity to adapt and survive. Again, however, this activity is often secret and individual, unsupported and poorly resourced,

limiting its impact and leading to poor dissemination and collaboration

with the result that HE is the site of high levels of creativity, which despite

being laudable is often localised, invisible, repetitive, and limited.

CHAPTER 6: REFLECTIONS

6.1.1 What might we claim to learn from case studies?

A case study is not a representation of a wider population, i.e., we cannot generalise from it and claim that something observed in one case is therefore true everywhere. We can, though, make a claim for 'transferability' through analytical generalisations which may be made by connecting the observations from the case(s) to the theoretical literature and making appropriate connections (or noting contrasts) between the cases' contexts and sequencing of events, and applicability to similar situations. There is strong precedent for this in, for example, historical studies and political science where single events are analysed and used to draw lessons or comparisons for future events (e.g. the Suez crisis, the run-up to and responses to 9/11, and Brexit – all unique cases which are repeatedly analysed within various theoretical frameworks and historical contexts but which may be used to guide future practice in similar if not identical circumstances). At best all we can do is say 'these things happened in these cases, these are the circumstances, this is how the existing literature and theory explains it (or not) and these are the observations that might be made'. Further research may test these observations. Case studies are analogous to inserting a thermometer in a piece of meat to take the temperature at different places. Each may produce different results, but it is possible for the cook (researcher) to infer from that what is going on and what might happen soon given certain conditions.

Although there is a large and growing literature that looks at creativity in laboratory conditions, or attempts to isolate key variables, the individual's context (career, values, personality) and organisational environment are not things that can be controlled for and may not be repeated elsewhere. Therefore, while the researcher can draw together the different narratives to arrive at certain conclusions, it is important that the reader approach the work as a co-researcher, drawing conclusions as appropriate and adding the 'seasoning' of their own experience to make sense, or to engage in *naturalistic generalisation* (Hellström 2006; Melrose 2009; Stake & Trumble 1982).

When I began this process, I confidently stated that this was a little-understood, and under-researched area. I still stand by that but with a major caveat: creativity in academic practice may be under-researched, but the topics affected by creativity are well-represented in the literature: curriculum development, assessment, student progression and experience, and more. However, these are rarely, if ever, considered as 'creative' and thus are not considered from this perspective. The shift needed to see what is out there is like looking at an image of a rabbit and finally seeing a duck, or the other way around – it is difficult to see both things simultaneously (and not always possible to unsee later).
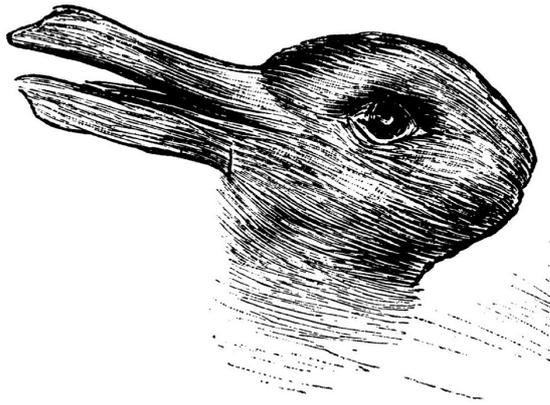
Figure 6-1: Kaninchen und Ente ('Rabbit and Duck') from Fliegende Blätter (23 October 1892) (Wikipedia 2013)

Contrary to what others have asserted (including me) there is a rich literature on creativity in HE, but it has not been labelled as such, because it deals with product, not process or approach, and so we are in danger of missing it.

My use of experience research and creativity theory to understand educational change as a creative act has led to conclusions that, though they cannot be generalised beyond the five case studies, suggest a theoretical model of creativity among academics that unites some aspects of creativity and pedagogic theory, offering useful insights. Initially I believed that Csikszentmihalyi and Amabile offered models that helped to explain issues identified in the literature on educational change, which had not previously been considered as creative acts, as well as helping me understand my own experience as a lecturer, manager, director of teaching and learning, and deputy head of school, attempting to change my own practice, helping others change theirs and, occasionally, requiring change from people who did not want to. From a personal point of view,

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this research has been enlightening as exposure to new theories and examination of familiar ones helped me understand my experiences in ways that would certainly have been useful at the time. For a while, I felt the research was leading in a particular direction, and one that challenged rather than confirmed my assumptions. It was only after the interviews that I began to consider the relationship between individual, domain and field to be more complex than Csikszentmihalyi's model suggested and it is this idea that holds particular interest for me as an area for further exploration. This thesis is not so much the end of the process but an episode in a continuing story.

My adventures in experience research are the least satisfactory aspect of this study. Although I was able to use the interviews and the basic maps to generate themes and conclusions in a way that was less labour intensive than traditional transcription and coding, giving me more time to develop a deeper understanding of the conversations from an experiential perspective, my goal of co-creating the journey maps with my subjects was not fulfilled. The disappointment comes from the fact that this is a skill I teach, and successfully so – but it turns out I am a better teacher of the technique than a practitioner. I would like to continue working in this way but feel that a second researcher or assistant would be useful in providing graphic facilitation during the interviews. I remain convinced that experience research is an approach to pedagogical research worthy of further development and hope to contribute to this. While the mapping was useful to me, I am not convinced the resulting illustrations are of any benefit to others and are presented in the thesis for completion only. In

refining them in this way, they lost the connection with the interview and do not work as standalone artefacts.

In terms of contribution to knowledge, the identification of the distanced nature of creative academics from their 'home' field and discipline is important and deserves to be tested; the isolation of creative academics from existing practice (leading to reinvention of existing solutions) and lack of contribution to a body of knowledge through dissemination is also noteworthy: are we being creative if nobody else knows about it?

This research only sought to understand what is happening, not to provide answers as to what should be happening. But as Wolcott (1992: p. 15) observes, much research is motivated by the idea that 'things are not right, or as good as they could be' and must be fixed. It is clear that to improve the situation and avoid killing off what creativity exists, universities need to generate the conditions for creativity: cross-disciplinary and sector-wide collaboration, value-aligned reward and recognition, critical qualitative evaluation of ideas and their impact, proper resources including expert support, time for development and iteration, tolerance for failure, a focus on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation, and a recognition of the essential nature of the messy process that leads to the (hopefully) neat version one outcome. There also needs to be an open culture of creativity, involving students, that shifts away from the defensiveness encouraged by bodies such as CMA and QAA and encourages reflection and 'engine tuning'. So not much.

6.2 Lessons

What follows are my personal reflections based on my research. They are, of course, flavoured by my own experiences in HE and readers will add their own to the mix. For each there is a shared responsibility between the domain (the discipline), the field (institutions, journals, the academic community, students, QAA etc) and the individual. Beyond this lie government, the public, potential students and more. Their expectations shape much practice but should in turn *be* shaped. A clear articulation of values would help towards that.

6.2.1 Sector-wide collaboration

The introduction of 'market forces' into higher education decreased the likelihood of collaboration between institutions, but the need to publish shows that academics are inclined to share their work, not only to meet certain targets, but to build off the findings of others and to establish themselves within the field (a mix of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation). Csikszentmihalyi suggests why this interplay of field, domain and person drive creativity, but that same engine is largely dormant when it comes to teaching and learning: being interested in teaching and learning is not rewarded and in places it is actively discouraged by peers, a 'satisfaction' culture, and promotion criteria. Attempts to encourage collaboration such as subject centres, HEA fellowship, NTFs and CETLs offer examples of projects with varying success, perhaps due to their extrinsic nature. Each of the case study subjects were keen to talk to others about their work (before, during or after it) but had no time, no access to, or lacked interest in existing networks or resources for a variety of reasons. Crucially, there

was a lack of opportunity for open speculative discussion of teaching within their own institutions, but the QA frameworks experienced by the case studies promotes defensive or secretive approaches, and this is, unfortunately, where I saw a lot of the creativity.

The pressures of work and the use of 'excellence' as a marketing tool, a point of distinction when attracting students, is a bar to meaningful collaboration. After all, why would you help others to be excellent when your financial survival depends on winning in a zero-sum game? Yet creativity and innovation benefits everyone and accepting that staff will move on to pursue personal and career goals means it is a false economy to keep developments internal – either they will be spread through staff turnover or will need to be built again from scratch. We saw in the case studies the costs to institutions of dissatisfied staff taking their ideas with them, and of the costs in time and good will of constant relaunches rather than progressive iteration. The HE sector acts in a competitive way, as intended by government policy, but this does not benefit students as increased regulation, the drive for positive KPIs and the pursuit of increased enrolments, encourage 'safe', predictable, dated, and uncontroversial curricula.

6.2.2 Value-aligned reward and recognition

The goal of attracting students should be to recruit new members to the field via their engagement with the domain, not to engage them in abstract concepts of 'a degree'. One is an active process, the other a passively obtained product.

It is difficult to align individuals to an abstract concept such as 'excellence' or 'efficiency', or to recruitment targets and student satisfaction, but easier to see meaning in goals to, for example, make a positive contribution to the local community, to increase recruitment of underrepresented groups, or to improve health and wellbeing in society. Such expressions of values are lacking in the websites and TEF reflections of universities and, judging from the case studies, in the actions of 'management'. Unsurprisingly, they are absent too in programme publicity. Instead, words such as 'employability' and 'innovation' are used frequently – but without clearly articulated values, what do these mean? Sadly, in the UK the debate is currently focused on graduate earnings as a measure of 'value', but many of the more 'meaningful' careers are notoriously badly paid (education, social work, medicine, and the arts) and consequently face cuts. It is difficult to be creative when there are no values set out by the organisation, the school, or the teaching team, and recruitment is likely to be a numbers game whereas, as any good brand manager will tell you, customers align with organisations they believe in, not the ones that will take them. A programme that makes it values clear might attract fewer applicants but is likely to convert more of them to actively participating students, rather than passive consumers and would-be complainants. As Sinek (2011) points out, Martin Luther King did not gain followers by claiming he had a five point plan, he said he had a dream. Explicit statements of, and tolerance for, domain-level, organisational and individual values, is a requirement for creativity among staff and students, and a better yardstick against which to evaluate ideas and projects than abstract KPIs. I would argue that university is more likely to

meet its widening participation goals, and recruit and retain good staff, if it focuses on values rather than targets. Similarly with reward and recognition: citations, funding, and conference papers are easy to measure, but a chore. All my interviewees had research ambitions but spoke of it the way one talks about housework. Feeling like you are making a difference is a creative spur – and more likely to result in citations, funding, and conference papers.

6.2.3 Critical evaluation of ideas and their impact

The research shows that innovation requires support and careful evaluation and feedback. Too often good ideas die in committees rather than being tested in the field and this is the result both of institutional inertia and a response to external pressures from QAA and CMA. Whether these pressures are real or perceived is yet to be properly tested – in response to claims that CMA rules mean course descriptions cannot change after publication, Universities UK and the CMA made it clear that they can – within reason (CMA 2015; Grove 2016). My subjects reported anxiety over whether they would be able to 'get away' with some of their plans if others heard about them and described often tortuous strategies to avoid premature evaluation or to anticipate objections. This is hardly conducive to good, creative, teaching and learning. However, the academics are not blameless here – there were in some cases concerning lack of interest in evaluating the effectiveness of a change, or revisiting it once done. For some, there was no organisational oversight or evaluation at all, and, at best, any carried out was anecdotal.

Within the domain, discussion of creative approaches to teaching is often led to specialist 'innovation' journals. Research for this thesis but not included for reasons of space suggests that such papers are often low on innovation and demonstrate a lack of engagement with developments outside academics' own domain. Domains and fields appear reluctant to permit or encourage experimentation, and quick to blame outside forces for this – with varying degrees of legitimacy.

6.2.4 Proper resources, expert support, time

Creativity is an iterative, messy process but the desire for things to work, and the fear of adverse reactions from students are high barriers to innovation. The solution to this could be as simple as being open when recruiting students, and involving them in the creativity, rather than subjecting them to it. It was notable how little student involvement there was, even informally, in the cases studied.

It should go without saying that academics require time and resources for creative development of programmes and courses. This is a universal complaint. Something that came through strongly from the cases was the way in which different departments had their own agendas, instead of being aligned to organisational values. So, IT were focused on supporting secure IT systems in one university, and not on helping academics to deliver novel approaches to assessment or supporting the team that wanted Macs and platform-specific software, rather than Windows PCs. Descriptions of QA departments focused on 'box ticking' rather than supporting the development of creative approaches. I got a sense that much of this was perception. The interviewee with the most experience of

dealing with QA colleagues reported them being helpful and engaged, two described IT colleagues as being helpful if approached early enough. The issue may not be one of balkanisation of support departments but lack of involvement in activities so that they are only brought in at the end. One simple way to encourage a culture of iterative development would be through the sharing of works in progress, rather than finished activities. This should shift the focus away from the end product to the development, and encourage continual development rather than the 'quick fix and move on' approach seen in some of the case studies.

6.3 Final words

When I was beginning this research journey my initial focus was what if universities modelled themselves on creative organisations such as Ideo, Pixar and the BBC? Managers, clients and employees of such organisations take as read that ideas, experimentation, and learning from mistakes are part of the deal, and this is what makes them attractive places to work with and to work for. But in my experience of UK universities over the past twenty years, the dominant feeling is one of paranoia, fear of complaint, and risk-aversion. This is the opposite of creative and unlikely to produce true innovation. This requires a cultural shift but one that should, in theory, be simple: talking, problem-sharing, honesty, and enthusiasm to try new things and challenge convention are qualities that universities already demonstrate in their approach to research if not in their teaching. What needs to happen urgently is for teaching and learning to be recognised as forms of enquiry and discovery, research and development, and creativity rather than the simple transmission of

knowledge in the pursuit of employability and economic value because,

without creativity, these aspects must surely be compromised.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW TOPIC MAP

Topic list for mapping sessions. These were prompts rather than scripts,

designed to encourage reflection and discussion.

Topic	*Topic*
1	**Preamble** description of current role, career to date, responsibility within the department, connections within and beyond the university, description of the university and openness to change among management, colleagues, students, and openness of the discipline to change.
2	**About the change** description of the change or enhancement made to teaching/module/programme etc. What was the trigger for this? Description of the process from recognition of the problem to completion and beyond. (Allow the subject to talk – note key topics and place them on the map based on Csikszentmihalyi/Amabile categories)
3	**After/during the initial mapping** Who else was involved formally and informally? At which points? What consultation with stakeholders was carried out? Why? When? What resources were required at each stage if any? Were there any resources required that couldn't be obtained (including assistance/advice)? What skills or personal qualities were used at each stage? (Interviewer ideally identifies or infers these and prompts reflection – examples might include negotiation, perseverance, politics but *not* creativity). What personal skills would have

made things easier? (Prompting for reflection on relative weaknesses)

What sort of responses were you getting at each stage from colleagues, managers, external stakeholders, students etc?

4 | **Risks and responses**

Were there any risks involved in what you were doing? (Probe for personal/reputational risks, potential for things to go wrong and impact on others etc). Were there any doubts or worries, and what changes were made as a result?

5 | **Wider discipline community**

Thinking about your discipline beyond your university, did you consider how your changes might be viewed? Did you ever consider your work as career or profile enhancing within and beyond your current situation? Do you know how your changes are or might be viewed by others?

Have you told anyone in the wider community about what you've done? Do you think your changes might have an impact beyond your current situation?

6 | **Formal processes**

Have you (or anyone) evaluated the impact of your work? Is there a formal process to follow when making changes like this? What documentation is provided? What would have been useful? Who did you work with inside the institution? How were you supported by other departments? Do you think they understood/cared about the changes you were attempting?

7 | **The experience**

How did this experience compare with past work like this? Do you think colleagues have similar experiences? Is it easier to make changes if you're more secure in post or more experienced? What constraints did you encounter? How did you respond?

Describe your emotional journey at each stage.

8 | General

Opportunity to expand on things.

Are you proud of the changes you made?

Was this a creative response or a practical one? (Probe understanding of 'creative'.

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