THE WELSH CONTEXT

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Recently, the Welsh Government funded a policy advisory document on the role of creativity/the arts in education (Smith, 2013). The report was supported by both the education and heritage ministries and managed through the Arts Council of Wales. This is in the context of both a national culture of public and participatory arts, and a systematic commitment to include all children and young people in developing and performing a multiplicity of artistic endeavours through the medium of Welsh. Centrally, this is supported by series of 'eisteddfodau' reproduced at the level of schools, regions and nationally. It is a measure of the value of the arts that the bardic chair, presented annually, is nationally esteemed beyond any particular Welsh poetic community.

Whilst the focus of the report is intended to be on the development of creativity and the arts in school, nevertheless, the overall messages are complex and often tangential to this theme. In particular, there is a concern with promoting the value of 'elite' (professional, paid for, etc.) over folk, participatory arts. There is also a concern to promote the value of the arts and creativity as instrumentally valuable to other educational attainment, most notably literacy and numeracy. Which, at the time the report was written, were the central focus of Welsh educational policy (see, for example, the government's recent Literacy and Numeracy Framework).

In this paper I argue that the Welsh debates in the arena of 'creative and the classroom' would be enhanced through three distinctions. Firstly, we need of be concerned with the distinction between 'education' and 'schools'. Broadly put, policy documents tend to focus on teaching content which is already deemed important for schools to develop in pupils and can be support by a 'discourse of creativity'. Secondly, we need to separate out 'creativity' in general from 'artistic creativity'. The relationship between these two is significant, for example, is artistic creativity a sub-category of creativity or is it the other way around? Thirdly, how does the national conceptualisation of the 'arts' and other creative endeavours shaped the discourse about 'creativity in the classroom'. Whilst it is commonplace to recognise the impact of different educational systems on classroom practice, there is less discussion of the role of national conceptions of artistic creativity on classroom practice.