Creativity and its development is a ‘hot topic’ in education. The ongoing debate about its meaning and role in education, shaped by the progressive movement’s belief of an intimate relation between creativity and the arts, has shaped policy and models of creative learning worldwide. But discourses of the knowledge economy and key competences challenge this relationship. Arguments about the value of developing creativity in schools typically advance either: its efficacy in developing the intrinsically valuable creative dispositions of the pupil; or its instrumental relationship to a range of educational and employability aspirations including entrepreneurship, innovation, literacy and numeracy – or elements of both. (Hamidi et al, 2008). For creativity to become a valued and recognised dimension of schooling, our discourse and associated research requires development.

In the English context NACCCE’s (2000) definition (‘imaginative activity so fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value’), is helpful and relatively uncontroversial. But it is unsituated and requires interpretation for the development of educational policy. Rather than re-visit debates about the meaning of creativity and its role in education, in this symposium we begin from its use in a number of policy and cultural contexts. Methodologically we draw on notions of ‘ordinary language’ (Wittgenstein) and the ‘emergent properties’ (Lewes 1875) to consider the significance of context particularly.

Being mindful that educational policies are ‘strongly influenced by an increasingly integrated international economy’ (Apple 2010), where crises and reforms in one country effects others, we collectively review key policy documents which form an international landscape. Then, drawing on three different nations, authors will pay attention to the educational and cultural contexts within which English, Danish and Welsh discourses are occurring and whether the particularity of each context offers a nuanced interpretation of apparent contradictions in the role ‘creativity’ is expected to play in schooling.

The symposium therefore explores the idea that debates on the role of creativity in education can only be properly conducted by a consideration of the significance of diverse cultural contexts and practices as well as policies and cultural practices.

Apple, M. (2010) Global Crises, Social Justice, and Education


Lewes, G.H. (1875) Problems of Life and Mind

NACCCE (2000) All our Futures

Wittgenstein, L. (1953) Philosophical Investigations