Creativity and Innovation: EU27

Practices of innovative teaching and creative learning are linked to how these topics have been represented and constructed in policy and practice across EU27 education systems.

In tandem, different ways of thinking about creativity and education are linked to different philosophical traditions, artistic traditions, educational practices, and political contexts.
Some Rhetorics of Creativity

Arts and crafts

The potentials of technology

Musical genius

Banaji and Burn, 2010 (2007)

A successful business?
Methods, Sample, Analysis

• Partnership: IPTS team, Futurelab Team, IOE

• 80 qualitative educational ‘expert’ interviews

• Sample and contacting

• Questions – topic guide based on IPTS lit review

• ‘Best’ Practices? – methods for determining

• Analysis – generalisability; rigour; ‘health warnings’

• Policy suggestions?
Traditions and approaches we encountered across Europe included...

- **Denmark**: child-centred and active teaching and learning practices, valuing of talk and group work, even now teachers trying to resist the move towards summative assessment – emphasis on critical thought and open-internet exams.

- **Estonia**: Soviet era – constant surveillance, teacher paranoia, avoidance of divergence/debate; pre-soviet – emphasis on tradition; post soviet – mixture of approaches
Traditions and approaches we encountered across Europe included...

- **England** – Broad student-centred and progressive approach valuing creativity in the 70s – reaction against this – ‘back to basics’ - National Curriculum ‘not all bad’, Standardization; ‘Target culture’; ‘performance measurement antithetical to innovation’; National testing and school competition inhibits creativity; ‘rhetoric of individualisation and personalisation’; tradition of ‘creative partnerships’ but not enough training

- **Portugal** – The Portuguese school system is **highly centralized**; since end of the dictatorship there has been an emphasis on common and traditional methods; fear of individualization or innovative independent leadership of schools; National exam system - makes teachers ‘risk averse’ - pilot initiatives show excellent creative work
What happens when we look at ‘creativity' and ‘innovation’ from an ideological perspective?

• Active learning versus…?

• Teacher/Teacher-trainer as mentor or instructor

• Cross-curricular – but not always

• Context-bound (a scale of creativity)

• Imaginative and intuitive or knowledge and skills-based

• Process-based or product-led

• Ineffable and instinctive or quantifiable and testable
Creativity : a few cross-national considerations

- A diverse landscape
- A spectrum from “lip service” to integration
- Consensus: creativity is key to equip young people with the right skills
- The need for a “cultural shift”
- Ongoing or recent reforms
- Complex picture: barriers and enablers often overlap
- The need for an holistic approach
ICT

- resourcing less of a problem than upkeep and upgrade
- Creative usage strongly linked to training
- very often digital tech supports best practice...
- ...but paradoxically can also stifle innovation (e.g., death by PowerPoint)
- ICT not embedded in the curriculum
- Closed environments (no personal devices, strictly filtered searches)
Barriers: curriculum and policy

• Competition and league tables
• Bureaucratic structures
• Lack of funding
• Institutional barriers: schools as places of authority & control:
  • Disciplinarian climate
  • Conformism and resistance to change
  • Closed ICT environments
• Rigid timetabling and regimented, content-heavy curricula
Barriers: assessment

- VERY political and sensitive topic
- Great influence on pedagogies
- Teaching to the test
- The “creativity vs accountability” trade off?
- Lack of a clear and transferable framework for assessing creativity
- The influence of national and international (PISA) league tables
European good practices

Primary

• **Greece - Can we see the sound?** - A multisensory and participatory approach to “unlock the natural disposition that every child has towards discovery”.

• **Cyprus - Funecole** - using an online platform to disseminate creative teaching materials - technological literacy alongside other forms of creative and critical thought.

• **Portugal – Historia Do Dia** - digital storytelling - incorporate digital technologies into the lives of students- culture of shared story-telling.
Secondary Best Practices

The Netherlands – Value in the valley – sustainable development – mixed age groups working in a business-like environment – involvement of experts

Ireland – Project Maths – everyday mathematics – “rephrase” the language of mathematics, often abstract and de-contextualised, in original and creative ways.

Scotland – Queensferry cross-curricular project – scientific, cultural, political and mathematical data applied to international, national and local problems - critiquing, evaluating and debating – multi-media approach.
Best practices what’s needed?

- best practices require energy and dedication from individuals or groups
- In most cases, they struggle to stimulate significant innovations at a systemic level...
- ...but illustrate the plurality of local, national and cultural understandings of C&I
- need for mechanisms to allow cross-fertilisation – from best to common
- Fostering creativity in practice requires a clear pedagogical vision, it cannot be improvised
Some key enablers for creativity (according to experts)

• **Systemic**: ‘holistic change’ to embed creativity in training, curriculum, pedagogic practice and assessment at the same time

• **Systemic/National**: proper pay and conditions for teachers. Holistic, well financed and sustained Continuous Professional Development.

• **Systemic/National/Local**: Balance of autonomy and direction in terms of what and how to teach – no punitive inspections; no league tables; time!

• **Local/contextual**: collaborative, active, student-centred – teachers not afraid of losing control

• **Local/contextual**: does not fetishise new technology or hardware, but uses a diversity of tools and training to enact interesting projects

• **National/Local**: Assessment – formative; values process, risk, divergence and play
Key questions remain...

Is it possible to redefine the relationship between innovation, creativity and traditional assessment outcomes at school or is there a fundamental contradiction?

How can innovative teaching for creative learning be fostered in across teacher training without being imposed from above?

Do ‘critique’ and ‘pleasure’ have a role to play in current discussions of creativity and innovation in compulsory education in the EU27?

What is the difference between ‘good’ pedagogy and ‘innovative’ pedagogy, between ‘effective’ learning and ‘creative’ learning?