

**Leadership of creativity in teaching and learning: Perception,
motivation and implementation**

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I confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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I dedicate this thesis to all the educators who always strive to go the extra mile to transform lives.

Abstract

In the current fast-changing landscape dominated by technological advances and education reforms, there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of creativity in education and its positive impact on student engagement and outcomes (Rinkevich, 2011). However, with the focus on high-stakes examinations and the prevalence of accountability culture leading to a perceived lack of agency among teachers, the risk of creativity being stifled has become a topic that resonates with many (Appel, 2020). Whilst developing students' creativity has been a popular area of research, creativity in teaching and learning from the teacher's perspective has received notably less attention (Cremin and Chappell, 2021). Amid growing concerns about prescriptive practices and their impact on professional autonomy (Narayanan et al., 2024), teachers' ability to adapt in response to their context and students' needs could be at stake.

This research aims to understand the role leadership plays in creating the environment school communities require to promote creativity and reap the benefits it can bring to practitioners and students. A case study featuring a multi-methods design was utilised to explore how creativity in teaching and learning practices is led at various levels within an English secondary school. Two original frameworks developed for this research were deployed to analyse and evaluate qualitative data from documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations. Findings indicated that contextual factors, particularly exam-driven pressures, emerged as a significant force, shaping the leadership of creativity and creating tensions between creative practices and monitoring structures. Nevertheless, clear examples of creativity existed across the school. Leadership at whole-school level fostered a pro-creativity culture through trust, autonomy and collaboration, while middle leaders proved pivotal in determining whether creativity flourished at departmental level.

This thesis makes three original contributions to creative education and educational leadership: an enhanced social perspective of creativity model extending Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems framework; a reconceptualisation of leadership as influences, configurations and implementation actions; and a creative pedagogy typology identifying three motivation-based types: ideological, pragmatic, and attitude-oriented. Together, these frameworks offer practical tools for leaders and inform policy conditions that can strengthen teacher autonomy and motivation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background: How it all began

In 2011, as a relatively inexperienced teacher, I was scheduled to be observed teaching a Year 8 music class that I found challenging. In the build-up to this high-stakes observation, feeling apprehensive, I struggled with ideas. For this lesson on electronic dance music, I had an original plan but felt it lacked the spark that I was looking for. One day before the lesson, I had a light bulb moment: maybe I could do something different that the students would not have anticipated, giving them an experience that they could enjoy while feeling challenged. What sprang to mind was *The Apprentice*, a popular TV reality show in the UK, which I occasionally watched and admittedly enjoyed. Feeling excited, I started brainstorming ideas for my new lesson plan. I wanted the lesson to be a mini project for the students, so that they could learn independently in their own peer groups.

On the day, as inspired by the TV show, the class was split into two groups, and two students were given the role of project manager, each to lead their own team. I then assigned the rest of the students with roles that I thought they would thrive in, such as music investigator, creative director, D.J., and detective, each carrying specific responsibilities. The objective for the lesson was to research a genre of electronic dance music and create a presentation that the group would deliver at the end. For the presentation task, the groups also had to source musical examples to show the audience. As soon as the class was given the brief, off they went. To my delight, the students were highly motivated throughout and both groups successfully presented. Following the lesson, I received very positive feedback:

This was an excellent example of independent learning...the work was challenging but presented in a fun way. It was clear to see the learning that had taken place...All students made a positive contribution to the tasks in the time they were given. They were thoroughly enjoying this way of working...The standard of work produced was very good and presented creatively.

Reflecting on the lesson, although it was a big risk, it paid off. I had never taught such a lesson prior to this observation and had no idea what to expect. For me personally, this

lesson plan was innovative. I tried to do something different with the aim of better engaging students and I achieved the desired outcome. Since then, teaching with creativity has become my mission. What I perceive as my best lessons are the ones in which I was able to be creative and do something different. Fast forward to the present, it has become my passion as well, hence my interest in the topic of leadership of creativity in teaching and learning. As will be discussed later, my quest to explore teachers' creativity in this research led me to experience another example of creativity based on The Apprentice, designed for Year 8 students, albeit a much more elaborate version than the lesson plan I put together in less than 24 hours. Nonetheless, creativity seems to have taken me full circle!

As I developed my interest in this topic, I found myself ruminating on questions such as "how do other teachers think about creativity in their practice, do they see it as beneficial as I do?", "do they feel as though they can be creative in their teaching, do they want to be creative?", and "what does creativity look like in others' practices, how can one lead creativity?". Eventually, these turned into the basis of my research.

1.2 The creativity paradox and my value position

The current climate in education is one that is dominated by fast policies and rapid reforms (Stacey et al., 2023). With the mandate to drive up standards, schools in many parts of the world are under increasing pressure to improve their performance (Li et al., 2025). Creativity with its potential benefits, such as having a positive impact on student engagement and outcomes (Cremin and Chappell, 2021; Rinkevich, 2011), is seen as an important element for school improvement (Muijs and Harris, 2006). In addition to the COVID pandemic, education globally, has also been significantly disrupted by technological advances, including artificial intelligence. Innovative teaching approaches are therefore said to be key to engaging new generations of students who have different needs (Chardonens, 2025). However, the pressure created by the focus on high-stakes testing, data-driven performance and accountability may discourage educators from taking risks in their practice. Furthermore, teacher training and classroom practices are becoming increasingly prescriptive, particularly in contexts like England (Anderson et al., 2025), meaning teachers may feel they lack the freedom and capacity to be creative. This perceived loss of professional autonomy and teacher agency not only can negatively impact creativity, but it may also reduce teachers'

motivation and job satisfaction, potentially exacerbating retention issues (Worth and Van den Brande, 2020). This is paradoxical because on the one hand, creativity appears to be highly desirable and seen as a way to overcome some of the key challenges educators currently face. Yet, on the other hand, the conditions are not favourable for it to thrive due to constraints within the macro environment. Despite this, I see leadership as a significant force capable of countering some of these constraints and therefore an important question to consider would be how it can be utilised to achieve that, thereby offering creativity a helping hand.

Meanwhile, *Teaching and learning* is often referred to as a reciprocal process between teachers and their students. The two components are so intertwined, they can be considered as one entity (Shuell, 1993). However, in this thesis, teaching and learning refers specifically to the aspect of practice that is undertaken by teaching staff; in other words, what teachers do. When applying this to creativity, whilst creative teaching and creative learning do overlap and are not separate (Lin, 2014), this research focuses on creativity in teaching and learning from the teacher's perspective at the case study school. By adopting this angle, it is also possible to explore in greater depth the concept of teacher agency as related to creative practices.

Beginning my career as a teacher in 2008, throughout my time in the state-funded secondary sector, I mainly taught subjects which are typically associated with creativity, particularly in music – my subject specialism. For six years, I also worked as a middle leader in schools, with responsibilities including leading teaching and learning at various levels. Now working in Higher Education, although I no longer teach *creative* subjects, I have continued to lead various aspects of teaching and learning at multiple levels. This means my chosen topic of research is very much related to my own experience and professional roles. Moreover, for various reasons, I have had significant freedom to be creative in my teaching throughout my career, something which I recognise as being perhaps untypical in some settings. The positive experience I have accumulated over the years has resulted in my strong advocacy for creativity in teaching and learning, and the belief that it can enhance the overall quality of education.

I am aware that my own experience in leading creativity in teaching and learning both as a teacher and middle leader, can result in undue bias and expectations, especially regarding what practice is creative and how it should be led and implemented. Conversely, the knowledge and understanding gained from my experience can bring

significant advantages. For example, the insights I have accumulated from my professional experience allow me to have a good overview of the phenomenon in question, such as the factors and forces that have affected my own, as well as others' leadership of creativity. Together with a thorough review of the literature, this has helped me to develop a comprehensive framework for analysis. During data collection, I would also be able to relate to the experiences shared by the participants. This mutual understanding is likely to assist me in building trust with them, in turn leading to more authentic data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.256).

1.3 Aims and research questions

Creativity in education is a multi-faceted phenomenon and thus, the leadership of creativity in teachers' practices can be affected by a range of mutually influential forces and elements. To reap the benefits creativity can bring to teaching and learning, these forces and elements ought to be acknowledged and taken into consideration. By examining how creativity is influenced in a particular context, implications for leadership can then be identified to help foster creativity in teachers' practices, ultimately making a positive impact on student learning.

My research project investigates how creativity is perceived and implemented in a case study school setting from multiple leadership perspectives. With teaching and learning being one of the key determinants of student achievement (Day et al., 2009), this research focuses on the ways in which teaching and learning is led at whole-school, departmental and classroom levels. More specifically, it aims to understand how those involved in the leadership of teaching and learning perceive creativity and identifies factors and leadership actions that can affect their perception, their motivation relating to creative intent, and implementation. Furthermore, the study assesses the extent to which creativity is implemented in practice and what it looks like.

To achieve these aims, the research poses three questions:

1. How is creativity perceived in the case study school from multiple leadership perspectives?
2. How do contextual factors and leadership actions influence a) key stakeholders' perceptions of creativity, b) their motivation relating to creative intent, and c) their implementation of creativity in practices related to teaching and learning?

3. How, and to what extent is creativity led and implemented in teaching and learning at whole school, departmental and classroom levels?

1.4 Methodological approach

This research is underpinned by interpretivism as it explores participants' lived experience and their teaching and learning practices. Methodologically however, it takes a pragmatic approach and utilises the most suitable methods to achieve the said aims. Consequently, this case study which focuses on one single school in England, a secondary academy in the West Midlands, has a multiple methods design, using the qualitative methods of documentary analysis, semi-structured interview and observation. The participants for this research are recruited among those with leadership responsibilities at the school, such as senior leaders and heads of department, as well as other teachers with no formal leadership roles, but involved in the leadership of teaching and learning within their own department or classroom. This way, the study can explore a range of relevant issues from multiple leadership perspectives: namely organisational leadership, middle leadership and leadership exercised through the planning and practice of classroom pedagogy. This research has been granted ethical approval to ensure that it adheres to the relevant ethical guidelines and expectations (see Appendix A).

1.5 Significance

With the stated aims and questions, this research intends to make a valuable contribution in several ways:

From an academic standpoint, it seeks to begin addressing some of the gaps found in the current body of research. These gaps include the examination of influential factors which affect teachers' creativity and the leadership of it within school settings, for example, the role motivation plays. As presented in Chapter 2 and applied in Chapters 4 and 5, two original conceptual frameworks are put forward to view the leadership of creativity in teaching and learning. Meanwhile, the rich qualitative data generated from this case study can be used to facilitate future research into the topic by highlighting gaps and areas that are still in need of further investigation.

Securing student engagement is key to effective teaching and learning practices and achieving positive student outcomes (Christenson et al., 2012). However, engagement has been identified as a significant challenge across many contexts (Jerrim, 2025). With the established link between creativity and enhanced student engagement (Cremin and Chappell, 2021), the findings of this research have the potential to contribute valuable insights relating to how teachers can adopt creativity in their practice to better engage students across different contexts.

1.6 Thesis structure

There are six chapters in this thesis. Chapter 2 reviews the literature to conceptualise creativity in education and more specifically, how leadership, as well as other factors can influence it in teaching and learning via three key components: perception, motivation and implementation. An original leadership framework underpinned by relevant theories is then introduced to understand how creativity may be led, while gaps in existing research relevant to the chosen focus are highlighted. Using the key components and main forces at play, a second original conceptual framework for the leadership of creativity in teaching and learning is put forward, forming the basis of my three research questions. Chapter 3 establishes the research context and outlines the research methodology where key decisions made relating to the research design are explained. In addition, this chapter discusses the ethical considerations, the thematic analysis approach taken, and the strategies deployed to maximise research quality. In Chapter 4, I present my analysis of the selected documents, as well as the interview and observation data collected. Findings from the analysis are then used to inform Chapter 5, where I answer my research questions. By evaluating the perception and implementation of creativity at the school while examining the factors affecting staff motivation in being creative, Chapter 6 compares the findings with the literature reviewed and discusses the implications. It also concludes the thesis by summarising the key insights from the research and their implications, acknowledging the study's limitations, and identifying areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

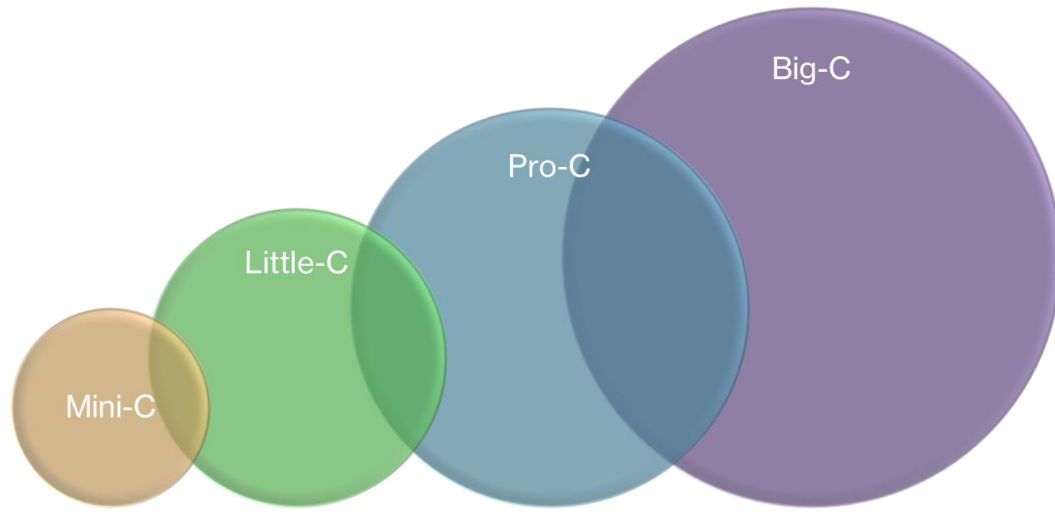
2.1 Introduction

In preparation for this research project, a wide range of literature relevant to creativity and leadership has been consulted, including texts by key figures such as Amabile, Bush, Craft, Cropley, Csikszentmihalyi, and Stoll and Temperley. This chapter provides a theoretical underpinning for my research by conceptualising and contextualising creativity in education. It also examines some of the key factors that can affect creativity in teachers' teaching and learning practices, including leadership actions. The leadership of creativity within education is explored in detail, drawing from existing leadership theories to provide a framework for analysis and identifying ways in which those with leadership power can encourage creativity in practice. Moreover, this chapter problematises the current body of research, identifying gaps and limitations to highlight the significance of my investigation. Following the thematised discussion, an original conceptual framework is proposed for the investigation which forms the basis of my research and research questions.

2.2 Conceptualising creativity

Creativity is a popular concept. A search in the literature reveals a plethora of materials related to a variety of disciplines. On closer inspection, this body of literature shows that creativity is, by and large, a term with an overwhelmingly positive connotation, seen by many as something which is desirable and can lead to better outcomes (Patston et al., 2021; Kapoor et al., 2025). Despite its popularity, creativity is an elusive concept (Craft et al., 2001; Treffinger, 2003) partly made ambiguous by having different definitions. Moreover, there has been a long-standing debate regarding who possesses creativity, i.e. whether it is an innate quality that is exclusive to some gifted individuals or something which can be developed or learned by everyone, resulting in an elite versus democratic view on creativity (Banaji et al., 2010). Whilst earlier research focused mostly on the former, more recent studies have tended to favour the latter (Collard and Looney, 2014). This dichotomy prompted some to differentiate creativity at different levels. For example, Craft et al.'s (2001) Big C and Little C, where on one hand, there

are creative outcomes which are considered novel by all and have significant impact on the society, e.g. major inventions, and on the other, everyday creative ideas which might be novel for an individual or a small group but not others. As the interest in creativity grew, more types have been identified. According to Kaufman and Beghetto's *Four C Model of Creativity* framework (2009) (figure 2.2a), creativity can be categorised based on the level of impact: transformative learning (Mini-c), everyday innovation (Little-c), professional expertise (Pro-c) and eminent accomplishments (Big-C).



Big C

Significant creativity of exceptional people: impact on culture, society or the world

Pro-C

Creative acts of experts/experienced teams within an organisation: impact on the organisation or the relevant field

Little-C

Everyday creative thoughts and actions: impact on individuals and people within their zone of influence

Mini-C

Changes in understanding, gaining insights: impact on individuals

Figure 2.2a – The four C model of creativity (Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009)

Creativity can also be “accidental” (Cropley, 1995, p.75). To some, luck and serendipity are even said to play an important role in achieving the highest levels of creativity (Austin, 1978).

Among the many different definitions, there are however, some common themes, e.g. novelty and usefulness. Therefore, considering its social dimension which will be

discussed later, creativity can be seen as the generation of ideas which are novel and of value, i.e. appropriate and useful, to certain individuals or groups (Collard and Looney, 2014; Helfand et al., 2017; Hennessey and Amabile, 2010). Owing to the useful nature of these ideas, creativity is seen as a particularly effective problem-solving quality (Cropley, 2001, p.48). Furthermore, given creativity's positive connotation, Cropley (2001) sees "ethicality" to be an essential ingredient (p.5). With teachers' creativity ultimately having an impact on students through their practices, this extra dimension of *ethicality* is clearly important to its conceptualisation in education. Therefore, not only do these ideas need to be novel and of value, but they should also be ethical as well.

Having reviewed the literature and reflected on my own value position, this research takes the stance that everyone can learn and develop creativity. More specifically for my investigation, creativity is **the generation of ideas relating to teaching and learning practices which are novel, of value and ethical, as perceived by those within the school and the wider community**. To contextualise this definition, an example of creativity could be the generation of ideas relating to formulating a novel school policy which can solve a problem in assessment, or adopting a more gamified approach in teaching Science previously unseen at a school in order to improve student engagement. Due to the relative short timeframe of my data collection, encountering Big C is unlikely. Instead, it is anticipated that most of the creativity observed will be at the *transformative learning* and *everyday innovation* levels. However, there might also be examples of what Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) refer to as *professional expertise* in some areas.

As demonstrated, creativity is complex. When observing in practice, it is important to critically reflect, so that a sound judgement can be made as to whether something is indeed creative, e.g. a novel idea that is not perceived as useful or ethical. Another potential challenge could be caused by the confusion between creativity and innovation (Hughes et al., 2018). Whilst creativity is the generation of an idea that is novel, innovation refers to the process of developing and implementing such an idea to achieve enhanced practice (Anderson et al., 2014; McLean, 2005), for example, implementing a new Science curriculum which takes a more gamified approach to improve student engagement. With the adopted definition of creativity in mind, the next section further explores the concept of creativity in education and teaching and learning practices.

2.2.1 Creativity in education

2.2.1.1 Creative pedagogy

As discussed in Chapter 1, my research project focuses on teaching and learning from the teacher's perspective. As such, pedagogy, or more specifically, teachers' creative pedagogy, is of particular relevance. However, it is worth noting that pedagogy is not the sole aspect of teaching and learning, for example, curriculum design may be considered an aspect of the latter but not the former. Nevertheless, since pedagogy primarily concerns how to teach and is a prominent part of teaching and learning, it would be logical to view it as a key feature of my overall focus. Another caveat to note is that the concept of creative pedagogy in the literature can sometimes encompass more than what teachers do. Lin (2014) for instance, helpfully identifies three interrelated elements: creative teaching, creative learning and teaching for creativity (figure 2.2b).

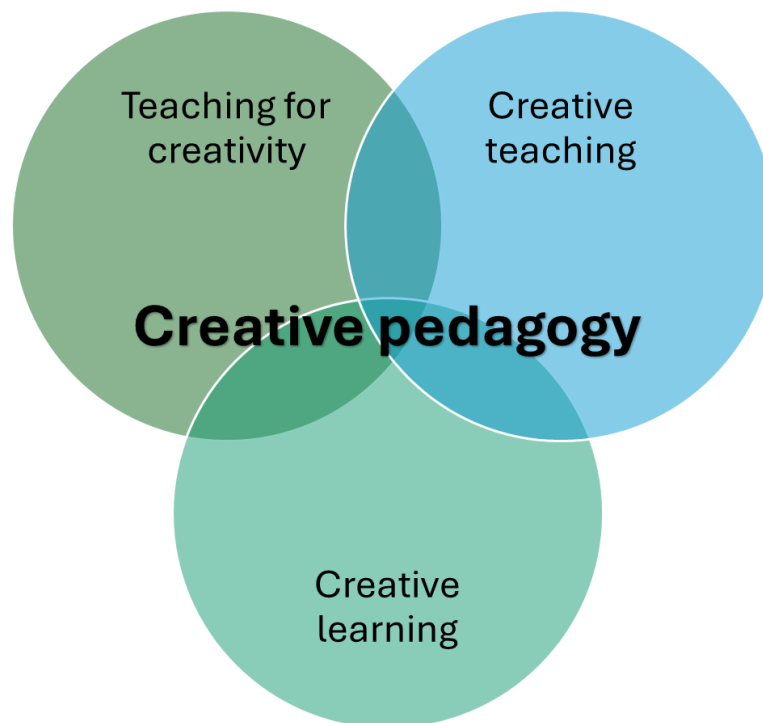


Figure 2.2b – The three elements of creative pedagogy (Lin, 2014, p.44)

This version of creative pedagogy builds on Jeffrey and Craft's (2004) concepts of *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*. Creative teaching, which is synonymous with teaching creatively – and teaching *with* creativity (Beghetto, 2017a), refers to teachers' actions that are deemed imaginative and innovative. It could also involve

being adaptive and spontaneous, meaning a teacher may deviate from their planning in response to circumstances (Lin, 2014). Conversely, teaching *for* creativity is when a teacher “focuses more on the objectives and strategies of developing learners’ creative capacities” (ibid, p.44), rather than acting creatively themselves. However, teaching for creativity could still involve teachers being creative in their teaching-and-learning-related actions, for example, teaching in a creative way that models creativity for students. This is where teachers and students’ creativity in teaching and learning can overlap, as reflected in the seven characteristics of *creative pedagogies* identified by Cremin and Chappell (2011):

1. generating and exploring ideas,
2. encouraging autonomy and agency,
3. playfulness,
4. problem-solving,
5. risk-taking,
6. co-constructing and collaborating,
7. teacher creativity.

Whilst teacher creativity is one of the characteristics, some of these, such as *encouraging autonomy and agency* are more relevant to teaching for creativity and creative learning. Nevertheless, Cremin and Chappell (2021) emphasise that teachers’ creativity is important to both creative teaching and teaching for creativity (p.319).

This overlap is apparent even in some definitions of *creative teaching*, e.g. Rinkevich (2011) defines it as “a unique, customized, and meaningful exchange of knowledge among all individuals in a learning context” (p.219). Although I see creative teaching as a reciprocal process involving everyone in a particular learning context through mutual engagement, given the aims and limited scope of my research, the focus and reference to *creative pedagogy* in this thesis will be kept to intentions and actions that are teacher-oriented. Therefore, pedagogical principles, lesson planning, the act of teaching in the classroom, as well as other related activities are of particular interest. However, due to creativity’s ambiguous nature, deciding how to identify creative practices may be challenging. One possible way to begin is to look for signs of teachers’ divergent thinking, as associated with creativity, based on Guilford’s (1967) four core components, but applied to teaching and learning:

- Fluency: the ability to generate many ideas quickly to transform teaching and learning
- Flexibility: the ability to generate different types of ideas to transform teaching and learning, covering various angles and perspectives
- Originality: the ability to generate unusual or unique ideas to transform teaching and learning
- Elaboration: the ability to develop ideas into innovative initiatives to transform teaching and learning

For some, teachers' adaptability (Rinkevich, 2011), as well as their embodiment and *intentional* promotion of autonomy, curiosity, risk taking, originality, ownership, and connection-making are also considered key features of creative practices (Cremin et al., 2015, p.5). When combined with creativity's definition outlined in 2.2, these features and components provide a good starting point for exploring teachers' creativity in teaching and learning.

2.2.1.2 The need for creativity in teaching and learning

In education, creativity has been linked to enhanced student learning in the classroom (Cropley, 2012) and identified as a key factor for teacher leadership and school improvement (Muijs and Harris, 2006). In recognition of its value, there has been a rising demand for creativity, with many countries now prioritising their support for nurturing creativity in education (Patston et al., 2021). More specifically, creativity is thought to improve teaching and learning through the leadership of curriculum innovation, capacity building and the creative use of data (Stoll and Temperley, 2009a). In teaching, it has also been shown to enhance student engagement and achievement (Rinkevich, 2011, pp.219-220), and lead to increased creativity in students (Dobbins, 2009). With its ability to solve complex problems (Cropley, 2001, p.49; Stoll and Temperley, 2009b), creativity has the potential to bring substantial value to teaching and learning in the post-COVID world that is undergoing the digital/artificial intelligence revolution. However, since the ability and willingness to take risks are essential to creativity (Lowe, 2010), creativity in teaching and learning could be stifled by performativity culture (Craft, 2011, p.28). In the current accountability-driven educational landscape, teachers and school leaders are under immense pressure to meet external demands and expectations, such as those from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and policymakers. This is further

exacerbated by a strong focus on high-stakes testing and competition, which may discourage educators from taking risks, resulting in the creativity paradox described in 1.2. This raises the questions as to how creativity could be affected and what can be done to harness its benefits at a time when it is most needed. To address these questions, one would need to understand how creativity is influenced within a context.

2.3 Influencing factors at multiple levels

Factors at multiple levels within a context can act as enablers and barriers, positively and negatively influencing creativity. These could be macro factors like nationwide education policies (Burnard and White, 2008), meso factors such as organisational culture (Martins and Terblanche, 2003) and micro factors like individuals' social relationships (Perry-Smith, 2006). Together, these factors would create the conditions and structures that are specific to each context. By understanding how these factors influence creativity, it would be possible for leadership to create the right conditions for creativity to thrive and remove barriers where possible. For example, to foster creativity, collaboration, support, time, suspended judgement and flexibility are seen as essential ingredients, whereas insufficient resources, having too many initiatives at the same time, overly close supervision and strong focus on measurable outcomes have been found to be detrimental for implementing creativity in practice (Lowe, 2010). However, with creativity being unpredictable (Beghetto, 2017b, p.350) and given the complex nature of the school setting and individuals involved, occasionally, creativity can still exist in hostile contexts (Cochrane and Cockett, 2007, p.67). Similarly, a pro-creativity environment cannot always guarantee creative outcomes either (ibid). For creativity to have the best chance of making a significant impact on teaching and learning, providing a fostering environment is paramount. Thus, one of my research aims is to identify the main influencing factors within the case study school's context and see how they affect creativity. By synthesising the literature, it is apparent that these influencing factors affect creativity through three key elements: perception, motivation and implementation.

2.4 Perception, motivation and implementation

2.4.1 Perception

According to Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective, three levels: individual, field and domain (i.e. person, society and culture), are responsible for constructing the meaning of creativity through an interaction between the producer and the audience (p.314). For creative outcomes to be relevant, they would also need to be responses which are domain-specific (Fautley and Savage, 2007). At institutional level, e.g. a school, such meaning-making interaction and the emergence of the norm would be influenced by the institution's own unique micro-culture, as shaped by various internal and external factors. This highlights the importance of identifying context-specific perceptions, the influential factors at play, and a point of reference when investigating into creativity, as these would ultimately determine how it should be acknowledged, observed and measured in practice. Furthermore, there is a need to consider the possible tension between what is accepted and not accepted within a particular field and domain. Whilst some novel ideas would be seen by virtually everyone as creative, e.g. major inventions, others might only be accepted by a smaller but significant proportion of the field, suggesting that many creative outcomes are likely to be dotted along a continuum with varying degrees of acceptance, as shown in figure 2.4, rather than being strictly viewed by everyone as *creative* and *not creative*.



Apart from knowing what being creative looks like in each context, assessing the extent to which creativity is perceived positively is also important. The validation of creative

outcomes depends on how accepting the field and domain are to novel ideas and so this explains why some settings appear to be more pro-creativity than others (Cropley, 2001, p.55). Further, the perceived value of creativity could vary between different subject areas and educational settings. As Ahmadi et al. (2019) point out, creativity is often more associated with art subjects and in some cases, viewed as being less relevant to the curriculum at secondary level (p.257). Importantly, these different perceptions can lead to different approaches to teaching and learning as well as the type and abundance of creative outcomes.

Based on the insights gleaned from my literature review, for creativity to thrive in a particular environment, e.g. a school, collectively, there needs to be a clear idea about what constitutes creativity within the context and what it looks like in practice. There should also be a culture that welcomes and values creativity, recognising how it can benefit teaching and learning across the organisation and not limited to certain subjects. Once a clear and positive perception of creativity has been established, it would then be able to positively influence motivation and the implementation of creativity. This is because teachers would see how creativity can benefit their practice, while a strong collective perception with minimal dissonance would also help create a coherent vision, ensuring that implementation is not affected by misinterpretation.

2.4.2 Motivation

With Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective, *context* can be seen to shape the perception of creativity (Adarves-Yorno et al., 2006). While serving as a range of influencing factors at multiple levels, it can also affect one's motivation in implementing creativity (Shalley et al., 2004, pp.935-936). This is because these factors can on one hand, create "an environment where risk taking is encouraged and uncertainty is not avoided" (Shalley and Gilson, 2004, p.44), and on the other, "inhibit, curtail, repress, or otherwise ignore creative efforts" (Houtz, 2003, p.130). This clear link between motivation and creativity has been highlighted by many (Hennessey, 2019), with motivation either regarded as one of the main drivers of creativity (Amabile, 1988; Deci and Ryan, 1985), or an essential component for the production of creative outcomes, e.g. Amabile's componential theory of creativity (Amabile, 1983; 2013) and Sternberg's investment theory of creativity (Sternberg and Lubart, 1991). Thus, for creativity to be encouraged, contextual factors need to lead to a high level of motivation.

Not all types of motivation are thought to have the same impact. The type of motivation that is the most likely to lead to creative outcomes has been identified as intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1990; Feldhusen and Westby, 2003) and one's motivational orientation, could determine whether they implement creativity, despite being capable of it (Hennessey, 2019, p.374). This could be explained by applying Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory to creative behaviour. Rewarding the behaviour - as associated with extrinsic motivation, could undermine the intrinsic motivation which already exists if one was to perceive getting the reward as the reason for such behaviour (Tighe et al., 2003, p.204). Despite this, according to research, some forms of extrinsic motivators such as relational rewards can enhance creativity and lead to creative behaviour (Fischer et al., 2019). Conversely, the more *controlled* type of extrinsic motivation (Gagné and Deci, 2005, p.336) and some of the associated factors such as time pressure, surveillance and expectation of evaluation have been shown to have a negative impact on both intrinsic motivation and creativity (Tighe et al., 2003, p.205).

Relating to this, Unsworth (2001) raises an important question. When applied to my chosen focus, it translates as: why do teachers engage in creative practice? To acknowledge the different drivers behind creative intents, she puts forward four distinct types of creativity:

1. *Responsive creativity* – externally driven, creativity utilised to meet a specific outcome that requires it
2. *Expected creativity* – still largely influenced by external expectations but one has more agency regarding what the creativity is for
3. *Contributory creativity* – driven by internal motivators, creative ideas generated voluntarily for a specific outcome, associated with collaboration
4. *Proactive creativity* – focusing on opportunity or problem finding, intrinsically motivated to use creativity for practice enhancement

By Unsworth's own admission, these categories may not sufficiently describe all the possible types of creativity (p.293). Nonetheless, it is still a helpful reminder that creativity may manifest in different ways according to the factors responsible for driving it. Consequently, it would be important to identify the various intrinsic and extrinsic motivators within the context, as well as understand how motivation for implementing creativity is affected by these factors. Once these have been identified and understood, it would then be possible to utilise leadership to enable creativity; in other words, for

those involved in teaching and learning, including leaders, to create an environment where creativity is actively encouraged and planned for, while barriers are removed where possible. This would include actively transforming the motivational orientation for creativity towards the more autonomous types (see Gagné and Deci, 2005, p.336), thereby further enhancing subsequent perceptions of creativity as well as its implementation.

2.4.3 Implementation

Implementing creativity is when one puts creative ideas into practice, turning ideas into innovations. Creativity itself does not automatically mean implementation; in fact, many creative ideas do not get implemented and are lost due to insufficient motivation and the lack of ability to secure buy in (Baer, 2012). This means generating creative ideas alone is not enough (Gurteen, 1998). To add value to teaching and learning, these ideas need to be put into practice.

The implementation of creativity is of particular importance for several reasons: to begin with, based on Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective, implementing creative ideas would reveal what is accepted as creativity within a particular context. Meanwhile, it is not until these ideas are assessed, selected, refined and put into practice that they become useful and eventually turned into innovations (Watts et al., 2019). For those who believe ethicality to be an essential ingredient of creativity (Cropley, 2001, p.5), how these ideas are put into use would also affect the way in which they are perceived ontologically. Moreover, how creativity is perceived in the longer term is key to sustaining motivation, capable of transforming it from extrinsic to intrinsic. The impact implementation has on the perception of creativity and the motivation to be creative can be explained by Guskey's model of teacher change (2002). According to Guskey (2002), significant enhancement of teachers' motivation and perception of a change in practice only comes after its successful implementation (p.383). For example, by experiencing the benefits of implementing creativity in teaching and learning practices and seeing how it could improve student learning, teachers would see its value and in turn leading to an improvement in their perception and motivation to be creative. Thus, for creativity to be validated and become an integral part of the practice and culture, it needs to be implemented. Once implemented, the impact would also play a part in

shaping the future context. Ultimately, the way in which creativity can directly benefit teaching and learning is through implementation.

In practice, implementing creativity could involve formulating a new school policy, developing an innovative scheme of work, or planning a novel activity to teach a particular topic. However, the reality of implementation is not straight forward. First, successful implementation would be dependent on the agency of those involved in the implementation process, that is, teachers having sufficient motivation and ability to implement the idea. Second, creative processes also do not always lead to creative outcomes (Cochrane and Cockett, 2007, p.67), meaning there is no guarantee that creative ideas can be turned into innovations. This non-linear link between input and output can be attributed to the various phases one has to successfully pass through between idea generation and implementation as well as a number of key contextual factors, including the ability to implement, resources available, acceptance in the field etc. (Perry-Smith and Mannucci, 2017). These factors can lead to an implementation gap or a discrepancy between intentions and actions, which can also be linked to Argyris and Schon's theory of action (1974). Using Argyris and Schon's framework, espoused theory can be seen as what those involved in teaching and learning say they intend to do and theory in use would describe what is actually done in practice. However, given how creativity can be accidental (Cropley, 1995, p.91) and unpredictable (Beghetto, 2017b, p.350), the idea of congruence (Argyris and Schon, 1974), i.e. theory in practice matching the espoused theory, might not always be important. Despite this, the implementation of creative ideas should not be just down to luck and this is where leadership actions can be utilised to turn creative ideas into innovations.

Table 2.4 – The eight step process for leading change (Kotter, 2012)

Kotter's eight steps
Step 1: Establish a sense of urgency
Step 2: Create the guiding coalition
Step 3: Develop a vision and strategy
Step 4: Communicate the vision
Step 5: Empower staff to act on the vision and remove obstacles
Step 6: Generate short-term wins
Step 7: Consolidate gains and build on implementation
Step 8: Anchor new approaches in new culture

If a creative idea is a novel idea, then putting it into practice should equal the implementation of a change. This means an established framework for leading organisational change such as Kotter's (2012) eight steps (table 2.4) would be a useful tool for assessing how creativity is implemented and how it may have been supported by specific leadership actions. For example, if a sense of urgency has been established, or if a strategic vision of the implementation has been formed. The next section explores the leadership of creativity in depth by examining several relevant theories.

2.5 Leadership of creativity and leadership actions

2.5.1 Conceptualising the leadership of creativity

Like creativity, leadership is a concept that is difficult to clearly define. This has resulted in there being many definitions and perspectives regarding what constitutes it (Bush, 2020; Northouse, 2021), potentially making analysing leadership a challenging task. Therefore, this section aims to establish the concept of leadership in the context of teaching and learning, and the role it can play in fostering creativity. A framework for analysing the various aspects pertinent to the leadership of creativity is then introduced, as supported by a range of relevant theories and models such as transformational leadership, creative leadership and Kotter's (2012) eight steps.

At the most fundamental level, leadership involves exerting influence over others towards specific outcomes through interactions (Hallinger, 2011). Bush (2020) helpfully expands on this by identifying values and vision as the components that can provide the direction for one's pursuit. He also points out that leadership and authority are different, with the former being something that anyone can exercise, regardless of their formal role. Therefore, leadership can be found at different seniority levels, as well as by different individuals or groups. When applied to the focus of my research, leadership of creativity can be seen as a process of influence with the aim to encourage creativity among stakeholders through interactions. From this angle, analysis can focus on if and how influence is exerted to inspire, foster, encourage, promote and facilitate creative ideas in teaching and learning practices.

Importantly, leadership *of* creativity is considered a unit of analysis for how creativity is led, rather than assuming that creativity must be led creatively. Like the discussion

about teaching creatively versus teaching for creativity, leading creatively and leading for creativity can overlap and exist simultaneously. It is quite possible that leading creatively can stimulate, model and encourage creativity, however, my investigation does not view them as synonymous or interchangeable. As will be examined in greater detail in the next section - 2.5.2, *creative leadership*, whilst related, is a distinct concept. For the likes of Stoll and Temperley (2009b), and Strobel et al. (2025), creative leadership involves the leadership of creativity, as well as placing an emphasis on leadership itself being creative. On a practical level, leadership is not just about leaders' influence, values and vision, but also their actions (Robinson, 2011), e.g. what they do to enhance teaching and learning. These could be the actions taken to initiate, sustain or strengthen the process, such as those Leithwood et al. (2020) suggest: set directions, build relationships and develop people, develop the organisation to support desired practice, and improve the instructional programme (p.573).

Another aspect which ought to be part of this discussion is the management of creative teaching and learning initiatives. Taking the view that management and leadership are not the same thing and involve different types of activities, both are seen as important and inextricably linked (Bush, 2020). Despite the differences, management is essential because the goal should not only be to generate lots of new ideas in teaching and learning, but it is also about implementing and sustaining these ideas, so that they can become innovations (Perry-Smith and Mannuci, 2017) and make a positive impact on students' learning in the longer term. This means once ideas have been introduced and developed, management would be needed to integrate them into the culture. However, for creativity to thrive, leadership plays a pivotal role by shaping the environment and influencing behaviour (Lee et al., 2020, p.1). As a significant force, leadership actions such as facilitating capacity building opportunities can act as a key enabler, creating the right condition for creativity to be nurtured and thrive (Stoll and Temperley, 2009a). Equally, it can raise barriers by supervising too closely and planning with too much detail (Lowe, 2010, p.70).

Stoll and Temperley (2009b) set out nine conditions leaders should induce to promote creativity:

1. model creativity and risk-taking,
2. stimulate a sense of urgency,
3. expose colleagues to new thinking and experiences,
4. self-consciously relinquish control,

5. provide time and space and facilitate the practicalities,
6. promote individual and collaborative creative thinking and design,
7. set high expectations about the degree of creativity,
8. use failure as a learning opportunity,
9. keep referring back to core values.

Some of the leadership actions needed to induce Stoll and Temperley's conditions align well with those found in Kotter's (2012) eight steps. Both emphasise the need to create a sense of urgency, communicate a vision, facilitate the optimal environment, and reinforce the core ideas. An explanation for this is that leading creativity would usually involve leading change, because implementing creative ideas would mean doing something differently. However, there are elements specifically needed for driving creativity, namely, to encourage risk-taking, favour newness, and learn from failures. Using actions linked to Stoll and Temperley's nine conditions explicitly to encourage creativity within a context would help signal acceptance of creative behaviours. However, due to the macro environment discussed in Section 2.2.1 where pressures from accountability culture and fast policy are intense, even willing leaders may lack the agency they need to facilitate the desirable conditions. Returning to Robinson's (2011) point on leadership, it is therefore important not to only look at their intentions or if creativity is said to be valued. What is espoused needs to be accompanied by corresponding actions as well.

Leadership actions can affect creativity through its influence on perception, motivation and implementation. To put this into context, what leaders do can determine what is viewed as creative within the organisation and the extent to which creativity is valued. Leaders can also affect followers' motivation to be creative (Lee et al., 2020, p.1), e.g. by way of using various motivators. Furthermore, leaders' actions have direct influence over the key factors relating to implementation identified by Perry-Smith and Mannucci (2017), e.g. allocating the resources needed and establishing a shared vision. Having identified four phases between idea generation to idea implementation, Perry-Smith and Mannucci suggest the type of need required at each phase, namely cognitive flexibility for idea generation, support for idea elaboration, influence and legitimacy for idea championing, and share vision and understanding for idea implementation (p.57). Although Perry-Smith and Mannucci do not specify leadership as being responsible for addressing these needs, it does provide a good initial framework for considering the sort of leadership actions which should be in place.

This further reiterates how creative ideas themselves are not enough and that they require support to be communicated to the system. Supportive leadership actions based on these needs could involve allowing time for creative ideas to be generated and developed, suspending judgement to maximise flexibility, providing relevant resources, using leadership to share the creative ideas as the new vision and remove any barriers within the environment. Reflecting on the lessons learnt from 40 years of leadership research, Hallinger (2011) notes that “Effective leadership is both shaped by and responds to the constraints and opportunities extant in the school organization and its environment” (p.127). Therefore, as well as being influenced by the context, it can also be a source of influence to shape the context’s future. Specifically, leadership actions can be used to harness the contextual factors that are positive for creativity and counter those which pose a threat, e.g. suspending judgement at school level despite pressure created by national policy. This shows as well as being a force which provides structure, it also acts as agency, responding to the structure that has been created by the other influencing contextual factors, further highlighting the mutually influential nature of these forces.

2.5.2 A leadership framework for analysis

With certain leadership actions being conducive to creativity, it implies that leadership styles can be an important factor. In particular, transformational leadership has been found to have a notable, positive impact on creativity (Jung, 2001; Koh et al., 2019). Considering its theoretical model, it is not difficult to see why such a link exists. According to Avolio and Bass (2001), transformational leaders are ethical, share risks with followers, motivate them, stimulate their efforts to be creative, encourage creativity and not publicly criticise individuals’ mistakes (p.2). Therefore, such a style would provide many of the previously discussed ingredients necessary for fostering creativity. Apart from transformational leadership, distributed leadership is also associated with creativity. This is because features such as active relinquishment of control, collaboration, empowerment through autonomy and supporting emerging innovations are all said to be important for effective leadership distribution (Harris, 2012). Another leadership style with an explicit emphasis on creativity is creative leadership. For Stoll and Temperley (2009b, p.66), it is seen as:

...an imaginative and thought-through response to opportunities and to challenging issues that inhibit learning at all levels. It is about seeing, thinking and doing things differently in order to improve the life chances of all students.

Creative leaders also provide the conditions, environment and opportunities for others to be creative.

Based on this perspective, creative leadership is about leaders themselves being creative in their approach to lead, while also creating the right conditions for others to be creative. It is important, however, to reiterate that my research focuses on *teachers'* creativity in teaching and learning, rather than leaders' creative leadership practices. For example, my focus is not on leaders taking an imaginative approach to influence teaching staff. Nevertheless, creative leadership is still considered relevant due to the emphasis on creating conditions for nurturing others' creativity (Stoll and Temperley, 2009b).

Leadership and power often go hand in hand. Power is the ability individuals have to influence others (Hersey et al., 1979), whereas leadership, as already noted, is the process of such influence. French and Raven (1959) identify five bases of power linked to leadership: power that comes with - formal roles (legitimate power), expertise (expert power), traits or charisma (referent power), ability to reward (reward power), and ability to punish (coercive power). In a school context, all these types of power can be applicable to leading creativity. However, when analysing leadership, it is not just about the type(s) of power being exercised or the leadership style(s) adopted, it is also important to examine what leaders use these to achieve. Therefore, to enable my research to fully explore the leadership of creativity, it is crucial to establish a systematic approach to analysing leadership, going beyond simply looking at leadership styles. To do that, I propose an original *leadership framework* which comprises three key units of analysis to provide a comprehensive coverage:

1. Leadership as influences: power to motivate,
2. leadership as configurations: power to deploy and organise human resources,
3. leadership as an implementation agent of actions: power to transform.

With these strands, the aim is to explore relevant leadership theories, as well as other aspects and concepts that are pertinent to how creativity is led. Once established, this framework can then be applied to examine the leadership of creativity at the case study school in Chapter 5.

2.5.2.1 Leadership as influences: Power to motivate

Whilst leadership as influence has already been established in the previous section, to elaborate on this, it could be seen as the power to motivate people towards a particular

goal(s) (Bush, 2020, p.4). This type of leadership power, although not exclusive to, is often associated with individuals and their traits/personality, something that one can exercise through interactions with others. Such influence can be achieved in various ways and would involve extrinsically or intrinsically motivating others towards the goal. The way in which this is done can serve as the defining feature of various leadership styles. It is possible that all these styles can motivate teachers' creative behaviours, at least to some extent.

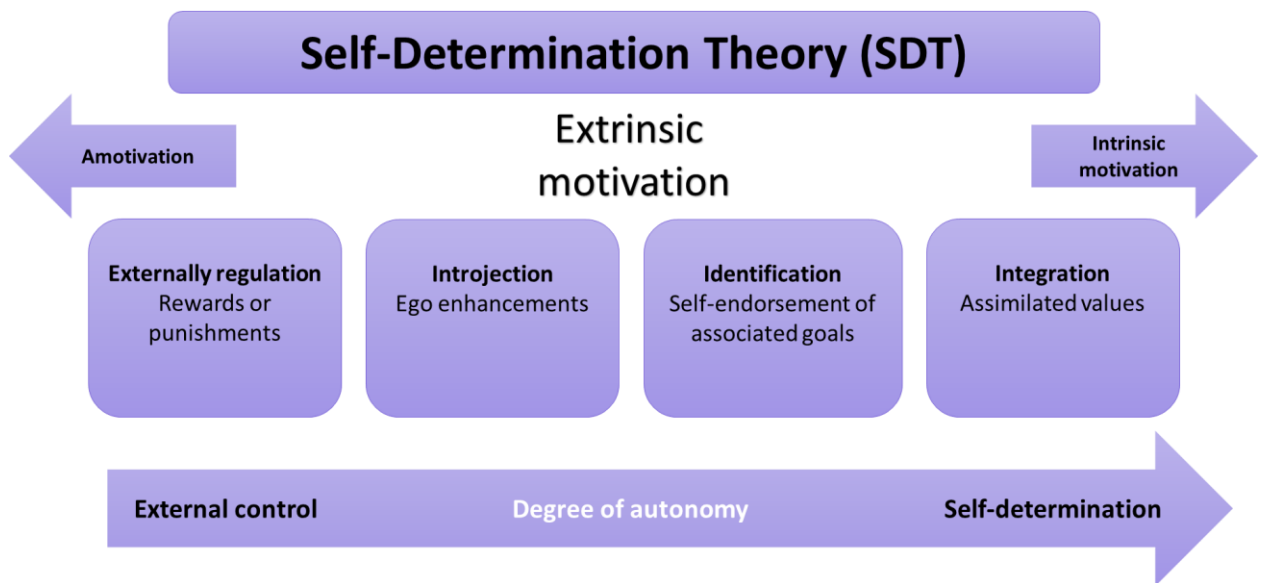


Figure 2.5a – Self-determination theory (based on Ryan and Deci's taxonomy of human motivation, 2000, p.61)

Leadership as the power to motivate can be illustrated using some of the well-established leadership styles as examples and through the lens of self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Transactional leaders achieve their influence using rewards and punishments (Avolio and Bass, 2001) and this could be particularly useful when trying to gain early momentum for an initiative. However, the motivation generated by this approach alone would be extrinsic, more specifically, the external regulation type (see figure 2.5a), thus likely to be short-lived (Ryan and Deci, 2000). In contrast, transformational leaders motivate by setting a clear vision, with help from their enthusiasm and role modelling to inspire, gaining followers' trust and respect (Avolio and Bass, 2001). This shift away from reward and coercive power should see motivational orientation move towards the more autonomous forms of motivation, therefore more likely to lead to longer-term behavioural change. Furthermore, the *four* *Is* which characterise transformational leadership (see figure 2.5b) not only clearly

emphasise the importance of leaders' ability to influence and motivate, i.e. through *idealised influence* and *inspirational motivation*, but it also expects leaders to use their influence to encourage creativity and innovation via *intellectual stimulation* (Avolio and Bass, 2001, p.2). Together with providing the support needed through *individualised consideration*, transformational leadership can be particularly helpful when it comes to the first three phases of Perry-Smith and Mannucci's (2017) framework: idea generation, idea elaboration and idea championing. However, this would rely on leaders possessing the four Is in the first place.

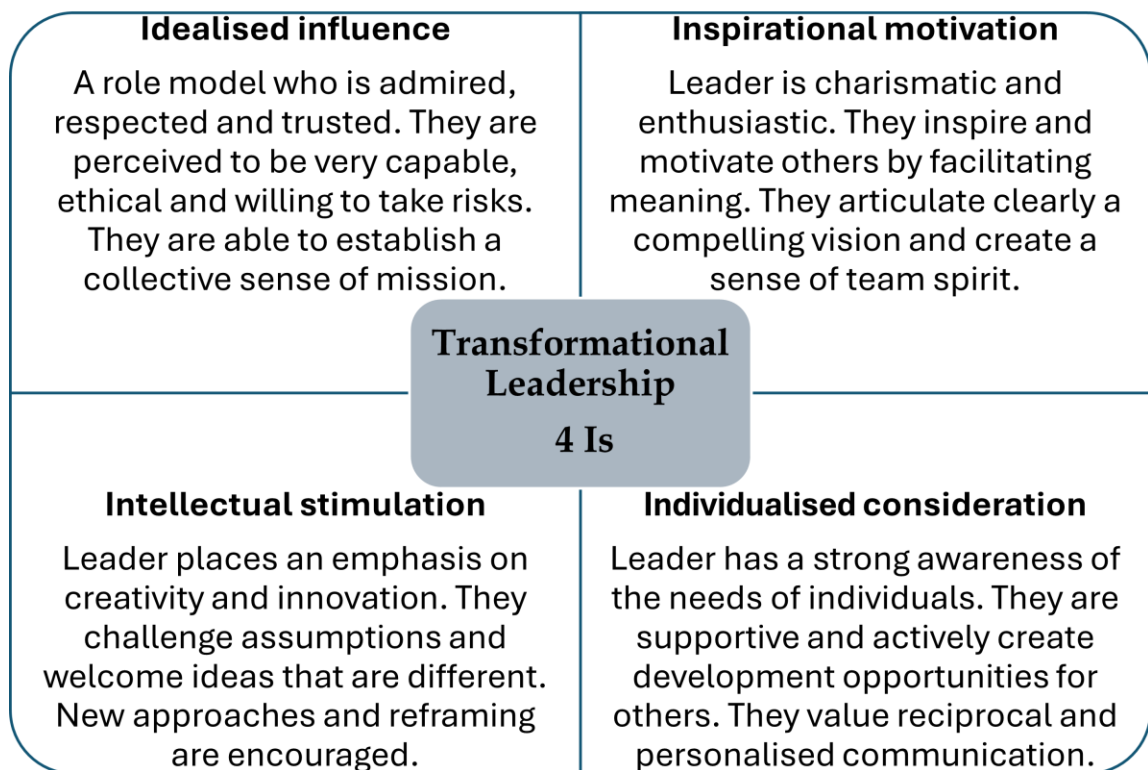


Figure 2.5b – Transformational leadership (based on Bass and Riggio, 2006, pp.6-7)

Distributed leadership, from the normative perspective (Harris, 2008; Bush, 2023) can motivate by having a shared vision established within a setting. Those with expertise would emerge as leaders to take forward creative ideas regardless of their formal roles (Harris, 2009). Empowerment and trust, alongside the internalised vision associated with this perspective, are likely to foster intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2017), creating a sense of agency and self-determination among those involved. The autonomy afforded by this way of distributing leadership would also be good for idea generation, because of the need for cognitive flexibility (Perry-Smith and Mannucci, 2017). However, this approach to leadership would require specific conditions such as

the availability of experts in the wider team and a structure that is sufficiently flexible. Due to this, some have questioned its practicality (MacBeath, 2005; Timperley, 2005) and others have raised the concern that it could be a disguise for delegation (Bush, 2023).

In the absence of a widely accepted model for creative leadership (Mainemelis et al., 2015), it is more difficult to highlight specific features which are relevant to motivation. However, drawing from Stoll and Temperley's (2009b) nine conditions, leaders can first motivate by creating a sense of urgency, modelling, and setting high expectations. The other conditions they facilitate such as providing time and space for idea generation and elaboration, as well as relinquishing control, would also be capable of fostering intrinsic motivation for creative behaviours. For this to work, it is imperative that leaders are aware of staff's perceived abilities and confidence related to creativity, and where appropriate, suitable professional development opportunities and peer support should be made available. This is because through the lens of SDT, teachers would only be intrinsically motivated to adopt creativity in their practice if they feel as though they have autonomy, a sense of competence, as well as being able to relate to others regarding their intent (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Situational leadership, whilst less directly relevant to creative behaviours, can still be relevant. The four situation-specific approaches to lead: directing, coaching, supporting and delegating, are dependent on followers' level of commitment and competence (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977) and these approaches can be applicable to motivating followers in adopting creative practices. The model suggests that by using the right approach in specific situations, leaders can guide followers to develop their commitment and competence accordingly, so that they can eventually work independently towards the goal (Hersey et al., 1979). The idea of commitment is closely related to motivation; thus, effective situational leaders should be able to increase followers' motivation and potentially even move their motivation orientation towards the more autonomous types.

As discussed, motivational orientation is not limited to amotivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. There are various points along the motivation continuum and leadership can be utilised to move teachers towards the more autonomous types or even intrinsic. This would allow creative teaching and learning practices to be more sustainable and self-driven in the longer term.

2.5.2.2 Leadership as configurations: Power to deploy and organise human resources

Leadership can be in different forms: autocratic; exercised by a small group of senior leaders; or dispersed among a larger group. Apart from securing motivation, leaders exercising their leadership power can deploy and organise their teams in particular patterns to work towards the set goals; Gronn (2009) calls these patterns “configurations” (p.383). Therefore, leadership can be analysed through the way in which it is configured, in other words, to examine the leadership of something in a given setting by describing the pattern of individuals’ involvement. For example, if it is a single leader leading an entire team or multiple leaders leading together. When leadership is dispersed and shaped by the interactions between team members, leadership can be described as stretching over multiple individuals and the situation (Spillane et al., 2001). This is what Spillane et al. (2001) and Gronn (2002) refer to as distributed leadership. More precisely, where distributedness is considered a unit of analysis, rather than automatically a preferred way of doing leadership, i.e. the normative perspective, this is known as the descriptive perspective of distributed leadership. The shift away from single leaders being the sole focus has become a popular perspective, leading to leadership being seen as naturally distributed (Robinson, 2011, p.8). It is also considered by some to be “a set of practices distributed among staff rather than enacted only by those in formal leadership roles” (Leithwood et al., 2010, p.683). This concurs with Spillane’s (2006) idea of the leader plus aspect.

When analysing the leadership of creativity in teaching and learning, this analytical frame concerns how leadership is configured to encourage and promote creativity, for example, whether the influence is concentrated and exerted by an individual/ a small team, or if it is distributed across several people who may or may not have formal leadership responsibilities. For creativity, collaboration is often thought of as an enabling feature (Harris, 2009, p.11), therefore, a distributed configuration could be favourable. However, this is assuming that the capacity to lead creativity is present. Even when it comes to the normative perspective of distributed leadership, the emergence of leadership would require those leading creativity to have the expertise to do so (ibid).

Different configurations may also be required for the different phases in Perry-Smith and Mannucci’s (2017) idea journey and thus, this could lead to a sequential, but not necessarily linear approach. For instance, it may be more appropriate to adopt a

particular configuration for the idea generation phase, e.g. a transformational leader to get people started and gain buy-in. When a shared vision is developed, the leadership configuration could evolve into a distributed phase, where the idea is elaborated and refined, involving different components. Once the idea has been fully developed into an innovative initiative, the configuration can evolve further to include more leaders to champion and implement it.

Meanwhile, reality can be more complex still. As Gronn (2016) points out, multiple leadership patterns can exist simultaneously. Such hybridity means different teams within the same setting can be configured differently, with some being more distributed than others. However, similar to Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) situational leadership, hybridity can also involve different leadership styles according to the needs of the situation. Clearly, the styles which can be adopted are not limited to Hersey and Blanchard's directing, coaching, directing and delegation; instead, the circumstances may demand other approaches. For example, certain creative initiatives may be led by one transformational leader while others are led by a distributed configuration simultaneously. Nonetheless, Hersey and Blanchard's idea of taking different approaches in accordance with followers' *maturity*, as determined by their commitment and competence, is useful. When looking for the most appropriate configurations for the leadership of creativity, the maturity of the organisation as a whole and different departments within it would be worth considering, especially when taking a distributed approach due to the need for expertise and self-direction.

This configuration analytical frame is not only about whether leadership is distributed, but it also considers what is distributed and how it is distributed. Therefore, in addition to distributedness, configuration also encompasses role functions. A good example for illustrating this way of looking at leadership is Belbin's (2010) team roles. In his model, the role of *plant* is particularly relevant because it is the idea generator. This also helps illustrate what Perry-Smith and Mannucci's (2017) four phases may require in terms of configurations, e.g. plant and specialist for idea generation, resource investigator and monitor evaluator for idea elaboration, teamworker and co-ordinator for idea championing, and implementer and completer finisher for idea implementation.

Meanwhile, Strobel et al.'s (2025) conceptualisation of creative leadership, as based on Mainemelis et al.'s (2015) work is that it can manifest in three distinct ways: *facilitative*, *directive*, and *integrative*, a result of the context it is situated within. The three manifestations are characterised by the way in which creative ideas are contributed.

Directive creative leadership is where leaders are the main generators of creative ideas; facilitative is where followers are the main generators; integrative is where both groups collaborate and leaders synthesise the ideas generated. Due to the difference in functions among leaders and followers, these manifestations are essentially different configurations and will therefore be analysed during my data analysis in Chapter 5.

2.5.2.3 Leadership as an implementation agent of actions: Power to transform

Another aspect of leadership to analyse is how those with leadership power or responsibilities carry out actions to implement transformations. Leaders tend to have more power to act on implementation than followers because of the types of power that French and Raven (1959) identify, including the *legitimate power* that comes with formal leadership positions. The distinction between this analytical frame and the first one is the focus on actions put in place by leaders as part of the implementation process rather than just how they influence and motivate others. An example of this would be when leaders actively identify and remove barriers that can derail the implementation of a creative initiatives, instead of just stating their vision. This reiterates how leadership is also about actions (Robinson, 2011). More specifically, as related to Argyris and Schon's (1974) theory of action, what leaders say or envisage may be different to what they do or are able to put in place in practice, leading to the implementation gap phenomenon alluded to in Section 2.4.3. Therefore, for this research, it is acknowledged that there may be discrepancies between narrative, intent and reality.

This is particularly relevant to the leadership of creativity because creative ideas often do not turn into innovations – many lose momentum or get abandoned (Perry-Smith and Mannucci, 2017). This highlights the significant role leadership can play in seeing through the ideas being pursued, hence the importance of this analytical frame. Moreover, this is also where leadership overlaps with management, and creative ideas overlap with innovations. Given the precarious nature of creative ideas, integration of supportive management during Perry-Smith and Mannucci's (2017) *idea implementation* phase would be crucial. Since most school leaders have responsibilities in both leadership and management (Bush, 2020), it is difficult to separate the two in practice. Effective leadership should therefore involve more than just change initiation, and act as a significant power to drive and support the process of change.

The overlap and interconnectedness between leadership and management can be seen in Kotter's (2012) eight steps model, which offers tangible ideas for leadership actions to facilitate change. Some steps such as *establishing a sense of urgency* and *developing a vision and strategy* are more relevant to leadership while others such as *removing obstacles* and *anchoring new approaches* by establishing systems and processes are management-oriented. In addition to the eight steps model, Belbin's (2010) team roles also show the ideal team to include roles that are specific to both leadership and management, for example, *plant* and *specialist* for idea generation and elaboration, as led by their creativity and expertise, whereas *monitor evaluator* and *implementer* would be good for managing the implementation process. Although Belbin's roles are more related to the configuration frame, three of the nine roles: shaper, implementer, and completer finisher, are responsible for the *action* part of Belbin's model, hence being relevant to this frame.

Strobel et al.'s (2025) conceptualisation of the different manifestations of creative leadership identifies the *facilitative* type to be good for idea generation, *directive* to be good for idea implementation, and *integrative* to be good for both. This provides further support that leaders tend to have greater impact on implementation through their agency to act, especially if they are the source of creative ideas. Nevertheless, integrative creative leadership, where both groups collaborate and contribute ideas, is shown to benefit idea generation and implementation, thus likely to have the greatest impact and the ability to sustain creative outputs in the longer term. As such, followers clearly play a key role in implementation despite the asymmetric power dynamics. Although to a lesser extent than their leader counterparts, followers too, possess agency that should not be overlooked. This is because their actions or inaction can also be determined and driven by their own motivation, interpretation and capabilities. This holistic view of leadership which considers all involved is crucial for analysing implementation because whatever happens on the ground is how creativity is led in reality, rather than what is intended.

2.6 Problematising current research

Despite creativity being a well-researched field, investigations looking at how teachers' creativity is led within school settings are scarce. Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of conceptual frameworks for evaluating the leadership of teachers' creativity in teaching and learning encompassing all the important forces and elements discussed.

Therefore, by constructing such a framework, this research has the potential to offer invaluable insights relating to how leadership can be utilised to foster teachers' creativity. The value of this research can be further demonstrated by Sandberg and Alvesson's (2011) gap-spotting and problematisation approaches. However, rather than "moving beyond gap-spotting" (p.25) to favour problematization, I see both approaches to be valuable, i.e. using gap-spotting to inform my research, highlighting areas of interest for my investigation and then use problematisation to put forward an alternative perspective, so that interesting research questions can be developed.

Sandberg and Alvesson (2011) identify three types of gap-spotting: confusion spotting, neglect spotting and application spotting. Within the current body of research, there are multiple gaps. First, regarding confusion, despite motivation being seen as an important element that affects creativity (Amabile, 2013), research into the effects of different types has yielded mixed results (Fischer et al., 2019, p.2; Grant and Berry, 2011, p.73). Second, with most motivation-related research into creativity being conducted in non-educational settings, there is a distinct lack of research looking at how teachers' creativity is affected by motivators that are specific to educational contexts. Similarly, whilst there is a plethora of research looking at students' creativity in the classroom, e.g. the link between creativity and enhanced academic performance (Gajda et al., 2017), teachers' creativity, and how it can be affected by various forces and elements have been largely neglected (Cremin and Chappell, 2021; Beghetto, 2017a). Third, regarding application, there is clearly the need to extend current research to pay closer attention to creative processes (Watts et al., 2019, p.2) instead of just focusing on creative products. With this gap, it has been suggested that the underutilised method of observation should be used much more extensively to enhance our understanding of creativity in education (Katz-Buonincontro and Anderson, 2018).

2.7 Enhanced social perspective of creativity – A conceptual framework for analysis

As illustrated in previous sections, creativity is a complex social phenomenon that is context-specific and shaped by multiple mutually influential forces and elements. When it comes to researching the leadership of creativity within a living organisation like a school, one needs to go beyond solely focusing on individuals, e.g. teachers, leaders and their traits. Instead, contextual factors and leadership actions, as well as the

structure and agency these create should also be accounted for. Neglected in the current body of research, this **enhanced social perspective of creativity** and its leadership places strong emphasis on the interactions between these different forces and elements which are linked to the individuals, the organisation and the broader context. When the leadership of creativity is viewed from both the individual and social angles simultaneously, it can provide researchers a more holistic view and this would help generate research questions that are capable of reaching greater depth.

As demonstrated, perception, motivation and implementation are all essential elements to consider when investigating creativity in a given context. These elements are mutually influential and have the potential to enhance or limit creativity. Meanwhile, through structure and agency, leadership actions as well as context are two interactive forces that can affect creativity, responsible for shaping and driving the three core elements. To examine how creativity is led in teaching and learning within the case study school, I propose my own conceptual framework (figure 2.7) which encompasses both interactive forces and the three elements, with double headed arrows representing their mutually influencing nature.

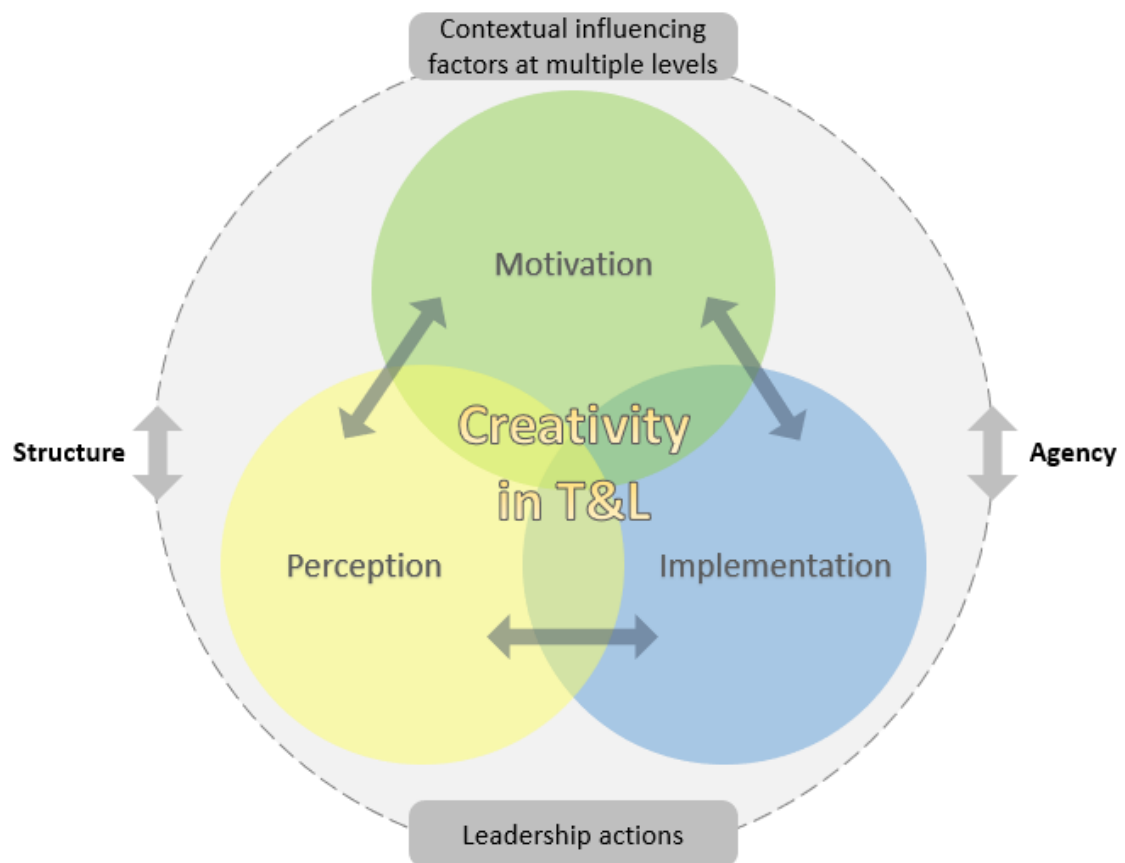


Figure 2.7 – the enhanced social perspective of creativity conceptual framework

Using this framework, the two forces and the three elements, as well as the extent of their influence, can be examined and evaluated. In the case study school, it is possible that one of the forces or some of the elements and their influence are more significant than others. Similarly, there could be additional factors that need to be taken into account. Therefore, once data has been collected and analysed, these will be highlighted where applicable.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the research undertaken, as well as its methodological approach. This includes outlining the nature of the inquiry and articulating the key decisions made relating to the data collection and analysis processes. Moreover, the data collection is reflected upon in order to contextualise the data and to consider the implications.

3.2 Research questions

Given the aims stated in Chapter 1 and the enhanced social perspective of creativity and its leadership introduced in Chapter 2, this research project sought to answer the following questions and to provide data for my creativity conceptual framework established in Chapter 2:

1. How is creativity perceived in the case study school from multiple leadership perspectives?

This first question was designed to closely examine one of the key elements from my creativity conceptual framework: perception. The objective was to ascertain participants' attitude towards creativity and to find out what they would identify as creativity in teaching and learning practices. Using the data and insights from the literature review, I was able to evaluate the impact these perceptions have on the other two core elements: motivation and implementation. Moreover, this research question set out to compare perceptions of creativity between three levels: senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. By examining these levels, the research assesses how creativity is perceived by the school as an organisation and not just individuals within it.

2. How do contextual factors and leadership actions influence a) key stakeholders' perceptions of creativity, b) their motivation relating to creative intent, and c) their implementation of creativity in practices related to teaching and learning?

The second question was designed to focus on the two interactive forces in my creativity conceptual framework: contextual factors and leadership actions, and how

they affect the three core elements from the perspective of the three groups of stakeholders: classroom teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders. The objective was to identify the specific factors and leadership actions found in the case study school's context and then assess the extent to which these encouraged or restricted creativity. Due to the all-encompassing coverage of the components from my conceptual framework, this question was the most complex one to address.

3. How, and to what extent is creativity led and implemented in teaching and learning at whole school, departmental and classroom levels?

The third question concerned gaining an overview of what creativity looks like in practice within the context of the case study school, including the types of creativity that exist. It also guided the research to explore the leadership actions taken to lead and implement creative teaching and learning initiatives at various levels. This allowed the research to assess creative processes and outcomes against intentions, in turn verifying the key factors at play and how they impact implementation.

3.3 Research approach and philosophical underpinnings

This research is underpinned by a range of philosophical principles and theoretical concepts. To maximise research quality, it is important to explicitly establish the key assumptions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and how the rationale for the adopted design is sufficiently robust. Given the assumptions outlined in the following sections, it is necessary to take a reflexive approach and consider the implications. The aim is to show that the methodology is based on a well-thought-out plan and that the key decisions made were well-informed.

3.3.1 Axiological considerations

Axiological considerations are fundamental to research and its design (Klenke, 2008, p.17). What area to research into, what questions to ask and the angle in which to view a phenomenon can be seen to carry the researcher's value judgements. Thus, when reflecting on my own value position, it soon became clear that the area of research and my own professional experience are inextricably linked. Prior to joining Higher Education, I spent over a decade working in the school and Further Education sectors.

My professional experience involved teaching and leading subjects that are typically associated with creativity, namely music and performing arts. During this time and since, I have had many leadership roles and responsibilities, sparking my interest in educational leadership. As a leader and teacher of creative subjects such as music, I had significant freedom in the way in which I facilitated teaching and learning, both in my own classroom and the department I led. With such freedom, I often experimented with new ways of doing things in my own practice, as well as creating new schemes of work or learning opportunities that took a different approach. In my own practice and leadership roles, I have always valued creativity and associated it with enhanced outcomes, most noticeably its ability to problem-solve and increase student engagement. This value position inevitably led to my interest in finding out how creativity in teaching and learning can be effectively led in school settings.

From my own axiological standpoint, educational research should be a vehicle for transforming education. Owing to its potential to help leaders and practitioners enhance their practice, research can ultimately lead to better quality education for students. To make this research transformative, the desired outcome is to bring about changes that can have a positive impact on teaching and learning, building on existing knowledge and understanding to inform future improvement opportunities. Clearly, what constitutes *positive impact* and *improvement* is based on my value position and worldview of education. Thus, the fundamental basis of this research is formed by my axiological and ontological stance, and these assumptions then informed the epistemological decisions I made. Whilst research cannot be value-free (Olsen, 2004), my positive perception of creativity and its perceived potential in school improvement can make the research prone to undue researcher bias, in turn undermining research quality (Briggs et al., 2012). Therefore, reflexivity has been crucial for the formulation of my research questions and how I conducted the data collection. Throughout the whole process, including the data analysis, there was a deliberate attempt to self-reflect and set aside my own prior knowledge, experience and perception to try to gain the most accurate depiction of the participants' reality, achieving what Tufford and Newman (2010) and Bevan (2014) describe as *bracketing*, an essential technique in phenomenological research (Husserl, 2014).

3.3.2 Ontological considerations

This research fundamentally concerns two concepts: creativity and leadership. As illustrated in Chapter 2, both are known to be ambiguous and elusive (Craft et al., 2001; Northouse, 2021). Such ambiguity goes beyond definitions and the theoretical implications because these phenomena can only be adequately conceptualised and captured in context, for example, to ascertain what creativity looks like and how leadership is done in practice. Thus, this research takes the stance that both creativity and leadership are socially constructed and context-specific (Kahl and Hansen, 2015; Bush, 2020), requiring a project that could examine a relevant setting in depth. Notwithstanding the ambiguity, Chapter 2 provided a working definition for both terms so that they could be applied to analyse the data collected. Meanwhile in Chapter 1, I specified my focus to be teaching and learning from the teacher's perspective, rather than from the broader sense, and similarly as stated in Chapter 2, I am only looking at one aspect of creative pedagogy: teachers' creativity. These foci have resulted in a **teacher-specific angle** for examining creative teaching and learning practices, and is acknowledged to be a limitation.

As well as recognising the research context as unique, this project seeks to identify the different realities at different levels, once again revealing its root in phenomenology. This means the aim is *not* to find the right perspective about creativity in teaching and learning, but to understand how individual actors within this specific system see and do creativity. In addition to such interpretivistic worldview, many of the phenomena of interest are also very subjective and personal, including perceptions and motivation. Consequently, a qualitative approach was deemed most suitable for exploring these perspectives in depth, allowing the research to generate "rich and thick" descriptions (Geertz, 1973; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) to represent the participants' lived experience. Taking the stance that knowledge is constantly changing and time-specific (Usher, 1996), my ontological position and therefore research approach are consistent with and underpinned by pragmatism and postmodernism.

3.3.3 Epistemological considerations

With the aim to examine individuals' unique lived experience and their perspective on creativity, this research inevitably leans towards being emergent in nature. However, having established a creativity conceptual framework (figure 2.7) based on synthesised

insights from the literature, the research focused on a range of specific components such as motivation, contextual factors and leadership actions. As such, the investigation can be considered both inductive and deductive. This is because the components in the conceptual framework formed the basis and structure of the data collection methods but at the same time, flexibility was integrated to allow for unexpected emerging themes to be explored, e.g. through the sequential design and semi-structured interviews.

Another key epistemological consideration specific to this research was the methodological challenges associated with researching leadership in schools, especially those related to interviewing school leaders. These included the demand for the researcher to be knowledgeable about the topic and the specialised language associated with it due to leaders often being experts in their area (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Leaders' interpretation of what goes on in their setting could also be very different to how followers perceive it (Klenke, 2008, p.145), suggesting that data gathered from leaders alone may not offer a holistic view. Furthermore, as highlighted in Chapter 2, what leaders say could be different to what they do (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003) and what they choose to say during interviews could be influenced by their motive (Mikecz, 2012). In some cases, this would result in "talk tracks" being used by leaders to achieve their own agenda (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p.172). Since all of these can affect what Lincoln and Guba (1985) see as rigour and trustworthiness, pilot interviews with two experienced leaders were carried out prior to my data collection to explore potential issues. Although these interviewees were not from the case study school, they helped consolidate my approach and provided me with the direction I needed to finalise my interview schedule. For instance, reflecting on these pilot interviews prompted me to ensure that my interview questions for the actual data collection focused on establishing the participants' experienced reality.

In addition to the insights gleaned from the literature, it was necessary to "do [my] homework" (Mikecz, 2012, p.487) as part of the research process, e.g. analysing the school's Ofsted report. This is so that I could maximise my preparedness by getting to know the case study school and its wider context properly before interviewing the leaders. Gaining an understanding of what leaders at the case study school had to work with increased my knowledgeability. This together with being an experienced leader working in education myself helped me to build trust and respect among the participants. Moreover, being aware of potential issues like talk tracks informed my

research design to allow scope for triangulation during data analysis, for example, comparing interview data between senior leaders and classroom teachers (respondent triangulation), as well as comparing data collected via different methods (methodological triangulation). During data collection and analysis, there was a conscious effort to read between the lines and keep the school's context in mind.

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 Case study

This project is an embedded single case study with multiple units of analysis (Yin, 2009). The units of analysis in this case are based on the different levels of leadership within the broader organisational school context, i.e. senior, middle leaders and teachers. The research is both descriptive and explanatory in nature; it describes the phenomenon in detail and provides an explanation for the issues raised with the emerging understanding developed in my data analysis. As the phenomenon being studied is inseparable from the context, a case study design allowed the investigation to be in-depth and context-sensitive (Yin, 2009), while retaining the “holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (ibid, p.4), e.g. specific leadership actions and creativity seen at different levels. This in turn helped the research to achieve the rich and thick descriptions that I was looking for. With creativity being a phenomenon that is context-specific (Cochrane and Cockett, 2007) and that the case study school's contextual factors being a key component of one of the research questions, this was particularly important.

The focus on one case study school as a unique case also acknowledges the complexity and diversity of educational settings, seeing each as its own living system (Mitchell and Sackney, 2016) without assuming that the leadership of creativity would follow the same process to reach predictable outcomes across different settings. In other words, a creative initiative led by a group of staff under the unique circumstances of one school, as created by its distinctive organisational culture, power dynamics, leadership styles and demographic-specific needs, would likely involve a different process to what is needed if a similar initiative was to be led elsewhere. Moreover, a case study offers the flexibility needed to pragmatically select the most suitable research methods (de Vaus, 2001, p.232), this was especially important when the three research questions concern core elements that would be better served by different

methodological approaches, e.g. hearing about one's motivation versus observing how something is being implemented. By adopting a sequential design (de Vaus, 2001), it was possible to have a deeper exploration of emerging themes, as well as to unit theory with practice (Diggins, 1994) through looking at leadership and creative, practices, both espoused and those in action.

Given the qualitative nature of the case study and my ontological standpoint, it is not the aim to produce generalisable findings that are usually associated with quantitative research. Instead, by presenting a detailed and authentic picture of how creativity was being led at the case study school, it is expected that at least some of the findings will be meaningful and relatable to teachers and leaders working in other settings. Providing that the findings and insights are applicable and useful to others, the research will achieve what Stake and Trumbull (1982), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as natural generalisation and transferability, respectively.

3.4.2 Multiple methods approach

The research has a multiple methods design, which consists of three different data collection methods: documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations. Whilst each of these methods are capable of capturing rich data, taking a multiple methods approach can compensate for the limitations associated with each method when used on their own (Denzin and Lincoln, 2007). When there are many variables, multiple tools should be used to help collect all the relevant data (Cohen et al., 2011). With my research questions targeting the three main components in my creativity conceptual framework: perception, motivation and implementation, the research required an approach that is multidimensional, which meant capturing detailed narratives relating to perceptions and motivation, as well as observing how creativity was being implemented in practice. Utilising the three chosen methods, the research had a qualitative four-stage sequential design as shown here in figure 3.4.

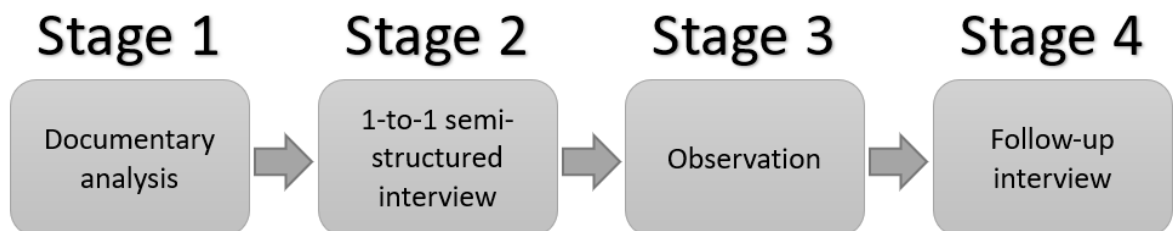


Figure 3.4 – Sequential four stage design

A mixed methods approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods is usually associated with pragmatic research (Klenke, 2008, p.27). However, the decision to include only qualitative methods was underpinned by pragmatism, in that a truly pragmatic approach would be to find the most suitable methods to answer the research questions (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, p.17), avoiding what Janesick (1994) sees as methodolatry. Moreover, it prevented my research from unnecessarily perpetuating the false dualism (Dewey, 1916) that drives the quantitative and qualitative divide (Pring, 2000).

3.4.3 Maximising research quality

When creating the research design, one of the key considerations was to ensure research rigour, maximising what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as trustworthiness, which is made up of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (p.300). To achieve this, a range of strategies have been incorporated in the research design, including respondent validation during Stage 4 as this would help increase credibility by making sure that the participants were accurately interpreted and represented.

With the adopted multiple method design, data quality can be further enhanced using three other strategies: triangulation, facilitation and complementarity (Hammersley, 1996). In terms of triangulation, two types have been used: methodological triangulation and respondent triangulation. With the former, data from the documentary analyses, interviews and observations have been crosschecked, allowing convergence and divergence to be identified, in turn creating a more holistic picture. In contrast, respondent triangulation crosschecks data from different categories of respondents, so that a comparative perspective can be generated. Regarding facilitation, the data from each stage informed the design of the next, helping to make subsequent data collection more focused. Beyond this project, future studies can also be facilitated using the overall findings (Hantrais, 2009). For this research, complementarity has been particularly useful. As well as combining the strengths of the individual methods to compensate their limitations (Hantrais, 2009), the combining of data has also allowed the in-depth exploration of complex issues from multiple angles. To illustrate how these strategies have been incorporated in my research, the following table (table 3.4) provides an example for each strategy.

Table 3.4 – Examples of triangulation, facilitation and complementarity

Strategy	Example
Methodological triangulation	A teacher with responsibilities for leading teaching and learning in Year 10 was observed during a staff meeting (Stage 3) where he modelled the way he uses tracking data to set differentiated homework tasks. When he was interviewed again during Stage 4, he was asked about the rationale for taking such an approach and his intentionality. Using data from the two stages, the researcher is able to examine both his espoused theory and theory in practice.
Respondent triangulation	When interviewing senior leaders about the perception of creativity, all of them stated that creativity is very much valued by the school community and actively encouraged wherever possible. When middle leaders were asked the same question, the majority spoke of the challenges they face when trying to be creative, particularly regarding the strong emphasis on performance management and that they are too anxious to take risks. By triangulating the responses from the two groups, the researcher is able to compare the differing perspectives about the same issue.
Facilitation	A head of department in her interview (Stage 2) talks about how a particular collaborative lesson planning practice which involves all the teachers within her department as being something creative. As a result, the activity is added to the observation schedule (Stage 3) to see what such creativity looks like in practice. This shows how 'data' from one stage could facilitate the foci of the next.
Complementarity	During an interview (Stage 2), a senior leader is asked to elaborate on a creative idea aimed at resolving an accessibility issue with the school's virtual learning environment. This idea was recorded in the meeting minutes of a previous leadership meeting and was analysed by the researcher during Stage 1. This type of follow-up allows the research to explore things which have not been observed and to gather additional information that is not available in the documents analysed.

By incorporating these strategies, a good level of familiarity with the participants' context was achieved, therefore increasing the credibility of the research. Meanwhile, the rich and thick description generated will allow the reader to relate the findings to their own context, thereby enhancing transferability through naturalistic generalisation (Stake and Trumbull, 1982). Furthermore, detailed fieldnotes, reflexive journals and accurate transcription were used to capture the research process. These helped provide all the information required to maximise transparency about the research and also how procedures have been properly followed. Not only does this enhance dependability, but creating an audit trail can also increase confirmability by showing how the analysis and findings are free from undue bias.

Overall, some level of respondent validation was achieved during the interview process using a variety of techniques, including restating key responses and summarising some

of the more complex ideas. This was done to seek confirmation from participants regarding what they had said. During the second-round interviews (Stage 4), participants were also invited to review paraphrases relating to the key themes from their first interview, e.g. definition and influential factors, so that they could confirm, revise, add or correct the processed initial data.

3.5 Overview of research context

3.5.1 Research timeline

The setting selected for this case study research is a large comprehensive secondary academy in the West Midlands. The main data collection period commenced in June 2022, 11 months after the end of the third national COVID lockdown in England and concluded seven months later in January 2023. Prior to the main data collection, an initial visit was made in April 2022 to assess the school's context and to discuss my proposed research with the setting's gatekeeper, in this case the headteacher. Between June 2022 and January 2023, 10 individual days were spent at the school collecting data. Although the number of days spent was broadly in line with what was anticipated, the seven-month duration was longer than the original three-month timeframe planned and this was mainly due to the participants' availability during this period.

3.5.2 Selection of the case study school

Having previously been a teacher and middle leader in secondary schools, it was a conscious decision to avoid schools that I worked for and other local settings that I was familiar with. This was to minimise the risk of my research being unduly influenced by existing preconceptions and assumptions. The intention was to find a school that was unknown to me and outside my locality. Another criterion was that the setting needed to be sufficiently big, so that staff from the three leadership levels in question could participate without compromising the scope for anonymity and diversity.

The case study school was selected following the recommendation by a fellow doctoral student who had professional links to multiple schools across England. His recommendation was based on how the school had previously espoused the importance of implementing creativity in teaching and learning and that they valued

research as learning opportunities for the school community. To gain access and ensure that the school was fully aware of the ramifications of the research, my fellow doctoral student facilitated an introduction between the headteacher and myself via email, and I was then able to arrange a preliminary visit to the school [see Section 3.5.3].

On reflection, I consider *the space between* being an outsider and an insider identified by Dwyer and Buckle (2009) as an accurate description of my positionality. The decision to find a school that was not in my own professional network meant that I was an outsider researcher, which led to some specific challenges, particularly those relating to identifying a suitable school, gaining access, as well as the need to build and sustain trust within a relatively short timeframe. Despite this, the substantial insider knowledge and understanding I developed from working in schools and leading creativity in teaching and learning allowed me to gain respect from the gatekeeper and participants, so that a positive rapport could be maintained throughout the research.

3.5.3 Preliminary visit

The preliminary visit involved a chat with the headteacher about the school and my plan for the data collection. During this one-to-one conversation, which could be viewed as an unstructured interview, the existence of creativity within the context became evident. Whilst most of the information was offered verbally, I was also shown materials such as the results of staff and student surveys, as well as videos hosted on the school's video sharing page.

Given the timing of this visit, the school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures put in place were inevitably discussed at length. One of the interesting points emerging was the ease with which the school moved to remote learning, which was described as relatively straight forward due to their well-developed capacity to deliver online learning prior to the pandemic. The headteacher has a strong background in educational technology and the integration of technology has long been one of the prominent foci in the school's development.

A few years before the pandemic, the school made the move to equip all students with a Chromebook which is to be used both inside and outside of the classroom. To make the use of Chromebook universal, the school has a clear system in place to ensure all students regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds have access to a device and

Wi-Fi internet at home. This routine use of technology as an integral part of teaching and learning enabled teachers and students to move fully online immediately after schools were first ordered to close. During the 2020/2021's lockdowns, teachers successfully delivered their teaching remotely according to the regular timetable and the delivery was underpinned by the school's clear remote learning policy. As a result, students were able to get live support during their lessons from the outset.

As time progressed, excessive screen time became a challenge for many teachers and students, and this then led to weekly off-screen activities such as baking challenges being introduced. Meanwhile, very well-produced entertainment was also regularly created to maximise student engagement and online presence. These high-quality productions are consistent with the renowned award ceremony that is hosted annually to recognise student achievements. In addition to the headteacher's expertise in technology, these impressive creative outputs can also be attributed to the school's IT technician who has demonstrated clear abilities in producing very professional-looking visual materials through skilful filming and editing.

Apart from technology and the school's response to the pandemic, another emphasis that became apparent during this first visit was the value placed on physical activities. The headteacher made explicit reference to research that highlights the benefits of physical activities and how these can make a positive difference to the school day by improving students' mental health. In light of this, an initiative was launched to get all students to regularly have a substantial outdoor walk around the school at the start of the day and then use an app to record and track the state of their mental health. I was informed that when the headteacher first shared the idea of getting the whole school to take part in these regular walks, most staff, including the senior leadership team, were very sceptical due to the potential practical issues. However, with the headteacher's perseverance, the initiative was introduced, and the subsequent surveys carried out showed that it is valued by both the staff and students.

During this invaluable visit, clear signs of creativity, in the form of novel initiatives being introduced, accepted, and implemented, were noted and the information gathered significantly aided the facilitation of the subsequent data collection. More specifically, the examples highlighted by the headteacher did not only provide a good starting point for my investigation, but they also prompted a much more informed preparation process, in turn allowing me to take a focused approach in creating a purposeful interview and observation schedule.

3.6 Data collection

3.6.1 Sampling

This research took a purposive approach to sampling which allowed groups from the three specified levels to be targeted. Owing to the topic of study, there was a stronger focus on staff with formal leadership responsibilities. Typical to the school sector, formal leaders were a minority group at the school. For this reason, the approach taken which involved a significant proportion of this group helped to maximise diversity while reducing the risk of anonymity being compromised. Possible attrition was also taken into consideration when it came to the numbers recruited. If some participants were to withdraw, there would still be sufficient data to achieve the research aims.

Notwithstanding the relatively small sample size, there was a good level of diversity regarding age, gender, subject area and length of service.

In total, 13 participants took part in the research (table 3.6a) and this coincided with the overall target number during the planning stage. Whilst I did not manage to recruit as many classroom teachers with no formal leadership responsibilities as I originally planned, I was able to reach the target number by recruiting more middle leaders. Despite this, it is important to note that all middle leaders are also classroom teachers.

Table 3.6a – Participants' role

Participants' role	Target number	Actual number
Senior leaders	3	3
Middle leaders	5	7
Classroom teachers	5	3

The participants were six males and seven females, with varied lengths of service – between 3 and 20+ years, and from a range of subject disciplines, including art, business, English, history, mathematics, physical education and science. Participants were interviewed on two occasions, with two exceptions: one had to complete the second interview (Stage 4) in multiple parts due to availability issues/disruptions and another was not available for their second interview due to a health-related reason.

Regarding observations, 14 events were observed (table 3.6b) and these were selected according to availability and relevance to my research questions. More detailed about each of these events will be provided in Chapter 4.

Table 3.6b – Observed events

Observed event
4 whole staff briefings
Pastoral meeting
Subject departmental meeting
Leadership meeting
2 Curriculum Group sessions
New staff induction
Life Curriculum Walk
Life Curriculum Day
2 subject lessons

3.6.2 Four stages of data collection

3.6.2.1 Stage 1: *Documentary analysis*

Stage 1 involved analysing a range of documents available in the public domain. Initially, the school's previous Ofsted inspection reports were used to gain a good understanding of the local context and to establish a detailed profile of the school. Then, other documents such as the school's mission statement and curriculum intents were analysed to shed light on the school's approach to creativity and leadership. Documentary analysis can be a useful tool for providing information that is difficult to obtain via other methods (Briggs et al., 2012, p.299). For example, some documents provided a diachronic view of relevant developments at the school over time, others such as the curriculum intent documents provided evidence at a later stage regarding my research questions, e.g. in terms of how creativity is perceived, valued and incorporated in the leadership of teaching and learning. Moreover, analysing the documents offered the research alternative perspectives, not only from an external body, i.e. Ofsted, but also how the school and subject teams presented themselves officially as an organisation and departments within the school. This helped illuminate how the school as an entity perceived creativity and what the leadership of it looked like as implied in the communication. However, data contribution from documentary analysis was less substantial than the other two methods. This was partly due to the research design itself, including the foci of the research questions, and was also limited by the range of documents available. Nonetheless, the main purpose of documentary analysis in this case was to establish the context, which helped facilitate the later stages by way of identifying areas to be explored in greater depth and to provide a means to triangulate subsequent data.

3.6.2.2 Stage 2: One-to-one semi-structured interviews

Stage 2 involved individually interviewing participants who gave consent to take part in the research. The majority of these were staff with formal leadership responsibilities, e.g. senior leaders and heads of department. However, some classroom teachers were interviewed to provide a different perspective on the issues raised as well. The interviews were not only designed to assess participants' perception of creativity and their motivation relating to creative intent, but they were also used to explore how these aspects were influenced by leadership actions and factors at different levels. Therefore, the data served as the key source for answering research questions 1 and 2. Moreover, the data gathered were used to facilitate the investigation in Stage 3 by way of identifying key areas for observation. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to keep focused on the main themes while retaining sufficient flexibility so that participants could respond relatively freely, achieving what Burgess (1984) refers to as "a conversation with a purpose" (p.102). The way in which prompts and probes were used was based on Tomlinson's (1989) principle of hierarchical focusing. This meant posing initial questions "at the highest level of generality" (p.165), before using more specific prompts to get in-depth information about themes such as perception, motivation, influential factors etc. The interviews conducted during this stage as well as those in Stage 4 were designed to cover three particular dimensions: 1) the person and context, 2) their experience, and 3) the meaning of their experience and intentionality. This was inspired by Seidman's (2006) three-stage phenomenological interviewing method, albeit adapted to fit in with my research design which only has two stages for interviews.

3.6.2.3 Stage 3: Observations

For Stage 3, a range of staff meetings and other relevant activities were observed. These included staff briefings, a leadership meeting, a departmental meeting, staff training sessions and some classroom activities. Whilst the events observed were largely determined by what was on the school's schedule at the time of the field work, the areas of focus were informed by the data gathered during Stages 1 and 2. The main purpose of these observations was to assess if and how creativity was being led and implemented in teaching and learning practices, for example, through implementing new initiatives, decision-making, problem-solving etc. The data gathered were primarily for answering research question 3, although some were also useful for

addressing the implementation part of research question 2. Furthermore, together with field notes taken, these observations provided a different angle for examining participants' perception and motivation relating to creativity, therefore contributing valuable data for all three research questions. A simple template (Appendix D) for recording the observation data was devised to keep the data collection purposeful, focused and systematic. The template was designed to prioritise four types of data, as identified by Newby (2014):

1. **Context data** - e.g. the condition of the setting, physical environment.
2. **Behaviour**
3. **Verbal interactions**
4. **Image** - of the participants, how they present themselves to the outside world, values, aspirations etc.

This observation stage in between the two interview stages aligns well with Seidman's (2006) phenomenological interviewing method because it helped explore the participants' context, lived experience and intentionality in practice, in turn further strengthening the phenomenological approach undertaken.

All 14 observations carried out were overt in that those being observed were aware of my presence as an observer. The observations were naturalistic in the sense that I was in the participants' natural setting, rather than imposing a controlled environment. Throughout most the observed events, I did not interact with anyone and the meetings or lessons proceeded as they normally would. Therefore, my role as an observer can be considered as obtrusive but non-participatory (Newby, 2014, p.352). However, with my presence known, it was not possible to eliminate the potential of what is known as the observer effect (Sykes, 1978). Regarding the observations being non-participatory, there were three exceptions. When observing two whole-day events: Life Curriculum Day and new staff induction, I asked some of the participants a small number of questions to get clarifications regarding how they felt about the examples of creativity being observed. Whilst I did not disrupt the activities or contribute in any way, given the occasional interactions, I can be regarded as an observer-as-participant during these events (Gold, 1958). Another observation which was different from the rest was the Life Curriculum walk. As well as participating in the walk itself, I also had an unstructured one-to-one conversation with one of the research participants at the same time. Despite this, neither my participation in the walk or my conversation with the participant affected the event or others taking part. From a data collection point of view, the main difference

is that the data had to be recorded after the walk, rather than at the time of the event, like the other observations.

3.6.2.4 Stage 4: One-to-one semi-structured follow-up interviews

During this final stage, the participants were interviewed again. The purpose of these follow-up interviews was to ask additional questions relating to areas that had been identified as still needing more data after the Stage 2 interviews, for example, the concept of ethicality in creative practices. For some, it was also a chance to reflect on the activities observed during Stage 3 and provide clarifications regarding their intentions. Furthermore, I was able to share some of my interpretation and analysis of the data collected during the previous stages with participants. This helped ensure that they represented the participants' reality accurately, thereby achieving respondent validation (Briggs et al., 2012). Whilst the vast majority were satisfied with my summary of their responses, a couple of participants did wish to add to the answers they provided during Stage 2.

3.7 Data analysis

3.7.1 Data processing

The processing and analysis of data were completed in different phases, starting with data from the documentary analysis. This was done during the main data collection period because Stage 1's data were used to facilitate and inform the subsequent stages. As the data were collected from published sources in written form, the documents were downloaded, stored and analysed. For the rest of the data, the processing began with the anonymisation of data from the two interview stages, which involved naming the audio files using the selected pseudonyms. Then, interview data had to be transcribed using a transcription software. This meant converting the audio recordings into word documents. Using a transcription software helped save substantial amount of time but the transcribed materials were not free of errors. To ensure accuracy, all transcripts were checked manually against the audio files and corrections were made before coding could commence. Regarding observation data, the electronic templates used were gathered, checked and analysed. Finally, all the handwritten field notes from the interview and observation stages were digitally transferred onto my password-protected OneDrive to aid the analysis.

3.7.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data from all four stages and identify emerging themes, highlighting similarities and differences between various perspectives in order to generate insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Table 3.7 – A systematic approach to thematic analysis - adapted from Nowell et al.'s trustworthy thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017, p.4)

Phases of thematic analysis	Means of establishing trustworthiness
Phase 1: familiarise with the data	• Prolong engagement with data • Triangulate data collected from the four stages • Document theoretical and reflective thoughts • Document thoughts about potential codes • Store raw data in well-organised archives • Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts and reflexive journals
Phase 2: generate initial codes	• Peer debriefing • Researcher triangulation • Reflexive journaling • Use a coding framework • Audit trail of code generation • Documentation of all supervision meetings and peer debriefings
Phase 3: search for themes	• Researcher triangulation • Diagramming to make sense of theme connections • Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes
Phase 4: review themes	• Research triangulation • Themes and subthemes vetted by supervisors • Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data
Phase 5: define themes	• Researcher triangulation • Peer debriefing • Agreed with supervisors on themes • Documentation of supervision meetings regarding themes • Documentation of theme naming
Phase 6: produce the report	• Respondent validation: for data collected during the first three stages of data collection, respondent validation to be carried out during stage 4. • Peer debriefing • Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient details • Thick description of context • Description of the audit trail • Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Specifically, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process was chosen to form the basis of my approach, which entailed getting familiarised with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and finally producing the findings.

To make my analysis even more systematic and trustworthy, I adapted Nowell et al.'s (2017) means of establishing trustworthiness, featuring specific actions embedded in Braun and Clarke's six phases to guide my approach (table 3.7). Due to the facilitative and multi-stage nature of my data collection, not all the data could go through the six phases at the same time and follow each step sequentially. Some data had to be processed first, resulting in different data entering different phases simultaneously, as well as certain steps such as diagramming themes revisited. Whilst the need to be flexible became apparent during the analysis, it was still reassuring to find that the six-phase process is meant to be iterative and recursive, rather than strictly linear (Terry et al., 2017, p.27). Adopting such a framework as a guide was helpful in that it prompted a thorough examination of the data, especially with the emphasis on triangulation and documenting reflective thoughts. All of these encouraged me to remain reflexive throughout.

3.7.3 Coding

A hybrid approach (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) was taken to process and encode data. This means codes were generated based on both an inductive and a deductive approach. More specifically, this involved creating a coding system initially from my conceptual frameworks, with all data viewed through the lens of the key elements identified, for example, perception, motivation and implementation. With these themes in mind, some sub-themes, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, were also created before the data analysis – as informed by the literature review. However, during the data analysis and coding process, additional sub-themes were added as result of the emerging data, an example of this being length of service and its effect on creative intents. This approach was taken because the intention was to apply my conceptual frameworks to examine data which has been created using a number of themes. However, as has been acknowledged in the Chapter 2, these themes, together with creativity and leadership are context-specific. Therefore, it is important to allow other unexpected or unaccounted themes to emerge, as this would help build the most accurate and holistic picture of the phenomenon.

3.8 Ethics

Researchers have responsibilities to protect and support their participants, stakeholders, fellow researchers and the wider community (BERA, 2024). To ensure that my research adheres to BERA's (2018) ethical guidelines and the University's research ethics policy (University of Leeds, 2021), an ethics application was submitted, reviewed and approved by the University's ethics panel prior to the commencement of the data collection (Appendix A). When completing the application, how the research process and findings can impact on the participants, the case study school as well as the wider community was carefully considered. The ethical issues relevant to this research included:

1. legitimately gaining access to the case study school with the gatekeeper's support,
2. being mindful of any possible ramifications that could undermine the credibility of participants and the school, as well as the need to avoid these,
3. obtaining informed consent from the participants,
4. ensuring anonymity and confidentiality,
5. appropriate data management during and after the research.

For the data collection, all participants were presented with the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) designed to maximise transparency and clearly communicate the purpose of the research prior to any data being collected. Verbal explanation was also used to make sure that they had understood the information and were aware of what was about to take place, e.g. how their interview would be captured via audio recording. Informed consent was then obtained using a physical form which they signed and dated (Appendix C). When signing the form, all participants were made aware of their right to withdraw and how their responses would be kept confidential and anonymised at all times. Anonymisation was applied at the institutional and personal levels, which meant following the correct procedures for the handling and processing of data collected, including personal information disclosed during the interviews and observations.

The research posed no risks to the participants. However, some might have found discussing the work challenges they faced or other relevant experiences unpleasant. The Participant Information Sheet was therefore used to make all participants aware of this beforehand. In addition to their right to withdraw, participants were told that they could decline to answer any questions they found uncomfortable discussing. Effective

data management is crucial for ensuring that ethical guidelines are adhered to, as this is the only way to keep data confidential. Therefore, all data collected, including school documents that are not in the public domain, interview recordings, transcripts and observation notes, were quickly and securely transferred onto my University's OneDrive which is password protected and requires dual authentication to access. These data will remain securely stored, until three years after the end of my data collection, to allow for future publication in journal papers. After that, the data will be destroyed.

The primary ethical dilemma I faced during this research concerned managing participant identifiability. With it being a single case study and some participants such as senior leaders belonging to smaller groups, there was a risk of deductive identification. Pseudonymisation alone was insufficient because using the participants' true pronouns would likely reveal who they are, e.g. being the only male in their department. Instead, gender-neutral names and the pronouns of she/her/hers were used across the sample to protect participants' identities. To maximise the richness of data, the use of profiles in Chapter 4 depicts some of the participants' perceptions and experiences in detail. Thus, extra care needed to be taken to ensure that potentially identity-revealing information is included only in Chapter 5. By restricting such information to Chapter 5, the risk is much lower because I was able to report data using only the stakeholder group. Moreover, findings that might be seen as sensitive or contested could be reported safely, ensuring that participants' trust in me is not compromised.

3.9 Limitations and chapter conclusion

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of a range of contextual and methodological limitations.

First and foremost, except for the teacher-specific focus mentioned in Chapter 3, this research is limited by its single-school case study design. With creativity and leadership being context-specific (Cochrane and Cockett, 2007; Bush, 2020) and that the school has its own unique set of circumstances, putting forward generalisable findings was never the aim but nevertheless worth acknowledging. Relating to this, as the study was conducted in a school well-disposed to research, the value it places on inquiry can imply that it is more reflective and open to new ideas than a typical school. The culture this creates could therefore be more enabling for creativity, leading to above-average

risk-taking behaviour and a reduction in perceived contextual constraints. Similarly, voluntary participants in this research are likely to be interested in creativity, which could mean more forthcoming examples of creative practice and a stronger appreciation of its value. Consequently, the findings may be less transferable to settings that are risk-averse and teachers who are indifferent to creativity. Equally, researching in settings with less established research cultures would require additional considerations relating to the methodological approach to elicit data with comparable depth.

Second, given my professional experience and positionality, there is a risk that the interview data were affected by response bias, whereby participants provided what they perceived to be the most appropriate answers, e.g. being motivated to be creative. This, coupled with the potential issue of *talk tracks* as discussed in 3.3.3, prompted a research design that allows for rigorous triangulation of data; however, such a risk cannot be entirely eliminated. The use of triangulation and reflexive approach detailed in 3.4.3, together with having two rounds of interview were particularly important. This is because despite the multiple methods design's ability to compensate for the limitations associated with each individual method (Denzin and Lincoln, 2007), the sequential design can also have unintended consequences – such as assumptions from early stages affecting the latter ones.

Third, my original plan was to recruit the same number of teachers and middle leaders so that their perspectives could be represented equally. However, due to availability issues, more middle leaders had to be recruited instead. Nonetheless, the sample had a good gender balance and was diverse in terms of lengths of service and subject disciplines. As all participants worked as classroom teachers regardless of their formal role, they would also have a common understanding of many of the issues discussed.

Finally, my research findings represent only a snapshot of the school's leadership of creativity in teaching and learning at a specific time. As context constantly evolves, some of the factors affecting the school then, e.g. COVID, may well be different to those that are important now. Nonetheless, many of the findings are related to factors that are less time-specific and therefore should still be highly relevant.

In this chapter, I have presented the rationale and justification for the methodological approach, ethical considerations and critically explored my role as research. The rich and detailed findings will be examined closely in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my data analysis and research findings in three sections. First, an analysis of documents; second, a series of interview profiles, and third, a commentary on a range of observations.

4.2 Analysis of documents

For Stage 1 of the research, eight documents were selected and analysed (table 4.2).

Table 4.2 – Documents analysed

Documents
1. Ofsted report
2. Ofsted monitoring report
3. Mission statement
4. Whole school curriculum intent
5. Business subject intent
6. Design Technology subject intent
7. Drama subject intent
8. Art and Design subject intent

The main selection criteria were availability and relevance to the three research questions. The selected documents contribute to two relevant themes. First, the Ofsted reports helped provide an overview of the school's *context* and some of the *influential factors* at play. Second, the mission statement, whole school curriculum intent and subject intent documents shed light on the *perception and leadership of creativity* at the school. It is worth noting that subject intent documents from all subjects were available, however, given the scope of the research, only those which have directly mentioned creativity were selected.

4.2.1 Establishing the context and influential factors

Two Ofsted documents available in the public domain were analysed. These offered the research an alternative perspective as well as shedding light on some of the

external factors capable of influencing the school's leadership of creativity in teaching and learning.

Upon analysing the school's **Ofsted report** [Document 1], it became clear that this "larger than average" comprehensive school would have been working under significant pressure. Following their most recent Ofsted inspection at the time of the research, it was judged to be requiring improvement. This judgement meant that inspectors during the subsequent full-scale inspection would need to be satisfied that sufficient improvement had been made or the school would go into special measures. Consequently, the school was preparing for their next inspection, hoping to go from *requiring improvement* to at least *good*. The main reasons cited in the report for the requiring improvement judgement were what Ofsted saw as under performance of teaching, "weak progress" and pupil outcomes that "were not good enough". The judgement appeared to be largely based on what was perceived as a historical decline in standards and outcomes.

From Ofsted's perspective, the school's own "analysis of the quality of teaching" prior to the inspection had been "over-generous" and needed to be more "robust". Leaders were said to have "focused too heavily on teaching practices, rather than on what impact the teaching was having on pupils' learning". Low expectations from teachers, inconsistent approach to promoting literacy skills and not catering for pupils' needs and abilities were regarded as the main weaknesses, resulting in poor engagement in certain lessons. Moreover, some lesson planning in the past did not provide ample opportunities to challenge pupils' thinking, and teaching was judged to be "variable" between departments and teachers. What effective teaching should look like was implied in the report as understanding students' abilities, allowing sufficient time for them to think, coupled with good subject knowledge and effective use of questioning, leading to high engagement and motivation.

Notably, there is no direct mention of creativity at all in this inspection report. Therefore, it is unclear how the Ofsted inspectors perceived creativity in teaching and learning, and if any creative practices were recognised. However, there is a link between two features of effective teaching highlighted by Ofsted and creativity: 1) allowing sufficient time for pupils to think, and 2) teaching that leads to high engagement. Not only is this link acknowledged in the literature (Lowe, 2010; Rinkevich, 2011), but it is also evident in the interview data collected. This could suggest that creativity or at least some of its features would have been valued by Ofsted. Given Ofsted's comments and judgement,

it is clear that the approach to teaching and learning at the school was under significant scrutiny. Whilst this could mean close supervision, a perceived barrier for creativity (Lowe, 2010), the need for change could also encourage creativity.

4.2.1.1 Judgement on leadership

The leadership of *teaching* was said to be “strong”, and leaders were praised for their role in creating an inclusive school with high quality pastoral support. It was noted that a range of processes and systems for monitoring progress had already been successfully implemented. From what Ofsted described, how leaders stopped the practice of entering students early for their GCSEs can also be considered as an example of responsive leadership, in that they would be prepared to make changes based on new data. The report also detailed how leaders encouraged teachers to be “reflective practitioners”, and that “targeted” training was utilised to support them. It was highlighted that “some staff received additional coaching support” as part of the drive to improve the quality of teaching. This could be a sign of situational leadership in practice. Ofsted also found that new teachers in particular valued the training provided and felt “fully supported”. This is likely to have led to a positive impact on staff morale and motivation, as well as the school’s organisational culture. Middle leaders, who have been working closely with senior leaders, were seen during the inspection as having a “pivotal role in the school’s improvement drive”. This perceived need for a collective approach to leadership could encourage a more distributed configuration, making this an interesting area to further explore.

4.2.1.2 Signs of creativity

Ofsted did not mention creativity in their report and it would also be presumptuous to comment on the inspectors’ feelings towards creativity in teaching and learning. However, based on the information included in the report, there are signs of creativity at the school. First, the school’s curriculum was redesigned around the time of the inspection and “relatively new assessment systems” were introduced. This could indicate a possible creative spell around that period. “The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development at key stages 4 and 5 is delivered through a number of ‘drop-down’ days when the normal timetable is suspended”. This could also be a possible example of creativity because of the deviation from the norm. In light of this, as

part of Stage 3, a request to see a drop down day or equivalent was put forward. The data relating to this will be presented in due course.

4.2.1.3 Further insights

By the time of the research, Ofsted had already carried out a monitoring visit to assess the progress made since the original inspection. By analysing the **Ofsted monitoring report** [Document 2], I was able to gain further insights about the ongoing context and the leadership of teaching and learning.

Similar to the original Ofsted report, leaders taking effective actions to improve the school was acknowledged. According to the inspectors, there was “a period of considerable change for the governing body” following the original inspection. Although this could mean a rather unsettling period for the school community, the change could also bring opportunities for adopting novel practices in various areas, including teaching and learning. The school was said to have a “structured approach” to school improvement. This could potentially be a creativity-friendly structure but would require further investigation in subsequent stages to determine.

Following the original inspection, the school also received some external support, which included some middle leaders visiting successful departments in other schools. This may have provided them with opportunities to observe and adopt novel practices that can be shared with colleagues. At departmental and classroom levels, “greater consistency between departments” and the prioritisation of sharing good practice were identified by Ofsted as further actions to take. One of the reasons for this is because “[t]here [was] still too much variation between subjects in the delivery of their planned curriculum”. This is an interesting comment. Whilst reducing “variation” in the delivery does not in itself stop teachers from being creative, it could affect their perception of what they think they were expected to deliver.

One could argue that the “rigorous monitoring” put in place and “regular reviews” of subject areas by senior leaders could have a similar effect on teachers’ perception. Despite this, inspectors found that students “generally enjoy lessons, particularly when they are given opportunities to discuss ideas or develop their own projects”. Based on some of the interview data relating to perceptions, e.g. Sam’s profile, this could be interpreted as students enjoying creative lessons. If perceived as such by teachers, this could positively impact their motivation to be creative.

4.2.2 Approach to leadership of creativity and perception

The school's **mission statement** [Document 3] is a short document. In the main textual section, some interesting points relating to leadership have been noted: 1) the type of culture the school aims to foster: kindness, respect and trust, 2) parents could have significant influence and thus leadership because it is part of the school's mission to empower them, and 3) there is the intention to ensure an empowering environment for staff and students to work in. The influence parents have is potentially important because how creativity is perceived by them, e.g. how valuable it is, could affect how creative ideas are appreciated and implemented within the school. Similarly, given how creativity can be enabled, having trust from stakeholders and an empowering environment could potentially have a positive impact on staff's motivation to be creative (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Meanwhile, whilst "innovation" is explicitly mentioned, *creativity* is not directly referred to.

In the **whole school curriculum intent** [Document 4], the word "creative" is used. The document indicates that the school strives to provide students with learning opportunities that would lead to "creative expression" and makes clear the aspiration to turn them into "innovators". Having skills in digital technologies is also deemed to be important for students to become innovators, as they would be able to collaborate with others and "learn beyond the confines of the classroom". Whilst it is interesting to see creativity and its associated terms being explicitly emphasised, it is worth noting that any reference is more to do with *students'* creative expression and potential to become innovators, rather than the teachers or leaders at the school.

In the **Business Studies subject intent** [Document 5], the importance of creativity and other associated terms such as problem solving are emphasised. This can be seen in one of the paragraphs where the skill of creativity is said to be "vital" and something which the subject team would like to help students develop. Although still relevant to teaching and learning, the emphasis is on students. As outlined in the subject intent, one of the units in Key Stage 5 BTEC is to "investigate role and contribution of innovation and enterprise to business success". This means Business teachers may be more likely to see creativity as something important and as such, how creativity is valued could be subject-specific.

In the **Design Technology subject intent** [Document 6], creativity is clearly highlighted as one of the key skills for students to develop. This content is helpful to my research because it explicitly articulates the value the Design Technology team places

on creativity and also how they aim to “encourage children to use their creativity and imagination”, albeit at subject level. Given the department’s active collaboration with other areas such as mathematics, science and engineering, this kind of vision is potentially shared by at least some others beyond the department. An example of such collaboration was something which I witnessed during Stage 3 of my data collection – the **Life Curriculum Day** event. Overall, despite this document being more about what the students do, it nevertheless provides an example of how creativity is valued explicitly at departmental level.

With “creating” being one of the three key strands identified in the **Drama subject intent document** [Document 7], the word “creatively” is used multiple times while being linked to expression and meaning construction. The quote: “Of course, nothing can actually teach creativity but it is a muscle that needs regular exercise and stretching”, provides a clear statement about how creativity is assumed to be unteachable but in need of ongoing stimulation.

In the **Art subject intent document** [Document 8], the development of creativity is emphasised, with art being said to “embody some of the highest forms of human creativity”. Creativity in this document is also used alongside “self-expression”, “experimentation” and “independence”, suggesting the perceived links between these words.

4.2.3 Documentary analysis key takeaways

By analysing the selected documents, it is evident that the school was going through a challenging period. This would lead to the amplification of a range of influential factors that could impact the leadership of creativity. However, such an impact could have been either positive or negative, or both. For example, the high-stakes environment could lead to risky ideas being rejected. Equally, the school might have had to be creative to address some of the concerns highlighted by Ofsted.

The shift from leaders focusing on teaching practices to prioritising impact and outcomes could offer teachers more freedom to experiment. This is a plausible scenario considering the environment described by Ofsted, e.g. good student behaviour. Moreover, as Ofsted value student thinking time and increased engagement, creativity can be seen as a way to achieve these, thus positively influencing the perception of creativity among staff. The documents revealed a

collective and supportive approach to leadership. As highlighted in my creativity conceptual framework (figure 2.7), this could play a crucial role in enhancing the leadership of creativity in teaching and learning. That said, the monitoring mechanisms in place and the *narrative* to reduce variation could negatively affect how creativity is perceived among staff.

4.3 Interview profiles

Some of the interview data collected from Stage 2 of my research are to be presented as **profiles**. This allows the formation of detailed narratives and is in line with the phenomenological approach taken to capture the participants' context, lived experiences and reflection – the three components in Seidman's (2006) interviewing framework. Due to the research's limited scope and the intention to retain the data's richness and depth, a decision was made to create full profiles for six of the participants only. The selection of these specific interviewees is designed to illustrate all the key emerging themes while avoiding unnecessary repetitions. The six participants were selected from the list below (table 4.3), two from each key stakeholder group:

Table 4.3 – List of interviewees

Interviewee – pseudonym	Stakeholder group
Kai	Teacher
Mel*	
Pat*	
Alex*	Middle leader
Drew	
Ellis	
Hilary	
Jazz*	
Robin	
Taylor	
Chris*	Senior leader
Sam*	
Vic	

*Selected for profiles

Despite only presenting six profiles, the other interviewees and the data they contributed during Stage 2, alongside Stage 4 interview data from *all* participants, will be considered and referred to in Chapters 5 and 6. This is to ensure that any significant consensus and outliers can be acknowledged, thus maintaining the findings'

representativeness. Notably, one of the middle leaders only completed one interview (Stage 2) due to a change to personal circumstances. Another was added during data collection because they expressed an interest in taking part after the research had commenced and appeared to have an interesting narrative to offer. As noted in Chapter 3, gender-neutral pseudonyms have been adopted and only the pronouns *she*, *her* and *hers* will be used. This is to ensure that the analysis is clear and that the participants' identities are sufficiently anonymised. These interview profiles focus on illustrating the participants' responses about the three core components in my creativity conceptual framework, while making explicit links to contextual factors and leadership actions. The intention is to keep the analysis focused and feed data into each part of the framework. As such, these profiles are viewed as a key source for answering all three research questions.

4.3.1 Interview Profile 1: Mel (classroom teacher)

Professional background

Mel is a classroom teacher. Before becoming a teacher, Mel worked in a different sector which she found to be “*restrictive and boring*”. When reflecting back, she sees her desire to have more creativity in her day-to-day working life as the main reason for such a career move.

Perception

Mel defines creativity as “*creating something from your own ideas*”, “*tactile*”, and “*something that you do*”. This overall perception clearly stems from what she describes as “*physical creativity*” such as art. Regarding teaching and learning, she characterises creativity as: to “*teach [students] the same thing, but in a different way*”. In addition, her perception is mainly related to resource creation and using tactile and visual resources such as matching cards to engage students. Moreover, “*children working together*” is seen to be associated with creative activities. This definition of doing something different and involving group work aligns very well with responses from other participants. However, it is worth noting that Mel's perception has a clear emphasis on resources, rather than other pedagogical elements. This seems to deviate from the consensus, which tends to have a more holistic interpretation, encompassing a range of pedagogical elements.

Mel views her own educational experience as lacking in creativity and was only introduced to such an approach during teacher training which at the time, led to quite a positive perception. However, having tried to implement creativity herself, Mel now sees it as something that might sound appealing but less so in practice. This illustrates how implementation can alter one's perception in a negative way. Similarly, the interconnectedness of the three core elements: perception, motivation and implementation, is clear in Mel's responses, in that her current perception has appeared to have negatively impacted her motivation to implement creativity.

Regarding the state of creativity at the organisational level, she feels as though the school is quite creative as a whole, but less so in her own department. Overall, Mel's perception of creativity is "*neutral*". More specifically in teaching and learning, she perceives creativity to be both positive and negative: positive in that it can lead to better student engagement and aid learning, especially among students of lower abilities and those with special educational needs. However, it could become "*too stimulating*" and a "*distraction*", therefore does not always lead to meaningful learning. Also, Mel views creative activities as "*risky*" and could mean "*an hour potentially wasted*". This concern is mainly due to how she thinks taking a creative approach would make assessing outcomes more difficult.

Motivation

Regarding her motivation, the main reasons given for being creative were: 1) "*pedagogy keeps telling us it helps*" and 2) after attending some staff training at the school, the impression she got was that "*they're expecting to see [creativity] in my lessons*". This perceived *expectation* suggests that Mel's motivation is extrinsic (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Despite her motivation being more intrinsic when creative ideas were first attempted, the general outcome of her attempts has meant that such motivation has not been sustained. Mel also said that due to the stage of career she is in, her motivation for being creative is now noticeably lower than when she was less experienced, saying how it is now "*too late*" for her. In the past, she would be more open to creative ideas, but now, she would prefer to keep doing "*what works*" [with "*what works*" being approaches that are not creative]. Although the decline in motivation can solely be the result of her negative implementation experience, given how some other experienced participants have expressed similar feelings, there may be other factors at play. Moreover, what Mel described seems to indicate a shift in what

Hoyle (1975) would refer to as her *professionalism* – from more extended to restricted, most notably regarding the reduction in reading and research activities relating to her practice.

Due to Ofsted-related pressures and the push for "*consistency*", Mel feels as though there has been a reduction in creativity at the school, particularly in her own department. This has led to a perceived lack of pedagogical freedom, further dampening her motivation. That said, she thinks as a whole, the school still values creativity in teaching and learning. When asked about motivating factors at the individual level, Mel clarified that she is "*not against creativity*" and "*may do it with some classes*". However, it "*would depend on the pupils [she has] got in front of [her]*", with the two main determining factors being student abilities and behaviour. Mel thinks that when lessons are taught in a more predictable way, it would allow her to make sure appropriate progress is made, whereas if they were taught in a more creative way, she would find it difficult and more time-consuming to ascertain what students have learnt. This suggests that by knowing how to accurately assess students' progress while teaching creatively, she may become more motivated to be creative.

Enabler

For Mel, having a "*whole school ethos*" that encourages creativity would be an enabler. If it was established as "*the aim of the school*" and everyone was going to adopt a creative approach, she would be happy to support and follow suit. This once again indicates that in Mel's case, implementation would be determined by the presence of extrinsic motivators, perhaps similar to what Unsworth (2001) describes as *responsive creativity*. By highlighting how this would make a difference, Mel also implied that in her view, such an ethos is currently absent.

Hindrance

Apart from student behaviour, Mel said insufficient curriculum time and a "*department policy*" that prompts teachers to use standardised resources are two significant factors. This perceived lack of time is due to the amount of content she needs to cover according to the subject's national curriculum, leaving very little time for creativity. It is interesting that Mel sees creativity as something that is only applicable to content outside of the national curriculum content, rather than any content. However, the

departmental policy mentioned could be a possible reason for that. Nonetheless, this time issue relating to content coverage aligns with other participants' responses. Referring to the wider context, Mel sees the way in which "*schools change the idea of how they want [teachers] to teach*" as another time-related issue because ideas are not usually given "*long enough run*" before they are changed again. This supports the argument that creative ideas need to be given sufficient time to be properly implemented (Lowe, 2010; Stoll and Temperley, 2009b). Lastly, being an experienced practitioner was identified as a hindrance. This is because Mel thinks knowing what works has reduced her incentive to be creative. In light of this, it could be an idea to show experienced practitioners the additional value creativity can add to what already works, so that a higher level of motivation can be achieved.

Implementation

Mel thinks there are aspects in her practice where she has been able to implement creativity, such as lesson planning and resources creation, e.g. the dominoes and matching cards used in her lessons. In general, she sees creativity as something that is "*difficult to implement*" and "*causes a lot of problems*". Elaborating on creativity's negative effect on student behaviour, Mel thinks since it involves "*a lot of movements*", "*pupils actually find it hard to handle*". This narrative shows a clear link between perception and implementation in terms of how one affects another. On reflection, she feels many of the creative ideas recommended to her during staff training did not work well for her in practice. Not seeing the desired impact as well as the problems with behaviour have led to a negative perception. Consequently, the staff training did not lead to a sustained change in her practice, concurring with Guskey's (2002) teacher change theory. This has also subsequently reduced her overall motivation to be creative, further explaining why being creative is not her preferred approach.

Mel went on to say that using creative resources to engage students may not always have a positive impact on learning. This is because students may only "*remember the activity itself*", rather than the subject matter they are meant to be learning about. Mel's insight suggests that when implementing creative teaching and learning ideas, considering how the learning focus can be maintained would be important. Mel also pointed out that not all students would be able to make connections between the creative activities and the intended learning focus. Therefore, such a limitation highlights the importance of practitioners "*pitching it right*" and keeping the

implementation purposeful. This could be achieved by making the connections explicit to all students.

As highlighted earlier, Mel's implementation of creativity has been partly limited by structures associated with external forces, e.g. Ofsted. This has led to her feeling she is "*not given free rein*" and needs to "*teach with the same PowerPoint*". From Mel's perspective, this sense of lost agency has reduced the amount of creativity she and others in her department implement. Thus, the influence gatekeepers of creativity have on implementation is clearly significant – both in terms of creating or countering certain structures to encourage creativity, plus enabling the sense of agency and autonomy required for optimal implementation. When asked about what leadership actions can be taken to encourage effective implementation, Mel's responses were very much in line with other participants. First, she would value "*constructive feedback*" about her implementation. Second, she feels additional time would be needed, in order to plan for creativity and collaborate with her colleagues to generate ideas.

4.3.2 Interview Profile 2: Pat (classroom teacher)

Professional background

Pat is a classroom teacher who completed her undergraduate degree as a mature student and has several years of teaching experience.

Perception

Pat defines creativity as "*doing things that are different, thinking outside of the box*" – in line with the typical responses. In the context of teaching and learning, it is about practitioners "*presenting new information...in new ways*" to more effectively capture students' attention, "*allowing [them] to express themselves in different ways*" and "*have their own freedom...to respond in the best way that suits them*". Therefore, her view is that creativity can make learning more personalised and lead to enhanced student engagement. Like some of the other participants, Pat's definition also carries an emphasis on student creativity. In her practice, creativity would involve students "*trying different things*", "*moving around*" while participating in different activities at once, not "*just sat there reading from a textbook*". This suggests Pat perceives creativity to be active, busy and novel. Overall, Pat sees creativity as fundamentally positive. She

believes it is important to teaching and learning and would usually lead to better outcomes.

Pat's perception has been shaped by her own educational experience, which generally lacked creativity. Where the teaching and learning was more "*interactive*", she performed better. This suggests Pat perceives creativity to be interactive as well, rather working in isolation. Professionally, she thinks her subject enables her practice to be creative, and that creativity is important for student achievement. When asked how her perception of creativity aligns with the school's view, she said it is a "*mixed bag*" and expressed her disappointment for what she perceives as a decline in creativity in recent months. More specifically, she feels as though the school has always encouraged creativity in the past, but this has somewhat changed due to Ofsted-related pressures, citing the reduced use of Chromebooks in lessons as an example. As well as a perceived change in the school context, this also indicates that the use of technology is associated with creativity. In terms of the risk element, Pat acknowledges that things may not always work, but she also pointed out that having to adapt and trying something else is "*essentially teaching*". For this reason, she does not see creativity as a risk and is something worth doing. This once again emphasises Pat's positive perception of creativity.

Motivation

When asked about her motivation, the main reason Pat offered was that creativity can cater for children's differing needs, so that "*they can get the most out of their learning*". Whilst this reason alone would suggest an extrinsic motivation orientation, albeit what Ryan and Deci (2000) would describe as the autonomous type, Pat also said not being creative would be "boring" for the teacher and that "*if we are creative in what we do, it just creates that variety for everyone to enjoy*". Therefore, her motivation can be best described as a mix between intrinsic and extrinsic. While acknowledging how the effectiveness of creativity can depend on the groups' behaviour, their "*ability levels*", "*time of day*" etc., Pat said it does not affect her motivation – she would "*always try* [her] *best to be creative*" first and respond accordingly based on the reaction. Interestingly, Pat admits that despite still being highly motivated to "*try new things*" and be creative, as she becomes more experienced, she is now more "*stuck in* [her] *ways*" than before. This provides further support for a possible link between practitioners' length of service and their motivation to be creative in their practice.

Enablers

Student behaviour is an important factor that can affect Pat's motivation to be creative. For her, this factor is perceived to have served as an enabler at the case study school. This is because students are generally well-behaved and "*receptive to trying new things*". However, rather than being a fixed enabling factor, she said if she was in a different school with poorer behaviour, she would be "*inclined to be less creative*". This indicates that despite her very positive perception of creativity, her motivation is situation-dependent and thus pragmatic in nature. Meanwhile, the integration of technology is also seen as a significant enabling factor. From her responses, it is clear that Pat feels excited by the possibilities technology brings to her teaching. In her view, the use of technology in the classroom, such as the use of virtual reality headsets, is very much associated with creativity and has the potential to transform learning.

Hindrance

When it comes to hindrance, Pat sees two external factors as being the most significant. First, with a strong focus on exams nationally, teachers are forced to "*teach students to answer exam questions*". As there is less scope for students to be creative, they are not able to enjoy the subjects they are learning as much, and it also stops them from becoming independent learners. Second, Pat thinks the pressure from Ofsted has led to her department becoming more reluctant to endorse creative approaches. Instead, there is now a stronger emphasis on what she sees as a less creative approach to ensure greater "*consistency*" within the department, e.g. the prominent use of exercise books. Not only does this show how external forces can have a significant influence on creativity, but it also explains why expectation of evaluation and a strong focus on measurable outcomes are said to erode teachers' motivation for creative practices (Lowe, 2010; Tighe et al., 2003).

Implementation

Notwithstanding the barriers, Pat feels it is generally "easy" to be creative in her department. This is partly due to having a sizeable team to discuss and exchange ideas with. Regarding examples of creativity implemented at the school, Pat cited the school's annual award ceremony as well as one of her own lessons which involves students learning in a practical way – using movements and participatory illustrations.

Also, she pointed out that the schemes of work she works with are quite flexible; whilst there are resources that she and others can use as a “*starting point*”, staff would be expected to “change it and be creative with it”. Her perception is that staff can “*do whatever [they] want in terms of lessons*”, suggesting a high level of pedagogical freedom within her department. Pat goes further by saying this is similar to how the school operates as a whole, in that as long as the “*objectives*” are met, teachers are free to be creative in their teaching. Although this view aligns with responses from many participants working in other departments, a small minority such as Mel did not find this to be their lived experience.

Regarding COVID and its impact, Pat thinks that the move to online teaching itself was an example of creativity implemented. However, the delivery of lessons soon became “*limiting*” and “*restrictive*” due to its passive nature. After moving back to in-person teaching, her department has been reviewing and updating their key stage 3 curriculum while actively trying to make it more creative. As a result, Pat thinks her department is now “*getting back to being a lot more creative*”. Despite this perception, she said more can be done at various levels to support the implementation of creativity. For example, Pat mentioned how she wishes her department and the school would encourage staff to observe each other’s lessons more frequently because it would allow staff to gain new ideas and be inspired by others’ creative practices. However, Pat does not feel as though the department has the right “*atmosphere*” for that currently because the general perception is that it is “*never nice to be observed by somebody else*”. For this reason, she stressed how important it is that these observations are not for “*making any sort of judgement*”, echoing Lowe’s (2010) emphasis on the need to suspend judgement. Occasionally, her department has used their weekly team meeting to share best practice, and this, alongside leaders “*giving suggestions*” are things that she would like to see more of as well. Meanwhile, Pat thinks some of the continuing professional development (CPD) activities could be more like the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP) (SSAT, 2024) training that all teachers at the school receive because at the time, it gave her “*lots of fresh ideas*”. Looking forward, Pat intends to prepare for the new academic year by looking at the ways in which she can be creative with the new schemes of work.

Based on this interview, it is clear that Pat has a very positive perception of creativity. This has in turn served as a significant motivating factor for her implementation in practice. For Pat, creativity is typically implemented in the form of learning activities

used during lessons. Prior to implementation, she would reflect on how things can be done differently and may also involve exchanging or discussing ideas with colleagues. She would then try these out and assess their effectiveness. Specifically for implementation, the factors which she sees as important are: autonomy, expectation, culture and conditions that are conducive to the sharing of creative practice, and the availability of CPD activities that can drive creativity.

4.3.3 Interview Profile 3: Alex (middle leader)

Professional background

Alex is a middle leader who got into teaching because she wanted a job that could change lives and one where she is able to collaborate with others.

Perception

Alex thinks creativity is “*hard to define*” and that various forms exist. It could be “*to create things*”, like an artist would, or it could be someone trying “*new*” and “*different things*”, “*thinking outside the box*”. With this forming the basis of her perception, Alex used “*different*” and “*creative*” synonymously throughout the interview. In teaching and learning, it would involve presenting information to students in an “*interesting*” way. This reinforces the emerging collective perception that creativity has the ability to engage.

When asked to give a precise example of what creative lessons look like in practice, Alex said it should mean using unusual tasks and not strictly following the usual structure. However, she thinks a creative lesson can have the same structure as a non-creative lesson and may not be creative throughout. This somewhat vague conceptualisation of creativity could potentially affect its implementation, for example, how it can be encouraged in a systematic manner. Nevertheless, using creativity as a “*teaching tool*” in a lesson that is not creative throughout suggests that for Alex, its adoption can be a pragmatic decision aimed at increasing engagement. A different approach could be a “*research-based task*” or “*putting up a picture and making the kids think*”. However, it does not have to involve students creating something physical. Essentially, it is about “*going away from the norm...but still...gets the point across*”.

Alex does not think she needed creativity as a student because she was able to engage without it. That said, when teachers took a creative approach, it made learning “*more interesting*” and memorable. These “*fond memories*” and the positive impact on her learning helped shape her current perception of creativity and her motivation to adopt a similar approach. Alex thinks that everyone can be, and is “*inherently...creative*”, a perspective that aligns well with what Benaji et al. (2010) describe as a *democratic* view on creativity. Relating to this, Alex does not think that creativity has to be “*bells and whistles*”. Instead, it can be a lower level of creativity and resembles Kaufman and Beghetto’s (2009) concepts of mini-c and little-c, i.e. transformative learning and everyday innovation. Moreover, creativity in her view can be someone else’s existing idea but used in a different way. This indicates that the emphasis is on *novelty* rather than *originality*.

Alex admitted giving a concrete example is challenging because “*quantifying creativity is really, really hard*”. Interestingly, she does not think she has experienced or taught a really creative lesson before, stating “*I don’t think I’ve ever seen a lesson that is completely like off on a tangent from what I suppose is the norm*”. This could explain why she struggled to describe precisely what a very creative lesson would look like in practice. Alex sees her perception of creativity as mostly aligned with the school’s and she thinks both creative and non-creative approaches are valued equally. From her perspective, the school “*likes to see...creativity...in teaching and learning*”, as shown by how “*practicals*” are included in the curriculum. However, she noted, “*the word creativity isn’t used very much in any school [she has]...been part of*” or “*in education as a whole*”. She clarified this by saying “*the school does talk about creativity, but...the word itself is not necessarily something that is often alluded to*”.

Alex sees *risks* to be a word that is linked with creativity because it is about “*doing something different*” and “*making a change*”. Despite this association, she does not think it always has to carry risks. Overall, Alex has a positive perception of creativity. In addition to being “*more beneficial*” for students, when a creative idea has not worked, one can “*learn from it, change it and adapt it next time*”.

Motivation

Part of Alex’s motivation for pursuing a career in teaching was the prospect of being able to collaborate with others while “*working stuff out*”. Given creativity’s association

with collaboration and problem-solving (Unsworth, 2001), it would explain why she said she tries to be creative *“as often as possible”* and that *“it’s always worth the risk”*. From her experience, creativity usually leads to better outcomes. Moreover, Alex thinks always presenting content in the same way could be a *“detriment”* to students because they would get bored. Alex has an overall positive perception of creativity and is motivated to implement it in her practice. However, Alex admitted that she is not always as creative as she could be because it is easier to do what she knows works and not to *“step out of [her] comfort zone”*. This again highlights the possible link between being experienced and reduced motivation. She added that *“certain things do work”* and *“trying brand new things every single lesson may not be the best approach”*. This suggests that her motivation is extrinsically oriented. More specifically, it can be categorised as identified regulation, which is towards the autonomous side of the extrinsic motivation continuum (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.61).

Enablers

For Alex, the main enabler is creativity’s positive impact in practice which in turn would enable practitioners to *“continue to try new things”*. For example, *“data and attainment”* showing how creativity can benefit student outcomes would help drive motivation and sustain a positive perception. This concurs with Guskey’s (2002) idea that teachers’ motivation and perception would only be enhanced if implementation is successful (p.383). It also supports my creativity conceptual framework regarding the interconnectedness of the three elements, illustrating how one element, like motivation, would be shaped by the other two. Meanwhile, receiving praise and recognition for implementing creativity is also seen as an enabler, further highlighting the extrinsic nature of Alex’s motivation.

Hindrance

Referred to as a *“Catch-22”* situation, Alex thinks the main enabler can be a *“hindrance”* as well, saying *“if you found something that works, do you really want to then try something different that isn’t going to work?”*. When taking a risk to be creative, Alex is conscious of possible judgements on her teaching ability, stating *“if something wasn’t to work...how does that make you look?”*. The risk of others having a *“negative perception”* is *“personally”* a *“big driving factor”*, meaning it could prevent her from

taking as many risks as she would otherwise. Considering what she said about risks earlier, this seems somewhat contradictory. Also, it shows how her motivation can be affected by her own perceived ability in implementing creativity, revealing that there are attitudinal factors at play. The focus on outcomes does not only highlight Alex's extrinsic motivation, but it can also be interpreted as Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective in action, in that the interactions between Alex and others form the process of creativity being defined and accepted, with outcomes being judged as the value.

In addition, some external forces are regarded as barriers. For example, when reflecting on why she has not seen a really creative lesson before, Alex attributed it to teachers having to teach with a rigid structure – a consequence of the “*expectations...from school [and] Ofsted*”. Furthermore, with the view that creativity “*disappears to some degree*” in post-16 education, there appears to be an assumption that being academic means not to be creative. From her perspective, this is due to “*time constraints*”, as caused by the amount of knowledge students have to acquire when studying at higher levels. Alex thinks the knowledge-focused curriculum reduces the flexibility for different ways of learning and generally represents the norm for the “*whole school system in England*”.

Implementation

In Alex's practice, one way to be creative is by making lessons “*different*” from year to year to suit different classes. Related to her idea that creativity does not have to be “*bells and whistles*”, she described her creativity as “*to some degree*” and “*a lesser extent*” – maybe an “*information hunt*” or changing what someone else has come up with. The emphasis is that “*it's nothing brand new*” and “*nothing out-of-the-box completely*”. Her perception of the creativity she implements seems to paint an ordinary picture. If implementation is indeed interconnected with perception and motivation, this could potentially dampen her longer-term perception and motivation. Conversely, by implementing more elaborate creative ideas, it could result in greater impact and thus enhanced perception and motivation. One caveat, however, is that given the “*big driving factor*” identified, the risk of others having a “*negative perception*” of her lessons would need to be minimised. Moreover, Alex feels as though “[she doesn't] *often think outside the box*”. This perception of her own creativity would therefore be an influential factor as well.

Beyond her own practice, Alex sees Life Curriculum Days as good examples of creativity because the approach to teaching and learning during these events is “*completely different*” from the norm. She thinks these are particularly special because both teachers and students get to be creative and the activities help students to remember their learning. Furthermore, during Life Curriculum Days, what and how students learn is very much “*down to*” the teachers and the departments, rather than something prescribed to them. During the COVID pandemic, Alex thinks the school “*had to be more creative*” because of the move to online delivery. On return, she thinks creativity “*took a dip*”. However, she clarified that it was not a dip compared with where they were originally prior to the pandemic, but there was a “*definite fall*” between COVID and post-COVID.

When leading the implementation of creative ideas, Alex thinks it would involve “*a fair few steps*” and that planning would be “*a bigger part than...the implementation*” itself. For example, how the ideas “*would fit in the curriculum*”, how they would be “*hitting the objectives*”, “*making the resources*” etc. Once planned and written in the scheme of work, it should be followed by “*training*” or “*sharing with others in the department*”, and then a review after the ideas have been implemented. Alex added that when implementing at department level, she would try the ideas with her own classes first and not to do a complete rollout straight away. This is to ensure that the ideas lead to the desired impact. Regarding how to counter resistance, she would emphasise in detail why the ideas were being implemented, explaining any benefits that she was aware of. If this did not work, then it would require a “*very personal*” approach to find out why there was a lack of buy-in. However, prior to embedding creative ideas in the curriculum, Alex thinks one needs to first ensure that the plan is “*hitting the basics*” and has the right structure.

At whole school level, Alex thinks there could be more sharing of creative practices and for leaders to highlight creativity’s importance. This is so that staff can feel “*more comfortable...taking that sort of creative route*”, with the “*opportunity to see how things work*” and how creativity “*fits into the bigger scheme of things*”. This in turn would give them more “*confidence*” to be creative.

4.3.4 Interview Profile 4: Jazz (middle leader)

Professional background

Jazz is an experienced teacher and middle leader who has previously been involved in staff development and other wider responsibilities beyond her own department. She became a secondary teacher due to having a passion for her subject specialism.

Perception

Jazz thinks creativity is about looking at things differently and from different angles, leading to “*new perspectives*” or “*new understanding*”. Like in other participants’ response, there is an emphasis on “*difference*”. However, Jazz is the only participant to link creativity with the outcome of new perspectives and new understanding. Moreover, she also thinks it can be found in any disciplines and not limited to the arts.

In teaching and learning, Jazz associates creativity with adaptability and *not* “*rote teaching*”. In her view, being creative would mean the teacher’s delivery is more “*personalised*” and “*relatable*” to the students. A creative teacher would encourage students to work outside of their comfort zone and their teaching would include an “*element of surprise*”, leading to students gaining new insights. Furthermore, Jazz sees creative teaching as a way to help students transfer skills from one subject to another, for example, through cross-curricular learning. The personalised and relatable aspects of Jazz’s definition align well with other participants’ responses. Similarly, whilst the element of surprise has not been directly referred to by other participants, it can be seen as being synonymous with doing something different to engage students, which was discussed by most participants.

Jazz’s perception of creativity has been influenced by her own educational and professional experiences. She sees these as having limited her creativity because it was not always valued or encouraged. For example, during the early stage of her career, Jazz described how her colleagues saw creativity as “*the opposite of anything academic or theoretical*”, and something that she thought they feared. She notes how her colleagues described practices as being “*too creative*”, and that creativity is “*a waste of time*”. Although participants at the case study school do not hold such views to the same negative extent, creative lessons being “*too stimulating*” was discussed by

Mel and the perception of creativity being somewhat incompatible with academic study was also evident in Alex and Sam's responses.

Despite encountering such negative views about creativity in her educational and professional experiences, creativity has helped Jazz to be resilient and develop new insights in her personal experiences. This has in turn shaped her positive view about creativity. When asked if her perception of creativity aligns with the school, Jazz said it does with some staff but not others. In fact, she thinks that there are misconceptions among some teachers regarding what creativity is in practice. More specifically, she does not agree with creativity being portrayed as something that needs to be aesthetically pleasing. For her, it is not about lessons that feature "*lots of resources*" but have little impact on learning. She also commented on how creativity should not be led by "*extrinsic motivation*" because that would take away its value. Whilst Jazz did not say the use of physical resources itself cannot be creative, her view does appear to contrast with a couple of participants who strongly associate physical resources with creativity, such as Mel. On risk, Jazz admitted that creativity always involves what others would see as an element of risk. However, she clarified that she does not see creativity as risky herself because she fully believes she can always "*find the best way*" with creativity.

Overall, Jazz has an overwhelmingly positive perception of creativity. She sees it as "*fundamental*" and the "*most valued skills*" she has, contributing significantly to "*anything successful* [she does]". In teaching and learning, she thinks it is highly beneficial because "*it allows for opportunities...flexibilities*", and can lead to enhanced "*stickability*", a type of resilience that is important for learning (Claxton, 2002).

Motivation

As implied in her comment about creativity being fundamental and how it should not be led by extrinsic motivation, Jazz appears very much driven by intrinsic motivation. This is not simply to do with whether she enjoys being creative in her practice, but for her, "*Creativity is the fuel that drives everything*", and "*It's just how* [she is] *fueled*". Such language depicts a need rather than a preference, and creativity in this sense, becomes part of Jazz's identity, responsible for shaping her approach in teaching and learning. Among the participants, this is an uncommon narrative because the majority

are motivated by creativity's ability to enhance student engagement, rather than seeing it as part of who they are.

Enablers

Jazz thinks the positive impact creativity has on student outcomes, and affirmative student voice are the most significant enablers. She attributed these to be why she is trusted by the school to be creative in her practice. The school's ethos and leadership can also be enabling, but how enabling these are can vary between different levels and has been influenced by the school's imminent Ofsted inspection. This highlights how the extent to which leadership as an enabling factor is susceptible to the pressure the school is under.

Hindrance

From Jazz's experience, students and their tolerance level for being outside of their comfort zone can become a barrier. This is an interesting and contrasting perspective because most participants describe creativity in teaching and learning as something "*fun*" and "*enjoyable*". Other barriers mentioned included the department's outlook, e.g. if the preferred approach is to favour conformity; workload and restricted time; parents being risk adverse about their child's learning; and prescriptive policies dictating what should be or must be taught. As Jazz is intrinsically motivated, these barriers do not appear to have dampened her motivation. Rather, they are perceived more of a source of frustration. Based on our conversation, teaching creatively would remain her default approach.

Implementation

At classroom level, Jazz feels as though she has "*total autonomy*" to implement creativity, stating that she is "*always as creative as [she] would like to be*". At departmental level however, she perceives this to be more difficult due to various "*restraints*". She also expressed her disagreement with some of the things she has to follow within the department because of how they have negatively affected her creativity.

Jazz said she has “*not seen enough of other people’s teaching*” to know what creative teaching may look like in their practice. Therefore, when asked to give examples of creative classroom practice at the school, she was only able to describe her own. To keep the Jazz’s identity sufficiently anonymised, the example provided will not be reported in detail. However, it involved Jazz turning an abstract concept students were learning about into something more “*tangible*” by finding a real-life and relatable stimulus to accompany the teaching.

The fact that Jazz could not provide examples of creativity in others’ teaching suggests that peer observations are still relatively uncommon at the school, consistent with other participants’ responses. Admittedly, peer observations alone would not necessarily support creativity – there is no guarantee that creative practices would be observed, as it would require staff’s ability and willingness to deliver such practices. Moreover, observers would need to have a positive perception of creativity, so that they can be open to new ideas. Coincidentally, peer observations were being encouraged by senior leaders during **Curriculum Group sessions 1 and 2** (Observation 2). However, as alluded to in Pat’s response, the current “*atmosphere*” may have limited staff participation.

Despite this, Jazz expressed her desire for a more collective approach to stimulate creativity. For example, she thinks a cross-curricular project involving input from all subjects would present a “*massive opportunity*” for creativity. This reinforces the view that collaboration is a key enabling feature (Harris, 2009) which many of participants agree with. It would also explain why Life Curriculum Days, which themselves are cross-curricular projects, have been consistently cited as being some of the most creative initiatives at the school.

Jazz sees certain leadership actions as being particularly helpful for implementing creativity. To minimise resistance, she thinks pilot schemes could be conducted to demonstrate positive results. This approach is supported by Guskey’s (2002) model of teacher change, as well as some of the participants, such as Alex. In practice, Jazz suggested to identify gaps in teachers’ current work, or highlight an issue that is affecting them, e.g. workload, and then show them how creativity can bring positive impact. She thinks this could help transform motivation, so that they would “*want to do it for themselves*”. Therefore, rather than seeing the implementation of creativity as something extra to do (Rinkevich, 2011, p.220), Jazz makes the point that creativity can

be used to address the problem of workload. However, she did also name workload as a limiting factor and so this can be seen as being somewhat contradictory.

In addition, Jazz suggested that buy-in can be secured by gathering staff voice via a skills audit, so that what they perceive as their development needs for implementing creativity can be identified. With this, “*pairing the right people in the right way*” would be possible, allowing teachers to observe colleagues who possess various skills that can enrich their own creative practice. Viewing through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), offering staff the opportunity to identify and improve their own development needs while working collaboratively with others is likely to enhance motivation through the three key components: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Furthermore, the pairing of colleagues for development can be seen as a form of distributed leadership.

Finally, Jazz thought it would be beneficial if creativity was to be actively celebrated and further encouraged by leaders. In her view, this could involve facilitating more opportunities for experimental approaches to allow different perspectives, e.g. teachers to teach someone else’s subject for a day, so that they can look at their practice differently.

4.3.5 Interview Profile 5: Chris (senior leader)

Professional background

Chris is a senior leader. She got into teaching because she wanted a job that was challenging and where “*everyday was different*”. She gets an “*intense amount of satisfaction*” from “*seeing success through the people that [she helps]*”. Being a senior leader, such satisfaction would come from supporting both staff and students.

Perception

Chris defines creativity as the “*act of producing original ideas which have value*”. This definition was said to have been adopted from the late Ken Robinson – a very well-known figure in the field of creativity. Chris elaborated on this definition by adding how it is about generating ideas and solving problems while considering different perspectives and involving an element of “*self-expression*”. She sees creativity as a “*continuum*”, ranging from something that is “*a bit out there*”, to more basic ideas at a smaller scale.

Chris' conceptualisation resembles Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) four C model of creativity. By bringing in components that add extra value, ideas can become more creative. In teaching and learning, she defines creative practices as moving beyond imparting knowledge without any self-expression. Referring to her "*continuum*" idea, this could be the use of an analogy when teaching a concept or to get students to build a three-dimensional model of the place they live in, with accompanying multimedia content. Meanwhile, she makes an explicit link between creativity and innovation, saying innovation is a "*progression*" from creativity because it is when one's ideas "*begin to have value for others*". By this, she means the value needs to "*transcend*" and go beyond the owner(s) of the ideas.

Chris' own educational experience, described as not particularly creative, shaped her initial perception of education. However, the professional development and training she received after becoming a teacher, notably TEEP, radically reshaped her perception and introduced her to Ken Robinson's ideas. This resulted in her adopting very different approaches to the teachers she had in school and what she sees as her own "*natural default*". During the TEEP training and through the trainer's modelling, she gained "*lived experience*" of how to teach creatively and was "*shown a whole variety of activities to make things more creative*". The training also helped her to utilise creativity in a "*focused*" way, each time based around "*a specific problem*", rather than being different "*for the sake of it*". For Chris, the main criterion for being creative is whether the practice adds value.

"*Broadly speaking*", Chris thinks her perception of creativity aligns with the school's. For example, the "*cultural understanding*" at the school is that creativity in teaching and learning "*doesn't have to be this huge, big thing*". Rather, senior and middle leaders would recognise the value of creativity at smaller scales. Interestingly, Chris thinks there is an assumption among some teachers that leaders want to see them acting creatively in lessons, in a sort of performative way – perhaps similar to what Mel described as the expectation. However, Chris said she can often see teachers' creativity without them trying to be creative in that way, and therefore it is not necessary. This implies there may be a general perception among staff that leaders at the school value creativity, thus suggesting a pro-creativity culture.

Overall, Chris has a very positive and well-developed perception of creativity. Whilst she thinks creativity inherently carry risks, she does not view these risks to be specific to creativity, because "*every choice*" she makes has a risk. For this reason, she does

not think the risk element associated with creativity should come with a negative connotation.

Motivation

Chris' motivation for being creative is strongly driven by the value it can bring to improving her practice and outcomes for students. Because of this, her attitude to risk is very positive, stating *"I'd pretty much try anything. I don't mind getting it wrong"*. Being *"experimental"* while trying to find the best way to teach a topic was described as her current *"default"* approach. Since she is motivated by the *"personal fulfilment"* she gets from her practice, her motivation appears to be primarily intrinsic. However, compared with Jazz's motivation, Chris' creative practice, which was described as not being her *"natural default"*, appears to be more of a rational choice than an identity-driven instinct.

Enablers

Chris underscored how all influential factors she identified can be both enabling and limiting. Nonetheless, she sees one's *"general motivation"* as being crucial for creativity. Following that, *"cognitive agility"*, which she defines as one's ability to *"switch between various modes of thinking"* and the *"ability to change direction"* would also be important, as it allows them not to be *"stuck in a rut"* based on their existing assumptions. She went on to say, *"the most creative people...generally have better mental agility and the ability to think in different ways"*. This perception highlights competence, or more specifically, what Guilford (1967) describes as divergent thinking to be an enabler. Apart from factors at individual level, like most participants, Chris too, thinks being given time to develop creative thoughts and ideas is a key factor. Moreover, she sees having the right organisational culture as vital, saying *"you are far more likely to feel like you can be creative in an environment where your ideas are valued"*.

Hindrance

A barrier Chris emphasised was risk aversion. Although her own attitude to risk is positive, she appreciates how some teachers may be reluctant to pursue creative ideas due to the perceived possibility of being judged negatively. Chris thinks this barrier is particularly potent when teachers are under pressures, e.g. in a *"highly monitored scenario"*. This idea of anticipated judgement threatening creativity was also raised by

Alex and explains why close supervision has been highlighted as a major barrier in the literature (Lowe, 2010). A “*contextual factor*” Chris identified was resourcing. For instance, if the school was not able to provide the resources needed for a particular idea, even if it could bring value, it would not be able to “*go anywhere*”. This echoes what Perry-Smith and Mannucci (2017) see as a need during the idea championing phase of the idea journey to innovation. Finally, Chris suggested that the “*general discourse*” in education can also be a barrier. This is because it can affect how creativity is accepted and perceived generally.

Implementation

Reflecting on creativity implemented at the school, Chris gave the example of an initiative called the accelerated curriculum. This was introduced to support a very challenging Year 7 group in which many students had a range of “*significant needs*” and were not “*secondary-ready*”. To help bridge the gap, the school applied a “*completely different curriculum model*” to be “*taught in a more primary style*”. The implementation process itself was described as “*highly experimental*” and reflective, with several changes made along the way in light of new insights. This resembles what Perry-Smith and Mannucci’s (2017) refer to as “back and forth” (p.66) between phases such as idea elaboration and idea championing in their idea journey model, allowing ideas to be further refined. Chris sees this initiative as having “*a good level of creativity*” because it started with “*a very open remit*”. The original curriculum was not working for that group of students and so it was a problem that needed to be solved.

In terms of how she and other senior leaders would typically implement creative ideas at whole school level, Chris said leaders would first identify a problem, investigate more deeply, such as analysing relevant school data, and then generate ideas accordingly. For this part of the process, Chris mentioned the possibility of relevant staff collaborating and making specific contributions. For example, some staff are very good at generating creative ideas, whereas she sometimes sees herself as more the “*finisher*”, responsible for “*structuring [the ideas] for the purpose of implementation*”. Commenting on how this kind of configuration is beneficial for implementation, Chris said “*between us, we can make a lot more stuff happen*”. From what was described, the process clearly featured at least some of Belbin’s (2010) team roles, e.g. idea generating staff being the plants and Chris herself as the completer finisher. During this phase, Chris also thinks it is important to conduct what she called a “*pre-mortem*”,

which is essentially to plan for anticipated issues, including resistance, and how these can be avoided.

Once ideas are generated and elaborated, Chris said planning for “*short-term, medium-term, long term*” would be next. For short-term, this would entail planning for “*quick wins*”. At this point of the interview, it became apparent that the approach to implementation is a conscious, intentional process, and the emphasis on quick wins reminded me of one of Kotter’s (2012) eight steps in his change model. Besides planning, Chris also stressed the importance of defining and communicating the solution “*explicitly*”. Identifying the problem and the solution is usually done by the senior leadership team (SLT), as informed by “*research and best practice*”. However, if SLT did not have “*concrete solutions*”, they would have “*broad and open discussions*” with middle leaders to gather additional ideas. After defining and communicating the solution, leaders would seek feedback to ensure that the implementation is progressing as planned. Occasionally, this would mean providing clarifications or amending the original plan. One of the main objectives is to make everything as “*explicit*” and “*clear*” as possible. Thus, the process is dynamic because leaders are able to respond to the needs and challenges that have arisen.

The next step is to link the new initiative to the “*broader system*”. According to Chris, “*when implementation is more effective, there is a greater alignment between the systems and structures...and the outcome*”. She fully recognises that the embedment of a new initiative would be a gradual process. This is why she emphasises the need to share data with staff to show progress, and to reiterate the rationale, “*so that overtime, it changes people’s beliefs, changes people’s behaviours, and allows them to form new habits*”. However, the process does not end there. Instead, Chris sees it as an “*ongoing evolution*”, one that requires “*evaluation*” and “*constant realignment*”. Meanwhile, there are “*mechanisms*” for countering challenges, such as bespoke support, follow-ups and “*setting department-specific targets and goals*”. Given the insights from my literature review, including how creativity can be unpredictable (Beghetto, 2017b), these are likely to be beneficial strategies.

Overall, there is a very systematic and yet flexible approach. The steps mentioned echo what other participants said and the pronoun “we” was used frequently, suggesting a team-oriental approach. That said, SLT still holds considerable power for putting in place relevant actions when implementing whole school creative initiatives. Not only are

they able to define the problem and solution, they are also able to set targets and keep staff accountable. This highlights the key role leaders play in creative transformations.

4.3.6 Interview Profile 6: Sam (senior leader)

Professional background

Sam is a senior leader and an experienced teacher. She was the first and only person in her family to go to university and is driven by providing young people with opportunities. Her career choice was heavily influenced by one of her teachers at school, who she saw as her role model.

Perception

Sam defines creativity as “*doing something different to make it more engaging*”. She sees creativity in teaching and learning as giving students the opportunity to learn by thinking in greater depth and “*not just go with the first answer*”, thus requiring more thinking time than a non-creative approach. It is a way to engage students, which leads them to becoming more “*involved*” in the learning process. This suggests that Sam’s perception of creativity aligns with the concept of active learning, as well as what Jeffrey and Craft (2004) describe a teaching *for* creativity. An example of creativity in Sam’s own practice is the use of scenario-based games to deliver the curriculum, synonymising gamification with creativity. Whilst the aim of such an approach is to engage students, Sam stressed the need to consider the “*fine balance*” between engaging students and preparing them for the “*next step*”. This is because of how they will be expected to learn during A-level and at university, e.g. a lot of reading. This perception concurs with Alex’s view and highlights two interesting assumptions: 1) creative teaching and learning is perceived to be less relevant to post-16 education, and 2) there is a risk that students would not be fully prepared for further studies if creative methods became too prominent. These assumptions perhaps have to do with Sam’s perception of creativity being a gamified approach. Nonetheless, it shows that there is a clear intention to be pragmatic. When asked about what creativity looks like in practice, Sam envisioned students “*working together, learning from each other, bouncing ideas*”, and to have “*unlimited thinking time*” while being given “*opportunities to show what they have learnt in different ways*”. Meanwhile, between colleagues and

herself, it would involve developing ideas and problem-solving through collaborations, “*bouncing ideas off each other*”, and “*group decision-making*”.

Sam’s perception has been shaped by her early work experience prior to becoming a qualified teacher. This experience involved her teaching strategies and skills that are known to aid memorization, for example, the use of colours, music, storytelling, mindmaps and mnemonics. For Sam, this experience made her realise the positive impact such an approach can bring and therefore helped establish a firm “*grounding*” for what teaching and learning should look like. Sam thinks her perception of creativity aligns with the school’s, specifically regarding the “*sharing of best practice*”, and “*having opportunity to watch each other teach*”. She explained this is how departments are “*expected, encouraged to work and operate*”, but this narrative appears somewhat at odds with a small number of participants, such as Jazz. Overall, Sam has a very positive perception of creativity. Despite acknowledging that “*there is an element of risk*”, she still thinks “*it is 100% worth it*”. One striking feature of Sam’s perception of creativity is how it is synonymous with collaboration, thus sharing the same potential benefits.

Motivation

Given creativity’s perceived collaborative nature, Sam thinks it allows her to engage staff and students more effectively. Through collaborations, it also helps generate “*bigger*” and “*better ideas*”. This perception of creativity and its associated positive impact have led to a generally high level of motivation. However, her motivation has been somewhat limited by certain perceptions, such as how creativity is less effective when preparing students for the “*next step*”. These perceptions, perhaps comparable to Herzberg’s concept of *demotivators* (Herzberg, 1968), appear to have resulted in Sam taking more of a pragmatic approach, rather than trying to be creative in her practice all the time. Also, the preference for collaboration and collegial practice suggests that Sam’s *professionalism* (Hoyle, 1975) is likely to be towards the extended side of the spectrum. Notably, as part of the Stage 4 respondent validation process, Sam wanted to emphasise that creativity needs to lead to some form of outcome. With teachers having very limited time, if creativity does not lead to better outcomes, Sam thinks it would not be a good use of time.

Enabler

Sam thinks that *“time is a huge factor”* and although acknowledged as both an enabler and a hinderance, it is largely the former in her setting. This is because from her perspective, the school allows a lot of dedicated department time in its calendar for staff to collaborate, such as working together to develop resources. For Sam and her department, this means being able to work together on a weekly basis. Due to this, Sam points out that having the *“funds available”* is an enabler as well. Specifically, this means having allocated time because *“time is money”* in the school context. With clear emphasis being placed on collaboration, Sam also views *“relationships”* as a key enabler. In practice, having a *“strong team”* has afforded her department the capacity to work creatively.

Hindrance

Sam sees *“examboard requirements”* as the main hindering factor because it *“squeezes the creativity out of [teaching and learning]”*. Whilst identified as a distinct limiting factor, it is time-related. This is because the requirements lead to the perception that there is excessive content to cover, resulting in Sam and colleagues having to teach in ways they deem non-creative. As consistent with her perception of creativity, the assumption here is that teaching creatively would require more time than a non-creative approach, thus less efficient. Such a perceived limitation can be controversial, especially to those who see creativity as a possible solution to that particular problem, e.g. using a creative method to teach the syllabus more efficiently. If perceived to be more time-consuming, motivation and the frequency of implementation could be reduced. With this in mind, the shaping of perceptions relating to creativity can be key to maximising both motivation and implementation.

Another interesting emerging theme is that time appears to be an enabling internal factor, but a hindering external factor. This supports my creativity conceptual framework by showing how external factors such as examboard requirements can create a structure, which in this case, limits creativity, while leadership actions such as allowing department time can serve as an agentic tool to help increase staff’s creative outputs.

Implementation

For Sam, having the time to collaborate regularly has been instrumental in the implementation of creative ideas within her department. By working together, Sam and her colleagues are able to see ideas “*grow and develop*” – an essential step for transforming creativity into innovations, according to Perry-Smith and Mannucci (2017). Not only has working collaboratively with colleagues had a positive impact on the implementation of creative ideas, but Sam's experience to date has also reinforced her positive perception of creativity and maintained her motivation to be creative.

When asked to give examples of creativity implemented at the school, Sam considers a scenario-based **Life Curriculum Day** (Observation 3) that features contributions from multiple departments to be the most creative. Meanwhile, the TEEP lesson planning framework was cited as another because it encourages teachers to spend time thinking about how to engage students in different ways as well as how to give them opportunities to apply their learning.

Speaking about the COVID pandemic and its impact, Sam noted an inevitable reduction in discussion activities between students and how this had negatively affected creativity. However, she thinks the difficult circumstances required staff to be creative, prompting them to rethink their pedagogies and use technology in new ways. Although many changes made during this period were “*forced*” rather than natural, the pandemic did lead to longer-term transformations in teaching and learning within Sam's department that are seen as “*better ideas*”. For example, prior to COVID, there was one particular practical lesson which was considered a creative lesson, but due to the published guidelines at the time, the department had to come up with a new idea. This later turned out to be a more effective lesson and has since replaced the original lesson permanently.

As a leader, Sam thinks implementing creative ideas requires the setting of clear deadlines in order to reduce risks. Moreover, “*quality assurance*”, alongside “*continuous reviews*” to inform future actions are also important. This management approach to implementing creativity is interesting, especially since having “*unlimited thinking time*” is what Sam considers as the ideal version of creativity in the classroom. However, this apparent contradiction is attributed to “*external constraints*”. Furthermore, implementing creativity in her department would involve “*getting the team together*” to plan how the ideas would be implemented, agreeing “*who is going to do what*”. Once an idea is in the process of being developed or has been rolled out, the team would

then get back together, give feedback on progress, and carry out a review. To illustrate this, Sam gave a collaborative planning example used to facilitate the transformation of an existing topic, showing how these steps were followed. This also served as an example of leadership being distributed as two members of staff took the lead in developing a new approach that is capable of teaching the topic in a “*more engaging and interesting way*”. Throughout the interview, the conception of creativity being a form of collaborative effort was strongly emphasised.

4.4 Observations

In total, 14 events were observed, as shown in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 – List of observations

Events observed
1. Whole staff briefing 1
2. Whole staff briefing 2
3. Whole staff briefing 3
4. Whole staff briefing 4
5. Pastoral meeting
6. Subject departmental meeting
7. Leadership meeting
8. Curriculum Group session 1
9. Curriculum Group session 2
10. New staff induction
11. Life Curriculum Walk
12. Life Curriculum Day
13. Subject lesson 1
14. Subject lesson 2

The selection of these events depended on what was available during the data collection period. My main focus was to gather data that would illuminate how creativity was spoken about between staff and to look for signs and actual examples of creativity in their practice. By observing the interactions, it was also possible to collect evidence to show if, and how leadership was being used to foster and promote creativity.

During Stage 3, four whole staff briefings (WSBs) and three other meetings of different nature: pastoral (PM), departmental (DM) and leadership (LM), were observed. As the name suggests, WSB involved all teaching staff and leaders. PM was attended by all pastoral leaders as well as a couple of senior leaders. DM was a meeting held weekly

for staff from one of the subject departments at the school (to be kept anonymous), and LM was attended by SLT. These meetings took place regularly at the school and are less specific than the other events. Therefore, data from them are collated to form the first observation section. The second has been allocated to more specific staff development events, including two training opportunities aimed at middle leaders, and a staff induction day for new teachers at the school. Finally, the third features data collected from teaching and learning activities representing different curriculum areas. More specifically, four events were observed:

- i. a new initiative for the pastoral curriculum,
- ii. a cross-curricular event that involved suspending the normal timetable, like a drop down day,
- iii. a Key Stage 5 lesson, and
- iv. a Key Stage 3 lesson.

4.4.1 Observation 1: Staff meetings

Whole staff briefings

The WSBs were structured by an agenda and served as opportunities to inform or remind staff about key information. One of these: **WSB2**, could be considered as a form of CPD opportunity because part of the aim was to increase staff awareness and understanding of autism. The presentation observed in **WSB2** showed the presenter's willingness to challenge orthodox ideas relating to autism, e.g. linear spectrum versus circular spectrum, while actively finding ways to solve problems such as masking in girls.

During **WSB1**, staff were informed about an upcoming CPD opportunity and a questionnaire was being sent to ask what they would be interested in. This is a sign of a distributed approach to the leadership of professional development, where staff have the power and agency to influence and shape their own professional learning. This is consistent with interview data where staff talked about being able to choose from a range of CPD topics that align with their areas of interest. A conversation with a member of senior staff during the Life Curriculum Walk [see **Observation 3**] also confirmed that staff have opportunities to form and lead their own working parties if they feel the need to innovate in a particular area.

The CPD opportunity mentioned in **WSB1** was related to staff's non-work-related wellbeing and so can be considered as a sign of leaders actively trying to create a supportive culture. In addition to gathering data about CPD preferences, it also became apparent that questionnaires are regularly used to actively assess staff morale [**WSB4**]. Although it would take more than observing these events to be able to accurately describe the approach to leadership, I would argue that they provide examples of what transformational leadership describes as *individualised consideration* (Bass and Riggio, 2006, p.7).

During **WSB1**, another important contextual factor – budget constraints was identified, with the headteacher explicitly stating that “*budget is tight*” and to the extent where it can potentially affect everyday operations. Despite the challenges, a senior leader emphasised how colleagues are all “*working as a team*”, and in most of the WSBs observed, staff were thanked and had their successes publicly celebrated by senior leaders [**WSBs2, 3 & 4**]. This once again provides strong evidence for a positive and collaborative culture at the school. It was also evident that these briefings were used to reassure staff about ongoing challenges [**WSBs1 & 4**], respond to staff voice [**WSB3**] and provide rationale for initiatives implemented [**WSBs2 & 3**].

Pastoral meeting

In the **pastoral meeting**, Edukit, a recently adopted app used by teachers and students to inform the provision of pastoral support was discussed at length, particularly regarding one of its key features and the on-going multi-stage implementation. Interestingly, the app's adoption was described by the leader responsible for its implementation as an “*accident*”, but it was kept due to the potential impact and ability to tackle the mental health problem among students. The on-going use and implementation of Edukit appears to be data driven. Data and graphs generated by the app are used as a formative mechanism to identify problems concerning pastoral support as well as to inform subsequent actions.

Throughout the meeting, phrases like “*We really need the support from colleagues*” and “*I can't do it on my own*” highlighted the strong focus on securing staff buy-in and collaboration. These appeals were accompanied by a clear rationale, and the use of relevant national statistics. The leader's desire to receive contributions and critical inputs from others was clearly expressed by how they were “*more than happy to take any positive and negative comments to make this work*”. Prompts such as “*If you have*

any questions or disagree with anything...” were used throughout, and how the initiative needed colleagues’ inputs because it was new was reiterated several times. Overall, collaboration was very much sought after in the leadership of this new initiative and staff appeared willing to engage in critical discussions. For example, “*the data is not looking right*” was pointed out by one of the pastoral leads when the group discussed one of the presentation slides. Moreover, these critical exchanges seemed to focus on problem *finding* and possible solutions. A short discussion about some specific issues with the app took place at one point between a few staff members, including the headteacher. This discussion highlighted the school’s prominent use of technology and how it was capable of being a key driver of change in future software development. From this discussion, it became apparent that the school had a significant leadership role in technology use beyond its own context. Therefore, when it comes to creative teaching and learning practices involving technology, this could be an important enabler.

As part of the implementation, pastoral leads at the meeting were strongly encouraged to champion the app. Across the different meetings observed and interviews conducted, there was clear evidence of championing being a form of leadership action used by staff at different levels to spread their influence. Furthermore, the approach taken to implement this specific initiative, like many others at the school, strongly resembles some of the steps in Kotter’s (2012) eight steps model for effective change management, for instance, to establish a sense of urgency, create the guiding coalition, and celebrate short term wins. Similarly, the idea championing and vision sharing promoted in this meeting align well with Perry-Smith and Mannucci’s (2017) framework for transforming creative ideas into innovations. Therefore, the data collected from this meeting supports the idea that there is a systematic approach to implementing creativity at the school.

Subject departmental meeting and leadership meeting

The **subject departmental meeting** observed was a fast-paced short meeting, led by the relevant head of department (HoD). By and large, the meeting focused on summarising and reflecting on the feedback the department received for a recent inspection, more specifically, feedback on the use of exercise books. There was a clear emphasis on “*consistency*” being key going forward and the general message was that staff needed to comply with certain expectations. As in some of the other meetings

observed, reasons were given explicitly to justify these expectations. The need for compliance was firmly articulated by HoD, with quotes such as: “*To make sure everyone is doing it and every student is complying with that*”, and “*Just make sure we are doing that because that’s what we have to do*”. This call for compliance in response to Ofsted’s feedback could potentially be thought of as an agency-limiting factor for the leadership of teaching and learning. Following the observation, I spoke briefly with HoD to see if that was the case. However, rather than seeing Ofsted as an agency-limiting factor, it was considered a kind of leverage, in that these expectations actually aligned well with what HoD wanted from the staff and so the Ofsted feedback gave HoD “*the right to get everyone to do what [HoD] want them to do*”. In this sense, Ofsted was viewed as a leadership driver that was reinforcing the direction of travel. In terms of leadership, how the ideal approach to teaching and learning is communicated would likely play a key role in influencing teachers’ perception and motivation.

Meanwhile, the observed **leadership meeting** involving the school’s SLT was only a short 30-minute meeting. The first half was used to approve a list of school trips and the discussion mainly focused on practical issues, such as costs and staff covers. The range of trips approved in this meeting suggests that experiential learning is, at least to some extent, a feature of the school’s curriculum. This could therefore be a source of creative teaching and learning examples found in the school. Towards the end of the meeting, the headteacher volunteered to participate in a sporting event which featured staff despite an injury. This could arguably be an example of *behaviour* associated with another component of transformational leadership: idealised influence, where a leader acts as a role model for staff (Bass and Riggio, 2006, p.6).

4.4.2 Observation 2: Staff development sessions

This section contains my analysis of three events: two Curriculum Group sessions and a staff induction event. The first two were afterschool sessions aimed at middle leaders but also attended by SLT – both sessions were held in the school’s main hall. The induction was a full-day training event for new starters which took place in the conference room.

Curriculum Group session 1

In this first session observed, several tables were laid out to get the staff to work in small groups. The session was led by one of the assistant headteachers (AH) and involved attendees completing a range of activities.

At the start of the session, AH briefly reminded attendees about the “*learning observations*” that were going to take place and that staff would get “*personalised feedback*” on their approach to teaching and learning. During this first part, important foci for staff such as the literacy pillars were mentioned and their significance reiterated. At this point, one senior member of staff said things like “*it’s up to you*” and “*you may or may not want to do that*”. With staff being given the freedom to choose how to achieve the strategic goals set as they see fit, this could be a sign of creativity being sanctioned or encouraged.

After the initial briefing, AH introduced the meeting’s aim, which was to understand the school’s assessment principles. AH explicitly tried to encourage staff to think differently, urging them not to “*just do something because the [previous] head of department did it this way*”. This can also be a sign of creativity being encouraged by a member of SLT. This session was mostly activity-based and provided staff with many opportunities to reflect on their practice. The first activity involved staff reflecting in groups on questions such as “What does ‘exceeding’ in Year 8 mean?”, and “What does it not mean. To keep the pace, AH gave staff strict timings to have these discussions and write down their answers on the A3 paper and colour pens provided. Each group was then asked to share their answers. The headteacher interjected at one point, saying “*no one has mentioned about prior attainment*” and that “*how and why students are on their current pathway is worth talking about*”. This in turn encouraged middle leaders to think more deeply about assessment.

The second activity involved all the attendees apart from the senior leaders getting into pairs. AH gave staff the freedom to choose their own partner, providing that they were from a different department. Once paired up, staff were then asked to label themselves as either A or B. At this point, they did not know what the task was and why they had to pair up, thus allowing AH to preserve an element of surprise. It then transpired that A would become the questioner, leading a conversation using the assessment reflection sheet provided. This 10-minute roleplay activity once again provided time for critical reflection and appeared to have initiated a meaningful information sharing discussion between the staff from different departments. The value of this activity was

acknowledged explicitly by at least some of the attendees, with one person saying, *“that’s a very good question”*.

By observing this session, it became apparent that AH values both reflection and sharing activities. Staff also seemed very engaged throughout these discussions. More importantly, there were clear signs that creativity was being encouraged and that staff were given freedom to be creative when it came to assessment. In summary, what can be gleaned from this observation is that priorities and vision have been explicitly shared by senior leaders. Creativity appeared to be encouraged to suit individuals and groups, with SLT openly acknowledging that one size does not fit all.

Curriculum Group session 2

Five months after **Curriculum Group session 1**, I was given the opportunity to observe another. Despite the sitting arrangement being similar, this session was less activity-based and much of it involved middle and senior leaders reflecting on the feedback subject departments received from a recent Ofsted inspection. A large proportion of the session was dedicated to heads of department (HoDs) sharing their thoughts on the inspection. The atmosphere was very positive and one HoD explicitly referred to the inspection as a *“good experience”*. There was plenty of humour and laughter throughout which suggests very good staff morale despite the pressure the school was under.

Another main item covered in this session by senior leaders was the problem of lower reading ages among some student cohorts. Like in some of the other meetings observed, school data presented as graphs and a spreadsheet were used to highlight the problem and this can be seen as senior leaders exerting their influence by establishing a sense of urgency, like the first step of Kotter’s (2012) change model. The discussion that followed emphasised flexibility within the curriculum regarding alternative syllabuses which could better suit these cohorts. This concurs with an earlier finding that leadership was responsive and that leaders were prepared to implement change when encountering problems arising from the data. By being open to flexibility, it would also serve as an enabler for creativity (Lowe, 2010).

After that, peer observation opportunities were discussed. All staff were strongly encouraged to observe others and this is what the school wanted to prioritise. The goal was to have all teaching staff complete their peer observation before the end of the

school year and it was also the aim that everyone receives developmental feedback that is “*personalised*”, “*detailed and precise*”. From this, the school can be said to have a collective and distributed approach to the leadership of teaching and learning. Although having peer observation opportunities is what participants such as Pat saw as a facilitating factor for creativity, as I argued previously, its potential would depend on whether creative practices were observed and how such practices were perceived. If teachers were reluctant to teach creatively due to being anxious about being judged negatively – like what Alex said, then it is unlikely that peer observations would benefit creativity substantially.

Towards the end of the session, a recently implemented initiative was discussed briefly. Here, a senior leader reiterated how it was about “*everybody having a role*” and that teaching staff needed to take ownership of the initiative. This further highlights the collective and distributed approach to leadership when it comes to sustaining new initiatives that have been implemented.

New staff induction

This full-day event was led by an assistant headteacher and attended by 12 new starters. It took place in the school’s spacious conference room. There were five tables in the room, all of which were utilised during the day when small group tasks were set. A white board at the front of the room was used by AH to note down key points and a PowerPoint containing audiovisual contents aided the delivery. Throughout the day, attendees also stuck the work they produced on the wall.

The induction day had a clear structure and was divided into three parts. The focus was to introduce the new starters to the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP) model (SSAT, 2024) that the school has adopted for lesson planning. These training sessions are designed to support TEEP’s ongoing implementation across the school and during this first session, there was an explicit effort by AH to model some of the pedagogical ideas covered. The idea was to provide attendees with an opportunity “*to have a lived experience*” of pedagogy shaped by TEEP. The implementation of this model was particularly interesting to my research due to it being highlighted as an example of creativity (e.g. Robin) and a model for encouraging creativity in teaching and learning (e.g. Drew).

This induction session was very interactive and had a strong emphasis on reflection. For example, attendees were frequently asked to reflect on how the different activities could be applied to their own subject. Using photo stimuli, the new starters also reflected on their perception of effective teaching and learning, with AH asking “*What is there to suggest effective teaching and learning is taking place?*”. The day was mainly made up of whole-group and small group discussions, but there were physical activities as well. These included a group game, which involved the attendees working with their peers to complete a challenge. The groups found the challenge quite difficult, leading to many different ideas being offered and tested. During another activity, AH facilitated a debate where attendees had to physically position themselves on a spectrum to state whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “Teacher talk is the enemy to effective learning” and provide reasons. According to AH, this was an example of active learning and an effective type of formative assessment. Throughout the day, despite the relatively small group size, it was striking how many different group configurations AH utilised. As well as individual and pair tasks, some activities and discussions were also done in groups of three, others in groups of six. There was a conscious effort to keep the activities different throughout. For example, attendees were explicitly asked to go into a different group after their break. Whilst having different groupings itself does not equal creativity, novelty appeared to be a key ingredient.

The concept of creativity featured at different points during the day, both in terms of ideas covered and attendees’ responses. For example, creativity and the state of flow, coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), were mentioned in one of the videos shown to the attendees about student motivation. When asked to name the top three most important ingredients for effective teaching and learning, half of the attendees (as one group) agreed on “*teamwork and creativity, i.e. creative tasks*” being one of them. The response from the other group, although did not name creativity specifically, included some key features of creativity identified by interview participants during Stage 2, e.g. collaboration, interaction, engagement, and different learning environments.

During Part 2 of the day, attendees were tasked with creating and delivering a presentation in pairs or threes. Essentially, this was a lesson planning activity followed by delivery. The presentations needed to adhere to a list of criteria, including a specific length, use of visual graphics, the creation of a memorable slogan and to be “unique and creative”, in other words, “*different to others*”. The groups subsequently produced and presented their visual materials, utilising a variety of activities such as a quiz, role

play and dance, while the rest of the attendees acted as participants. Creativity was also alluded to in two of the presentations, albeit relating to students being creative, for example, to “*get the kids to think outside the box*” in Religious Education and how ICT can encourage more creativity. Thinking about my creativity conceptual framework, these discussions and activities as new staff join the school can help develop or reinforce a positive perception of creativity from the outset, as well as modelling how creative pedagogy can be implemented. After the presentations, the attendees were directed to reflect on that part of the day using de Bono’s (2010) Six Thinking Hats model which features a creativity hat. The way in which creativity featured in this induction provides further support that creativity was valued by leadership at the school.

Regarding the leadership of teaching and learning observed in this induction, there was clear evidence of *idealised influence*, *inspirational motivation* and *intellectual stimulation*: three of the four components in transformational leadership (Avolio and Bass, 2001). This can be seen in how modelling and idea sharing were used, the setting of pedagogical expectations, and the emphasis on creativity. Specifically, providing a clear rationale while actively referring to research and relevant theories to gain influence is something that was modelled for these new starters as early as their induction. The emphasis on collaborations, group discussions and peer feedback, alongside what was noted in the two **Curriculum Group sessions** also demonstrate how shaping practices collaboratively is the cultural norm. Notably, this induction saw AH highlighting the importance of being “*outside [of one’s] comfort zone*” and not to be “*too committed to doing [things] one way*”. Considering the factors that can enable or limit creativity, such a narrative would help create a favourable condition for it to thrive. The attendees I spoke to on the day viewed TEEP positively, particularly because of the model’s flexible nature and how it would be updated in response to research. They also liked having a model that could aid their planning and practice without feeling restricted. Therefore, this enabling structure would likely help staff develop a sense of agency, in turn enhancing their perception of creativity. Through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), if staff were to be able to plan successful lessons with TEEP, the sense of competence gained would also enhance their motivation to be creative.

4.4.3 Observation 3: Examples of creativity in practice

This final observation section features four observed examples of creativity in practice: a Life Curriculum Walk, a Life Curriculum Day, and two timetabled lessons. The two Life Curriculum events were identified by several participants as creative and the two timetabled lessons were also described by the teachers delivering them as having some elements of creativity.

Life Curriculum Walk

Following **WSB1**, one of the senior leaders (SL) took me to complete a Life Curriculum Walk alongside staff and students. This was not a pure observation, in that it was myself observing the Life Curriculum Walk in practice while having an unstructured conversation with SL simultaneously.

The Life Curriculum Walk is an initiative implemented around the time of the research and involves staff and students following a clearly signposted route around the entire school ground. The walk is completed during form time twice a week and the aim is to help maintain students' wellbeing. The idea is based on research evidence that senior leaders came across about the benefits of physical activities on learning and the Edukit app which featured in the **pastoral meeting** observed, is used to track students' state of mental health after each walk. This together with earlier findings show how new initiatives were in abundance at the time of the research and that some were being used to support each other's implementation.

During the walk, I learned about the school's senior leadership structure, which consists of senior leaders and a couple of volunteering middle leaders known as the extended leadership team. To become part of the extended leadership team, when a vacancy arises, interested middle leaders would apply for it, similar to secondment opportunities. Once appointed, these extended leaders would join other senior leaders in regular leadership meetings and be given substantial responsibilities. Moreover, I learned that the school has a range of working parties, belonging to two categories: "*fixed*" and "*not fixed*". The focus of the former would be determined by the school, while the latter would allow staff the freedom to work towards something which they saw as important. Both the extended leadership structure and the way in which working parties operate can be seen as further examples of the school's distributed approach to leadership.

From this conversation, it appears that staff are offered much autonomy to form and lead working parties. According to the SL, these groups serve as a good way to satisfy staff's needs relating to working on new initiatives whilst being able to potentially make positive contributions. Some of these groups are also less specific and more about problem *finding*, rather than problem solving. This is particularly interesting because of the associated risks involved, e.g. opportunity costs, especially given the high-stakes pressure the school was under. Using staff-led working parties to organically generate new ideas and solve problems is in itself, creative in nature. Not only could the groups act as a major source of creativity, but they could also be the key driver of leadership of creativity in teaching and learning at the school. Furthermore, it illuminates a culture that encourages the exploration of new ideas, showing the leaders have created a structure which enables staff to utilise their agency to be creative.

SL spoke about one specific initiative that was being implemented – Provision by Design (PbD). This initiative originated from a problem which SL identified: prior to PbD's implementation, the interventions put in place were not seen as appropriate for some students in specific groups. In other words, students belonging to a particular category, e.g. disadvantaged, may not all have the same needs. This then developed into a more concrete intervention concept, and a working party was set up, with an extended leader taking the lead to implement the new approach as their school-wide responsibilities. SL pointed out that creative ideas generated within the school do not always lead to innovations. For example, some working parties and departments are particularly good at brainstorming new ideas but often lack follow-up actions. This is a very interesting point which clearly relates to how idea generation does not automatically lead to innovations (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017, p.54) and supports Belbin's idea relating to the importance of team roles, e.g. having *plants* as well as *completer finishers* (Belbin, 2010).

Life Curriculum Day

Life Curriculum Days (LCDs), where the normal timetable for a specific year group would collapse so that an entire day can be dedicated to a particular theme, have been referred to by many participants as notable examples of creativity at the school, e.g. Kai and Taylor. On this occasion, it was for the Year 8 cohort, and the theme was based around a well-known TV series in the United Kingdom called The Apprentice. For these students, this was their second LCD since starting Year 8. Cross-curricular in nature,

Business, Design and Technology (D&T), and mathematics were the focus, thus acting as the lead for the event.

The day began in the school hall, with a well-produced video on the big screen, featuring the iconic music by Prokofiev and characters portrayed by the school staff emulating a scene typical of the TV show. The headteacher played the character of an established business boss, uttering the famous phrase “You’re fired”. Students were then briefed by a member of staff about what was to come: spending the day researching and working with their peers to create a new toy box. They were encouraged to “*challenge*” themselves and get “*out of [their] comfort zone*” in order to improve their skills. The day would see students working in groups, with three shortlisted groups presenting their final product to the boss and the winning group will “get hired”.

Once in groups, students were sent to different rooms to begin their work. The project was broken down into multiple timed tasks, for example, spending 10 minutes to decide on team name and create a logo. Students within each team also had to take up different team roles. Throughout the day, students worked collaboratively and made joint decisions such as what they wanted in their toy box. In addition to using physical resources provided, such as worksheets and materials needed for creating the box, students also completed some of the work digitally on their own laptop. For example, they all created a questionnaire for market research. This was a novel experience for many as the majority of students admitted not to have used Googleform for that purpose before. Students then worked in multiple locations to complete different parts of the project, e.g. some filmed their presentation outside while others created their toy box in the D&T room. Although the day was predominantly practical and group-work-based, a small part where students were taught about doing market research was teacher-led and delivered in a way that resembled a typical lesson.

For the final part of the day, students returned to the hall to watch the deliberation. Three shortlisted groups took turns to present their final product to the panel, outlining their considerations relating to costs, profits, target audience and unique selling points. From this, it was apparent that these students were able to develop and apply their business-related knowledge as well as other useful life skills, such as presenting skills. This part was live streamed from the headteacher’s office and just as the verdict was about to be delivered, the live stream abruptly stopped, creating a real sense of suspense in the hall. Much to the students’ surprise, the headteacher then emerged

with the Business team in person and spoke about each of the finalists' work, offering feedback regarding the product, its advert, the finance, as well as the pitch. All feedback was kept very positive and the cohort's effort throughout the day was explicitly recognised in the form of praises and congratulations. In addition to announcing the winner and reiterating how all three groups had produced outstanding work, the headteacher took this opportunity to emphasise the importance of creativity to the students. The event ended with the finalists being presented with their prize and having photos taken.

This LCD was a clear example of creativity. Firstly, the Apprentice Day was a one-off for these Year 8 students. From the staff's perspective, it was also a relatively novel experience because it was only the second time this particular LCD had been held and many staff present were not involved the first time round. Secondly, the LCD was valued by both staff and students. Throughout the day, multiple students said they preferred it to "*normal*" lessons, some even became animated, saying how they liked this type of work and that the day was "*fun*" and could better their "*organisational skills*". One teacher said she valued this type of lesson due to having experienced something similar before. This reinforces the idea that previous experience can shape perception, just as demonstrated in the interview data. The teacher also commented on how students could work with others in a much more collaborative way during the LCD, in turn allowing them to develop useful skills such as teamwork skills. Meanwhile, a teacher from the D&T department valued this LCD because of the cross-curricular skills it offered and whilst students might not be fully aware of all the skills they were developing, the learning was valuable. With D&T being a practical subject, the teacher argued that this event was actually "*not that different*" to a typical D&T lesson. However, where students would usually work as individual designers in lessons, they got to collaborate in groups and gain skills in different areas during this LCD. An interesting comment from this teacher was that "*students having too much freedom won't work*" and that they should have some pre-determined selection of materials or shapes to work with. This relates to *structure* in my creativity conceptual framework and the suggestion here was that creative ideas need some form of structure to work effectively.

Judging by the progress observed, the level of student engagement was high. By lunch time, all the students working in the D&T room at the time had produced something that looked like a toy box and some even had very intricate designs. One of the groups

appeared very impressed by their own work, exclaiming “*Sir, we are so proud*” while showing the teacher their prototype. This demonstrated how value generated was not based on perceptions alone, e.g. whether the learning was fun. On this occasion, the impact could be measured by the progress students made. For these reasons, LCD was creative by definition, in that it was novel and of value to the staff and students. However, it is worth noting that various levels of contribution among students were observed during the day. Therefore, whilst a creative approach may be able to enhance engagement, it may not have the same impact for all.

Two subject lessons

A Key Stage 5 Business lesson featuring a lively class was observed first. The lesson began with a timed activity where students in small groups, were asked to discuss an image and keywords provided, using mini whiteboards to note down their ideas. One by one, students were selected to explain their chosen keyword. The strategy deployed here was that students had to select the next person from a different table to contribute after they had given their answer. As students did not know if they would be selected next, most were visibly engaged. Meanwhile, the pace of the activity allowed many to contribute.

Everyone selected was able to explain their chosen keyword. Occasionally, the teacher would prompt students to think deeper, especially when understanding was less clear. For example, when a student gave a one-word answer, the teacher responded with “*Go on, expand*”. The class was also asked “*Why do you think we did this activity?*”, indicating that it was not a routine starter. Students then resumed their group discussion based on a key question set and were presented with real-life scenarios to contextualise their learning. Prompts such as “*Why is that a problem*” were used by the teacher to model critical thinking.

These discussions lasted approximately 30 minutes. After that, a new task involving independent written work was set. Interestingly, students were asked how much time they felt they needed. Following a short negotiation, the class and the teacher agreed on 16 minutes. As the task began, the teacher put on some very soft music in the background and whilst there was no explicit instruction to work in silence, the room went completely silent except for the music at one point. When the teacher realised that

the majority needed more time, an additional four minutes were added to the timer, demonstrating some degree of flexibility and responsiveness.

Before the end of the lesson, students were asked to complete a “*snowball review*”, where they had to formulate their own question relating to the topic on a piece of paper, screw it up and then throw it in the direction of another student. These snowballs then served as exit tickets, meaning students had to answer their peer’s question before leaving the classroom. As confirmed by the teacher, this was another novel activity which students had no experience of. On this occasion, students appeared to really like the task and as a result, all were happy to participate.

The second lesson observed was a Key Stage 3 English lesson. Very clear instructions were given at the start, with high expectations firmly established. The first activity involved students choosing and explaining a word from the topic vocabulary that they had learnt in recent lessons. In order for them to keep their chosen word and not have it “*stolen*” by their peers, they needed to use it correctly in a sentence. For those who were not able to contribute immediately, extra “*thinking time*” was given while others took on an extension task, therefore enabling everyone to participate.

During this whole-class activity, the teacher reinforced and potentially extended students’ knowledge through additional explanation and elaboration, as well as modelling the use of these keywords. Within approximately six minutes, everyone had successfully participated. The lesson then rapidly progressed onto the next activity: drafting two sentences that feature some of the keywords. This acted as scaffolding between the first and main activities. There was a very positive and productive learning atmosphere, created by the teacher’s effective behaviour management, humour and encouragement. Some students rose to the extended challenge and included several keywords in their sentences.

Following that, the whole class brainstormed together and generated ideas such as “*full moon*” and “*cemetery*” for the main task, which was to create an opening to their own gothic story. The teacher said to the class “*use a pen, make those mistakes. I learn best from my mistakes*”, and the phrase “*open your brain*” was used to encourage them. Students were then given seven minutes to create their opening in silence. Shortly before the end of the lesson, all had created their opening and some took turns to read their story out loud, showcasing their impressive imagination.

Both lessons utilised a variety of configurations and activities, such as whole-class discussion, brainstorming in small groups and independent writing. They also featured tasks that required students' imagination and the teachers supported this explicitly by providing students with "*thinking time*". Notably, some features relating to the perception of creativity mentioned during the interview stages can be found in the two lessons, including:

- Students participating in novel activities
- Learning via collaborations and interactions, bouncing ideas off each other
- Guided to think in greater depth, thus requiring additional thinking time
- Activities that allow for self-expressions

Therefore, these features can be considered at least partially representative of how creativity is perceived and implemented in practice at the case study school. High level of student engagement, which can be considered as value, was evident throughout both lessons, as demonstrated by the work completed and the number of students wanting to contribute.

In the English lesson, whilst the teacher had clearly established a routine relating to classroom management, the lesson itself was creative in nature. This is because the students were tasked to *create* their own original gothic story, something which they had not done before. In the Business lesson, it was particularly interesting to see how students had agency to make some of the key decisions during the activities, resulting in them being directly involved in shaping their own learning journey. It is possible that pedagogically, such an approach could help facilitate more novel experiences that are of value to the students.

Both lessons also had a focus on keywords. Given Ofsted's comments about the need to consistently promote students' literacy skills, this is unsurprising. However, it shows how despite externally imposed priorities, teachers can still have agency to implement creativity in their practice, albeit dependent on the structure they have to work within. If there were strict expectations that lessons are delivered in a particular way with only prescribed activities allowed, it would be difficult for teachers to try out or adapt novel pedagogical ideas.

This highlights the importance of having an enabling structure. Such a structure, as supported the appropriate leadership actions, can play a key role in lessening the potential negative effects restricting contextual factors have on the three core elements

relating to creativity in teaching and learning, i.e. how creativity is perceived, how teachers are motivated to be creative, and how creativity is implemented.

4.5 Chapter conclusion

Having presented my documentary analysis, interview profiles, and observation commentary, this section summarises the key findings and the application of my creativity framework's components (figure 2.7).

The research was carried out during a challenging period for the case study school, where it faced significant external pressures, as well as having to navigate through the immediate aftermath of COVID. Contextual factors, as a result, served as a significant force in shaping the leadership of teaching and learning. Examining these key factors revealed tensions arising between the need for creativity and monitoring structures at various levels that could be inhibiting. This inevitably led to differing interpretations among staff regarding their perceived level of agency for creative practices. Despite this, there were clear examples of creativity, both as described in interviews and the events observed. Whilst creativity at whole school level was seen to be valued and encouraged, albeit mainly implicitly, the leadership of creativity at departmental level painted a more nuanced picture, highlighting the key role middle leaders played through the structure they create.

All three data sources indicated that leadership at whole school level was responsive and open to change. There was a strong emphasis on taking a collective approach which valued collaboration. Although creativity was not always seen to be promoted in an explicit way, a range of leadership actions to a large extent helped create a pro-creativity culture, and implementation at whole school level, also appeared to be a conscious and intentional process. Meanwhile, although the interview profiles presented a range of distinct narratives, each demonstrated a clear sense of interconnectedness and the mutually influential relationships between the three core elements of my enhanced social perspective of creativity framework (figure 2.7): perception, motivation, and implementation. The interview profiles and observed events also provided specific examples showing how these elements were being affected by contextual factors and leadership actions through structure and agency.

Chapter 5 will proceed to address and answer the three research questions. To support the analysis and discussion while ensuring that all participants are represented, this

next chapter will also draw from additional data not featured in the interview profiles or observation commentary.

Chapter 5: Findings by Research Question

5.1 Introduction

This chapter answers my three research questions (RQs) by drawing from the findings detailed in Chapter 4, as well as some additional complementary data from various stages which have not yet been presented. The additional data include those from the seven participants who were not featured in Chapter 4's interview profiles. The inclusion of these additional data is designed to serve two main purposes:

- 1) To illustrate common themes, particularly those which are pertinent to each leadership level, by providing rich and thick descriptions of a range of lived experiences, in turn complementing the profiles.
- 2) To build a holistic picture of the case by highlighting nuances and alternative perspectives, e.g. what creative practices entailed. This allowed comparisons to be made and data to be triangulated, leading to more informed and in-depth answers to the RQs.

When selecting additional data, the following five criteria needed to be met:

- **Richness and illustrative quality:** data were selected based on their richness and ability to offer specific details or examples.
- **Conciseness and relevance:** data needed to be relatively concise and directly relevant to my RQs.
- **Avoidance of unnecessary repetitions:** data illustrating a specific theme would not be included once thematic saturation had been achieved.
- **Risks to anonymity:** data were excluded if they posed a risk to the participant's anonymity, e.g. when a subject-specific scheme of work was mentioned.
- **Proportional representation of all participants:** the selection of data overall needed to reflect the diversity of my sample.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, some direct quotes and paraphrases presented in this chapter are only attributed to stakeholder groups to maximise anonymity. Both the findings and additional data are synthesised with insights from the Literature Review to

build on existing knowledge, illuminate the nuances found in the case study school, and discuss the wider implications relating to the leadership of creativity in teaching and learning.

5.2 RQ1: How is creativity perceived in the case study school from multiple leadership perspectives?

This research sought to capture the participants' lived experience relating to creativity in teaching and learning, as well as their interpretation of what constitutes creativity in their setting and practice. Furthermore, it sought to assess how they feel about creativity, including its perceived value, and some of the specific teaching and learning initiatives exist within the school. By examining participants' perceptions, one would be able to explore how the school as a system - as related to Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective, see and do creativity, as well as how creative ideas are validated.

To gain a comprehensive overview of the participants' perception, three themes were identified during the analysis:

1. Defining creativity
2. Examples of creativity
3. Perspectives on creativity

To fully address this first RQ, theme 3 also evaluates how perceptions compare between teacher, middle (ML) and senior leaders (SL).

5.2.1 Defining creativity

With creativity being a social construct (Kahl and Hansen, 2015), what constitutes it depends on how one defines it. How creativity is seen collectively at the case study school and whether there is a strong agreement, would form the perception at institutional level. This research found that there is broadly a general consensus regarding how creativity is defined and described, albeit with some nuances. In the interview data, specific features unique to each participant were noted. Some key features were acknowledged consistently across the sample and most of these fit in well with the definition outlined in Chapter 2, this being: **the generation of ideas relating to teaching and learning practices which are novel, of value and ethical, as perceived by those within the school and the wider community.**

5.2.1.1 *The generation of ideas and novelty*

By and large, participants described creative ideas as new ideas. However, based on their responses, *adoption* and *application* can be used as alternative options in place of *generation* in my definition. As illustrated in Alex's profile, it is not always necessary for one to generate creative ideas themselves. Instead, one can adopt or apply ideas they have not tried before, in which case, the emphasis is on novelty rather than originality. However, for some, like Taylor and Chris, an idea should be "*unique*" or "*original*" if it was to be considered creative. Newness can also be from the perspective of either teachers or students. Some participants referred to lessons they had taught multiple times as creative because their current students had not experienced them before. Some saw their own creative practice as facilitating activities that allowed students to express their creativity. For Ellis, it could even involve minimal "*live input*" from the teacher, highlighting the blurriness between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. However, she emphasised how these lessons still need the teacher to act as a stimulus and lay the groundwork, e.g. creating physical resources like laminated cards. Therefore, such an approach can be seen to require teachers' creativity, albeit outside of the lessons themselves. This perception of creativity as the creation of "*tactile*" or "*visual*" resources was also discussed by the likes of Mel, Robin and Taylor.

Generally speaking, if you come into my lessons, I can guarantee they are different to the lesson happening next door

(ML)

"*Different*" is a word that was used by every participant when they were asked what creativity was to them. Despite this overwhelming consensus, what is considered different, or more specifically, novel, would depend on what the point of reference is (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999) and thus could vary between the three leadership levels. What different looks like in practice can also vary significantly across subjects, or lessons delivered by different teachers within the same department. For example, the teaching and learning practice observed during the **Life Curriculum Day** (Observation 3) was described by one of the Technology teachers as "*quite typical*" within her department. However, for most of the participants working in other subject areas, such practice is not typical. Meanwhile, a few participants talked about creativity in their practice as having some sort of variety, which can be interpreted as a form of difference and a way to prevent students and even teachers from getting bored.

Another relevant aspect from participants' responses was that creative ideas can be generated by individuals or groups. However, the majority thought that the latter would be more beneficial, concurring with Harris' (2009) idea that "creativity is sparked and fuelled by interaction and co-construction" (p.11). For example, Sam thought collaboration would lead to "*better ideas*" and Hilary suggested that it would offer a "*broader spectrum of creativity*". Some teachers associated creativity with students undertaking practical activities that involved physical movements. An example observed would be the snowball review activity depicted in Observation 3. Interestingly, the teacher who delivered the lesson confirmed afterwards that the activity was the most creative part of that lesson, suggesting that making an activity practical could enhance creativity. To synthesise responses from Ellis, Hilary, Robin and Vic, it is about having the freedom and ability to experiment, try new things and think outside the box. For Hilary, teachers being creative would require them to reflect on and adapt their own practice as well.

What has been described so far highlights creativity's highly variable, situation-specific nature and that it is open to interpretation. This leads to many possible ways in which teachers can be creative in practice, and at least in part, explains why creativity may be considered conceptually elusive by Craft et al. (2001) and Treffinger (2003) alike. This is also why exploring specific examples within a given context is crucial for defining creativity in practice.

5.2.1.2 Value and ethicality

In addition to commenting on the novel aspect of their creative practice and the many forms it can take, participants highlighted several ways in which it can be valuable. The most cited value was creativity's ability to engage students, and many share Taylor's perception of creativity being "*fun*", "*enjoyable*", "*exciting*" and able to "*bring a topic to life*". Furthermore, it was said to make learning more "*relatable*" and "*memorable*", with students being given freedom to express themselves and teachers using specific techniques such as scenarios, games, acronyms and stories to achieve such results. Reflecting on creativity's characteristics, this is likely due to the variety it brings and what Jazz highlighted as "*the element of surprise*". Whilst Mel thinks that creativity could be "*too stimulating*" for some students, most participants see this as a major advantage. Besides student engagement, Robin, among others, value creativity because "*it's a really good way of problem-solving*". Its usefulness can go beyond the

live delivery aspect of teaching and learning, as acknowledged by SL Vic because it has helped her to solve problems during non-teaching tasks. When asked about why something was more creative than others, Vic's view was that the level of creativity correlates with the impact. If something had an "*overarching impact*" and was transformative at whole-school level, then it would be seen as highly creative, concurring with Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) way of viewing creativity at various levels according to the impact.

At first, Cropley's (2001) concept of ethicality did not appear as a distinctive feature in the data. During the first round of interview (Stage 2), none alluded to the need for creative ideas to be ethical explicitly. This prompted a specific question in the follow-up interview (Stage 4) about creative ideas and potential ethical issues, especially given the risk element associated with creativity (Lowe, 2010; Cremin and Chappell, 2021). Whilst participants like Pat and Alex felt that creativity may not always be risky, most acknowledged that risks are inevitable and that they would be willing to take such risks, at least at the espoused level. For example, Drew admitted how sometimes taking a creative approach may not work, but "*if it did work, it would be brilliant*". Kai also said that it would be "*100% [worth the risk], especially because of the rewards that you can get from it*". There is strong evidence that the school has a culture of staff not being afraid to take risks, partly due to encouragement from SLT:

Here, you are encouraged to take risks.

(Hilary, ML)

However, ethicality was very much a consideration for all participants. Not all risks were deemed acceptable, as demonstrated by this quote:

Undermining colleagues for me is a big no no...if it's just for creativity reasons, and would negatively impact [students'] achievement or even undermining colleagues, I wouldn't say it's worth it.

(Kai, Teacher)

Furthermore, why participants are motivated to be creative can also be linked to ethicality. For example, Drew thinks one of the determining factors for deciding if a risk is worth taking is whether it would benefit her students. Although the intolerance of risks capable of causing ethical issues was only confirmed at the espoused level, my data still support the idea that ethicality should be considered an essential ingredient when conceptualising creativity in education.

5.2.2 Examples of creativity

All participants provided examples of what they see as creativity during the interviews. These ranged from classroom activities to whole-school initiatives, and from new departmental schemes of work to extracurricular programmes. In addition to those featured in the interview profiles, other specific examples included:

- Using the Greatest Showman film to teach entrepreneurship in business
- A new way of writing analytically in English: PATEL paragraphs
- Having a geography lesson in a park
- New topics in history
- A mathematics trip to another school
- Performing arts performances at the school
- A carousel-style lesson in physical education
- A science lesson about the spread of diseases
- The accelerated curriculum for students with specific needs
- A hand-made dominos resource idea shared with another department
- Combined Cadet Force at the school

The use of technology was named as one of the most creative *aspects* of teaching and learning at the school. Many also see the TEEP model used to induct all new staff, as well as the working parties mentioned in Chapter 4 as creative and that these help them to be creative in their practice. Furthermore, many spoke enthusiastically about their own lessons and lesson planning within their department as notable examples of creativity. This suggests that they consider at least part of their practice as creative and many appear confident in their abilities to implement creativity.

During Stage 4 interviews, participants were asked to identify a specific initiative, event or activity that they considered the most creative at the school and give one example of what they considered only somewhat creative. The aim was to get them to differentiate examples of creativity and explain what made one example more creative than another. Life Curriculum Days (LCDs), which the Apprentice Day (Observation 3) was an example of, were described by the majority as a notable creative initiative. Most of these participants also ranked LCDs as the most creative things they have come across at the school, not just the most creative at the time of the research. The reasons given were consistent among the sample: because of the cross-curricular links they offer as well as the high level of student engagement and positive impact witnessed.

This in turn led the participants to develop a very positive perception of this type of event. Commenting on one of the LCDs, a ML said:

Just the amount of imagination that went into making such an engaging experience that covered such a wide scope, I think that was probably the best thing I have seen.

Towards the other end of the continuum, what participants consider only somewhat creative was much more varied and there were no common responses. One of the reasons for this is because most of the examples given were from within the participants' own department and as the sample included staff from various departments, different responses were inevitable. However, even the responses which shared a link are quite different in practice, for example, a resource for literacy in the department versus a range of classroom activities designed to support literacy. This shows a correlation between the extent to which something is accepted by the system as creative and its perceived level of creativeness. In other words, the more people think something is creative, the more likely it is seen as something that is highly creative. This supports Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) *Four C Model of Creativity*, in that the higher levels of creativity such as Big C and Pro-C would have a higher level of recognition and acceptance. Whilst it is difficult for this research to precisely define what Kaufman and Beghetto's four different levels should look like in this specific setting, the fact that these LCDs involve multiple departments and are much more elaborate in terms of ideas and delivery than standard classroom lessons, they would fit well within the Pro-C category or at least more like Pro-C than the *somewhat creative* examples.

Moving even further towards the non-creative side of the continuum, participants were asked what they saw as the least creative aspect of teaching and learning. The responses were once again very consistent, with the vast majority nominating assessment or a specific aspect of assessment. However, what many participants alluded to was actually how students are graded and the data generated, rather than the assessment tasks themselves or feedback mechanisms. That said, there were some participants who think the assessments themselves are rigid and uncreative. Interestingly, although very much in the minority, lesson planning and curriculum were two items that were placed at both ends of the continuum by participants from different departments. This implies what happens within departments, for example, if creativity is

implemented or encouraged, can have significant influence on how creative something is perceived.

5.2.3 Perspectives on creativity

As in the literature, creativity is viewed very positively among the participants. Similar to what has been acknowledged by Gajda et al. (2017), all participants believe creativity to be a way to secure enhanced outcomes, and a SL went as far as saying that “*it is always positive*”. All but one participant have an overall positive perception of creativity. Mel, the only participant who described creativity as *neutral*, still acknowledged a range of benefits and does not see it as an overall negative. Broadly speaking, if a teaching and learning idea is novel, valuable and ethical, it is not surprising that teachers and leaders would view it positively. However, such a positive perception would not be absolute and could be affected by many variables, for instance, what value an idea brings, potential risks and limitations, the level of acceptance, relevance, and more fundamentally, the different interpretations of what creativity is. Notwithstanding the positive impressions, some issues relating to creativity’s value in teaching and learning, and even potential misinterpretation were raised by the participants.

According to Drew, creativity in teaching and learning leads to enjoyment and “*maximum engagement*”, but creative lessons may not equal learning. This links to what Mel said about creativity being able to make an activity memorable but not necessarily the subject matter that students are meant to learn about. Drew named one of her Year 7 lessons as creative and whilst the students had a lot of fun, she is unconvinced that they had learnt anything from it. Given the lesson’s apparent lack of value, it is interesting how Drew still sees it as creative. Nevertheless, from her perspective, if creativity was to secure positive outcomes, it would need a “*specific intended effect*” and to be “*focused in the right way*”. This emphasis on intentionality aligns with Hilary and Kai’s beliefs that creativity should be “*well-planned*” to minimise risks and to ensure that it can add value. This would explain why many participants, such as Sam, thinks that being creative in their practice would be more time-consuming.

Another ML talked about the “*opaqueness*” around what it means to be creative, and how creativity may be misinterpreted as something that it is not: “*lessons that are over-resourced and completely unfocused*”. She also noted the “*stigma*” that is sometimes

associated with creativity in that it could be seen as being unproductive and less academic. Incidentally, the narrative around creativity may not equal learning and that it may be unsuitable for higher levels of study (as highlighted in Sam's profile and Ahmadi's (2019) findings), could be regarded as a sign of such stigma. Regarding creativity being misinterpreted, it is difficult to objectively say if the "*over-resourced*" lessons referred to represent creativity unjustifiably. Afterall, creativity is open to interpretation and what one sees as value may differ to someone else. The experience such lessons offer may be novel and valuable to both the staff and students involved. However, this serves as a good example of Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective in practice, where something may be seen by some as creative but not accepted by others.

Differences in participants' perception appear to be more related to factors specific to individuals and their perspective, rather than their respective stakeholder group. However, SLs tended to have more of a general, whole-school angle when talking about creativity, whereas other participants' responses were more subject-specific. Owing to SLs having whole-school responsibilities, this is not surprising. However, it is worth noting that some teacher/ML participants explicitly said that they were unfamiliar with what other departments did. Nevertheless, the data clearly shows that there is a relatively strong sense of alignment between the participants. Whilst the sample were from a wide range of departments and different leadership levels, the findings may not be representative at the institutional level, and thus, this is acknowledged as a limitation. Nonetheless, the relatively low level of dissonance between the participants is likely to benefit the implementation process of new creative initiatives because of the shared understanding. The overall positive perception is also likely to lead to participants being more motivated to be creative in their practice.

5.3 RQ2: How do contextual factors and leadership actions influence a) key stakeholders' perceptions of creativity, b) their motivation relating to creative intent, and c) their implementation of creativity in practices related to teaching and learning?

This complex question explores how factors and leadership actions influence the three key components in my creativity conceptual framework, considering the various

alignment across the different stakeholders. The factors are categorised into macro (wider context), meso (organisational) and micro (departmental and individual) levels, but it is worth noting that the boundaries between these levels are ambiguous and can overlap. Therefore, the levels are more for structuring my answer than to assert exactly how they should be defined. Moreover, rather than addressing contextual factors and leadership actions separately, leadership actions will be discussed alongside the relevant factors. This integrated approach is by no means implying that leadership actions are a passive force. The reason for framing the answer in this way is because both creativity and leadership are context-specific phenomena and therefore need to be presented accordingly. Nevertheless, in a given context, while still mutually influential, one could be more dominant in shaping the other.

5.3.1 Macro factors

The **exam-focused national curriculum** was identified by many participants across the three stakeholder groups as a significant macro factor. The need to cover a large volume of content prescribed by examboards was seen as a major hindrance to creativity. This was mainly attributed to the time constraints it incurred, negatively affecting both motivation and implementation. In addition to assessment being seen as the least creative aspect of teaching and learning at the school, the general perception was that there was limited scope for creativity when teaching year groups taking high-stakes exams, such as GCSEs. This is a likely reason for the perception highlighted in Sam's profile regarding creativity being less suitable for higher levels of study.

I think a lot of the education system is constrained, especially when you get to exams and the way that the students are assessed these days, it's almost knocked the creativity out of what's expected as an outcome.

(SL)

Based on this SL's narrative, it was not just the prescriptive curriculum and time constraints that restricted creativity. She went on to say, "*how you gain success actually isn't defined by creativity*", suggesting that creativity is not valued by the system. Interestingly, creative teaching was not mentioned by any of the participants as a possible solution to counter this restricting factor. Instead, it was portrayed as something that they would be able to do more of if there was not such a strong focus on exams. For those who do not value creativity intrinsically, this lack of alignment with what is valued by the system is not likely to enhance their perception. If anything, it

could reduce creativity's perceived value and therefore motivation. Moreover, having less time would make implementing creative ideas seem riskier and less likely to receive the needs Perry-Smith and Mannucci (2017) deemed necessary for transforming ideas into innovations, e.g. the time needed for idea elaboration. This would explain why another SL said that creativity is likely to be *“one of the first things that might go if a school is under pressure”*.

Understandably, given the time of my research, another macro factor some participants identified was **COVID-19**. Unlike the first factor, some considered it as both an enabler and a hindrance. Many agreed that the pandemic initially prompted additional creativity being implemented because the unprecedented situation required practitioners to adapt accordingly. The COVID lockdown curriculum was even named by a ML as the most creative thing she had ever seen at the school. However, the perceived positive impact was short-lived. In fact, it quickly became a restricting factor owing to the limitations associated with remote learning. On returning to in-person teaching, participants felt that creativity was able to recover, although for some, still not back to the same level as pre-COVID. Despite the creativity boost being short-lived, there were examples of creativity from that period which turned into fully adopted innovations post-COVID, such as the example detailed in Sam's profile. However, in terms of participants' perception and motivation, COVID did not appear to have had a significant and longer-term impact.

The third macro factor, mentioned by two MLs and two classroom teachers, was **prescriptive and restrictive education policies**. These were spoken about very briefly and appeared to be noticeably less significant than the other factors. All four participants regarded this factor as something negative, capable of restricting creative practices, such as dictating what they *“must teach”*. However, it did not seem to have played much of a role in influencing their perception or motivation.

5.3.2 Meso factors

The school was under considerable pressure due to their imminent inspection by Ofsted. Given the nature of this pressure and the implications on time, it could be a significant creativity-limiting force (Lowe, 2010; Tighe et al. 2003). Despite this, **Ofsted** was not seen as a major factor by all the participants. Where it was acknowledged, the perceived impact varied. Based on the inspection reports, Ofsted did not directly endorse or discourage creativity. Instead, it was as Pat said, up to the school to

“interpret” the inspection framework, and she thought the school actually “[had] *to be creative*” as part of the preparation process. Therefore, rather than limiting creativity, Ofsted was perceived as a motivating factor for implementing additional creativity.

As highlighted in Mel and Pat’s interview profiles, an issue many saw as a barrier for creativity was the emphasis on “consistency”, which stemmed from what Ofsted perceived as “too much variation between subjects in the delivery of their planned curriculum”. However, participants had contrasting perspectives about this emphasis, most notably, whether it negatively impacted creativity. For one SL, *“consistency does kill creativity”*. Another thought that achieving consistency would provide *“more opportunities for creativity in the classroom”* because it would lead to good behaviour, allowing teachers to be more creative. For MLs and classroom teachers, it was mostly viewed negatively. One teacher said that the emphasis limited her time for creative teaching because her department had to focus on *“trying to make sure [students] have got perfect exercise books”*. A ML from a different department thought that creativity was being *“stifled”* due to the need to make explicit link between all learning activities and the specific skills students were expected to gain. For these participants, consistency was perceived as the opposite to creativity because they felt as though they were being restricted, much like Mel describing how she had to teach using prescribed materials.

From SLs’ perspective, the idea of *“everyone’s doing the same thing, on the same lesson, at the same time”* was not the intended message and achieving consistency by making practice more prescribed was a misinterpretation. Elaborating on this, one of the SLs said that it was about students being able to access the same subject content regardless of their group or abilities because they were going to be assessed by examboards using *“the same measuring stick”*. It was very much up to teachers to be creative and adapt. However, for MLs and classroom teachers, it might have been a more complicated issue due to the locus of power and how messages were disseminated.

People are scared to be creative in a climate where you need to have certain tick boxes exercises...I feel like the higher up you get in a school, you can be more creative, whereas lower down in the school, it's seen as in opposition of productivity...A lot of middle leaders may say that they feel like they're losing the autonomy of their own curriculum.

(ML)

This quote highlights how the stakeholder groups might have different perceptions about the degree of agency staff had. In Chapter 4, how consistency was communicated in the subject departmental meeting observed showed how the intended message could be presented differently based on MLs' own priorities and motivation for creativity, i.e. micropolitics, therefore prone to intended or unintended misinterpretation. That said, the lack of desire for creativity in this case might not have been the result of it not being valued, but it could be because of the specific issue being dealt with or the perceived creative capacity within the department. However, effective communication between all leadership levels is clearly important because it can directly affect motivation and implementation.

To many, having a **supportive senior leadership team** (SLT) was an enabling factor. Participants such as Taylor, Kai, Pat and Hilary, believed they were trusted to implement creativity. When speaking about how her department wrote a new scheme of work, Taylor said, "*There was a lot of freedom given to us as a team*". A consistent narrative was that if the aim was to achieve a good outcome for the students, staff would have the autonomy to be creative. Reflecting on the two lessons I observed, both teachers were clearly able to be creative and not follow a prescribed routine. In fact, one of them said during her interview, "*Within my classroom, I have total autonomy*", while the other commented on how she would always be able to implement new ideas without worrying how they might be perceived by SLT:

[Headteacher] *wouldn't question it, he would understand that I am doing something different to get an outcome.*

(Teacher)

According to one of the SLs, this was a conscious approach to be supportive and create "*an environment that is safe for staff to try things*". Corroborating this, another SL stated:

I have absolutely no problem with somebody experimenting and it failing epically, if they're trying to improve, they're trying to do positive things.

(SL)

Meanwhile for Ellis, as well as autonomy, receiving constructive and encouraging feedback from SLT was also important. Based on my observations, the reassurances, praises and thanks that SLs gave during staff briefings was a good indication that such support was available.

Given the significant challenges facing the school at the time of the research, i.e. COVID aftermath, Ofsted and budget constraints, allowing staff freedom to be creative was a leadership action that sheltered them from some of macro and meso factors. This involved SLs setting clear goals, or what one of them referred to as “*very defined criteria for success*”, which became a structure that staff could work within but with a high degree of autonomy. Through the lens of self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 1985), this autonomy would enhance motivation. However, as demonstrated in some of the narratives presented so far, autonomy was not felt by everyone, since there were perception and motivation-related factors at departmental and individual levels which limited creativity. Still, as staff generally felt well-supported by SLT, this would likely lead to a high level of staff morale, something which was apparent during my observations, e.g. Curriculum Group session 2.

Beyond SLT’s support, having an **enabling organisational culture** was also identified as a significant factor that can influence motivation and implementation. Due to SLT’s action that allowed for a high-degree of autonomy, there was a distinctly risk-tolerant culture based on trust from SLT.

There is a culture of you are not gonna be in trouble for trying something...You are very much encouraged to share what’s gone well and share what maybe didn’t go as well.

(ML)

In addition to interview data, SLT’s encouragement for staff trying different approaches was observed in meetings, such as in **Curriculum Group Session 1**. This kind of culture would help staff feel psychologically safe and lead to more creative outcomes and innovations (Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Shalley and Gilson, 2004).

Whilst SLT would have been a key contributor, the shaping of the school’s organisational culture is all-encompassing, influenced by various internal and external factors, as well as stakeholders. Moreover, autonomy is only one of three key components of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000); how culture can encourage creativity would also be affected by staff’s sense of relatedness and competence. In terms of relatedness, this would be supported by a collaborative culture. As noted in the observations, there was a strong sense of staff working as a collective. Some departments also appeared to be highly collaborative, such as Sam’s. Furthermore, weekly department time integrated into the staff’s timetable can be seen as an enabling structure established by SLs. However, responses relating to this aspect

of the school's culture were somewhat mixed. Most participants acknowledged that there were opportunities for collaboration and practice sharing, but some talked about the practice sharing within their department as mostly “*ad-hoc*” and infrequent. A ML spoke about how reciprocal observations were an excellent tool for staff to exchange creative ideas, but she added, “*I don't think we do enough of it*”. One of the reasons for this could be to do with the “*atmosphere*” that Pat thought was missing, as related to how some staff were afraid of being judged, something which was also alluded to by Alex and Ellis.

Some participants described their respective departments as having a more prescriptive approach to teaching and learning, and one ML spoke about what she saw as a creativity limiting structure within her department: a rigid medium-term plan, suggesting that not all staff shared the same positive attitude towards creativity. Nonetheless, among the participants, there was a strong desire to collaborate more frequently to enhance creativity. I see this as an opportunity that SLT can take advantage of because it suggests a high level of motivation.

For creativity to be implemented successfully, so that ideas can turn into innovations, **institutional capacity to be creative** would be a determining factor. There are, however, different dimensions to this. Firstly, staff's capabilities and creativity, as well as aspects of their professionalism (Hoyle, 1975) were regarded as both potentially enabling and hindering. As noted, Sam saw having a “*strong team*” as a significant enabler. Similarly, Hilary emphasised the importance of having expertise within her department, saying “*If you allow people to play to their strengths and their knowledge, you can identify more opportunities for creativity*”. Furthermore, Hilary also mentioned how the lack of awareness of “*ever-changing pedagogical research*” would hinder creativity. Chris shared a similar sentiment, in that some practitioners' professionalism was more restricted because they were unaware of the practice of others. Expanding on this, she said:

My experiences of the highest performing teachers, the highest performing departments never fall into that trap, and they're constantly refining and evolving and asking questions of themselves and of each other to constantly sort of challenge that mindset.

If staff had the capabilities to be creative, it is likely that they would have a secure sense of competence, which alongside autonomy and relatedness, would help them achieve self-determination.

Relating to institutional capacity and leadership actions, the weekly department time put in place for staff to collaborate would help extend their professionalism and also increase capacity for creativity. Moreover, most participants thought there was a good provision of CPD which met their professional needs. Many said that the CPD available, such as TEEP and some of the working parties, helped them to be creative in their practice. However, just like reciprocal observations for practice sharing and modelling, there was a strong desire for more. Taylor even suggested that practice sharing with other schools would be beneficial. According to the Ofsted monitoring report, this already happened as part of the school's engagement with external support. However, this could potentially be extended as a way to further enhance staff's capacity.

Another enabling feature relevant to institutional capacity highlighted by the headteacher as well as participants from all three stakeholder groups was the school's **use of technology**. Being a technologically proficient school enabled staff to respond to the challenges arising from the COVID pandemic creatively. The focus on innovation and technology is evident in the school's mission statement, and the extensive use of technology afforded leaders the capacity to introduce new apps such as Edukit more easily. Having Chromebooks and a dedicated virtual learning space also offered teachers more possibilities in their teaching and learning practices. Overall, this substantially enhanced perception and implementation.

A further meso factor which was only mentioned by two participants was **parents' perception of creativity**. Both participants saw this as a hindering factor, implying that they believed creativity in teaching and learning was viewed negatively by parents. This could be related to the stigma discussed in 5.2.3. However, despite this factor being found to be influential in certain educational settings (Haisraeli and Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2023), it was not raised as a key factor or mentioned by other participants. Therefore, it is unlikely to have significantly influenced the stakeholder groups' perception, motivation or implementation at the time of the research.

5.3.3 Micro factors

As indicated, **time** played a critical role in shaping participants' attitude and actions related to creativity. It was a commonality between the two major factors of exam-focused curriculum and Ofsted-related pressure. This finding of time being a major factor is consistent with insights from the literature (Lowe, 2010; Stoll and Temperley, 2009a; Tighe et al., 2003) and thus unsurprising, especially considering the challenging

circumstances the school was facing. At departmental and individual levels, the significance of time appeared even more emphasised, and is determined by participants' perceived time capacity to generate and develop ideas, against the workload pressure they were under.

If we had time to do it, then absolutely I would...with current workload and current pressures, I don't think I'd be able to do my best job on it because I just simply don't have the time.

(ML)

Because of this pressure, some said they would consciously choose to repeat what they had done previously:

It's easier to carry on teaching the way you taught the topic last year because the resources are already there and so workload is a barrier. Time is a barrier.

(ML)

This again highlights participants' perception of creativity needing more time, with one of the above MLs saying, "*it takes a lot of effort and time to come up with something that's creative*". Recognising this, SL Chris said, "*Time is a key factor; time is the key resource. If you have flexibility with your time, it facilitates [creativity]*".

Notwithstanding the challenging circumstances, every department had weekly department time allocated in their timetable to work collaboratively. Not only would this time be helpful for staff to work together to ease the workload pressure, but it would also allow them time to collaborate and generate creative ideas.

Yesterday we were given a few hours in the afternoon off timetable to actually sit and think about the curriculum, so that was great!

(ML)

This is another example where leadership action was used to establish an enabling structure for creativity and was acknowledged as such by some of the participants. However, since time was such a significant factor, some thought that creativity in teaching and learning needed to be purposeful, so that it could lead to an enhanced outcome.

If it isn't going to lead to something, as a teacher on such limited time, or a leader on such limited time, then that's not the best use of my time.

(SL)

Student behaviour was regarded as a major potential barrier for many, but an enabler for two participants, one of these being Pat. Those who saw it as a barrier described

behaviour similar to what Herzberg (1968) refers to as a hygiene factor (see Herzberg's two-factor theory). In other words, if behaviour was anticipated or perceived to be poor in a particular lesson, the motivation for being creative would decrease. In practice, this could mean either taking a less creative, i.e. less risky, approach with a particular class as the norm, or poor behaviour in one lesson would result in the next lesson being less creative. Describing the latter scenario, a ML said:

I then made sure that my next lesson was a contrast...I wanted them to realise that if we want to have fun, enjoyable lessons, they are gonna have to behave and act in the right manner.

Therefore, behaviour can determine if and when creativity would be implemented in lessons. With this being more relevant to the classroom teaching, it was more of a consideration for teachers and MLs. For senior staff who had less teaching or staff who were very confident in their behaviour management, this factor was not highlighted as being important.

Similar to student behaviour, some participants would choose not to be creative with certain **groups based on their abilities**. Most of these participants were less likely to be creative in classes where students had more learning needs and with lower academic abilities. For example, a ML said she would take more risks with students with less specific learning needs due to their adaptability. Another ML also pointed out that it might be more challenging to be creative when teaching students with physical disabilities. This thought had very much to do with how creativity was perceived, i.e. creativity being the use of certain types of resources or learning activities that involved physical movements. Conversely, as noted in her profile, Mel thought creativity would be particularly suitable for students with more learning needs, suggesting that this factor is influenced by teachers' perception of creativity, which then determines their motivation and implementation.

Personal motivation is another major factor. As shown in my creativity conceptual framework, motivation is one of the three mutually influential components concerning the leadership of creativity. In this setting, it was identified as an enabler by some, and a hindrance by others. Reflecting on how it might be affected, participants referred to many variables, such as their identity, their mood, confidence for taking risks, and so on. As demonstrated in the interview profiles, participants' perception of creativity was found to have been shaped by a variety of factors or experiences that were unique to them. Whilst own education experience did have a notable influence on individuals'

perception of creativity, there did not appear to be a correlation between positive experience with creativity as a student and the motivation to be creative in practice. In other words, both the lack of, and the abundance of creativity in an individual's education could lead to positive motivation. Meanwhile, training and professional development, such as TEEP or doing a master's degree, seemed to have played a key part in positively influencing all three components in my framework.

For this research, an important consideration is motivation orientation. If a participant was intrinsically motivated to be creative, they would naturally have a positive perception of creativity, whereas if they were extrinsically motivated, their perception could be situational and more likely to be affected by outcomes. From my interview data, different motivation orientations were clearly at play. On one end of Ryan and Deci's (2000) motivation continuum, a small minority of participants alongside Jazz appeared to be intrinsically motivated. For a fellow ML, apart from acknowledging creativity as being effective for engaging students, she also said that it brought her "*personal enjoyment*", a clear sign of intrinsic motivation. Another ML stressed that creativity did not need to have an outcome: "*I can be creative for no reason, it's an outlet, isn't it?*". Moreover, she went on to say, "*I enjoy it, it fulfils me. It's who I am, I am a creative person...It's not something that I think about, it's just something I do and feel*". Therefore, being creative was part of her identity. However, the majority of participants were driven by extrinsic motivation because they were motivated by outcomes such as how it would help them problem-solve, not feel stagnant, have less behaviour issues in the classroom, and the prospect of contributing to students' holistic development. Although they were not intrinsically motivated, they still had a very positive perception of creativity, with many saying that they would always try to be creative in their practice.

When it came to creative intent and implementation, none of the participants were amotivated at the time of the research, but the level of motivation and what Ryan and Deci (2000) refer to as regulatory style, varied. This is mainly due to many espousing their source of motivation, or in Ryan and Deci's (2000) terms, perceived locus of causality, as either *somewhat internal* or *internal*, making their regulatory style within the extrinsic motivation spectrum as either identification or integration. This means, they have either identified with the importance of creativity in their practice or have assimilated creativity into their practice, albeit still driven by a "presumed instrumental value with respect to some outcome that is separate from the behavior" (Ryan and Deci,

2000, p.62). This can be illustrated by the SL who saw creativity as “*always positive*” saying “*ultimately, it’s a means to an end*”. Moving towards the external spectrum of extrinsic motivation, as depicted in her profile, Mel appeared less interested in creativity than the others due to various reasons. However, she said if she was “*asked to*”, she would still be willing to try to implement creativity. With this focus on gaining approval from others, her motivation at the time of the research would be best described as introjected regulation.

Motivation is not static though. Some participants talked about their motivation fluctuating due to personal moods. For example, Ellis said she would not be motivated to be creative if she was “*not having a great day*”. Taylor shared a similar point: “*If I’m not necessarily feeling it, or if I’m not in the zone, then that can affect the way that my lesson is presented*”. Furthermore, confidence was also said to play a part for some:

Maybe somebody is going to come in...It hasn't worked this lesson. People are gonna have a negative perception...about you and your lessons...I think that definitely could put you off trying something different.

(ML)

Together with Mel’s narrative, this shows unsuccessful implementation can lead to reduced motivation. However, most participants said this would not put them off completely. In fact, for a ML who was intrinsically motivated, it would not have a negative impact:

Nothing really discourages me from being creative, because I don’t know how not to be creative.

In light of this, it is important for leadership actions to take into account individuals’ motivation, so that creativity can be encouraged among staff with different motivation orientations. For those who are on the external side of the motivation continuum, demonstrating the value creativity can bring would be beneficial.

Finally, **length of service** was identified explicitly as a factor only by a small group of participants, but by their own admission, being experienced had made them less motivated to be creative. To clarify, it was not that these experienced teachers were unmotivated to be creative, but the level of their motivation was said to have declined overtime because they had become somewhat set in their ways. Like Alex said, once she found something that worked, it was hard to motivate herself to try something different. As experienced teachers are likely to have established more routines, it is logical that many would feel less inclined to take unnecessary risks and thus become

less creative than they once were. Not only did experienced participants say that their established routines had a negative effect on their motivation, but Ellis also said that new teachers were more likely to have creative ideas:

If you have a new member of staff, fresh out of PGCE, they have got so many more ideas!

With teaching training being cited by some as what shaped their perception of creativity, e.g. Ellis and Mel, it would explain why someone new to the profession might be more motivated to be creative. Less experienced teachers are also less likely to be put off by the associated risks compared with their more experienced colleagues because of what is at stake, such as having an established reputation or a more senior position. That being said, motivation orientation and self-perceived identity relating to creative practices can be an overriding factor that determines motivation. The ML who said “*I don’t know how not to be creative*” is a very experienced teacher, showing for some, experience and motivation are not necessarily correlated. Nonetheless, for those affected, this presents an opportunity for leadership to take a targeted approach when it comes to promoting creativity in teaching and learning.

Regarding the different stakeholder groups, whilst many of the factors were specific to individuals, SLs were generally more aware of the macro factors at play. The perceived capacity to be creative also varied between SLs and the rest of the participants. Possible explanations include SLs having a higher level of autonomy, differing leadership approaches at other levels, and micropolitics within departments. Moreover, teachers and MLs’ perception, motivation implementation were also prone to more barriers, such as behavioural issues, colleagues’ negative attitude towards creativity, and other department-specific restrictions.

5.4 RQ3: How, and to what extent is creativity led and implemented in teaching and learning at whole-school, departmental and classroom levels?

My data shows that creativity in teaching and learning is implemented at all three levels. Examples include the Life Curriculum Walk initiative, PbD and Edukit at whole-school level; Life Curriculum Days, extra-curricular activities and trips at departmental level; and various lesson activities at classroom level. The types of creativity observed range from what Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) would describe as Little C, such as the

snowball review observed in **subject lesson 1**, to Pro-C initiatives like **Life Curriculum Days** which involved multiple teams collaborating. Whilst there were examples from each level, the prevalence of creativity implemented was difficult to quantify, especially at classroom level. This is mainly due to my data collection being restricted to 10 non-consecutive days and my observation sample being limited by the school's schedule at the time. Given the scope of the research, I only observed two subject lessons and was therefore unable to thoroughly triangulate all the interview data relating to participants' creativity by way of observation. Nevertheless, many participants offered examples of themselves or colleagues being creative in their classroom practice, showing that creativity was relatively common.

As highlighted, there were multiple examples of creative initiatives being implemented simultaneously at the time of the research at whole-school and department levels. Despite this, the significant pressure the school was under did appear to limit creativity somewhat. Just with the impact of COVID, multiple participants said the level of creativity had not yet fully recovered. Reflecting on an earlier quote by a SL about creativity being one of the first things to go if the school was under pressure, it is highly likely that creativity was not implemented as extensively as it would have done under normal circumstances. Nonetheless, to illustrate how creativity is led and implemented, the *leadership* conceptual framework established in Section 2.5 is utilised, focusing on leadership as: *influences*; *configurations*; and an *implementation agent of actions*. Since these three frames draw from the same data sets, there will inevitably be overlaps. However, each will explore the leadership and implementation of creativity from a distinct angle.

5.4.1 Leadership as influences

This aspect of leading creativity examines how leadership is used to motivate staff towards implementation. As demonstrated, most participants are highly motivated and on the autonomous side of Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT continuum. To illustrate the different influences involved, three themes have been identified. Due to transformational leadership's association with motivation (Avolio and Bass, 2001), explicit links will be made to the four Is to show how creativity is led.

5.4.1.1 Inspire by creating and communicating a shared vision

At whole-school level, influence is exerted by SLs setting a clear vision and key goals that enable creativity, e.g. the “very defined criteria for success” mentioned earlier. The reiteration of these has been seen in staff meetings frequently, including when introducing new initiatives. Whilst the vision and key goals themselves are not about teachers’ creativity, many see them as being compatible or synonymous with creativity. For instance, when reflecting on her perception of creativity and how it aligns with the school’s vision, Ellis said:

[Headteacher] *wants to develop the pupil as a whole...and I feel like that's what we do with the creativity and the lessons.*

When communicating the vision or key goals during the meetings observed, these were consistently and explicitly accompanied by a rationale, supporting data and the focus on enhancing student outcomes. This is consistent with what senior and MLs said when asked how they would try to implement a creative idea.

If I'm rolling something out or trying something new, my go to sort of thing is...to say this is what we're doing. This is why it's happening...I've seen the positives from it, you know the students engage really well in it. It's a different way of presenting the same information. It's helpful to us. It's helpful to the students.

(ML)

From this, it is clear that leaders use logical (logos) and ethical (ethos) appeals to secure buy-in from staff. This communication of the vision and goals, together with the collaborative approach that leaders foster, does not only enable distributed leadership (Harris, 2008), but is also an example of *inspirational motivation*, one of the four Is in transformational leadership (Avolio and Bass, 2001). Incidentally, the use of ethical appeals reinforces Cropley’s (2001) idea that ethicality is an essential feature of creativity.

5.4.1.2 Lead by example, build trust and empower through enabling structure

Another finding which can be linked to transformational leadership is the presence of *idealised influence* (Avolio and Bass, 2001). My data shows that some members of SLT are highly respected. They were responsible for generating and developing creative ideas such as the **Life Curriculum Walk** and PbD. An assistant headteacher (AH) in particular, is described by many participants as a key person of influence in teaching and learning. Speaking about how the school views creative practices, a ML said,

I would definitely say that...as a school, especially with [AH] leading the training, that is definitely her approach. Like some of the TEEP stuff we've done, I've used quite a few of those ideas into my lessons...I would definitely say that it is the sort of route that she wanted to go down, and most people would go down.

As observed in the **new staff induction** TEEP training, the same AH modelled teaching practices which were considered creative by the attendees. Since all new staff receive the training, the influence of AH and the TEEP model have significant reach, both in terms of normalising creativity in practices and demonstrating how it should be implemented. The perceived value of this has prompted Pat to say that she would like more similar opportunities because she got “lots of fresh ideas” from it. Beyond the TEEP training, modelling creativity by way of sharing practice is something that should happen more frequently according to participants. The importance of this is captured by Stoll and Temperley’s (2009b) nine conditions for promoting creativity. Having such experiences would not only *model creativity*, but it would also *expose staff to new thinking*. Meanwhile, with the variations noted at departmental level, MLs clearly have a significant influence too, but not always in a positive way.

In both transformational and distributed leadership, mutual trust is a key emphasis (Avolio and Bass, 2001; Harris, 2012). As reported in my answer to RQ2, many participants see it as a key enabler. The trust that participants feel they have from leaders is evident in the significant autonomy they are granted and thus serves as a source of influence towards implementation. Commenting on how trust from both the headteacher and her head of department has been enabling, a teacher said,

I know there are schools where you're observed like once a week and I'm like if that was here, you wouldn't be creative...I think that freedom, that trust from above that we're doing the right thing.

Therefore, together with the risk-tolerant culture mentioned previously, it can be argued that SLs have created a safe and enabling environment for creativity, which in turn can motivate staff to be creative. However, it is worth returning to a quote from the **Life Curriculum Day** in which a D&T teacher said, “having too much freedom won't work” and that there needs to be some pre-selected materials to work with. Although the teacher was talking about students, the principle is arguably the same. Just as SL Vic said, “Just be creative, but within a framework...within a structure”. Teachers need some facilitating structures to work with and as a source of influence, similar to the “starting point” teaching resources that Pat spoke about or how the TEEP model was

said to aid practice but without being restrictive according to the **new staff induction** attendees. Overall, the environment appears to be one which SLs are open to creative ideas.

If I went to [SLs] and said I have an idea that I think will be really useful whole school and I would like to talk to the combined staff about it, I can't imagine there would be a situation in which they said, "no, you can't". It will be "Okay, when could you do it?"

(ML, Drew)

There are also examples of heads of department being a positive influence. When speaking about factors that could hinder creativity, a teacher said,

I'm trying to think in terms of what else would limit me, so we've got the time of year, the students...um...staff pressures, which I don't really feel because [head of department] is brilliant.

Once again, this is an example of leaders being able to shelter staff from hindering factors. Therefore, both quotes can be considered examples of staff feeling empowered to be creative, thus providing the condition needed for what Strobel et al. (2025) see as facilitative creative leadership.

5.4.1.3 Motivate through encouragement, collaboration and stimulation

There is strong evidence that creativity is valued and enabled within the setting. For instance, ML Taylor spoke about how SLT has increased her motivation to be creative:

It's always nice obviously when say people like [SL] are coming around and doing their learning walks...the little comment saying like that was really good...I really enjoyed the way she went about doing that kind of thing...if you get that good positive feedback...it's more of a "well, I'm gonna try stuff like that again".

However, evidence showing creativity being *actively* and *explicitly* promoted was less forthcoming. Whilst leaders recognising achievements and celebrating successes publicly have been noted in Chapter 4, these were not specifically about creativity. This is something which has been acknowledged by multiple participants, including middle and SLs, with one ML saying, "I don't think creativity has been a focus". Concurring with this, a SL said,

I don't think we ever go out there and say we want you to be creative...we haven't explicitly said that to them...but I think they get rewarded if they do.

By reward, the leader meant “recognition through praise” and to be given roles with more responsibilities. Meanwhile, another SL suggested that it would be a good idea to create opportunities in which creativity can be actively encouraged:

I think as a school, do we need to be better at seeing where these opportunities are for being creative...? We tend to kind of wait for somebody to sort of say... “This is a good idea, can I do that?”. We don't kind of perhaps highlight our own areas of where we need to be more creative and offer that out.

Therefore, this is a clear acknowledgement that creativity can be further promoted to actively increase motivation. Despite these remarks, there are examples of *intellectual stimulation* (Avolio and Bass, 2001), which can serve as a positive influence. First, given the school’s collaborative culture and the active use of championing when implementing initiatives, the working parties that allow staff to innovate and solve problems with others can be a way to encourage, promote and stimulate creativity more widely. Second, the culture that has enabled open dialogues, like those observed in the **pastoral meeting** and **Curriculum Group session 1** can stimulate staff’s critical thinking, reflection and reciprocal exchanges. Third, constructive feedback for creativity can make a difference. Reflecting on how she became engaged in creative teaching, a ML said:

I trained in this school and had a great mentor. She's head of department now...I was teaching [a Year 9 group], she said the way that you're presenting it, it's too the same [sic] every time. You need to think of new ways of developing it. So, it wasn't really probably until I started here that I thought, “Okay, there are different ways of doing things”.

In addition to being intellectually stimulating, feedback like this can also be considered an example of *individualised consideration* – the last of transformational leadership’s four Is (Avolio and Bass, 2001). This is because the mentor constructively identified an area for development and encouraged the mentee to adopt a more creative approach. The same genuine concern for staff’s individual needs associated with individualised consideration was also evident through the use of well-being CPD and staff morale surveys. This alongside how staff are able to choose CPD based on their interest has created a supportive environment where many staff feel motivated and understood.

I would like to consider [a specific CPD programme] in the future, not right now because my life is very hectic, but as it calms down and [SL] will understand because she's got a young child like me as well. But like as they get older, it's

definitely something that I want to pursue to go further like towards SLT, because I do have a real keen interest in like teaching and learning.

(ML)

5.4.2 Leadership as configurations

Leaders have the power to deploy and organise human resources for leadership purposes. In other words, they have the ability to decide when to include others, who to include, as well as what and how leadership activities should be distributed. In practice, this could mean leadership activities are highly centralised and top down, or they could be participatory. Regarding the leadership of creativity from the teacher's perspective, this leadership analytical frame is mainly for analysing how creativity is led at whole-school and departmental levels. Configurations are generally less relevant to teachers' creativity at classroom level because teachers typically teach on their own. Whilst this frame could be made more relevant to classroom teaching if students' creativity is taken into account, as stated previously, it is beyond the scope of this research. Upon analysing the data to examine how leadership is configured to inspire, encourage and facilitate creativity, three key themes relating to configurations emerged, which were: collective and distributed approach to leadership, hybrid leadership styles and configurations, and creative leadership manifestations.

5.4.2.1 *Collective and distributed approach to leadership*

The school has a collective approach to leadership. This is evident when examining different sets of data, including the **Ofsted reports**, the interview data – e.g. **Sam's profile**, the observed **Curriculum Group session 2**, and the **whole staff briefings**. An example of this participatory approach was also seen during the rollout of Edukit (**pastoral meeting**). This is important for the leadership of creativity from Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective in that having a collective shared vision within the setting could make it easier to align creativity-related perceptions, thereby reducing ambiguity. Leading with a collective configuration is also said to reduce potential risks, thus allowing staff to be more confident in trying new creative ideas. ML Hilary talked about how her department would usually work together to generate and implement creative ideas, so that the accountability can be shared.

I think it's that kind of shared ownership of it as well...they know if we try this activity and it goes wrong. I am not gonna be blaming them.

Meanwhile, I was first told about the school's distributed approach to leadership when I joined the **Life Curriculum Walk**, with the extended leadership structure and working parties named as examples. This interpretation was corroborated by SL Vic's interview when she talked about how CPD at the school can be utilised to enhance creativity:

Instead of relying on a handful of senior leaders...use the experts.

This shows that the adoption of distributed leadership is conscious and intentional, representative of Harris' normative perspective (2008). Distributed configurations can be seen across various aspects at the school, including how staff are given the power to shape their own professional development, as well as working parties where staff with no formal leadership responsibilities can lead according to their expertise. Apart from being distributed at whole school level, there is also evidence of distributed leadership in some departments. For example, a head of department spoke about how two members of her team took the lead to make a topic more creative:

I planned [the topic] when we were in lockdown...I'm not happy with how it's delivered...It's definitely not very creative. It's very sort of teacher-led and it could be much more interesting. So, [Teacher A] and [Teacher B] have both agreed together – right, we'll work on this together and come up with some new ideas...And then they'll work together on developing those resources, and then they'll feedback to me...For various reasons, they they've taken a lead on that particular topic and they'll work together on it to sort of go – right, how can we teach this in a more engaging, interesting way.

Once again, there is a clear emphasis on collaboration. However, except for various working parties and initiatives like the **Life Curriculum Day** observed, it appeared that collaboration relating to teaching and learning predominantly occurs within individual departments. When asked about practice sharing at the school, a ML said:

I don't think I can necessarily comment for teachers outside of the department if I'm being honest because I don't integrate or I don't necessarily see them in that scenario as often.

Although there is more collaboration within each department, especially as encouraged by their weekly department time, collaborating to *generate* and *share* creative ideas between staff remained infrequent and "ad-hoc" according to a few of the participants. One reason is that some departments are made up of experienced staff who have their own established routines, further supporting the idea of being more experienced can be a barrier for creativity.

At this point, the rest of the department are very experienced teachers, so they've all got maybe like their own particular way of delivering a certain kind of topic or strand from the scheme of work.

(Taylor, ML)

That said, when a good idea was shown to be impactful, it would be shared with the rest of the department. At classroom level, the leadership of creativity is also distributed because of the substantial autonomy most participants enjoy. In departments where there are limiting structures, teachers still generally have sufficient agency to act creatively.

5.4.2.2 Hybrid leadership styles and configurations

Different leadership styles are exercised at the school simultaneously, both in general and regarding the leadership of creativity. Section 5.4.1 illustrated this hybridity by showing the presence of transformational and distributed leadership. More specifically, the former describes some of the individual leaders and their approach, the latter represents more disperse and emergent configurations commonly found in the leadership of various aspects or initiatives, such as the working parties. Moreover, based on Stoll and Temperley's (2009b, p.66) definition, there is evidence of creative leadership, which saw leaders themselves being creative when problem solving, while creating the right conditions for others to do the same. It is not my claim that these were the only styles and configurations present, but the key point here is to highlight the existence of a hybrid set up.

There are however, two notable layers of nuances: first, each department has its own distinct leadership style and configuration(s) due to the unique sources of influence, interactions and power dynamics. For example, the leadership style observed in the **subject departmental meeting** was very different to the style witnessed in the **pastoral meeting**. Similarly, how Mel described the leadership of creativity at departmental level contrasted with Pat's narrative. Second, the whole school approach to leading teaching and learning is not one size fits all. Instead, it is contingent on the individual departments and staff. Speaking about how teaching and learning is managed, a SL noted:

We always do everything based on where a department is at. So for example...one of our strongest performing departments. We did their department review. There was almost no 'you have to dos' in like the kind of

outcomes of that. It was largely just you're doing this really well, maybe consider doing this because it might give you a marginal gain.

Conversely, some other departments were said to get a much stronger direction because of their differing needs by way of “department-specific targets” that “they have to then act on”. This resembles Hersey and Blanchard’s (1977) situational leadership, in that the stronger department fits well in the *delegating* quadrant, while departments which get a much stronger direction could be seen as being in the *coaching* quadrant. The use of higher stakes outcome-based targets is also a sign of transactional leadership (Avolio and Bass, 2001).

The hybridity that Gronn (2016) refers to, in this case is not limited to there being multiple leadership styles and configurations simultaneously, but individual leaders and teams also have been found to configure themselves differently according to the situation and people they interact with. For some departments, like Sam and Hilary’s, working collaborative is a priority; for others, it would depend on the scenario. Therefore, the set of hybrid configurations at any given time is changeable – hence the overall complexity. This approach of having multiple contrasting leadership styles simultaneously would inevitably have implications for creativity because the departments and staff who have more autonomy would have more scope to be creative, whereas those which are supervised more closely could potentially have their creativity restricted (Lowe, 2010).

5.4.2.3 Creative leadership manifestations

The hybrid configurations described above is indicative of Strobel et al.’s (2025) three creative leadership manifestations. Across the different scenarios discussed, senior and MLs, as well as classroom teachers have acted to lead and support creativity in teaching and learning. This is achieved by staff informally adopting different roles, like those specified by Belbin (2010). For instance, there is evidence of SLs contributing creativity directly as *plants*, e.g. Life Curriculum Walk and the accelerated curriculum. There are also examples of non-leaders contributing creativity with a leader being a *monitor evaluator*, like the topic improvement initiative led by two teachers mentioned in Section 5.4.2.1. Furthermore, the rollout of Edukit saw leaders and others collaboratively contributing ideas and supporting the implementation, before the leader then synthesised the insights. Therefore, the various configurations have enabled all three manifestation types (*directive*, *facilitating* and *integrative* respectively), which

according to Strobel et al. (2025) is most effective for creative leadership – with the caveat that the specific type of context featured in their research is not entirely representative of the case study school.

Life Curriculum Days, regarded as the most creative teaching and learning initiative at the school, are good examples of collaborative projects that fit the integrative manifestation profile. As such, participatory configurations which are interdepartmental, perhaps similar to what Jazz suggested in her profile would be a good way to stimulate creativity. However, what Belbin's (2010) team roles highlight is that staff need to have the capabilities and confidence required to contribute meaningfully via those specific roles. This therefore reiterates the importance of relevant and high-quality professional development opportunities that can help them develop those skills as well as to inspire their creativity.

5.4.3 Leadership as an implementation agent of actions

For creative initiatives to add substantial value to teaching and learning, they need to be put into practice (Watts et al., 2019). It is only through implementation that creative ideas can become innovations (Perry-Smith and Mannucci, 2017). Robinson's (2011) emphasis on leadership being actions is particularly pertinent to this part of the idea journey because implementing an idea requires specific actions to actualise the plan and to embed the idea into day-to-day practice. Many participants were able to name specific examples of unsuccessful creative initiatives from the past that got abandoned or lost momentum during implementation. In many cases, this was attributed to ineffective actions or the lack of actions. While citing an example implemented at whole school level, a ML recalled:

A few years ago...there was a whole sort of literacy push and there was some training on SPAG [spelling, punctuation and grammar]. It was something that we were meant to do in all of our lessons, so we had this whole training on it. But then you hear nothing else about it at all. So I know as a teacher I stopped using it...it was really, really, brilliant idea, very creative in its approach.

(ML)

"No follow up", "no accountability" and "no one ever checked" were given as he reasons for why the initiative did not work out. Meanwhile, the importance of effective actions was also highlighted when another ML discussed an example implemented at classroom level.

I have tried to implement...a recall strategy to really improve the fundamentals that these students know... This is not something that I made. It was something that I've been shown from a previous school and brought with me... But unfortunately it didn't really have a positive impact.

(ML)

On reflection, the ML said “*the way it was presented*” did not make clear to the students why they were being asked to partake in the activity. Also, there were unexpected issues such as student attendance which were not anticipated during the planning stage. Assuming these ideas could have been implemented successfully, the leadership actions which would have led to success are the focus of this analytical frame.

Drawing from my interview and observation data, creative initiatives, as well as change in general at the case study school are typically implemented using a systematic yet flexible approach, consisting of a range of leadership actions that were commonly cited by the participants. Given SLs’ positional authority, my data confirms that they have considerable power to enforce and support implementation through their actions. Again, the idea that SLs have greater agency to act aligns with Strobel et al.’s (2025) research that the *directive* and *integrative* types of creative leadership are better for securing innovative outcomes than the *facilitating* type. That being said, many of the leadership actions specified are not exclusive to SLs. Rather, participants from across all three stakeholder groups generally appear to be familiar with the use of these actions when implementing creative ideas. This familiarity could be due to the school’s collective and distributed approach to leadership highlighted in Chapter 4. Due to this, MLs and their individual actions also play a key role in determining if creativity is implemented, resulting in the variation between departments explored in Chapter 4. The impact MLs’ actions have on perceptions can be seen in the two contrasting quotes below.

Middle leaders, I would say 100% encourage it because it can impact their department directly.

(Teacher, Department A)

If I found some fantastic new creative way of teaching [a subject-specific topic], I wouldn't be allowed to run with that because I have to follow what the department has decided they want to do.

(Teacher, Department B)

Notably, some of the leadership actions to be discussed are technically not part of the implementation itself, but those that would be carried out during Perry-Smith and

Mannucci's (2017) idea elaboration and idea championing phases. Nonetheless, the participants regarded these actions as important for implementation. Therefore, actions from the various phases can be categorised as either part of:

1. planning and preparing for implementation, or
2. management of implementation.

5.4.3.1 Planning and preparing for implementation

The leadership actions featured in this stage are mainly for maximising success through idea development and refinement, creating the right environment, removing barriers, and securing buy-in. Collaboration, an enabler for creativity (Harris, 2009), is a common thread here. All but one participant spoke about the need to collaborate with others in some way, whether it is to discuss ideas with colleagues or to get feedback from them. The participant who did not explicitly mention this was in fact the ML leading the **pastoral meeting** observed where collaboration was highly emphasised throughout. Not only does this show participants value feedback from their colleagues, but it is also evident that there is a strong collaborative culture at the school, further supporting the idea of a collective approach to leadership in teaching and learning. Having examined the responses, what Ellis said about a creative idea that she had implemented serves as a good way to summarise the typical approach.

So it's like kind of gone to consultation...I shared my idea...got some viewpoints back, tweaked it slightly on what they thought as well and then kind of like run with it really...most of the time it's a department decision and that's what's going to happen.

As captured in Alex, Pat and Jazz's profiles, conducting a pilot is seen as an important step as well because the effectiveness of an idea can be assessed before wider rollout. Positive results from this could then be used to secure buy-in at a later stage.

From a strategic standpoint, leaders should act to create the right environment and actively remove barriers (Kotter, 2012). One SL gave an example of how the leadership team creates a suitable environment for the implementation of creativity by ensuring good student behaviour – a key factor affecting staff motivation.

We create the environments there for the taking at this school, I think because the behaviour is relatively good from the students...we created an environment that's safe for staff to try things.

Another action thought to be crucial is planning. For some, this could be done in a collaborative way to boost creativity and counter limiting factors such as restricted time.

We do lots of shared and collaborative planning as well, which I think really helps to facilitate more creativity. Because if say, you're focused on planning five lessons, rather than 20, you actually have time to incorporate more creativity into the lessons.

(ML)

As noted in Chris' profile, a clear vision can be formulated through planning, while key milestones, or "quick wins" can be identified and later used as a tangible way for monitoring progress. What she called a "pre-mortem" can also be performed to anticipate possible issues, allowing mechanisms to be put in place to minimise the impact. With planning, one would be able to consciously align the desired outcome with what Chris referred to as the "broader system" as well, so that the "implementation is more effective".

As part of Perry-Smith and Mannucci's (2017) idea championing phase, getting buy-in is an action routinely taken at the school and was observed in several meetings. Once a creative initiative is ready to be implemented, the process would usually begin with its introduction to relevant staff through a staff meeting. Whoever is responsible for implementing the initiative would explain to the staff explicitly why it is being implemented and how it would benefit the overarching objective that the school is trying to achieve, e.g. tackle a particular problem. Relevant statistics and evidence would often be included as part of the justification. This action resembles what Kotter (2012) and Stoll and Temperley (2009b) describe as establishing a sense of urgency. Whilst initiatives were not always presented as an urgent matter, they were portrayed as something important or capable of addressing a significant problem.

Within this first stage, the actions described execute or prepare for six of Kotter's (2012) eight steps: *establish a sense of urgency, develop a vision and strategy, communicate the vision, empower staff to act on vision and remove obstacles, generate short-term wins, and anchor new approaches in new culture*, thus showing the systematic nature of the typical approach.

5.4.3.2 Management of implementation

Having clear management processes in place was considered an important aspect of the implementation phase. For example, Sam – a SL, sees "setting deadlines" as a way

to keep the implementation on track and in turn “eliminates or reduces some of the risks”. In addition, she thinks “continuous review” allows her and colleagues to identify what has worked and what has not, therefore helps inform the ongoing implementation and refinement. An initiative that has been successfully implemented which multiple participants regard as an innovation is PbD. For one of the classroom teachers, certain leadership actions during the implementation phase were said to have made a difference.

It's pushed so much...It's mentioned quite a lot in briefing. It's mentioned in e-mail, so it's that constant reminder that this is really important. We can see the data shows that it's important...you see [student] grade has improved or their engagement has improved...I think that's important in terms of making sure something is successful and it's followed up.

(Teacher)

This example highlights two important actions: 1) constant reinforcement via different means, and 2) having a monitoring system to show progress. The significance of these actions was acknowledged by a SL during her interview:

I really feel like showing people data in a cold sense is important...You're constantly reminding people about the importance of that thing you are trying to implement...I'm not deluded enough to think that I'll say something and people will do it because it's a great idea. They have to form habitual changes.

(SL)

Showing data can make an initiative's value and success visible and would help enhance teachers' motivation towards the change (Guskey, 2002). Importantly, as highlighted in Chapter 2, reinforcement and acknowledgement are what is needed to signal what is accepted and valued based on Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective. Thus, these actions are capable of shaping perceptions relating to creativity within the setting. According to Chris, SLs would utilise existing structures and processes in the event of resistance, such as “department reviews”, to support and reinforce the implementation. In some cases, “one on one” support and follow-ups would be put in place to assist, in line with the “very personal” approach that Alex spoke about in her profile. These actions once again can be made relevant to Kotter's (2012) model in that they are crucial to the steps *communicate the vision*, *generate short-term wins*, *consolidate gains and build on implementation*, and *anchor new approaches in new culture*.

Regarding actions to do with resourcing, some participants like Vic said it is important to put in place training or CPD if there are things that “staff need to know or be able to

do". Some participants also highlighted the need for staff to share good practice. Not only would this model how an idea should be implemented, like in the **new staff induction** event, but it would also help consolidate what is seen as creative within the school. Moreover, all three classroom teacher participants emphasised the allocation of time and resources by leaders as an important action. This suggests that classroom teachers have less agency to secure the time and resources they need and rely on leaders' supportive actions, such as timetabling the weekly department time mentioned previously. Between providing training, sharing of good practice, and the allocation of time and resources, it is clear that leaders are responsible for ensuring staff capacity for implementation through their facilitating actions.

5.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter addresses my three RQs by drawing from insights gathered from all four data collection stages as well as my literature review.

Regarding RQ1, participants broadly agreed that creativity in teaching and learning centres on novelty, whether through generation, application or adaptation, with "different" being the common descriptor. Its primary value was seen in enhancing student engagement and outcomes, as well as problem-solving. However, some cautioned that it may not always lead to effective learning. Life Curriculum Days were widely regarded as the most creative initiative in the school and assessment was considered the least creative aspect. Overall, perceptions of creativity were overwhelmingly positive and largely consistent across leadership levels. That said, senior leaders tended to have adopted a whole-school perspective, while middle leaders and classroom teachers were more subject-specific. Minor tensions were also noted around misinterpretation of creativity and its perceived incompatibility with academic studies.

In terms of RQ2, creativity at the school was shaped by macro, meso and micro factors with time pressure being a recurring theme. At the macro level, the exam-focused national curriculum was the most significant barrier. At the organisational level, senior leadership played a crucial enabling role by fostering a trust-based, risk-tolerant culture and granting staff meaningful autonomy. However, the push for "consistency" following Ofsted scrutiny created tension and was interpreted differently across leadership levels and subject teams. At the departmental and individual level, key influential factors

included student behaviour, class ability, staff capacity and personal motivation. The majority of participants were extrinsically motivated by student outcomes, but a small number were intrinsically driven. Motivation was found to be fluid, affected by mood, confidence and length of service, with more experienced teachers tending to favour established routines. SLs were generally more conscious of macro factors and felt greater agency. Conversely, MLs and classroom teachers recognised more immediate and context-specific barriers.

Finally, RQ3 explored how creativity was implemented all levels of the school, covering what Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) would refer to as Little C to Pro-C. Leadership of creativity from the implementation angle can be viewed through three lenses: influences, configurations and actions. In terms of influences, SLs motivated staff through a clear vision, a trust-based culture of autonomy, and transformational leadership behaviours. However, creativity was not always promoted *explicitly* or celebrated as a specific priority. Regarding configurations, the school generally operated with a collective and distributed model, with hybrid styles adapted to departmental needs, enabling all three creative leadership manifestations: directive, facilitating, and integrative. When it came to implementation actions, successful creative initiatives typically followed a systematic yet flexible process involving collaboration, piloting, planning, securing buy-in and continuous monitoring. When looking at implementation specifically, MLs emerged as pivotal figures, with their individual approaches significantly influencing whether creativity flourished or stalled at departmental level.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Having already started synthesising the findings with insights from the literature reviewed, Chapters 4 and 5 discussed in depth the wider implications for leading creativity in teaching and learning. This final chapter succinctly extends on some of the key findings to inform the development of an original creative pedagogy typology model. After that, the conclusion section summarises the overall findings, while highlighting the theoretical and practical implications. Finally, the study's limitations are acknowledged and recommendations for further research are put forward.

6.2 Interpretation of findings

Based on the enhanced social perspective of creativity framework (figure 2.7), the research sought to address three research questions:

1. How is creativity perceived in the case study school from multiple leadership perspectives?
2. How do contextual factors and leadership actions influence a) key stakeholders' perceptions of creativity, b) their motivation relating to creative intent, and c) their implementation of creativity in practices related to teaching and learning?
3. How, and to what extent is creativity led and implemented in teaching and learning at whole school, departmental and classroom levels?

Overall, apart from the positive perception, there is a broad consensus regarding what creativity is, especially in terms of the value it can bring. Aligning with the literature (Rinkevich, 2011), it is commonly seen as a way to engage students, leading to enhanced outcomes. Most acknowledged the risk element but with the school not having a risk-adverse culture, it is not a deterring factor. Whilst risks are deemed inevitable, like Cropley (2001), all agreed that creative ideas must be ethical. The use of technology, Life Curriculum Days, CPD activities such as the TEEP training, and working parties are all widely accepted as good examples of creativity within the setting. Meanwhile, many think creativity can be found in planning within their department as well as their own teaching, suggesting that staff do implement creativity at departmental and classroom levels, at least to some extent.

In answering research question 2, the issue of time (Lowe, 2010) dominated and acted as a driving force at all three levels. Despite the positive perception of creativity and high level of motivation, barriers were more strongly emphasised than enablers. Not only did the participants generally find it easier to identify barriers, but barriers were also consistently identified first, despite the question asking them to discuss “enablers and barriers”. This could be due to negativity bias, or creativity being more sensitive to limiting factors. External structures and the macro environment were mainly seen to hinder creativity, but there is evidence that internal structures and leadership actions were used as positive counterforces.

Despite challenging circumstances that can be detrimental to creativity, the case study school has shown how it is possible to enable creativity. This supports Cochrane and Cockett’s (2007) idea that creativity can exist even in less favourable conditions. There is a range of leadership configurations at the school, i.e. hybrid configurations, and these varied between departments. However, transformational and distributed leadership was found to be most prominent. Both leaders and non-leaders contribute creative ideas, together with the clear collaborative culture, there are signs of all three creative leadership manifestations (Strobel et al., 2025). Acting as positive influences, leaders were seen setting a clear vision that aligns with creativity while encouraging staff to take risks within a safe environment that they have facilitated. Some leaders also lead by example and have been able to build trust and empower others. Overall, teachers enjoy a high level of autonomy in their classroom teaching but this is less consistent at departmental level due to variations between middle leaders’ attitude towards creativity. When leading creativity at whole-school and departmental levels, a systematic but flexible approach is typically taken, featuring all steps from Kotter’s (2012) model. However, it was found that the leadership of creativity can be further strengthened through more active and explicit encouragement.

6.3 The leadership of creativity from an enhanced social perspective

The leadership of creativity in teaching and learning at the case study school can be understood through the enhanced social perspective represented by my creativity conceptual framework (figure 2.7). The findings illuminate the interconnectedness between the five key components. It has been demonstrated that any one of the three

core elements: perception, motivation, and implementation, can influence the other two. For creativity to thrive, teachers' perception of it should be positive as this would enhance motivation. There should also be clear ideas of what it entails in practice, so that the chance of misinterpretation affecting implementation can be reduced. A high level of motivation, particularly intrinsic or the more autonomous types of extrinsic motivation would increase the likelihood of creativity being implemented. Such motivation, especially when it is in abundance collectively, serves as a powerful influence for sustaining creativity's positive image and perceived value. Similarly, successful implementation, too, can further sustain positive perception and motivation or even enhance them. Besides the three elements, the two significant forces: contextual factors and leaderships actions, were also seen to influence the three elements through establishing structures and the levels of agency.

When applying this enhanced social perspective to the case study school, the interactions between the key components have been shown to be complex. How these components affect each other can vary between individuals and departments. For example, the same contextual factor – Ofsted, can affect motivation differently between two departments. This can be explained by how each individual or department would have a unique set of factors and leadership actions that affect them. Their perception, motivation and implementation would also be different from one another. Despite this, the framework is sufficiently flexible so that it can be used to analyse the leadership of creativity at classroom, departmental, and whole-school levels.

6.4 A typology of creative pedagogy

From the findings, how the three core components (perception, motivation and implementation) interact can lead to different reasons as to how and why a teacher wants to be creative in their pedagogy. For example, whereas one may be intrinsically motivated due to their perception of creativity, another could be extrinsically motivated because of the need to implement a school-wide creative initiative – similar to Unsworth's (2001) *responsive creativity*. Just as motivation is seen as a continuum in self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000), creative pedagogy from a *motivation* angle can also be considered as such, albeit a *three-way* continuum instead of a single linear one. This is because based on my data, some participants appeared to be primarily driven by intrinsic motivation, whereas others implemented creativity

based on either extrinsic, or internal attitude-oriented factors. Therefore, I **propose** an original typology of creative pedagogy that represents three distinct points, which are:

- attitude-oriented creative pedagogy,
- pragmatic creative pedagogy,
- ideological creative pedagogy.

As in a typical continuum, this typology shows a gradual variation and degrees of motivation without distinct boundaries and it is likely that most individuals fall somewhere between these three points. Like motivation orientation, these labels do not represent a permanent state; rather, it is changeable over time (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.63). This means at a specific time, one's creative pedagogy can be primarily pragmatic, but with some elements of attitude-oriented, then over a period of time, it can become a clear mixture of ideological and pragmatic.

Essentially, the three types of creative pedagogy is a way to show how a teacher is motivated to carry out what Lin (2014) refers to as *creative teaching* [synonymous with Jeffrey and Craft's (2004) *teaching creatively*, and Beghetto's (2017a) *teaching with creativity*]. The distinction between these three types of creative pedagogy is determined by one's motivation orientation, as well as the types of factors which drive motivation. These variables explain why one's creative pedagogy can feature elements of different types.

6.4.1 Three types of creative pedagogy

Ideological creative pedagogy (ICP) describes a teacher's creative teaching at a given time as their default pedagogical approach, as part of their natural disposition or teacher identity. Their motivation is generally resilient against extrinsic or attitudinal factors, thus more stable. As seen in the data from Jazz and the middle leader who said "*I don't know how not to be creative*", their creative teaching is primarily driven by intrinsic motivation. Teaching creatively would lead to a deep sense of enjoyment and it may be something that they do automatically without much conscious thinking.

Pragmatic creative pedagogy (PCP) describes a teacher's creative teaching at a given time where their motivation is primarily dependent on extrinsic factors, e.g. student behaviour, to satisfy a colleague's expectation, or to solve a particular problem.

It is functional, like the senior leader who said it is “*a means to an end*”. It is also intentional, for example, if one plans *when* to be creative because of a certain scenario. They see creative teaching to be a useful tool, e.g. enhanced student engagement, but only suitable in certain situations.

Attitude-oriented creative pedagogy (ACP) describes a teacher’s creative teaching at a given time where their motivation is primarily dependent on *internal* attitudinal factors, such as their *attitude* towards creativity, their own perceived ability to be creative, and personal mood. Relative to ICP, motivation is more changeable due to being susceptible to factors affecting one’s attitude. Compared with PCP, it is less intentional and may be more spontaneous. Instead of planning when not to be creative based on an extrinsic factor, e.g. unsuitable for a particular year group, it may be because one is “*not necessarily feeling it*”, or they do not feel confident about being creative when teaching a particular topic.

The main difference between PCP and ACP is to do with whether the primary influential factors are extrinsic or based on one’s internal feelings about being creative. The emphasis of this model is not to rank the different types in terms of which are more effective for generating high-quality ideas. It is perfectly possible that ideas generated by a teacher with ACP can lead to greater impact than those by a teacher with ICP. This is because my proposed typology is about *motivation*, not skills or capacity. However, the ideological type, being less affected by influential factors, is a predictor of higher *frequency* of creative ideas generated. Conversely, given its less intentional nature, ideas from those with ACP are likely to be relatively less frequent. That said, the caveat is that motivation does not equal implementation, which is reliant on external forces. For example, even if someone is intrinsically motivated to be creative, if there are factors in the environment which prohibit them to be creative, e.g. a rigid structure or policy, they are less likely to be able to implement creativity compared with someone who is extrinsically motivated but has significant autonomy. For implementation, structure and agency would need to be considered as well.

6.4.2 Applying the creative pedagogy typology

When applying the typology to my data set, the majority of participants are towards the pragmatic/ideological side of the three-way continuum (see figure 6.4). This is because many, like Sam, were motivated mainly by extrinsic desirable outcomes, e.g. enhanced

student engagement. Moreover, participants generally considered at least part of their practice as creative while feeling positive and confident about implementing creativity. This explains why most are not on the attitude-oriented side of the model. Notably, everyone had elements of different creative pedagogy types. For example, Taylor in the main was intrinsically motivated because she found creativity "*enjoyable*". However, if she was "*not necessarily feeling it*", she would choose not to be creative. Importantly, as corroborated by my data, motivation for creativity is shaped by factors and experiences unique to each individual. As a result, creative pedagogy can vary noticeably between participants, including those who belong to the same stakeholder group.

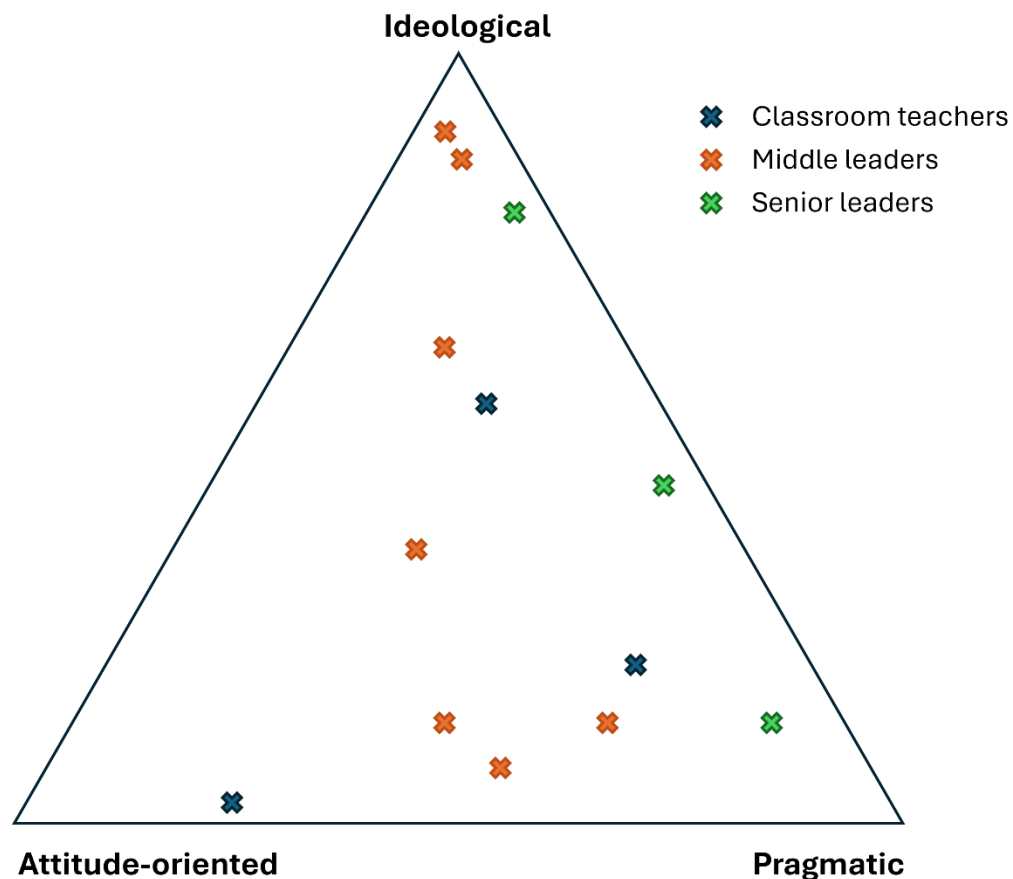


Figure 6.4 – Creative pedagogy at the case study school (participants as Xs)

Although most participants reported having sufficient autonomy, SLs, and to some extent MLs, are likely to have greater autonomy due to their formal role and legitimate power. For the same reason, they also have considerable agency to mobilise people and resources, allowing them to more easily implement higher-level creativity, such as what Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) refer to as Pro-C. If implemented successfully, the

significant impact would transform their perception and motivation. This could be one of the reasons why all three SLs are between ICP and PCP. Conversely, external pressures and inhibiting factors at macro and meso levels are likely to have a more immediate influence on SLs. As they are directly accountable, they may be more inclined to be outcome driven. This may explain their pragmatic leaning and why creativity was described by one SL as a “means to an end”.

Since motivation forms the basis of my creative pedagogy typology, the different types of creative pedagogy can be made relevant to Unsworth’s (2001) four types of creativity, which are also underpinned by motivation. For instance, ICP is likely to lead to self-driven types of creativity, i.e. *proactive* and *contributory*, whereas ACP and PCP are more likely to manifest as *responsive* or *expected*. Applying this to my data - Jazz (ICP) actively seeking the opportunity for a cross-curricular project to stimulate creativity is a form of proactive creativity. Staff within Sam’s (PCP) department volunteering to contribute ideas to make a topic more engaging is an example of contributory creativity. Meanwhile, Mel (ACP) shared an instance of expected creativity implemented after staff training, which she felt aligned with the leaders’ expectations.

As illustrated by Pat’s and Mel’s contrasting interview profiles, those who lean towards ICP generally reported a high level of autonomy and confidence in their creative practice, whereas those who felt restricted and/or less confident are closer to ACP. This correlation between creative pedagogy and motivation orientation aligns well with Ryan and Deci’s (2000) self-determination theory and highlights the transformative power enabling leadership actions have in fostering creativity.

6.5 Implications for leadership

To become intrinsically motivated and towards ICP on this continuum, one would need to feel as though they have agency, ability and social acceptance, as per SDT’s autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). If teachers’ creativity becomes self-sustainable, it is likely to lead to longer term impact. To achieve this, leadership plays a pivotal role in supporting a shift towards intrinsic motivation and ICP. This can be done by actively targeting the three core elements using specific strategies [leadership actions]. For instance, where motivation is lower, less autonomous or unstable, leaders can actively work to enhance the perception of creativity and support the implementation experience, so that it is positive regardless of outcomes. This would

in turn help enhance teachers' motivation towards being creative. Table 6.5 provides example strategies to show how this might work in practice. By taking a targeted approach, it can become part of a situational/transformational leadership configuration that provides personalised support, i.e. *coaching* and *individualised consideration*.

Table 6.5 – Example strategies for enhancing the core elements

To enhance	Targeting	Example strategies
Perception	Implementation	Develop staff's ability to lead implementation, distribute leadership, celebrate success to lead to sustained change in practice
	Motivation	Capacity building to enhance self-efficacy and autonomy, leading to intrinsic motivation
Motivation	Perception	Establish a clear idea of what creativity looks like in practice, modelling, facilitate positive experiences, debunk myths
	Implementation	Remove barriers, facilitate opportunities for creative practice (e.g. collaborative), mentoring, developmental feedback
Implementation	Motivation	Show how creative practice can benefit students and staff, help shift motivation orientation
	Perception	Guide reflection and reinforce positive perception

In addition, it is important to support the process towards innovation by addressing the needs identified by Perry-Smith and Mannucci (2017). A systematic approach like Kotter's (2012) eight steps would help establish a clear structure, but due to the nature of creativity, such a structure should be flexible and allow for collaboration. Therefore, the preparedness for deploying different leadership styles and configurations would be important too, for example, using transformational leadership to inspire and motivate, distributed leadership to empower and enable collaboration, and situational leadership to provide flexibility and bespoke support.

To draw inspiration from Strobel et al.'s (2025) research on creative leadership manifestations, a mixture of configurations, including those that are participatory, are likely to be beneficial. Specifically, once there is a clear vision, collaboration between leaders, non-leaders and other important stakeholders like students and parents could offer considerable potential. This could take the form of cross-curricular events that involve the wider community in which there are opportunities for participatory idea

generation and elaboration. With more perspectives available and enhanced capacity, it could increase the chance and frequency for substantial creativity, like what Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) would refer to as Pro-C and Big C.

For leaders, they would have the crucial tasks of carefully synthesising the ideas to ensure quality, progress monitoring and constantly realigning the implementation with the broader system, so that appropriate leadership actions can be carried out to provide additional support where appropriate. Not only would this collaborative approach allow for the gathering of ideas from a vast array of different perspectives but getting wider stakeholders involved is also likely to lead to greater awareness and buy-in, thereby sustaining interest and support for creativity in the longer term.

6.6 Conclusion

6.6.1 Summary of overall findings

This research set out to examine the leadership of creativity in teaching and learning within a UK school setting. Through a qualitative multiple methods design, the research sought to answer three research questions. Two original conceptual frameworks were developed: one for exploring the enhanced social perspective of creativity and its leadership in teaching and learning, and the other for analysing the leadership aspect in a more holistic way.

Fundamentally, creativity in teaching and learning is driven by perception, motivation and implementation, which are affected by contextual factors and leadership actions. To encourage and support creativity, the findings suggest that leadership plays a crucial role and can do so by targeting the three core elements. Through influences to inspire, configurations to empower, and actions to transform, leaders can promote and support creativity by establishing creativity-inducing structures and strengthening teachers' agency. This in turn would help foster teachers' intrinsic motivation towards creative practices, ultimately leading to a more self-determined type of creative pedagogy.

6.6.2 Contributions and implications

6.6.2.1 Contributions

Leadership and management of change are well-researched, but leadership of the creative process and the innovation journey of teaching practices have received significantly less attention. In addition to the rich qualitative data gathered and addressing the three gaps detailed in Chapter 2 (Cremin and Chappell, 2021; Beghetto, 2017a; Watts et al., 2019; Katz-Buonincontro and Anderson, 2018), this thesis offers three distinct original contributions to the fields of creative education, and educational leadership and management:

1. My **enhanced social perspective of creativity** model (figure 2.7) builds on Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems perspective. It offers a multidimensional conceptual framework that synthesises three core elements known to be important to creativity while demonstrating how its leadership within teaching and learning is shaped by two significant forces: contextual factors and leadership actions. The model extends the current understanding relating to the social aspect of creativity by explaining how creativity is socially constructed through the interactions of the five components. Although the significance of these individual components has been acknowledged in the literature, this research illuminates the connections between them and explores the implications explicitly. This then allows future inquiries to systematically examine and compare how creativity is led within and across various settings. Furthermore, the conceptual framework enables leadership to take an intentional and targeted approach when leading creativity in practice, e.g. countering certain inhibiting contextual factors by establishing a creativity-enabling structure to enhance motivation and implementation.
2. This thesis proposes a second multidimensional conceptual framework (Section 2.5) viewing **leadership as influences, configurations and implementation agent of actions**, with Chapter 5 demonstrating its application. This analytical lens breaks down the different types of power associated with leadership and encourages a more comprehensive and holistic approach to exploring leadership, taking into consideration complexities that exist simultaneously in many settings, such as leadership hybridity and implementation gaps. Whilst these three individual units of analysis are already established in leadership research, it is argued that such a combination is needed for studying leadership due to the landscape becoming increasingly more complex. Specifically for the

leadership of creativity, it extends existing theories such as Perry-Smith and Mannucci's (2017) idea journey regarding how leadership can be used to support the identified needs, and similarly, how the creative teaching aspect of Lin's (2014) creative pedagogy framework can be led.

3. In light of my research data, an original **creative pedagogy typology** (Section 6.4) is introduced, revealing three specific types of creative pedagogy: *ideological*, *pragmatic*, and *attitude-oriented*, as underpinned by teachers' motivation orientation relating to their creative practices. From a theoretical standpoint, this typology elucidates the role of motivation orientations and the relevant driving factors in influencing teachers' creativity. This raises interesting questions about how creative pedagogies manifest differently in practice based on varying motivators and the extent to which motivation orientations can affect the idea journey to innovation. For practice, understanding the typology would help leaders and practitioners identify ways to strengthen the leadership of creativity through motivation, and by extension supporting the enhancement of perception and implementation as well.

As demonstrated in this thesis and by the methodological approach undertaken, the three original frameworks can be used in tandem, but equally, they may be deployed separately to focus on specific angles or to solve particular problems.

6.6.2.2 Implications

This research has offered detailed explanations and analysis regarding how examples of creativity in practice have been led and implemented. By exploring the findings' implications, practical strategies for leadership to foster creativity in teaching and learning are highlighted for consideration. Furthermore, not only will this thesis provide the case study school and its community an opportunity to reflect on how teaching and learning is done as well as the important factors that affect it, but for other educational institutions, it also serves as a reference point for reflection. This, alongside the recommended strategies, can then be used to stimulate professional development and inform future implementation of creative endeavours.

Given the desire for creativity at the macro level, the findings and recommendations from this research can also inform policy makers and those with significant influence to create the most optimal conditions nationwide for creativity to thrive. By enabling creativity at macro policy level, teachers would be able to exercise their professional

autonomy to develop their creative practice and sense of agency, which through the lens of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) could enhance teacher motivation and ultimately teacher retention.

6.6.3 Limitations of the study

As discussed in Chapter 3, this single case study explored the leadership of creativity at a secondary school in England well-disposed to research. This openness to inquiry and the use of voluntary participants may limit the transferability of the findings. Thus, additional considerations would be required when adapting this methodological approach to settings with less established research cultures. Similarly, as a snapshot of what was happening at the time of the research, some of the specific findings may also be less relevant to schools leading creativity in teaching and learning since.

Whilst the original design aimed to achieve balance by recruiting an equal number of MLs and classroom teachers, due to availability issues, this was not possible. This has to some extent limited the scope for more in-depth comparisons between the two stakeholder groups. Moreover, response bias has also been acknowledged as a risk whereby answers from participants during interviews might have been skewed by their desire to give what they perceived as the right answers. To minimise this risk, the research was intentionally designed to allow for rigorous triangulation.

6.6.4 Recommendations for future research

Following this thesis, work relating to the two original conceptual frameworks and the creative pedagogy typology model will be further developed towards publications. It is envisaged that these publications will explore and explain in detail the application of my frameworks to leadership practices, empirical research, and theoretical development. For example, I will illustrate how the enhanced social perspective of creativity conceptual framework can be applied as a CPD tool, similar to the way in which the technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) (Koehler and Mishra, 2009) and TEEP models are used to help teachers and leaders reflect on their own practice and inform their professional development. This would unlock the frameworks' practical value and potentially be part of an enabling structure that transforms and innovates teaching and learning in schools.

Given the limitations noted, further research would facilitate in-depth explorations of my key findings and their implications, such as how different configurations can be used to strengthen the leadership of teachers' creativity within various settings. Specifically, contextual factors have been demonstrated to be a significant force throughout my research. Whilst this case study focused on a single secondary school in the West Midlands, England, applying the proposed frameworks to other settings would allow comparisons to be made about the leadership of creativity between different contexts. It would be particularly interesting to see how the various components and forces interact in contrasting contexts, e.g. primary, other secondary, Further and Higher Education settings across other national contexts, and how these in turn shape teachers' creative pedagogy.

The complexity evident in this research also illuminates the need for a holistic approach to leadership research, rather than being limited to examining single units of analysis and neglecting crucial details such as hybridity and followers' actions. Furthermore, to gain a deeper understanding of the creative processes involved in teachers' creativity so that its leadership can be a more conscious process, the underutilised method of observation and other combinations of methods, such as visual methods and focus groups, can also be considered. Meanwhile, to gather findings that can be generalisable, larger scale studies looking at perception, motivation and implementation with mixed-methods designs would be a sensible subsequent step. To maximise impact, one should build on this field of research to identify solutions to persistent contemporary problems found in education. For example, researchers can examine the extent to which effective leadership of creativity enhances teachers' sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness, thus be considered a helpful tool for supporting sustainable teacher retention while driving curriculum and pedagogical innovations. Given the rapid pace of technological advances, investigating how technology like artificial intelligence can reduce barriers such as limited capacity for generating and implementing creative ideas, also has clear potential to encourage teachers' creativity despite workload intensification.

6.6.5 Final remarks

14 years after my Apprentice-themed music lesson in which my students researched into electronic dance music, I completed my own research project which features a school that had an Apprentice event of their own. Throughout this journey of inquiry, my

perception of creativity has developed significantly, from something that I struggled to articulate at first, to creating my own conceptual frameworks to capture the complex interactions involved in its leadership. In this time, my motivation has shifted from seeing it as a tool that can enhance my practice, to something that I truly believe can transform education. Now, I take the step to implement my own creativity in the form of this doctoral thesis. It is my hope that it will survive Perry-Smith and Mannucci's (2017) idea journey and become an innovation, offering value to my fellow researchers, schools, teachers, and ultimately – the students.

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Appendices

Appendix A – ethics approval

From: John Hardy [REDACTED] on behalf of ResearchEthics
Sent: 04 August 2020 10:40
To: Philip Yeung [REDACTED]
Cc: ResearchEthics [REDACTED]
Subject: AREA 19-147 - Confirmation of Ethical Approval

Dear Philip,

AREA 19-147 - Leadership of creativity in UK secondary education: perception, motivation and enactment

NB: All approvals/comments are subject to compliance with current University of Leeds and UK Government advice regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as any local restrictions where the study is being carried out regarding in-person data collection and travel.

I am pleased to inform you that the above research ethics application has been reviewed by the Business, Environment and Social Sciences (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and on behalf of the Chair, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion based on the documentation received at date of this email.

Please retain this email as evidence of approval in your study file.

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any further amendments to the original research as submitted and approved to date. This includes recruitment methodology; all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. Please see <https://leeds365.sharepoint.com/sites/ResearchandInnovationService/SitePages/Amendments.aspx> or contact the Research Ethics Administrator for further information (researchethics@leeds.ac.uk) if required.

Ethics approval does not infer you have the right of access to any member of staff or student or documents and the premises of the University of Leeds. Nor does it imply any right of access to the premises of any other organisation, including clinical areas. The committee takes no responsibility for you gaining access to staff, students and/or premises prior to, during or following your research activities.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, risk assessments and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited.

It is our policy to remind everyone that it is your responsibility to comply with Health and Safety, Data Protection and any other legal and/or professional guidelines there may be.

I hope the study goes well.

Best wishes

John Hardy

On behalf of Matthew Davis, Chair, AREA FREC

John Hardy

Research Ethics & Governance Administrator

The Secretariat,

University of Leeds, LS2 9LT

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet

School of Education
University of Leeds
LS2 9JT



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Participant Information Sheet

Date: (/ /)

You are being invited to take part in a research project, titled Leadership of Creativity in UK Secondary Education: Perception, Motivation and Implementation. I am currently a research student as well as a middle leader working in Higher Education (HE). Before moving into HE, I worked in schools as a middle leader, specifically in the subject areas of Music and Performing Arts. This research is for my Doctor of Education (EdD).

Your head teacher has kindly granted permission for me to research at the school. Before you decide whether to participate, please take time to read the following carefully. If you have any questions or would like more information about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

What is the purpose of the study?

- To increase understanding of how creativity is perceived among school leaders and others with leadership responsibilities, and to identify influential factors that can affect their perception as well as motivation to lead creatively. The study also aims to assess how creativity is implemented in their leadership practice. For more detailed information about the research, including the specific aims and research questions, please see the 'About the research' section below.

Do I have to take part?

- Your participation is entirely your decision and is voluntary. Although your head teacher has given permission for you to be approached you must decide if you wish to participate. If you would like to take part, please either speak to me in person or contact me **via email at** me@leeds.ac.uk. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time and you will not be asked to provide a reason or face any negative consequences.

What will it involve?

- I will make several visits to the school. During these visits, some school documents will be looked at in order to gain a good understanding of the school and its context. There will also be two rounds of interviews and some observations. In the first interview, you will be invited to individually share your experience relating to the research aims and questions. Next, observations of professional practice and staff meetings will take place to assess how creativity is implemented. Observations of professional practice will be negotiated with yourselves based on experiences identified in your first interview. These could include a range of activities of your choice. If you choose to share your practice in the classrooms, it will not involve any discussion with or direct observation of your students. Finally, the second round of interviews will involve discussing what has been observed as well as any other issues which have not been covered during the first interview.
- The maximum time for each interview/observation is 60 minutes. Please note that the interviews will be audio recorded.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

- Whilst there are no immediate benefits of participating, it is hoped that the opportunity to reflect on your professional experience in this research will have a positive effect on your professional development. A report of the research will be made available to you and the school's Senior Leadership Team which may provide benefits for school evaluation and development planning. This report will focus on the three project aims outlined on the next page. Meanwhile, there is a possibility that you may find it uncomfortable to talk about some of your experiences. You may feel that the research process or findings create negative connotations about yourself, department

Appendix B continued

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University of Leeds
LS2 9JT



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or whole school in relation to leadership of creativity. You may decide that the research was not what you expected or that during the research you did not have the opportunity to experience or express particular aspects of creativity. If this is the case, or you have any reservations, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time or discuss with me any issues you might have.

Will the information I provide be kept confidential?

- All the contact information will be kept strictly confidential and stored separately from the research data. Steps will be taken to anonymise the research data, e.g. using pseudonyms, so that you will not be identified in any internal report or publication that is external to the school. However, since the report of the research will be made available to the school it is possible that your identity may become known to others internally. If you are uncomfortable with this possibility, you have the option, as indicated earlier, to not take part or to withdraw from the research at any time.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings of the study will form part of my EdD thesis at the University of Leeds. The results may also be used in relevant publications and/or presentations. You will be consulted at various stages of the research in order to verify my interpretations of the data, and suggest changes, if necessary. The report to the school will summarise data findings in the three areas outlined below. This may assist the school, staff teams and individuals in evaluating perceptions of leadership for creativity.

About the research

Specifically, the project aims to shed light on three areas: 1) how those involved in the leadership of teaching and learning perceive creativity, 2) the influential factors and leadership actions which can affect their perception, as well as their motivation relating to creative intent, and 3) how, as well as to what extent, creativity is implemented in practice and what it might look like. The study will look at these issues from multiple perspectives of leadership: organisational leadership (senior leaders), middle leadership (e.g. heads of department, heads of areas/years) and leadership exercised through the planning and practice of classroom pedagogy (classroom teachers).

The three research questions which underpin the project are:

1. How is creativity perceived from multiple leadership perspectives?
2. Among the three groups of professional key stakeholder identified, how do factors at different levels and leadership actions influence a) their perceptions of creativity, b) their motivation relating to creative intent, and c) their implementation of creativity in practices related to teaching and learning?
3. How, and to what extent is creativity implemented in the leadership of teaching and learning at whole school, departmental and classroom levels?

If you are willing to take part or have any questions about the research, please contact me at [REDACTED].

Thank you for taking the time to read through this information sheet.

Philip Yeung

Appendix C – consent form

School of Education



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Consent to take part in Leadership of Creativity in UK Secondary Education

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 12/6/2022 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (If you wish to withdraw from the project, please contact the lead researcher, Philip Yeung via email at ed16pcty@leeds.ac.uk . You can withdraw at any time and you can also withdraw any data already provided from the study.)	
I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential and my name will not be linked with the research materials, i.e. I will not be identified or identifiable in the reporting of research data and findings.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymised form.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	15/6/2022
Name of lead researcher	Philip Yeung
Signature	
Date*	15/6/2022

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix D – observation schedule template

Meeting/Activity Observation

Date:		Time:
Event:		
Attendees:		
Other contextual information (e.g. physical environment, seating plan, agenda): <i>Context data</i>		
Timings:	Notes on behaviour and interactions: <i>Behaviour and verbal interactions data</i>	Attendees involved:
Summary:		

Field note/reflection:

E.g. 'Image' data + data relating to group dynamics and collegiality + impact/leadership actions of a critical incident