

## **Creativity as a Pastoral Concern**

**Dave Trotman**

**Newman University**

### **Abstract**

In this paper the author considers the contribution of creativity to pastoral care in education. Since its advent in English schools in the early 1970s, pastoral care has placed the affective realm and individual enrichment centre stage in both its curriculum aims and teaching approaches. These principles have, however, had much to contend with over the past fifty years; from the obtrusive effects of state intervention in schools, to the challenges confronting young people growing up in increasingly complex societies. For many teachers and practitioners engaging young people in creative pursuits has come to be regarded as a necessary counterpoint to increasingly performative school cultures and an essential means to enabling vibrant forms of positive self-expression. The power of creative activities has received new impetus as a pastoral concern in light of two national trends. The first as creative arts provision in the curriculum in English state secondary schools declines as a consequence of Government qualification reforms, and second as an increasing number of young people are referred to Alternative Educational Provision with mental health issues. As a consequence, many pastoral educators have turned or, indeed, returned to creativity and creative practices as a primary means of supporting and enriching the lives of young people, particularly for those who now struggle in contemporary school environments. In light of these developments and drawing on research and practice in the field of creativity and pastoral care this paper aims to cast further light on creativity in pastoral education.

Key Words: Creativity, Pastoral Care, Education, Curriculum, Teaching

Dave Trotman

Newman University, Birmingham UK

[d.trotman@newman.ac.uk](mailto:d.trotman@newman.ac.uk)

## **Pastoral Care and Creativity - what exactly do we mean?**

Many readers of this journal will already be aware of the histories and debates that surround the field of Pastoral Care. Its uniquely British place in school education alongside the controversies of its problematic roots in religious hierarchy and paternalism have been well rehearsed (Best, 2000). So too has much of its travel in the mid-1990s through the realm of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education; and as I write this paper the current shift in emphasis in pastoral care has been away from universal provision to the allocation of targeted provision for those deemed as needy, 'at risk' and vulnerable (Tucker, 2013). The original underpinnings of pastoral care - educational, vocational and personal guidance anchored around imperatives of care, personal and social development and civic responsibility - are widely credited to the seminal work of Michael Marland, who was amongst the first to attempt to define both the concept of care and the importance of it as a central function of school activity. Of particular importance in this paper, however, is Marland's emphasis on the affective dimension of development, with opportunities to develop an individual 'lifestyle' and 'individual enrichment' (Marland, 1974; Best, 2014). In this regard these dimensions of pastoral care, as I will aim to show, have new and important resonance in a contemporary reading of creativity for pastoral care.

As much as it is difficult to pin down an absolute and agreed contemporary definition of pastoral care in education, the task is similarly tricky when we attempt to do the same for the term 'creativity'. Amongst the numerous problems with the use of the term 'creativity' is not only its elusiveness but the prevalence in education for it to be applied as a 'catch-all' to describe all manner of aspects of the curriculum. Typically, this has encompassed the arts (art, creative writing, dance, drama, media, music), aspects of culture, play, thinking skills, problem solving, philosophy or simply anything that can be regarded as unconventional. When it comes to creativity in teaching and pedagogy the term is equally slippery. Frequently 'creativity' is no more than an analogue for approaches or methods that give children and young people greater autonomy and responsibility for their own learning while paralleling the pursuit of progressive ideals (Trotman, 2018, 35). This then warrants a modest review of the field.

Despite becoming a topic of research interest only relatively recently, the origins of creativity can be traced to early Eastern and Western philosophies (Albert and Runco, 1999, p.18). In the early Greek tradition creativity was regarded as little more than simple imitation (see Plato's *The Republic*, Book X) while in contrast Confucian and Hindu philosophies long considered creativity as an aspect of individual cultivation and spiritual expression (Lubart, 1999, 340; Leong, 2011, 54). By the eighteenth century, creativity in continental Europe was to become widely associated with the idea of the artistic genius and by the mid twentieth century it was of increasing interest to researchers working in the field of psychology, particularly in North America where much of the early research on creativity has evolved (Trotman, 2018, 35).

One of the most enduring insights into the process of creativity, however, comes from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the work of British academic Graham Wallas. In his book *The Art of Thought* (1926) Wallas proposes a five stage model of creativity involving: preparation, incubation, intimation, illumination and verification. Each stage of Wallas's model marks a particular phase in the creative process—from the stimulus of initial ideas to the completion and reflection on the creative outcome.

More recently, attempts to understand this process can be found in the work of the American psychologist Csikszentmihalyi. In his work on creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) reports the positive qualities of the state of 'flow' experienced by participants when immersed in a range of creative projects. While flow is a largely positive quality, creativity, particularly at the stage of incubation, can also be a restless, frustrating and nerve-wracking process as John Tusa's (2003) interviews with professional artists vividly demonstrate.

Meanwhile, other scholars working in the field argue that creativity can be categorised into four specific stages of a 'four-c' model (Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009). This view of creativity starts with the 'min-c' of personal interpretation of experience in the formative years of childhood and progresses to the 'little c' of every day creative experimentation and exploration. So-called 'Pro-C' creativity is that of the expert, as in the work of the professional composer, film-maker or artist etc, which in exceptional circumstances can lead to the 'Big C' of the creative genius.

Such accounts of creativity can, however, lead to two misassumptions. The first, as noted earlier in the origins of the term, is that this creativity is contingent upon the socio-cultural perspective or 'lenses' through which phenomena and practices are deemed to be creative. Matsunobu (2011), for example, cautions that what might be considered legitimate creative acts in some cultures could be unacceptable or inappropriate in others. Broad distinctions between Western and Eastern standpoints have also been reported in the work of Lubbart (1999) who notes how Eastern traditions have much less preoccupation with innovative problem-solving than in the West while placing much greater emphasis on spiritual expression and self-realisation. A second misassumption inferred in Matsunobu's analysis is that not all creativity can be considered to be good. For instance, Copley et al (2010) caution that there is also a dark side to creativity, with instruments of torture, weapons of war and criminal activity all involving degrees of imagination, experimentation and ingenuity – key characteristics of creativity in malevolent form.

Finally in this summary, the rapid growth of digital technologies has also created new challenges for thinking about creativity. Employing the term 'vernacular creativity', those researching the use of participative digital media consider creativity primarily in terms of innovative reconfigurations of aspects of culture that are non-elitist, social and collaborative (Buckingham, 2009).

### **What might creativity have to offer Pastoral Care?**

This then leads us to consider the place of creativity in pastoral care, and in doing so we should perhaps remind ourselves of Marland's own commitment to the essential role of the creative and artistic experience in the educational lifeworld of young people (Marland and Rogers 2002, *The Guardian*, 2008). While Marland was a passionate advocate for the educative power of the arts, the contemporary landscape makes this advocacy not only more pressing but necessarily requires a renewed assessment of this in light of the creative dimensions described above. In recent work on the challenges confronting young people in a global society my colleague Stan Tucker and I have turned to the concept of supercomplexity advanced originally in the work of Ronald Barnett (Trotman and Tucker, 2018; Barnett, 2000). Paralleling Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) ideas of 'Liquid Modernity' - a

condition of constant mobility and change in relationships, identities, and global economics within contemporary society - for Barnett, supercomplexity 'denotes a fragile world':

...brought on not merely by social and technological change; it is a fragility in the way that we understand the world, in the way in which we understand ourselves and in the ways in which we feel secure about acting in the world.

(Barnett, 2000, 257)

While the limitations of space prevent detailed discussion of both liquid modernity and supercomplexity, the conditions of supercomplexity present something of a profound binary in tension for pastoral educators. On the one hand, there is the increasing demand placed upon children and young people in contexts of intensive performativity and the now established consequential negative effects of this on their mental wellbeing (Trotman, Enow and Tucker, 2018; Gill, Quilter-Pinner and Swift, 2017, 7), and, on the other hand, the potential in the conditions of supercomplexity and liquid modernity for the opening up of new possibilities for creative expression and innovation. Indeed, studies of creativity from a psychological perspective have highlighted creative traits such as tolerance of ambiguity, risk taking and preferences for complexity (Cropely, 2004); traits one might consider to be essential in successfully living in the contemporary context.

Supercomplex environments illuminate, then, both the problem and the potential possibilities in terms of creativity. For pastoral educators, creativity as an experience and approach offers new possibilities in engaging in the affective dimension of development, lifestyle and individual enrichment that was so important to Marland.

### **Doing Creative Work: Key characteristics for curriculum and pedagogy**

From the scholarship of creativity, it is then possible to extrapolate a number of key characteristics that have special significance for creative practice in pastoral care.

Amongst these are:

- Affect and emotion
- Imagination
- Problem solving
- Originality and innovation
- Entrepreneurialism

In the first of these, the necessity for affective and emotional work will be all too apparent to pastoral educators. Originating from the '*Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*' advanced by psychologists Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1973), the 'Affective Domain' of feeling, sentience and emotion has been of primary interest to educators. While the importance of this in artistic creative self-expression and personal enrichment has been persuasively argued as an essential general feature of a broad and balanced education (Abbs, 1987; Ross, 1978), emphasis has also been placed on the affective domain as a form of therapeutic self-knowledge and quality of intelligence (Goleman, 1996). Hence, the histories of creative pastoral work have aimed to not only nourish the interior lifeworld through creative artistic means, but have increasingly acquired a necessary therapeutic function.

In the second of these characteristics, the role of imagination in creativity is widely recognised as a means of possibility thinking and invention (Craft, 2005, Egan, 1992, Eisner, 2005). Receiving less attention though is imagination as a powerful empathic quality that enables exploration and reciprocation of the 'other'. In this regard empathic imagination offers a means of making vivid the lives, identities, experiences and feelings of others (Trotman, 2005). Here again we see the imaginative feature of creativity as conduit to the affective realm with obvious connections for pastoral educators. In contrast to this affective emphasis, however, is creativity as a problem-solving activity. In this form the creative emphasis is on cognitive activity in which solutions and alternatives are developed and tested. Creativity in this regard is less about nurture and interior emotional nourishment and more about personal resilience, determination and mental mapping of the problem at hand. Closely aligned to this is one of the defining features of creativity – that of originality and innovation. In this aspect observers of creativity such as Csikszentmihalyi (1996) have argued that the impact of originality and its innovative quality within a given social system is the defining feature of creativity. This bringing into existence of something new is one of the hotly contested areas of assessment in creativity in that this necessarily requires a public assessment of the originality of its

product or artefact. In the province of pastoral education, the bringing into existence of novelty is something that may only need to be original to the creator in order to for it to have creative value in personal terms.

In the last of these selected key characteristics, an entrepreneurial orientation sees creativity aligned with innovation and calculated risk-taking as an important means of generating new commodities and the identification of new commercial markets. As already noted in this paper, this can span a multitude of sins – ranging from new and improved technological developments, such as the latest smartphone, or an app for ordering takeaway food, or a new and improved cyclonic vacuum cleaner. It's association with capitalist and neoliberal interests are also evident, however, in the relentless pursuit of 'bigger and better' and the rejection of 'make-do and mend' (Craft, 2005).

Innovation and entrepreneurialism can also easily be configured with the sorts of malevolent creative intent noted previously. In his observations of gang culture in central London, Jones (2018) emphasises how entrepreneurial creative flair is used for recruitment and operation. Gangs involved in 'county lines' drug dealing are seen offering all manner of attractions to young people through sophisticated marketing and recruitment strategies, which in one London gang involves the appropriation of the Warner Brothers film logo in their gang iconography and jewellery: 'if you see the police, warn a brother'. Creativity in this realm has a number of key characteristics, chiefly amongst them is both the malevolent creativity discussed by Cropley et al (2010) and the vernacular creativity argued by Buckingham (2009). Consequentially, effective responses for those vulnerable to gang inculcation and violence and those wishing to extricate themselves from gangs necessarily requires equivalent positive creative approaches – many of which are now used by projects that work with young people related to gangs.

The absence of creative alternative entrepreneurial possibilities for vulnerable young people has also been noted in recent research conducted by the author and colleagues concerning young people in Alternative Provision (Trotman, Enow and Tucker, 2018). In this study we report that one of the significant problems for young people is the distinct lack of opportunity for them to realise their own creative entrepreneurial interests in real employment and vocational terms. Typically,

opportunities for entrepreneurial development are truncated on leaving compulsory education, or worse still reduced to stereotypical binary options of 'hair and bricks'. It is perhaps not surprising then that the initial allure of gang culture creativities and trappings are so attractive for some marginalised young people.

## **Conclusion**

I write the conclusion to this article in late November following an invitation to a musical production at a local secondary school. This wasn't the usual pre-Christmas festive offering, but a production co-written by school pupils with members of the local football club and community. '*1978: The Ultimate Goal*' is based on the story of three West Midland footballing legends the 'Three Degrees' – Laurie Cunningham, Cyrille Regis and Brendon Batson, who all also happened to be black. In the production, music, song, narrative, drama, choreography, social history and video newsreel were all powerfully combined to offer a vivid analysis of racism, violence and the social mores of the time and ultimately triumph through sporting excellence. Like many other collaborative projects taking place across the country, 'The Ultimate Goal' offers but one example of how vibrant creative projects can be realised in the hands of skilled teachers and educators supported through courageous pastoral leadership.

As I have sought to show in this article, creativity is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that necessarily requires educators to think beyond the received short-hand of alternative approaches that are by default a 'good thing'. The scholarship of the field calls for us to understand creativity as a much more complex concept that, in turn, offers a range of ways in which this can engaged as an educational force for good on its own terms. In the spirit of Marland's premise for pastoral care in schools, creativity has an obviously vital role in terms of personal expression and style, the development of empathy and the understanding of self. As I have also sought to show, it has a powerful role to play in the domain of vocational and personal education originally set out by Marland, but with a new impetative to realise this in a contemporary context of supercomplexity. It is perhaps to the kind of creative pastoral care that Marland was such a passionate advocate for that we should return to with a renewed sense of urgency and vision.



## References

- Abbs, P. (1987) (ed.) *Living Powers: The Arts in Education*, London: Falmer Press.
- Albert, R.S. and Runco, M.A. (1999) 'A history of research on creativity', in Sternberg, R.J. (ed.) *Handbook of creativity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.16-31.
- Barnett, R. (2000) 'Supercomplexity and the Curriculum', *Studies in Higher Education*, 25 (3) pp.255-265.
- Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Best, R. (2000) 'Concepts in pastoral care and PSE', in Best, R., Lang, P., Lodge, C. and Watkins, C. (eds.) *Pastoral care and personal social education: Entitlement and provision*. London: Continuum, pp.3-18.
- Best, R. (2014) 'Forty years of pastoral care: an appraisal of Michael Marland's seminal book and its significance for pastoral care in schools', *Pastoral Care in Education*, 32 (3), pp.173-185.
- Buckingham, D. (2009) 'A common place art? Understanding amateur media production' in Buckingham, D. and Willett, R. (eds.) *Video Cultures: Media technology and everyday creativity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Craft (2005) *Creativity in Schools: Tensions and Dilemmas*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Csikszentmihalyi (1996) *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Cropley, D., Cropley, A.J., Kaufman J.C. and Runco, M.A. (2010) *The Dark Side of Creativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cropley, A. (2004) *Creativity in Education and Learning*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Eisner, E. (2005) *Reimagining Schools: The selected works of Elliot W. Eisner*, London: Routledge.
- Egan, K. (1992) *Imagination in Teaching and Learning: Ages 8–15*. London: Routledge.
- Goleman, D. (1996) *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, London: Bloomsbury.
- The Guardian, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2008 - Obituary: Michael Marland  
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/jul/04/mainsection.obituaries>.  
Accessed 13.12.2018
- Jones, E. Westminster Forum (19th October, 2018)

<http://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/publication/alternative-provision-18>

Kaufman, J.C. and Beghetto, R.A. (2009) 'Beyond big and little: The four C model of creativity', *Review of General Psychology*, 13 (1), pp.1-12.

Krathwohl, D.R., Bloom, B.S., Masia, B.B. (1973) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook II: Affective Domain*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc.

Leong, S. (2011) 'Creativity and the Arts in Chinese societies', in Sefton-Green, J., Thomson, P., Jones, K. and Bresler, L. *The Routledge international handbook of creative learning*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.54-62.

Lubart, T.I. (1999) 'Creativity across cultures', in Sternberg, R.J. (ed.) *Handbook of Creativity*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.339-350.

Marland, M. and Rogers, R. (2002) *Managing the Arts in the Curriculum*, Oxford: Heinemann.

Marland, M. (1974) *Pastoral Care*. London: Heinemann.

Matsunobu, K. (2011) 'Creativity of Formulaic Learning: Pedagogy of imitation and repetition', in Sefton-Green J., Thomson, P. Jones, K. and Bresler, L. *The Routledge International Handbook of Creative Learning*. London: Routledge, pp.45-53.

Ross, M. (1978) *The Creative Arts*, London: Heinemann.

Trotman, D. Enow, E, and Tucker, S. (2018) 'Young People and Alternative Provision: Perspectives from participatory–collaborative evaluations in three UK local authorities', *British Educational Research Journal*, First published: 12 December 2018 <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3495>

Trotman, D. and Tucker, S. (2018) *Youth: Global Perspectives, Challenges and Issues of the 21st Century*, New York NY, Nova Science Publishers Inc.

Trotman, D. (2018) 'Creativity' in Trotman, D. Lees, H.E and Willoughby, R. *Education Studies: The Key Concepts*, Abingdon: Routledge. pp.35-39.

Trotman, D. (2005) "'Looking for Sparks": A phenomenological study of educational practice and the imaginative lifeworld in primary schools', *Teaching Education*, 16 (1) pp. 61-72.

Tucker, S. (2018) 'Pastoral Welfare' in Trotman, D., Lees H.E and Willoughby, R. *Education Studies: The Key Concepts*, Abingdon: Routledge. pp.192-195.

Tucker, S. (2013) 'Pupil Vulnerability and School Exclusion: Developing responsive pastoral policies and practices in secondary education in the UK', *Pastoral Care in Education*, 31 (4), pp.279-291.

Tusa, J. (2003) *On Creativity: Interviews exploring the process*. London: Methuen Books.

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Pastoral Care in Education on 28/01/2019, available online:  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/02643944.2019.1569844>.

Wallas, G. (1926) *The Art of Thought*, London: Jonathan Cape.