



How might we better understand perceptions of  
**CREATIVITY?**

Insight report  
by Jordan Hart

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# What is creativity?

Creativity is a complex term. The definition of the term creativity is “the use of skill and imagination to produce something new or to produce art. Creativity and originality are more important than technical skill” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries: creativity, 2020).

The possibility to the creative mind is endless and as we grow older into maturity, we tend to lose the freedom of our imagination. We start to categorise into what is logical and what is nonsense. Tom Robbins (Brainy Quote, 2020) states “The only limit to your impact is your imagination.” In many cases this is used as motivation for children, however, most people forget the power in which creativity actually has. All of the amazing inventions, and all of the small ones came from someone’s creative mind.



**“The only limit to your impact is your imagination.”**

Tom Robbins: Brainy Quote (2020)

Lego.  
Kim (2017)

# Why creativity?

Creativity has many interpretations and applications. Not everyone acknowledges this, therefore creating a stigma around people with a creative interest. Everyone is born creative, but the skill is choosing to keep it through adulthood. Throughout history, those who have impacted the future have done so through their originality. They saw the world in a new perspective and using this altered viewpoint they managed to change the world. Albert Einstein constantly challenged concepts, not only his own but those that came before him (think creative, 2017). As stated by think creative (2017), Einstein said “Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.” Logic can only take people so far in life, but in order to make a difference you need creativity. The magnitude in which creativity has impacted our lives is unfathomable, yet not everyone sees it this way. Some believe creativity is meant for children. Others think it for those not smart enough to make it in the academic industry. It all stems from educational experiences. Due to these judgements and stigmas, this insight report is aimed with the purpose to investigate the **‘perceptions of creativity’**

**“Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”**

Think Creative (2017)

Mixed media painting.  
Johnson (2018)



# Aims:

# Objectives:

- To review how creativity will impact our future.

- Secondary and tertiary research will be conducted to learn what existing views and insights are out there. This will be performed by searching the internet and reading literature to gain an understanding on what other people have found out.

- To compare how people define creativity.

- For this target there will be a series of study groups, one on one interviews and ethnography to identify the individual insight of different people. These will be from different age groups, education backgrounds and profession/ career aspirations.

- To identify what people know and think about creative facing subjects within education to identify if there is a stigma.

- A series of study groups, interviews, questionnaires and surveys will be conducted to gain these insights.

- To investigate what people know about the creative industry.

- Interviews, surveys and questionnaires will be performed to gather a wide range of personal insights.

- Finally, to explore how creativity is encouraged and taught under an educational environment.

- Insight into this aim will be obtained by interviews and ethnography. This will allow me to identify patterns, themes and extreme personas through a wide range of demographic responses.





Creative industries have grown

**30.6%**

In comparison to the UK average growth of 10.1% between 2011 and 2018

CIC (2019)

# Creativity = the future.

Too often we hear the phrase “I’m not creative” as supported by Sam Lee (2019). As if creativity was a rare talent that has been gifted to a limited few. Creativity means thinking differently. It is not just those who can paint a pretty picture, or make the next fashion trend, it exists in everyone no matter the occupation. According to Alex Gray (2016) the world economic forum states that by “2020 creativity will be within top 3 skills most valued by all industries, after complex problem solving and critical thinking.” The “avalanche of new products” (Alex Gray, 2016) means that people need to adapt to these changes and the way we think. CIC (2019) states that “between 2011 and 2018, creative industries employment has mushroomed by 30.6%, compares the UK average growth of 10.1% during that period.”

As we venture into the uncertain future, the creative industry is leading the way as it is growing faster than other economies. In this day and age companies need to tap into the “creative energy” (Sam Lee, 2016). Robots and machine are being created to crunch the numbers, process the outcomes and take over from manual labour. They get us where we need to be faster, but what can’t they do? Well, they are not as creative as humans (yet). As a species, imagination fuels our future. Without innovation we will never progress and we will get stuck in the past. Tradition is important, but evolving is crucial.



# The investigation:

**“A creative adult, is the child who survived.”**

(Ursula Le Guin, 2013).

Creativity is like a muscle, we all have it, but when exercised it can grow and become stronger. Duncan Wardle (2018), suggests that when you are a child, at Christmas everyone wants the biggest and best present. Though, many children spend the rest of the day playing with the box. Why? It is because it could be anything they want it to be. Anything from a castle, to a rocket. At what stage in life does this creativity stop? Generally, between the age of 6 to present, someone tells you that you are not creative. At some point in life, some people actually believe it. Over time we start to become narrower minded because education teaches us that there is one right answer and it makes us fear failure. Creativity is the opposite: failure brings experience and experience brings originality. Duncan Wardle (2018) implies, being in a work faced environment is like being in an argument, you lack creativity because you always find yourself saying you do not have time to think. A creative industry removes this. Yes, it is still fast paced, but it is aimed at pursuing creative thoughts and unleashing creative potential.

It is stated by Duncan Wardle (2018), that 13% of your brain is used to make quick decisions, but when awake, the link between the conscious and sub conscious parts of your brain are closed. Meaning you cannot access 87% of the rest of your brain. This is why you have historic characters, such as Salvador Dali, that went to sleep with heavy objects in their hands. The idea was that when they fell asleep, the object will drop, waking them up and they would recreate the last thing they remember from their subconscious.

Often, this led to strange and wonderful ideas. The goal was to just access the sub conscious and ultimately unlock their creativity.

Walt Disney re-framed his challenge in July 17th 1955. Instead of creating employees, he created cast members. They wear a costume not a uniform. They work on stage or back stage. He created the best single guest service in the world and he still exist today. All he did was re-express his challenge. (Wardle, 2018)

Creativity requires bravery. You need to be brave to challenge what is considered the norm and innovate. Wardle states “The bravest animal in the jungle is the butterfly. It is amongst the smallest and most delicate, yet it still goes out amongst all the other creatures.”

Another insight gained was one presented by Sir Ken Robinson (2007), where he implies how schools need to prepare and nurture creativity rather than breaking it. We have no understanding of where creativity will lead us in five years, let alone even further. Educators today got to prepare children for their future that no one knows about. Children have extreme capabilities for innovation and creativity but how can we tell them what to expect when we cannot comprehend it ourselves? Robinson (2007) says “my belief is now that creativity in education is just as important as literacy and it should be treated with the same status...” If children do not know something, they will have a go. They are not scared of being wrong. By the time we become adults, most children leave this ability and thought process behind. We stigmatise mistakes and the education system teach us that mistakes are unacceptable. People are being educated out of their creativeness. According to Robinson (2007) Picasso once said “all children are born artists; the problem is to remain an artist as we grow up...” We do not develop creativity, it is taken away. Every country on the planet has a grading of subjects within education. At the top we have mathematics and languages, next the humanities and finally is the arts. According to Sir Ken Robinson (2007) No curriculum in the world teaches drama or art everyday like they do maths and languages. Why not? Maths is very important, but so is creativity. The education system came into place in the 19th century. It was created to meet the needs of the industrial revolution. The hierarchy is separated into 2 ideas.

Idea one, is that the academic subjects are at the peak of the hierarchy. So, you were guided away from subjects you liked, in the belief you could not get a job. ‘Don’t do art, you won’t become an artist.’ Now this is incorrect as the whole world is consumed in a revolution where creativity could become the most important skill set.

Idea two, is academic ability. This has dominated the views of intelligence. The problem is that highly gifted, intelligent but also creative people, assume they are not smart. This is because they have been led to believe this due to stigma. The things that you were good at in school, was not appreciated and even stigmatised.

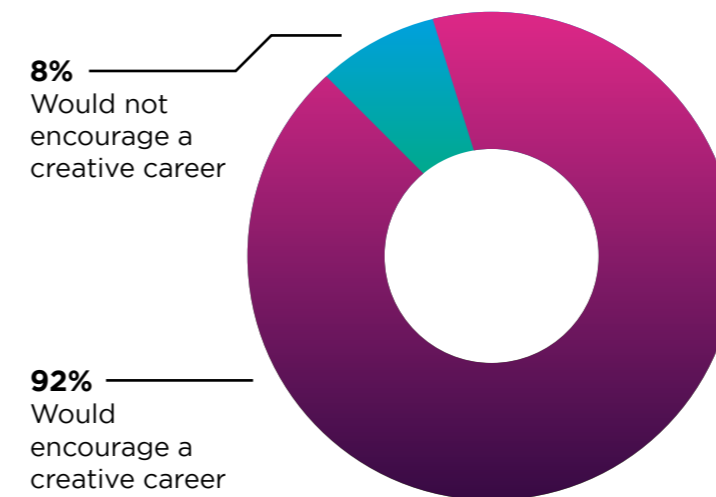
In the next 30 years (Sir Ken Robinson, 2007) we need to embrace and celebrate the genius of the human imagination and pass this knowledge onto the younger generation.

Andreas Wagner (2019), suggests that creativity should be treated as ‘play’. Alexander Fleming, who discovered penicillin, was reprimanded by his employer for having a ‘playful attitude’ to his work. Andreas Wagner (2019) also discussed that Fleming said “I play with microbes...it is very pleasant to break the rules and find something that nobody had thought of.” It circles back to perception.

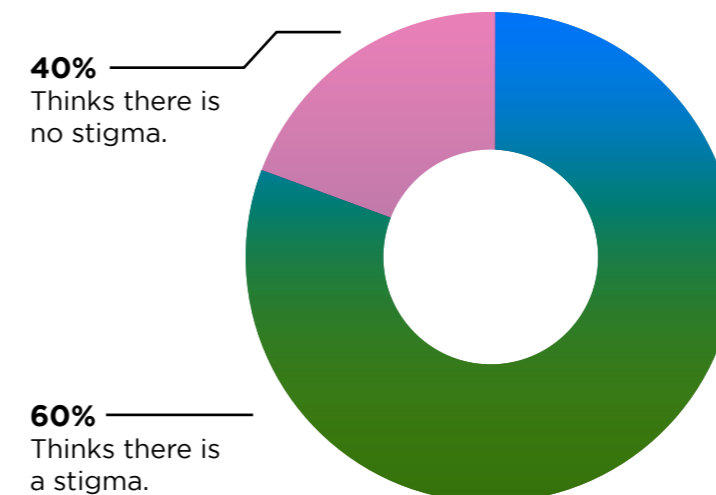
# Surveys:

Two surveys were conducted to gain a wide range of responses that may not have been possible through interviews due to a short time frame. This method was chosen because it allows you to analyse real world data and when done so by the internet it can spread across different cultures and demographics. "When done well, surveys provide hard numbers on people's opinions and behaviours that can be used to make important decisions." (SurveyMonkey, 2020). Initially, this survey was sent out across different social media platforms; including that of Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. These were used because they are popular platforms used by students (past and present) and it allowed a wide range of results to be collected. It was also sent amongst to a study group of 14- 16 year old students. A survey was sent because they did not feel confident having a face on face interview. These answers shown that none of these students understood anything about creativity. In its self, this suggests a lack of education and resources. Intentionally, the purpose for this survey was to gain a general understanding of first hand views around creativity and see if anything they said contradicted any of the information provided.

## Would you encourage your child to get into the creative industry?



## Do you believe that there is a stereotype/ stigma around creative subjects within education?



From these initial readings, the original research question has developed into:

### 'How might we better understand perceptions of creativity within education?'

This is because our future starts with our past and how we got where we are today. Education is where our creativity either strives, or diminishes. There is a gap in the research provided due to the lack of student's opinions. It is all written by journalists, professionals and bloggers and there is no first-hand evidence from students within the creative sector.



**65%** think they are creative.

In total, 21 people answered this specific survey, ranging from 14- 72, with the majority being 16- 18 years old. 65% of the responses believed themselves creative though, it was concluded that 52% (11 out of 21) believe there to be a stigma around creative led subjects within education as it is deemed as 'not cool' or 'irrelevant to society.' 5 in 11 of these responses were from people who have taken/ taking a creative subject. Only 9% of these responses defined creativity as 'anything you want it to be, it is everywhere.'

All the others stated that it is expressing art or making stuff in school. Also taught by the survey, 33% do not understand what a creative profession is and 42% thought it only comprised the top creative subjects. Examples given were art, music and drama. This shows that there is a lack of knowledge. A comment that stood out from this survey came from the question 'how important is creativity within society.' Majority of the responses stated it depends on the context however, one individual stated "it doesn't do much for people, so they do not pay attention." This was a milestone in the investigation as it contradicts most of the findings in saying that creativity does not affect us.

Secondly, a survey was created with the intent to learn the insights from parents. The concept was to understand whether parents would encourage creativity as a career path. For this survey there was 13 responses, 60% where parents and 15% where planning on having children.

### Would you encourage academic over creative within education?

**0%** Said not sure.

Overall, 92% said that they would encourage their child to go into the creative industry, with the average response being, "if it is their passion, then go for it."

However, in contrast to this, the 8% that said they would not encourage their child to go into a creative profession stated that they are "unsure about job security and long-term prospects." This contrasting view is interesting and it backs up the previous survey in regards to there being a stigma around a creative career choice. When the question was altered to 'would you encourage academic subjects over creative', 30% said yes, where the average comment within this 30% was "academia offers more employment options."

**70%** Said not no.

**30%** Said yes.

## Real people, face to face.

Following on from the surveys, a series of interviews and ethnographic studies were conducted to gain a deeper knowledge of personal view points and behaviours. These methodologies were chosen because they enable more in-depth responses that are more personal to the user.

"Interviews are most effective for qualitative research: They help you explain, better understand, and explore research subjects' opinions, behaviour, experiences, phenomenon, etc. Interview questions are usually open-ended questions so that in-depth information will be collected" (Virginia Tech, 2018).

"Ethnography is the description of cultures and the groups of people who live within them. It can be useful in personal adaptation, personal success, and to better understand other cultures." (Melanie Palen, 2019).

Ten interviews were performed to elaborate on some of the patterns and themes identified by the survey. Initially, interviews were undertaken at Coleg Gwent Crosskeys campus to interview students, both creative and academic

Unfortunately, due to the sensitive nature of being with in an education environment, no students or staff were willing to be photographed for documentation. When walking through the halls of the college, the surroundings were analysed and the walls in some areas were bare. For a creative campus, the surroundings did not signify a strong creative culture. Robby, aged 17 (was studying art and design) explained how he thought creativity was only important if the job is creative. By this, he went on to explain how if you are a builder you do not need to know how to draw. Suggesting, that he does not fully understand the potential of creativity. These themes cropped up a few times through the interview process. Are they stuck in tradition? Ryan Preece (2020) said "dip into the past to justify the creativity, but creativity targets the future, not the past..."







Creative crisis  
Maltsev (2018)

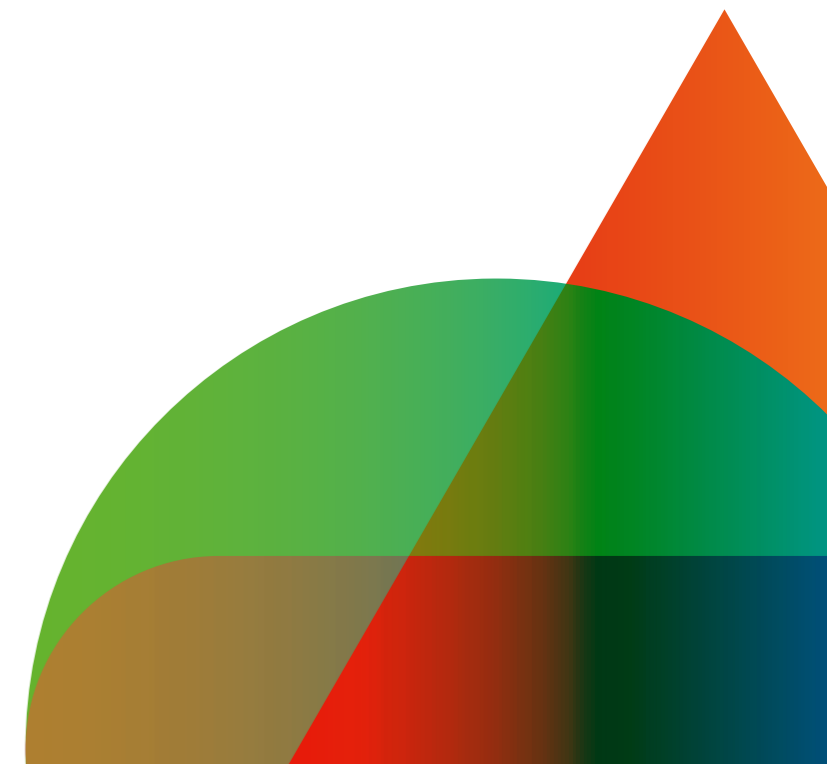
In order to gain a fair insight, interviews were conducted with other students from different courses. Dave, aged 16, studies child care and health. When asked how important he thought creativity is, he said it is important as it allows you to approach a scenario differently. Comparing the contrasts, Dave had a better understanding on creativity than that of Robby. Is it because he is an outside perspective that is not trapped in tradition? "Creativity shapes the future. No creativity, no future" (Kyle, 2020). Kyle was from the game design course. Game design is targeting future technologies and skills. The student went into further detail and explained how he had to teach himself this interest from a young age which was sparked by playing Minecraft many years ago. The past can be used to teach us, but it should not be used to decrease imagination. According to Pamela Kelly (2018), the creative industry is female dominated by 62%. However, Kelly also suggest that there is an exception, whereas males tend to dominate DCMS subjects (Digital, Culture, Media and Sport).

This was made evident and supported by the findings at Coleg Gwent, as the department determined the gender dominance. There is a clear pattern emerging, but it needed to be pushed and tested further within a different academic environment. Next, interviews were undertaken at Gorseinon Gower College in Swansea. This was to see how a different scenery and background can affect how we learn about creativity. When analysing this environment, the walls were barren and it also felt academic. Anthony, whom was a mature student, aged 31, suggested he was a student of the interactive media course, but had a passion for photography. "People see what I do as something a child would, as if it be finger painting." (Anthony, 2020). It was suggested that he got a lot of stigma aimed at his choice to go back into a creative education at a mature point in his life. This backed up the idea of a stigma surrounding courses. Although, this implemented that it is not just other students who create the negative representation but also adults. He also emphasised how his older mates

insisted his passion should be a hobby, not a job. According to the survey aimed at parents, 92% said that they would encourage it. Is the problem friendship pressure and not parent influence? In contrast to the other college, this media class consisted of a recognisable domination of female students. Fraya, aged 18, spoke of how her parents wanted her to become a doctor and pushed her to do A levels. Not having a passion for this, she stuck to what she enjoyed and said how she loves the creative freedom to express herself with purpose. This is an interesting viewpoint that no one else had explained before. Fraya went on to explain how she believes many students have the same urges but they are too afraid to act on it. This insight was very impressive and gave a completely new perspective on the problem as it was about taking a 'risk' for your passion. Finally, in order to not be biased within one course, Catrine, aged 18, who studies photography also got interviewed. "Everyone tries to talk you out of it, but it is your life, so go for it." (Catrine, 2020). Catrine went on to express how she does not know where photography will take her career wise, but she knew what she wanted to pursue. Uncertainty is evident, as a number of students did not know what possibilities awaiting within the creative industry.

"I definitely agree that courses are stuck in the past. There tends to be these older generation of lectures who might not understand where the industry is going. It is not their fault, but they should be encouraging looking to the future rather than painting an apple." (Chris Thomas, 2020)

Furthermore, two older men with families from completely contrasting backgrounds were interviewed to get an older perspective outside of the school culture. Matthew Hood, is a 36 year old plumber, whom dropped out of university when he was 19. He does not believe creative jobs are important and he states how he disagrees about there being university degrees for creative subjects. "It is not hard, it does not deserve to be a degree, they might as well throw them away." Hood believed that it is at the bottom of the career ladder and university should focus on important jobs such as law and psychology. In comparison to this, Adrian Thomas, aged 46, ex-army (currently works as a security guard) believes that "arts and crafts" are "not a proper job." These two perspectives from an older generation suggest that it is a generational ideal and that they do not understand the importance creativity will have on not only their future, but also the future of their children.



# Interviewing the professionals:

Clearly a pattern has emerged through education, it was decided that interviews will be approached to professionals in the creative industry. In tensions for this approach was to see how the professionals felt about current educational influence and their views out in the world of work. When asked, Gareth Hughes (2020), stated that a creative career is the only profession that catered to his “quiz like mind.” He also shares that he believes over the years design has become less of a “black art.” With the rise of technology and creative industry growing by 1.6% in 2018, other sectors only grew by 0.8% (CIC, 2019). The demand keeps growing. Many clients come to creative professionals and expect magic done in a matter of seconds, not understanding the time and skill that it requires. Another view gained was from Karen Williams, who is a project manager from Icon Creative Design. She implies that there is ‘definitely’ a stigma around the creative subjects, because even when she was in education she felt that STEM subjects were pushed and that they looked down on creative sectors as ‘soft subjects.’ STEM careers are a competitor as they tend to get higher paid salaries and more job opportunity. Williams also says that she thinks creativity is not encouraged within schools unless you show a talent in that specific subject. To contradict this she also stated:

“Despite being in the creative industry myself, and a mum of two boys, I can honestly say that I would discourage my children from choosing a creative path knowing the struggles and limitations that’s imposed on the industry. Especially as there is no indication that perceptions are likely to change any time soon. I personally, with hindsight, will be encouraging them to look more closely at careers where there is a definite gap in the marketplace.”  
(Karen Williams, 2020)

# Discussion:

A mass of themes and patterns started to emerge. Highlighting both problems and misconceptions. From these highlighted areas, three extreme personas have been created.



The traditionalists: They value traditional methods of creativity and enjoys subjects like art and music. Being interested in their career, they do not always see the possibilities that are out there. Creativity is important in their progression, but only matters within certain job aspects. Hobbies include: painting, drawing, pottery and photography.



The embracers: These understand the significance of many professions, from game design and interactive media, to child care and science. As an embracer, enjoyment and playing with new technologies is always exciting and they love tackling problems. Believing that creativity should be used no matter the profession, they think that the human race cannot evolve without it.



The academic: Full time career and strongly believes in the superiority if STEM and other academic facing disciplines. Not always enjoying their profession, the academic worshippers enjoy relaxing and enjoying what spare time they have. There is a high opinion that creativity is for children and it is not as important as “proper jobs” as found within the academic environment.

Ultimately, these categories identified four main areas.



# Benefits of creativity:

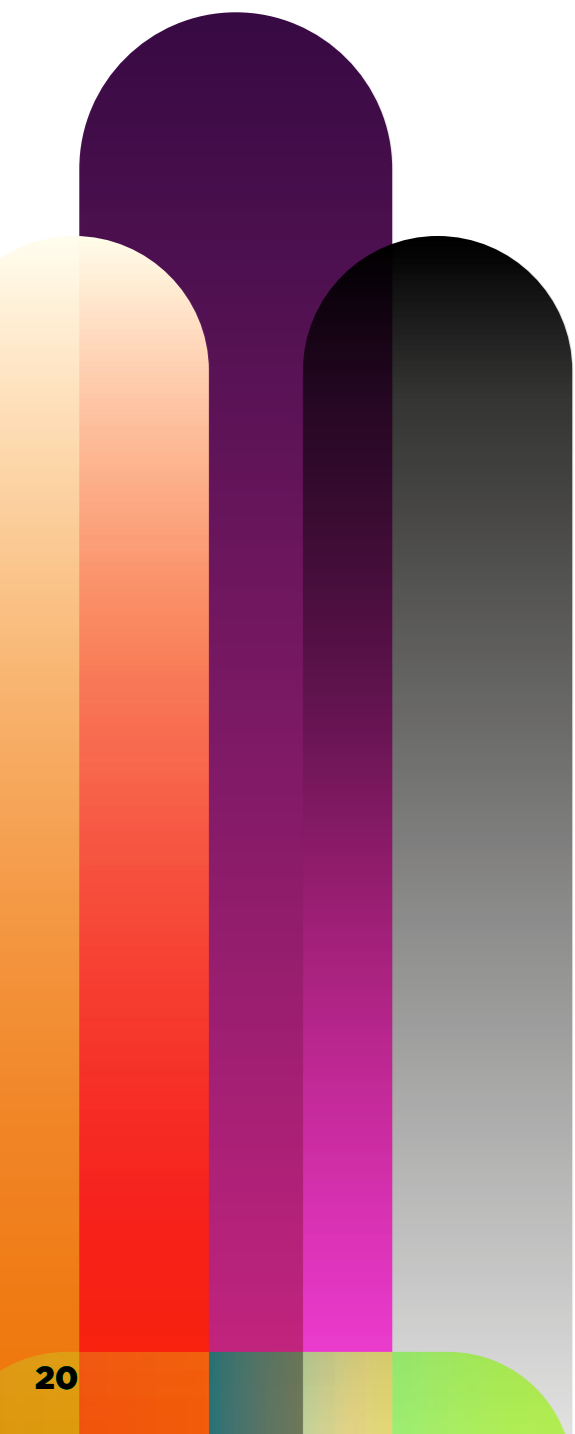
According to Teach Thought Staff (2019), creativity is a valued skill, both in the classroom and in the work place. Almost everyone agrees that creativity is important (supported by survey results), yet budget cuts and lack of funding into these forms of education suggests otherwise. BBC (2015) demonstrates that the amount of professional art teachers has diminished by 11% since 2010 and the number of teaching hours within a creative art sector had dropped by 6%. Educational boards state that they encourage engagement, however, where is the proof? In schools all over the UK, courses such as art, drama and music are being cut out of the GCSE curriculum, due to not enough funding. Studies have been performed by other researches all across the world and it has been discovered that being creative, no matter the subject, has its benefits. Some of these positives include, problem solving, reducing anxiety and stress, improving the ability to focus and it encourages us to be lifelong learners (TeachThought Staff, 2019). Creativity is also known to improve confidence. Although, to contradict this, a pattern that occurred repeatedly was a term stating that creativity is 'not cool'. A hypothesis from this, is that because people do not fully understand the potential within creativity, they fear its unpredictability.

# Stigma:

From the insecurity, people tend to play it safe with careers that have a right answer. Where there is a book telling you what to do. It is used to create this negativity around creative subjects. Karen Williams (2020) of Icon Creative Design, says that many members of the public either see creativity as a dead-end occupation, or it is really hard to get into. Especially when competing against S.T.E.M industries. Parents put these views on their children with the aim of making children consider a safe career choice. Yes, there are difficulties and hardships but there is with any career. All careers offer a degree of uncertainty, but creativity offers a career with no limitations.

"If you're a creative, then you must be strapped for cash all the time, living off tinned food and never really knowing where your next pay cheque is going to come from. If you're a creative, then you must be one of those pretentious types at parties who drink red wine and brag about their latest artistic achievements. But those achievements were probably years ago, because the work trickles in so slowly and inconsistently that eventually you lose faith in your abilities and are driven a little bit mad. It is these ideas that keep most of us from even considering turning our creative skills into a career. But I'm calling bullshit." (Year 13, 2018)

Realistically, creatives are probably some of the most successful people in society. All the big brands, all the big inventions, they all came from someone who had the curiosity to explore their imagination. There is also a fair amount of money in it to, if you get the right idea. Creative professionals are the real winners, because not only do they prove the stereotype wrong, but they actually love what they do. This cannot be said for all careers. The creative industry is a self-motivated trade, you need to be the one to drive yourself to success.



# The creative industry

The term creative industry, means an economic industry that strives and originates around creativity. This can be graphic design, fashion, art etc. It is a culture in its self where creative minded people share their passion with the public and also help bring societies visions to life. According to the Creative Industries Federation (2019), 1 in 8 businesses in the UK are within the creative sector. With the demand and growth of the creative industries, they are growing at three times the UK's average economic rate. Contributing £101.5 billion to the United Kingdom. With such a huge foothold within the UK alone, why are there not more students showing an interest within their education? Pamela Kelly (2018), describes how between 2017 and 2018 the number of graduates within the creative sector had dropped by 5.4%. An assumption made from interviewing college students, is that they do not get educated enough from a younger age.

S.T.E.M tends to get prioritised within the curriculum. It is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Being academic facing, many people think that S.T.E.M. is a higher degree of intelligence than the creative industry, but they are simply different professions.

Creativity can still be applied to even S.T.E.M.

Majority of the interviewees were not fully aware of the possibility's creativity can lead to, demonstrating a lack of understanding. Those whom did know where they wanted to be, implied how they had to research and learn for themselves through their determination and passion. Many students never really explored creativity before college, as lower education offered less variety of creative outlets. Could this mean that they are not informed enough of the options before making the decision to join the creative community? In secondary school, you have to attend all the subjects, until your final years where you choose your GCSE's and prepare for college. If students have not experienced or learnt about all their options, how can they make these decisions? When shown a high talent in a creative subject, it is typical for the student to then be pushed to explore their potential. However, this contradicts itself because until you are educated into unlocking your creative potential, you will never know how far creativity can take you. Everyone is creative in different ways and this should not be judged based on the drawing ability of a 16 year old. Schools themselves only offer limited curriculum in comparison to colleges and universities.

Straight away this shows a flaw in the system where children are being asked to make a choice, after five years of having their creativity restricted by the tyranny of academic priority.

# Stuck in the past?

This was one of the most interesting themes discovered from the investigation. From analysing the survey reviews, interviews and all the other methodologies, a pattern arose. Depending on the course, effected the knowledge and understanding of the student. For example, art students saw creativity to only effect careers in the creative industry. Whereas game design (less traditional and more future technology aimed) saw creativity in everything they did, everything they saw and everywhere they could think of. This led to the question 'does tradition hold us back from reaching our creative potential?' An assumption made from this pattern is that when taught the likes of art or music, you get shown the skills/ tools needed, in contrast to this, game design and other future facing curriculum focus on creative thinking. "Creativity is more important than photoshop." (Ryan Preece, 2020). With modern technology and the limitless internet, anyone can learn how to use software. It is the ability to use your natural creativeness and create original ideas that makes the individual stand out. When questioned, all lecturers said their philosophy was to prepare and educate the students, yet the students are not being prepared for the future and all the possibilities. Technology is advancing, education should advance with it.







## Summary:

Developing from my initial research question of 'how might we better understand perceptions of creativity?' A wide examination allowed insight to be obtained from a variety of directions within the subject. Problems identified from this meant that the initial question evolved into 'how might we better understand perceptions of creativity within education.' This permitted for more precision within the research. Key questions that repeatedly arose, subsequently are about stigma and clinging to past ideals of creativity. People still get criticised, they still get the lectures and they get told that they will never make it. Being creative is stereotyped as not being academically smart; in fact creativity is linked the intelligence due to its nature of problem solving. In conclusion from the findings within this document, four main areas remain to be an issue.

- The stigma around creativity and creative industry.
  - Encouragement of 21st century practice within contemporary creative education.
  - Unlocking the creative potential within students for their future careers.
- Due to these statements, the final question is:

'How might design be used to challenge misconceptions and stigmas about creativity and promote creative thinking in education, with the purpose of educating students towards the importance that creativity plays within 21st century creative industries?'

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