

The Conflicted Other in Policy Making: focusing on Art Education

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Abstract

Dynamics of policy making for education are invested with intersubjective tensions, as different stakeholders seek to meet their changing needs in the shifting ground of neoliberalism. Recent literature emphasising the need for boundary-work seeks to bridge the tensions in order to broker resolutions. I argue that perspectives on boundary-work connecting with the Foucauldian sense of power as relations could benefit from further analysis of the forms of intersubjective conflict involved. Accordingly Sartre's concept of conflicted Otherness is in focus. Through empirical investigation, the stances taken by advisory policy makers and school senior management attempting to navigate directives for art education are theorised. This original approach to such relational boundaries locates key issues in the field of policy studies. It raises questions about the difficulties of aiming for effective collaboration in a climate of protectionist reactions to globalisation, incentivised competition, and the divisive minimisation of creativity in the curriculum.

Keywords: *art education, boundaries, conflict, Other, policy, Sartre*

Introduction

Policy for education in Britain has gone through many changes in the last decade, which can be seen to reflect conflicting political interests, and different approaches to creative learning. There are also indications that the cumulative

effects of neoliberal capitalism have reached a crisis (Adams, 2013; Maisuria, 2014) and an indication of this is the ‘intensified’ acquisition (Fitzgerald Murphy, 2016, p.184) of the resources invested in creative fields of education before 2010. In addressing the literature, I have observed attempts to reconcile the differences between policy actors and those affected by policy, through projected collaborative work to span boundaries (Ball and Junemann, 2012). This call for fluency across the discourses of policy appears to be the most reasonable perspective, but despite research justifying such interventions (Herne 2006, Papanastasiou, 2017), boundary roles in education have recently met with cuts. Schools and policy makers since 2010 have shut down politicised dialogue rather than addressing conflict (Wilkins, 2016).

This paper investigates the relational problematics between central government, advisory policy makers, school senior management and teachers. I put into question how the functions of policy are constructed through maintained positions of difference as forms of ‘othering’, which separate identified roles in education. Having noted that creative education in Britain is under sustained attack from the government (Adams, 2013), I focus on Art and Design education, with a theoretical lens informed by Sartre. I will here explore how this intersubjective conflict is conditioned and incentivised in contemporary education. This research has international relevance as creative learning is here indicative of an area of pressure and ‘othering’, and because the core significance of the arts in the curriculum prior to 2010 contributed to Britain’s connective international presence in creative fields. A presentation of empirical data gathered in the brief era of the ‘New Curriculum’ (2008-10) in England, will be followed by an assessment of the implications for recent changes in policy for art and design education, through data gathered in 2016. The significance of the theoretical lens for this research will then be expanded.

To situate the significance of this investigation of boundaries, I will present an example of the effects of the Academies Bill (2010), which enabled all schools to take up independent academy status (Maisuria, 2014) and the introduction of English Baccalaureate (2010) which excluded creative subjects from the core of five valued academic subjects – and therefore rendered Art and Design non-compulsory. At ‘The Sixth Form College’, as I will anonymise my workplace between 2007-2014, governors and senior management were moving towards academisation. They held a ‘consultation’ meeting in 2012, at which a ballot from the staff that rejected this transition was ignored. Having organised a meeting was seen as sufficient consultation to proceed with becoming an academy. Subsequently the creative faculty was subject to extreme cuts and two departments, music and performing arts were lost entirely. Reflecting on such instances of the exclusion of teachers from life-changing decision-making, I set out to ask questions about barriers to and possibilities for inter-agency collaboration in policy for creative learning. The research participants included key advisory figures in the development of the 2008 National Curriculum for Art and Design, with the ‘critical mirror’ (Sartre, 2008, p. 25) of perspectives from two Assistant Principals at ‘The Sixth Form College.’

There was a surge of investment in the arts in New Labour Britain prior to 2010 and the 2008 curriculum presented a diverse ‘bigger picture’, which sought to enable a greater choice of subject combinations and flexibility of learning content. Under the Coalition and Conservative governments, educational policy has narrowed its perspective to an austere clutch of five academic disciplines in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), to the detriment of creative subject areas (Warwick Commission, 2015). Teachers in subjects such as art and design are immersed in work environments beholden to policy which envisions the arts as areas of limited economic productivity, and therefore ‘non-essential’ (Gove 2010, p. 17). These conditions can be seen to encourage ruthless competition

between schools and intra-hostility between subject areas. In one school I visited in 2017, three of five art rooms had been handed over for English lessons, in another the English department took half of the Head of Art's office space.

Such embodiments of lack of consultation followed by invasive action are microcosms of England's geopolitical tensions, as the government seeks global recognition for standards. They also demonstrate extreme difficulties for policy, in connecting across the outlines of professional roles and bands of hierarchy. With these conditions in focus, I will argue the relevance for a theoretical position that can accommodate factions of difference.

Theoretical Basis: Sartre and conflicted subjectivity

The rationale for my focus on Sartre is motivated by an analysis of the interpersonal problematics in policy making. The relational concept of power in a Foucauldian approach I think still offers critical tools for contemporary theory. However this inquiry questions the reliability of placing emphasis on positive power discourses in addressing what is actually happening in policy relations, through observations of unequal access to such networks. There are indeed contradictions between the *Power/Knowledge* approach to 'power as a productive network' (Foucault, 1980, p.119), and Foucault's historical documentation of force, war, and conflict in politics in *Society Must be Defended*, when he moves away from power as 'relations of production' towards analysing 'a relationship of force' (Foucault, 2004, p.15).

Foucault's identification of power as formed in relationships is however sustained: 'Power is relations; power is not a thing, it is a relationship between two individuals' (2007, p. 135). This statement I think calls in a new humanist approach to engagement and consultation, in support of Hanson who cites

Marcus Morgan's neo-humanism of socially constructed morality and Les Back's *Art of Listening* as current theories moving away from an epistemological approach (Hanson, 2017). I venture that Sartre's presentation of *being-for-others*, as the relational factor in social and ethical choices in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 2003) relates well with Morgan's concept of 'socially constructed' morality in particular the 'agonistic' sense of such dilemmas (Morgan 2014, cited in Hanson, 2017, p. 12).

In addressing relational issues as they have emerged in policy making for art education, I identify the motivations for distancing the self from the Other and for continuing relationships of conflict. I will later investigate positions of subjectivity as they emerge in interview data, specifically focusing on forms of self-definition in relation to the other.

The relevance of Sartre for education in the 21st century appears in discussions of agency in learning (Howell, 2008), social responsibility (Detmer, 2005) the shifting of oppressive institutionalised traditions (Papastephanou, 2009), and the plurality of freedoms in artistic expression and creative pedagogies (Matthews, 2008; 2018; Thornton, 2013). If we, as interconnected individuals, can be considered as *all* having the potential for transformative agency or 'free-will', we nevertheless exist in recurrent conflict with the Other, since we perceive them as a barrier to our aims in life: 'the alienation of my possibles' (Sartre, 2003, p. 293). Our goals are therefore dissipated by the different aims of others in our social interactions. Yet there is also a *positive* self-identification through difference, as the subject requires this delineation of self to outline a *preferred* identity – and role within society. This is worth remembering, as we seek to understand why it is that people maintain and fight for difference, and why political conflict is an ongoing factor of existence.

Sartre represents the Other in *Between Existentialism and Marxism* as a ‘critical mirror’ (2008, p. 25) whose ‘look’ puts our own subjective experience into perspective as ‘fixed in the midst of the world’ (Sartre 2003, p. 292) creating the sense of who we are as our *being-for-others*. In taking this stance, Sartre sets out to contradict theories of the self which emphasise ‘being-with’ others, in a form of community termed *mitsein* (Heidegger, 1967). Even in collective communities, dynamics of self-definition through difference can be suppressed in any situation when one person or group can take more power than another.

In this sense we might relate to the concept of subjectification, as detailed by Foucault in terms of the ‘function’ of the self within a defining system (1982, p.787), since the social and historical discourses that influence our life choices can be seen to construct the relational activities of *being-for-others*. Taking this into account, I will observe that Sartre raises the significance of the range of possibilities for movement between the different driving forces that act upon the self, towards an ethical alignment. With the assistance of time for reflection, such possibilities present a basis for choice in decision making, and the scope for positions of difference.

The emphasis here is on unpacking the manifest difficulties of relational interaction, considering the premise that: ‘The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the *Mitsein*; it is conflict’ (Sartre 2003, p. 451).

Interpreting this statement in the context of education, we may observe that the forms of social collectivity which can be achieved need to be consciously resourced and worked for. A view through Sartre can here be paralleled with Levinas, who presented the pain of ‘traumatic intersubjectivity’ (Coelho and Figueiredo, 2003, p. 18). If we take account of the current crisis in democracy as observed by Matthias Lievens (2017), the significance of a critical perspective of alterity in conflict is evident.

For Sartre, as for Levinas, a conclusive Hegelian synthesis between the choices made by different selves is not possible. The Other is never completely understood and appears as a pre-conscious *being-in-itself*: as an *object*. This objectification of the other is enacted – sometimes in extremes, through oppression, dehumanisation and lack of intercultural understanding. I will contextualise this view of subjectivity in contemporary educational policy, as relations constructed through globalised comparisons of what it means to learn ‘the required skills’ (Carter, 2015, p. 3). Educators in Britain are urged to focus on their role in forming themselves and their students as a national product which ‘must compete with those around the world’ (DfE, 2016, p. 8). These policy directives goad management, and therefore teachers and students, to mobilise their urges for self-fulfillment *now*, towards envisioned standards.

To navigate the obstacles and conditioning structures that surround us, Sartre proposes that the subject engages in an ongoing struggle towards fulfillment in a mode of self termed *being-for-itself*. As soon as one is goal achieved, another takes its place. This perception of ever shifting goals and accompanying changes in motivation can be compared to processes in the policy development cycle (Alcock, Daly and Griggs, 2008). When viewed in its positive sense *being-for-itself* is the aspect of subjectivity that urges the investigation of new experiences, and the movement out of passive learning patterns, into positions informed by awareness of the self in the world.

The for-itself is seen by Sartre as compelling us towards freedom, through an urge for release from the precedent. Yet this freedom is conditional upon our relationship with *being-for-others*. The formative effects of other external influences on the self also mean that we are not ‘able to modify the situation at our whim’ (Sartre, 2003, p.503). Sartre deals with the divisive actions of social conditioning, particularly in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960); this

treatment of ‘divide and rule’ social processes could be placed in dialogue with Foucault’s discussion of the ‘dividing practices’ in society that objectivise the self (Foucault, 1982, p.777). I will later explore these tensions through data analysis.

We could seek the potential for meaningful in-depth connections in Sartre that acknowledge affective processes. Rae discusses the Sartrean ‘we-relation’ in which substantial, genuine exchanges can be created between subjects, as ‘a plurality of subjectivities’ (2009, p. 61). Within the cycle of policy making I will argue here that such empathic and in-depth relationships are preempted by the lack of meaningful consultation with all parties concerned, and the expectation of compliance.

Methodology

Initial considerations of how teachers could become more empowered through involvement in policy making discourses, led to research among advisory policy makers in Art and Design education and figures in senior management. In taking this approach my role in education was operationalised as a teacher-researcher (Kincheloe, 2003). To increase the depth of the data, a range of qualitative methods were used including semi-structured interviews and discursive interpretation of historical and incoming education policy. The interview transcripts were analysed to locate driving factors behind the subjectivities expressed (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003) that could be identified as influencing the perceptions of participants.

The ‘policy maker’ participants involved in this research include firstly those who have been involved in creating educational policy for art and design, and secondly senior management figures who adapt national policy and create localised school policies. All participants, and their associated locations and

organisations are anonymised to safeguard ethical research processes. The first group of participants comprised 5 senior figures: *David* worked in policy for art and design education, there were 2 regional Art Advisers - *Jim* and *Pete*, a strategist in curriculum provision - *Simon*, and a policy leader in an educational arts organisation - *Louise*. The 2 senior management figures *Ron* and *Tim*, were Assistant Principals at my workplace (2007-14), 'The Sixth-Form College'. They had both been in education since the early 1980s. I also interviewed a local MP, in the area of the college. All of the participants were white British, and all but two were male. Initial interviews took place in 2009. Further data was collected through interview and email exchanges in 2016, to address changes in the participants' interface with policy.

Written consent was given by all respondents, and all were sent the transcripts of their interviews for reciprocal verification. The sample of respondents is indicative, rather than aiming to be comprehensive. This research intends to form qualitative in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and contextual factors. Themes identified in analysing the transcripts inform the basis of the theoretical analysis.

Locating the Barriers 2008-2010

In 2009 national policy actors and case study senior management figures at the Sixth Form College were approached as different research groups, in a form of boundary-work. As stated, the intention was to question how barriers were arising between these groups and the teaching profession. Themes emerging in the data analysis included the policy makers' formulation of the self as critic of conditions in education. Historicisation of current policy changes, as they were seen to relate to the subject's past experience, also recurred between participants. Among the responses there was a recurrence of blame for the lack

of effective policy, which was attached to specific figures, groups and organisations.

The data was analysed for aspects of collaborative networking, as a Foucauldian ‘productive network’ of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980, p. 119) and a concept of being-with others relating to Heidegger, rather than a Sartrean situation of conflict with others. Art Adviser Pete saw his role as a ‘conduit’ between policy makers and school art departments. This concept became significant for the analysis. Others talked about the boundary resources and activities they created: David in Art and Design policy, worked to forge networking opportunities for teachers, further subject related training and up to date online information about policy. Simon in curriculum quality and control created online resources for management and teachers to understand curriculum recommendations. It was noted however that the participants expressed forms of antagonised subjectivity in policy making, with varying levels of intensity.

Art Adviser Jim had a particular grievance about what he saw as the squandering of resources on ‘Art Links’ organisation, which he thought refused to connect meaningfully with schools. Simon thought that teachers were not proactive enough in taking up opportunities to take part in policy consultation. David blamed senior management for their insularity and slow uptake of new policy initiatives. This criticism related to Louise’s concern that many schools were keeping teachers ‘in house’ for generic professional training, and not permitting them to attend external training and networking events. In contrast, Ron in senior management located issues in effective policy making with vote seeking politicians. These participants presented active constructs of what I view through Sartre as the conflicted Other.

To engage with the issues presented in the data I will focus on the interview transcripts of two participants, focusing on the counterbalancing positions between Art and Design policy maker *David* and Assistant Principal *Ron*. David was involved in developing the ‘New Curriculum’ for Art and Design which was brought in by the Labour government in 2008; then the Coalition took power in 2010 and erased it. David had great visions for the ‘blue sky thinking’ of the 2008 curriculum, celebrating its 27 aims as goals ‘you can’t argue with.’ In this statement I locate the drive of *being-for-itself*, as an urge towards freedom and escape from the constraints of precedent. However the emerging policy initiatives were seen as being at the mercy of senior management’s potential positions of conflict. The subjectification of *being-for-others* presents an obstacle, which in this case became more than a cloud on the horizon. When discussing whether the ‘New Curriculum’ held the basis for creative freedom in education David personified the obstacle:

I think the problem is with senior management... I mean there is an acknowledgement that senior management are the make or break. Some, a minority, have embraced it, and are really moving things on fast and others have just stuck their head in the sand, or there’s no change. This is the biggest change in education, certainly since 1944 and possibly ever, really.

David portrayed senior management as inflexible thinkers, who liked packaged subject areas, rather than interdisciplinary working. He saw this limiting tendency as a regression towards 19th century forms of control and social division. In this we may see the serialisation of the workforce that Sartre discusses as ‘a structure of serial alterity’ (2004, p. 204), and Foucault observes as power/knowledge boundaries enforced through ‘dividing practices’. He viewed the Art and Design curriculum as momentous progress, pitching its importance as potentially beyond the 1944 Education Act – which provided

state education for all, since the 2008 curriculum was projected towards education for all aged 0-19. David was keen to see the New Curriculum implemented before impending changes from the Conservatives – if they were to be elected in 2010.

Policy makers are consistently called upon to justify their actions, and their positions of power over the production and distribution of knowledge in educational settings. They are therefore all the more pressurised to deflect positions of blame outside their professional role. With this acknowledgement, as we examine what happens when new policy is launched, it becomes apparent that there is a ‘quarantining’ barrier created by the school management, to observe whether the policy will disrupt the school ethos, administration and curriculum. This barrier reinforces the boundaries of conflicted otherness, appearing as a distrust of any intended ‘we-relation’ between those enacting policy and the stakeholders.

Assistant Principal Ron was one of those not impressed by the ‘New Curriculum’. Ron was sceptical about changes in national policy. When asked: ‘What provisions are there in government educational policy that you think can assist autonomous learning and creative freedom of choice? He responded: ‘I don’t think that it’s actually opening up freedom.’ In response to the question: ‘What barriers do you see currently in government, school and Further Education professionals working collaboratively?’ Ron looked outside the institutional walls and saw the difficulties as being caused by vote seeking political objectives.

So in terms of government and the political side of it, I would say that the differences in agenda are the barrier to working collaboratively...Often they have got a political mass and they have to please them.

Obstacles to fulfilling trajectories in education policy development are constructed by Ron as being maintained by political ideologues that attempt at once to please and corral the dehumanised ‘mass’ of the electorate. Voters are here portrayed as a force, to be politically incentivised towards compliance. He suggested the runaway self-importance of politicians as figures of power, which is far from an actualisation of the ‘Importance of Teaching’ (Gove, 2010). Ron presented the possibility for future connections between policy makers and educators, but spoke about the difficulties of working in competing hierarchies:

I think there are chains of command, lines of authority, and I’m not sure if that really implies ‘working together.’ I think it’s quite possible for a better degree of co-ordination between the different strands of policy, between the various levels at which things are implemented. But certainly within the way things are at the moment, I don’t think the input from educational institutions and classroom practitioners is particularly valued by those who set policy.

What emerges from Ron’s data is the expression of experiences of exclusion in the developmental stages of policy for education. He perceives a division in processes of implementation, formed through separate professional ‘chains of command’, in contrast to ‘working together’ via lateral processes of interconnection.

David in art and design education, worked on initiatives which set out to bridge the divide between policy for the arts and provision for young people. We could say that he set out to establish the affective connections of a ‘we-relation’ in policy making that had relevance for young people, in developing sociable and creative learning experiences. He demonstrated success in this venture in discussing his involvement in developing *The Cultural Offer* (2008-10), a New Labour policy which stated that young people should have access to five hours of creative activity per week. The Offer included national initiatives such as

Find Your Talent, which showcased young people's art projects in major arts venues. He celebrated what he portrays as effective exchanges that existed in 2009 between different arts organisations.

[Find Your Talent] includes government departments. It's the DCSF [Department for Children Schools and Families] it's the Arts Council, Crafts Council, Design Council, Museums, Libraries and Archives, MLA. So these are all institutions, government institutions and quangos working together in a common cause, and there is no problem at that level.

The definition of self through difference from the Other, as signified by professional 'level', role and motivations in education can be seen in David and Ron's data in their observations about how the thinking processes of professionals in education can be perceived. David said in discussion of issues in collaboration:

I think its educational management very specifically in schools. I think it's school senior management. I think there's a wooliness.

In parallel, though completely unaware of this response from David, Assistant Principal Ron also identified the perception of teachers as 'woolly': meaning lacking a critical purchase on curriculum and policy issues. When asked how he thought government, national and local institutions could work together to implement policy and report on its application he said:

I still think that the view is of teachers being a liberal, washy, woolly, child-centred, weak whatever, group of people who aren't realists.

Ron identifies a stereotyped concept of the 'view of' the teaching profession, as envisaged in the eye of the policy-maker. Both participants have registered the

difficulties of understanding the different motivations or interests of the Other – which is presented as a preconscious *being-in-itself*, when forming and implementing policy. Ron still presents an affinity with teachers – although in senior management he is in a position distanced from their role. Through Ron’s perspective, the ‘caring’ nature of teachers is characterised by policy makers as a ‘woolly’ lack of clarity around social realism in policy issues.

Having identified intersubjective tensions in policy making in the data, I will now focus more particularly on the participants’ approaches to creative learning. David was against the narrowing of the National Curriculum and the rhetorics of standardisation which clamp down on experimental creative teaching. He recalled the days of being able to ‘just teach’ without standardisation. He observed a drive towards continuous assessment, introduced in the Education Reform Act of 1988. The controversial SATS tests were implemented as a result of this Act. David sees this policy, brought in under Thatcher, as the turning point for control of freedom in educational practice. When asked if he thought the ‘New Curriculum’ (2008) would enable creative freedom of choice and autonomy in schools he responded:

I suspect that schools are not that keen on freedom really. I mean they are institutions which exercise a lot of social and other kinds of control, and that’s really the antithesis of creativity.

David’s overview position on the post-1988 ‘not that keen’ school is that it is organised on principles as ‘the antithesis of creativity’, set in opposition to experimental and interdisciplinary practices, and producing a narrow form of ‘school art’, which is a limited version of fine art, excluding craft and design elements.

Ron's consideration of creativity in learning reflected the forms of control that David criticised: he said there should be more 'thought about what actually creative thought and learning *is*. It's not the same as play is it?' It appears through this distancing of play from *thought* that creativity should be *dissociated* from play, rather than distinguished from it; Ron's response could be seen to present this antithetical position as a fear of freedom in learning. When asked about how the 'New Curriculum' changes might affect the provision for education he said:

Actually if syllabuses change and become more free-ranging and broad ranging, what implications does that have for trying to follow a curriculum after that? If you're trying to plan, I don't know, a history course.

This statement could be interpreted as confirming David's perception of senior management as risk-averse, and keen to streamline the curriculum to tried and tested content. Again, Ron attempts to place himself back in the subjectivity of the teacher, but in this sense envisions policy which preconditions the teacher's ability to *plan* curriculum as the need *to follow*. This pre-empting of teacher autonomy in planning, through the managerial filtering of policy, is one factor in the continued disempowerment of practitioners in post-2010 policy.

Increased power was placed in the hands of school management, and cuts were made in networking roles, independent of the government, such as the art advisers who had acted as a 'productive network' or 'conduit' between the national and the local.

Post-2010: 'Make or Break' to Breaking the Making

For a post-2010 reflection on intersubjective tensions in policy making for art education, I will present the policy climate and discuss the effects on the roles of the research participants I had interviewed in 2009. I will then discuss

thematics in the transcript of the 2016 interview with David, relating to intersubjective tensions in the decentralisation of the arts and the resituation of the Other in the light of policy changes.

Through the 2010 election, British education policy as we knew it under New Labour was shaken to the ground, by a nominal ‘Coalition’ that saw the Liberal partnership position obliterated by Conservative dominance. The publication of Gove’s White Paper ‘The Importance of Teaching’ (2010) trumpeted a new era of neo-liberal appropriations of the meaning of ‘freedom’, in which individuals would participate in the ‘big society’ by ‘shaping their own destiny, and becoming masters of their own fate.’ (Gove, 2010, p. 6). This distance led ‘autonomy’ actively sought to shape the destinies of young people in a skills-based curriculum, towards the perceived needs of industry. Geo-politicised comparisons were used to justify this subjectification, relying on indicators such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey. Art and Design was devalued from its statutory position, among other creative subjects designated as ‘non-essential’ (Gove 2010) by the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This ‘block of capacity’ (Foucault, 1982, p.787) comprises 5 GCSEs in English, maths, science, a modern foreign language and geography or history.

There was a period of some months after May 2010, in which the policy makers who had worked with the resourcing of New Labour, waited to see what would happen when the dust cleared. Through this haze, their networking ‘quangos’ were disconnected and their dissolution planned. In email correspondence on September 21st 2010, David said: ‘there seems to have been a vacuum since May 6th’. Reprising the question of collaboration between professionals in educational policy, David responded:

There seems to be no willingness on the part of government to consult or work collaboratively. Letters to ministers and the Secretary of State have not been answered. It is understood that there is a huge backlog of correspondence at the DFE which may explain this or, maybe, they just don't want to collaborate. If they don't want to – see us tainted by New Labour – we can't make them...

We know the new primary curriculum has been scrapped and the new Secondary Curriculum is to be 'reformed'. A consultation is promised on EYFS [Early Years Foundation Stage] but we'll need to wait for a White Paper in December to know much more. This is all very depressing, especially it is far too early to evaluate the impact of the NSC [New Secondary Curriculum]. More change for change sake? We know Gove wants a 'knowledge based curriculum, whatever that means.

David then discussed the axing of the 14-19 New Diplomas, the abolition of the quangos, Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA); British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) and massive budget reductions for the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) and Arts Council England (ACE). It appeared that there was a refusal to communicate, but there was information gleaned about the demolition of New Labour associated cultural infrastructure which appeared to be 'change for change sake', and the movement towards a 'knowledge based' banking education economy (Freire, 1996) rather than a creative, problem-solving and entrepreneurial economy.

David's consideration of whether he and confederates were politically 'tainted' as Other seemed to be born out by the changes in roles that he and other research participants described when I contacted them again in 2016. At this point I wanted to reassess the participants' reflections on possibilities for collaborative working and for creative freedom in art education, and to review the theoretical lens on this basis.

Seeking to continue the comparison between policy makers and senior management, I approached the Assistant Principals of the Sixth Form College in 2016. I had left the college in 2014 to start teaching in Higher Education, therefore I no longer had access as ‘an insider’. Ron had also left the college, and the Principal had been asked to leave by the governors following successive Satisfactory Ofsted inspections. When I inquired about Ron in September 2016, the current Principal said he had no knowledge of Ron or the other AP participant: ‘I am afraid I don't know these people sorry... I have only been in post since August.’

I did however have email exchanges with the policy maker participants, and David agreed to be interviewed again. Revisiting the two Arts Adviser research participants from 2009, I found they had moved towards other consultancy roles. Their prior roles in policy making had been negated by the government’s disbanding of the quangos as independent advisory organisations. The participants had therefore evolved their professional activity to survive the changes. One of them – like David, had started developing arts curriculum abroad – in countries that were seeking to build up creative subjects. There is some irony in this, considering that international comparisons are used as a justification for reduction in resourcing of the arts.

David had left the organisation he had worked with since the 1980s. I was interested to see how he would present the changes in educational policy. When I talked to him in 2016 he was still very angry at what he called the ‘scrapping’ of the 2008 curriculum.

The evidence at the time was that it was going really well. But it was scrapped, which was an outrage. There was no justification for it.

He responded with great sadness to the Coalition and Conservative destruction of the organisations, which had networked to develop policy and provision for art education. David reflected on the demise of the Arts Advisers, two of which I had interviewed, who had given regional support to programmes of learning in schools saying:

The Art Advisers were a very powerful group. Virtually all, if not every authority, had an Art Adviser, or someone responsible for art. And obviously they did in-service and looked at standards...I think I'm right in saying there's not a single adviser left in the country. There's a few people working freelance, but schools aren't very keen to invest in CPD for art teachers.

Here David records the destruction of an alternative form of power network, and the role of figures associated with this, as this impacted on schools, on provision for art education and on the people who had worked in these connective roles who had been isolated through the negation of their areas of activity. As Louise had observed in 2009, David identifies the lack of investment in specialist Continuing Professional Development for art teachers, and the prevalence of generic training on the school site as barriers to networking in art education. This standards based normalising training is a mainstay of academies and multi-academy trusts (MATs) in England. The concept of Art and Design as a subject area not requiring specific skills development recurs as David discusses the development of the 2013-14 National Curriculum:

The reality there was actually nobody in the department with any knowledge of art and design when they were developing National Curriculum. No one had a clue really.

David reflects on policy changes which have projected a curriculum based on ‘skills and knowledge’ (Carter, 2015, p. 3) yet seek to move creative subject areas out of considerations of expertise. As stated earlier, the prioritisation of the EBacc subjects was justified through international comparisons that situated Britain in a declining position of academic achievement. The EBACC was seen as a route to a more solid economic position.

In reaction to what I see as a nationalist panic in reaction to globalisation, David like other senior figures in art policy, had started developing the art curriculum of other countries. He said of previous colleagues: ‘They’ve all set up consultancies doing work for, mainly overseas...but I don’t think that’s worked...It’s a terrible waste, of people with lots of experience really.’ This sense of the arts as *conflicted otherness* is continued in relation to Higher Education, in which David sees learning in the arts as an ‘irritant faculty in most universities,’ supported by the presence of fee paying international students and those educated in independent schools as ‘kids from the State sector are being directed away.’ This view of the channelling of state school students into EBacc subjects that are perceived to have higher economic yield is supported by the Warwick Commission’s report (Neelands et al, 2015) which charts the declining socio-economic and cultural diversity in British students’ access to art education.

Within what is experienced as a ‘wasteful’ dispersal of expertise in the arts, and the seismic changes in resourcing for learning in the arts, David’s pre-2010 position on the barriers to collaboration in policy making had significantly changed.

I noted that in 2009 David had placed particular emphasis on the conflicted role of senior management in schools and their power to ‘make or break’ the

emerging National Curriculum for Art and Design. Reflecting on what he termed ‘the halcyon days’ pre-2010, he expressed a resituated position regarding senior management figures in schools, who in 2016 elicited a more sympathetic reaction:

Well they’re terrified aren’t they? [Senior Management]: there’s targets, all the EBacc stuff and so on. And at the moment they’ll try to go through with that.

In the light of the Conservative changes in policy, senior management are dehumanised by David as an oppressed ‘terrified’ group, in fear of losing their school’s performance in the league tables through poor EBacc results. He appears hopeful that this will be a temporary position of ‘the moment’, leaving room for them to respond differently in less pressurised conditions.

There is however a key obstructive figure who replaces the ‘head in the sand’ school Principal. David identifies the Minister of State for School Standards (henceforth MfS) as art education’s key adversary. Presenting MfS as a salient contentious figure, David said: ‘He’s got a totally blinkered view. He’s always right. He can’t be reasoned with.’ MfS was characterised as the ‘blinkered’ bouncer of educational policy. He was described as refusing to concede in debate or to listen to contrary evidence, as a figurehead for non-democratic policy making. Having created a consultation session for subject advisers, he refused to listen to their positions on policy changes, in a similar manner to the initial example I gave of nominal consultation of teaching staff regarding the transition to becoming an academy. MfS was seen as ejecting the reasoned position for creative subjects in the EBacc as if these subjects were a foreign body in the eye of the Conservative government.

Space for Contention and Otherness

I will now theorise the constructions of subjectivity and the interrelational tensions of policy making represented here. We can observe a key difference in the political aims prior to 2010 and after the election: New Labour invested in policy makers for the arts who were aiming for a ‘we relation’, and becoming frustrated with groups who did not, or were not able to, respond. From May 2010 the political insurgents aimed to court insularity and control multiplicity, devolving power to schools as divided units so they could divide and organise their own ‘human resources’. As noted, this strategy of capitalism can be defined through the concept of ‘seriality’ via Sartre, and ‘dividing practices’ observed by Foucault.

Interpreting the data for 2008-10, I found that the focus participants identified a conflicted Other as the cause of barriers to shared goals in policy development and implementation, David in criticising senior management, and Ron in distrusting politicians. They did have ideals of collaborative being-with and *working with* others: David more so than Ron expressed his experience of productive collaborative working in ‘a common cause’, with what Sartre would term the ‘fused group’ (Sartre, 2004) approach to prioritising focus areas.

David was in favour of the Labour government (1997-2010) and he justified their policies as moving in the right direction for arts and culture. He saw senior management as the specific barrier to the ‘New Curriculum’ (2008) which favoured creative subjects and free communication with other professional groups working with young people. David grouped the thinking processes of senior management as a pre-conscious, *being-in-itself* position, which does not relate to the outside world or to developments in society. David is set in contrast to this position: intending to develop the reach of

policy towards diversity – in subject matter, cultural and historical context, and across all forms of art and design. He defines the Other of senior management as lacking critical awareness: their muffling of the materiality of policy interventions is a ‘wooliness’.

Here, in relation to the perceived opacity of managerial thinking processes, Ron defended against the same criticism of ‘wooliness’ in the teaching profession, identifying a *mitsein* among teachers, and not separating himself as a management figure – as he thought the whole teaching profession was alienated from policy development. He expressed ‘the phenomenon of *care*’ (Heidegger 1967, p. 157) and ‘common concern’ (Ibid. 159) among teachers. In doing so Ron had smoothed over the boundary of his position in senior management.

Ron’s discourses can be seen to relate to Sartre’s account of how the Other is projected as a barrier to freedom, in his disillusionment with policy directives, and observations made about distanced relationships between professionals. Ron indicates hierarchical stand-offs between groups of professionals, who seek to establish their place in ‘lines of authority.’ This intentional separation and stratification provides an indication of the persistent conflict (Sartre) and ‘traumatic’ (Levinas) intersubjective processes involved in forming and implementing policy.

Having analysed the transcripts for David and Ron, among the other policy maker and senior management research participants, they appeared to present the polarity of the obstructive Other that each located as an impediment to productive networking in policy making. However there were near connections in their ideals for education. Both saw the division in approaches to learners on academic and vocational courses as a confining form of social construction of

the learning subject: David talked of the persistent ‘so-called vocational-academic split’ which channels students into skilled labour or to professions with higher social status. Ron thought that changes in the ‘New Curriculum’ would not unseat ‘the old tri-partite system’ of elitist divisions set in place by the 1944 Education Act. This view was borne out by post-2010 interest in building new selective Grammar schools. Perhaps these research participants would have been able to strike an agreement on some areas of policy making if they had ever met, but they were unlikely to do so as their working roles were set in divergent patterns of activity.

In practice David and Ron struggled with intersubjective tensions, as their ideals were cut across and thwarted by institutional ‘chains of command’ (Ron) and the ‘make or break’ of oppositional managerial forces (David). A view of these tensions through Sartre’s conflicted Other can I think assist identification of the barriers to collaboration, and provide a rationale for why policy makers frustrate many by initiating change when the realisation of prior goals is barely formed in the minds of stakeholders.

Through my analysis of the data it emerges that between 2008-2010, in a surge of greater support from the government for the arts in education, tensions between different pockets of empowerment, and resistance to what were seen as short-term changes, were preventing effective collaboration in policy development. These findings correspond with Papanastasiou’s observations of ‘persistent boundary tensions’ (2017, p. 93) between individuals in intently different roles, which they indicate as a ‘distinct human profession’ (Ibid. p. 94).

With the incoming government in 2010, the political support for connective working in educational policy was sharply withdrawn. The positioning of

intersubjective conflict was resituated at arm's length from the government (Wilkins, 2016), via academisation and the competition between schools to achieve in the league tables. The shift towards school autonomy, which courts insularity, has effected increased internal division between the more empowered management and the less empowered teachers. This disempowerment of teachers on an institutional basis took particular effect on those working in the creative subject areas (Warwick Commission, 2015; National Society for Education in Art and Design report, 2015-16).

Continuing the theoretical analysis in the post-2010 policy context, the Minister for Standards was presented in 2016 as the new highly abrasive conflicted Other, closing routes for freedom and creativity in learning. As such, he was characterised by David through a language of dissociation, as though he is impervious and impermeable. This is the perception of the Other as *being-in-itself*: with MfS as an object without a social consciousness to engage with. This analysis corresponds with Magrini's (2013) observation of accentuated positions of conflict and alienation in education since 2010. Such aggravated tensions can be observed in the competitive ethos of 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' (2016).

It would appear that post-2010 attempts to condense a national identity of learning are seeking to avoid the risk-taking and proactive problem solving of creative subjectivities. There is a move towards a concretisation of teaching and learning subjects, absorbed in the perceived needs of industry. This compression of subjectivity, which we now see in the Brexit mentality of 'hard' skills and concrete isolationism through *intentionally maintained difference* from the EU, is starting to effect a protectionist plug to the flow and international interchange of creative energies and skills.

Recent policy for learning in the arts is seen by David as a ‘critical mirror’ of his perspective on possibilities for collaborative inclusive provision in the curriculum. He perceives this reflection of the arts as an ‘irritant’ Other, which disrupt the implementation of educational policy - as it is intended to create social status-quo. Through this account, those in governance are seen to be evaporating the *presence* of decision-makers in the arts. In the development of the National Curriculum for Art and Design 2013-14, David says that: ‘No one had a clue really’. Art is thereby reconstructed as a non-entity, as are other creative forms of learning, with an evacuated consciousness shifted out of valued forms of social engagement.

Reports by the Warwick Commission (Neelands et al, 2015) and the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD, 2015-16) do not of course underline the obstructive position of MfS as a policy figure. They are however supportive of David’s observations on the effects of post-2010 educational policy on the prospects and choices of young people, who are being conditioned towards normative forms of participation in society. Education policy post-2010 has sought to silence dialogue between the government and arts educators, defending the tactics of austerity in a form of ‘silent war’ (Foucault 2004, 16). This tactical silencing is apparent in the dismantling of advisory networks, that acted as ‘conduits’ between central policy and schools. The governing interest appears to be in centralising maintained positions of conflict – to direct and divide, rather than enabling creative methods of self-definition through difference and diversity.

Page markers for ongoing dialogue

In this article I have presented an analysis of intersubjective tensions in policy for Art and Design education which crosses political eras. The international relevance of this research is located in presenting an approach to addressing

crises in democracy through an emphasis on understanding conflict in policy making, and the efforts to conceal it. The focus on art education in Britain draws attention to how this area, and the creatives emerging from the field, are being projected as an irritant factor, rather than a cause for international celebration.

I have focused on a view through Sartre, my intentions being to provide a discursive theoretical investigation which can locate barriers to collaboration in policy, and provide a working lens for the ongoing difficulties in making intersubjective connections. This approach is additional to a relational Foucauldian perspective, since it develops the concept of interpersonal power that Foucault indicates, but enables us to *stay with* different positions which cannot be ‘assimilated’ (Coelho and Figueiredo, 2003, p. 202) to build greater understanding of their intersections and polarities. The findings indicate the need for further research which pursues an understanding of how an involvement in policy decision-making, or in implementing policy, could vocally claim creative and positive positions of difference. It is acknowledged that the Other may still at times be held as a ‘critical mirror’ to the self. This can however also be treated as a developmental process, for example in viewing how policy is received by different social groups who have historically been marginalised.

This research also indicates the socially divisive effects of a restricted curriculum, which alienates creative possibilities in learning. More *positive* reflections of self-definition through difference would be exemplified through diversity in learning options. An emphasis on ‘scarcity’ (Sartre, 2004) of resources, as discussed by Matthias Lievens in theorising the crisis in democracy (2017), is however presented by current forms of governance as creating progress through competitive responses. Scarcity formed by austerity

measures that cut resources for education, is a banker's dream that became a reality for many. The current administration has slighted the work put into resourcing collaborative policy making, favouring what appears to be the self-supporting school league table *sport of conflict*. Competition is also devolved from central government, through performance management structures of teaching staff at an institutional level (Maisuria, 2005).

I have also described how attempts at a nationalised *being-for-itself* can be observed in international comparisons for academic achievement that seek to create a 'British citizen', with a hard-shelled normative identity. This projected national identity has spurred an embattled position towards the arts, which are seen as not contributory to the vision of achievement. The creative practitioner's interests in investigative learning are thereby ushered into a conditioning framework for measuring standards. The arts are inventive routes to express critical conflict with society, and ideas for emancipatory transformation that are important for many young people. Arts subjects are becoming toll-gated by parental capital for extra-curricular activities and independent schools. Can this really be seen as a more effective alternative provision?

I would suggest that there is a need for more resourced spaces for connectivity between policy actors and proposed recipients in learning and teaching. Education would benefit from a shift towards valuing the expression of differences, rather than a race towards an ineffective synthesis of oppositional views. The involvement of teachers and young people in education consultation could retrieve some form of democracy – as they are the dispossessed stakeholders of policy. Contemporary processes for policy development appear to involve, at best, a 'look at' relation with the Other (Rae, 2009). If only nominal consultation is offered, counter hegemonic views can still be represented, for example through creative issues based projects in schools,

public critical art works, petitions, protests pressure groups. For those willing to listen: there is an urgent necessity to view investment in boundary processes as deeply significant, indeed priceless for future generations. Rather than performing on tightropes, we could perceive such processes as page markers for recording dialogues of geopolitical and cultural differences, in which there could also be emergent, though not expected, relational exchange.

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