CREATIVITY IN THE MALAYSIAN ESL CURRICULUM:
POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

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A Thesis submitted to the Department of Humanities
Imperial College London
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Signed:

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London

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian English as a second language (ESL) Curriculum Specification states that "students should be able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively" (Curriculum Specification for English, p.21) and teachers are encouraged to develop learners’ imagination and creativity. However, there is tension between this policy and its implementation. In practice the focus is on examination grades, and consequently teaching mostly concentrates on knowledge transmission rather than on developing understanding. This approach does not appear to develop creativity or to comply with policy.

This study examines how the government’s education policy on creativity is interpreted and implemented in the ESL curriculum. It takes a broad case-study approach, examining key stakeholders’ definitions of creativity and how these impact on policy implementation and exploring contextual factors, using a single representative school as a ‘working unit’ of ESL teaching.

The research questions are:

1) How do different stakeholders define creativity?
2) How do different conceptions of creativity impact on policy implementation?
3) What are the contextual factors which impact the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum?

The key findings are that, while stakeholder groups have different definitions of creativity, these are overlapping and not problematic in practice. Contextual factors such as the rigid exam focus and limited time and resources present more significant barriers to promoting creativity. This is exacerbated by the fact that, while stakeholder groups share overlapping definitions of creativity, they do not all appreciate the difficulties of implementation. The UK Creative partnerships approach which brought in multiple types of creativity and creative people into schools for children is also discussed in comparison with the Malaysian approach which set out to add creativity to the curriculum.

In conclusion, the policy appears ambitious and idealistic, limiting its chances of successful implementation. While defining creativity is not the problem, perhaps bringing people together to agree a consensually acceptable common definition might be useful, not because the definition itself is problematic, but because the process of discussion might make the issues of implementation more explicit to all concerned.
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<td>American Association of School Librarians</td>
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<td>BCC</td>
<td>Big ‘C’ Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTS</td>
<td>Critical and Creative Thinking Skills</td>
</tr>
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<td>CLT</td>
<td>Communicative Language teaching</td>
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<td>ELP</td>
<td>English Language Performance</td>
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<td>EPRD</td>
<td>Education Planning and Research Division</td>
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<td>EPU</td>
<td>Economic Planning Unit</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>ICREC</td>
<td>Imperial College Research Ethics Committee</td>
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<td>ITE</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Educators</td>
</tr>
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<td>KBSM</td>
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<td>KBSR</td>
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<td>LCC</td>
<td>Little ‘c’ creativity</td>
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<td>MSC</td>
<td>Multimedia Super Corridor</td>
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<td>SJK(C)</td>
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<td>UPSR</td>
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Context

Creativity has become a major concern in recent years. Scholars in the arts, psychology, business, education, and science are all working to gain a deeper understanding of this abstract concept. In the literature there has been an unusual amount of interest in the genesis of creativity in individuals and in the characteristics of creative people. According to Cole et al. (1999) as our society grows increasingly complex and the amount of information generated continues to evolve, society’s problems require more creative solutions. Hence, creativity is an important component of this additional skill set that our students need in relation to education and societal growth.

Indeed, creativity is emerging and being recognised as invaluable to an organisation; and, in some cases, it may be critical to long-term business survival (Driver, 2001). Therefore, creativity is a skill set which should become important to society -- in action: it should not be merely a matter of paying lip service to it. If creativity is not valued, the chances of its being encouraged or nurtured are bleak at best. However, the common mode of teaching in Malaysia currently is not one which supports or encourages thinking (Ahmad, 1998). Students are mainly taught through the traditional didactic transmission method. In this method of teaching information is deemed to be transferred from teacher to students, largely through lectures: the mind is considered to be passive and simply able to absorb everything (Paul, 1993). According to Mohd Dom (2008), memorisation and taking orders are part of the culture in the
east. Absolute obedience to the teachers’ words is expected; therefore most teachers will not respond positively to constructive arguments.

Being aware of this alarming trend, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is making efforts to change the teaching in both the primary and secondary sectors in order to undo a situation which has developed over many years. The change in the school curriculum, called the Integrated Primary School Curriculum (KBSR) for the primary school level and the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM) for the secondary school level, aims at holistic learning and claims to be more student-centred. This curriculum is also more activity-based, with the intention that the students’ creativity is tapped and critical thinking is developed (Integrated Secondary School Curriculum, p.3). In 2001 the KBSM revised syllabus was introduced by the MOE with the same objectives in mind; that is, to produce a work-force that is not only technologically competent but also possesses higher order thinking skills in order to meet the challenges of the new millennium. Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (CCTS) were introduced into the KBSM aimed at producing individuals who are intellectually capable of rational, critical and creative thinking.

The emphasis on creativity in Malaysia is also clearly outlined in the curriculum specification for English language. It is stated in this document that students should be able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively. Thus teachers are encouraged to use various stimuli in order to develop learners’ imagination and creativity (Curriculum Specifications for English Language,2003, p.21). However, there seems to be a gap between the apparent intent to build a creative and critical approach in students, how this is reflected in policy, and how this is actually implemented in schools. In the classroom the main focus of the teaching and learning practices, perhaps not surprisingly, is on examinations and grades, with an added emphasis on covering a
large amount of the syllabus. Given this focus, teaching is mostly carried out in order to deliver rather than to interpret information, and there is little room for abstract, and perhaps less examinable, concepts such as creativity. Certainly this is my perception as an English language teacher, struggling to resolve the tension between the curriculum and the intention to develop creativity and creative approaches and the amount of material which has to be covered for the exam and the consequent pressure to adopt a didactic transmission approach in order to cover the material. Being a teacher in a secondary school for more than ten years, I notice that this scenario occurs as a result of several complex and interrelated societal, economic and political issues. In order to explore these issues I will first attempt to describe and define them as they apply to my experience of secondary school ESL teaching.

If we make the assumption that the language educational policy has a role in defining and promoting creativity in the ESL classroom, it seems appropriate to describe briefly the Malaysian ‘Smart School’ and Malaysian language educational policy, which are both part of the major transformation in education which has taken place since Malaysia became independent.

1.2 The Malaysia ‘Smart School’

According to the Smart School Blueprint, Malaysia needs to make the critical transition from an industrial economy to becoming a leader in the Information Age. In order to realise this vision, Malaysians need to make a fundamental shift towards a more technologically literate and thinking work-force so as to be able to perform in a global work environment and to use the tools available in the Information Age. To make this shift, the education system must undergo a radical transformation. The
school culture must be transformed from one that is memory-based to one that is informed with creative and critical thinking skills as the main focus in acquiring leading-edge technology. It is against this background that the ‘Smart School’ has been made one of the flagship developments in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) (‘Smart School’ Blueprint, 1997).

By 2010 all of the approximately ten thousand Malaysian schools had become ‘Smart Schools’. In these schools the intention is for learning to be self-directed, individually-paced, continuous and giving rise to reflection. The expectation is that this approach is made possible by providing multimedia technology and world-wide networking. These facilities, in theory, allow learning to be shifted from being traditionally teacher-centred to being more student-centred and supported by a flexible and open-ended curriculum. The government’s intention is that ‘Smart Schools’ will lead to the full democratisation of education. These schools are not only aimed at the most gifted students; indeed, the intention is that they are an effective way of ensuring that all students – strong or weak, rich or poor – are stretched to their fullest potential in a way best suited to their learning pace and style. In order to best achieve this, the curriculum recognises that students have different learning needs and relies on computer technology to allow for this flexibility and diversity to be built into the system. The intention is to narrow the ‘opportunity gap’ between the affluent, who can afford advanced technology in their homes, and the less affluent, who cannot and therefore have less access to information technology.

The ‘Smart School’ initiatives have five main goals, which focus on the need to develop a skilled work-force for the Information Age and to promote the goals of the National Philosophy of Education, which are to:
(i) produce a thinking and a technology-literate work-force,

(ii) democratise education,

(iii) increase stakeholder participation,

(iv) provide for the all-round development of the individual, and

(v) provide opportunities to enhance individual strengths and abilities.

In this context the development of the individual includes their intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual sides. ‘Thinking skills’, which explore the way a student could use thinking in order to resolve problems, are emphasised in ‘Smart Schools’. The expressed intention is that students are actively taught and encouraged to be creative and to think ‘wisely’ in order to generate new ideas or theories and to facilitate the future development of the country.

In the ‘Smart School’ a broader approach to education is also taken with the school management being expected to provide opportunities for a wider range of stakeholders, such as parents and the community, to participate in the children’s education. Even in this broader, less traditional approach to learning the teachers still play the most important role and continue to be a fundamental part of the majority of teaching and learning situations. Their knowledge, skills and attitudes remain essential in creating the best conditions for their students’ learning.

‘Smart School’ teachers have to move away from traditional didactic teaching and need to learn how to facilitate and encourage students to take charge of their own learning. Teachers act as the students’ mentors in ‘Smart Schools’, and each student will have one or possibly several ‘virtual mentors’ who can be accessed at any time. These mentors monitor the students’ online learning activities, offering advice and giving feedback. Such mentors also report any significant event in the child’s learning
process to the parents, teachers and any other interested stakeholders. Thus, even in this brief description of the context and characteristics of ‘Smart Schools’ it is apparent that the change from being a ‘normal school’ to being a ‘Smart School’ is significant. The change depends on a change in the teaching and learning culture of the school, moving away from classic memory-based, didactic transmission approaches to teaching and learning. The intention is that this gives opportunities for students’ thinking and encourages them to be more creative. The ‘Smart School’ gives space for students to decide their own way of learning under their teacher’s supervision. In this way, students can explore knowledge using their own creativity. In my view, this is a fundamental change and requires a shift in approach by both the teacher and the student and needs to be supported by an appropriately designed and examined curriculum and by a more flexible administrative and management approach, if it is to succeed.

1.3 Language Educational Policy in Malaysia

Malaysia is a complex multi-cultural society with three main ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese and Indian. Each group has a different culture and speaks a different language, and yet they combine to form the complex overall culture in the country. As a result of this multi-ethnic society, any public policy formulation in Malaysia has to be carefully considered taking into account many factors, political, social and economic, in order to achieve an acceptable norm of satisfaction among its citizens. Additionally, governmental language policies have been changing both as a result of political and economic developments in the country and changes in the world in general.
After Independence in 1957 the government of Malaysia set out on a programme to establish Bahasa Melayu (the Malay language) as the official language, to be used in all government functions and as the medium of instruction at all levels. The New Educational Policy of 1971 resulted in the conversion from teaching all school subjects in English to teaching them in Bahasa Melayu. This was carried out in stages. In 1980 all schools, regardless of type and location, were required by the government to use Bahasa Melayu as the medium of instruction in all subjects.

As the country continues to develop and as the world continues to progress, the use of the Malay language also develops and progresses. It was felt that a national language would help to create a bond and encourage national unity notwithstanding the cultural and linguistic diversity. The creation of the national language, Bahasa Melayu, has been successful to some extent (Khemlani, 2007). For 40 years the government supported a major programme of language cultivation and modernisation. It did not, however, attempt to control language use in the private sector, including business and industry, where the pressure of globalisation led to a growing demand for English. The demand for English was further fuelled by internationalisation of education, which was met in part by the opening of English-medium affiliates of international universities.

In 2002 the government announced a reversal of policy, calling for a switch to English as the medium of instruction at all levels. Global changes such as economic turmoil, partnerships between local and reputable international universities, internationalisation and globalisation, and the decline in the standard of English in Malaysia have also influenced the language educational policy (Zarina, 2009). The need to promote English language proficiency in order to cope with the challenges of globalisation and the desire to promote creativity and innovation are linked, and both
occur largely as a result of Malaysia’s commitment to participating in the world economy and developing an ‘internationally compatible knowledge-based economy’. Together a policy change requiring education to be undertaken in English rather than the national language, Bahasa Melayu, and the increased emphasis on creativity in the broader school curriculum in general and in ESL teaching and learning in particular, and the linking of these policies to a national desire for globalisation highlight the importance of creativity in ESL teaching and learning.

1.4 Education in Malaysia

Education in Malaysia is overseen by two government ministries. The Ministry of Education handles matters pertaining to pre-school, primary school, secondary school and post-secondary school education. Matters regarding tertiary education are dealt with by the Ministry of Higher Education. Although education is the responsibility of the federal government, each state has an Education Department to coordinate educational matters in its territory. The main legislation governing education is the Education Act of 1996.

Education may be obtained in the multi-lingual public school system, which provides free education for all Malaysians, or in private schools, or through home-schooling. By law, primary education is compulsory. As in many Asia-Pacific countries, such as the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Japan, standardised tests are a common feature.
1.4.1 School types and medium of instruction

Public primary schools are divided into two categories based on the medium of instruction:

- Malay-medium National Schools
- non-Malay-medium National-type Schools, also known as "vernacular schools", further divided into
  - National-type School (Chinese), Mandarin-medium, and simplified Chinese writing known as SRJK (C) (Chinese primary school)
  - National-type School (Tamil), Tamil-medium known as SRJK(T) (Tamil primary school)

All schools admit students regardless of their racial and language background.

Malay and English are compulsory subjects in all schools. All schools use the same syllabus for non-language subjects regardless of the medium of instruction. The teaching of the Chinese language is compulsory in SRJK(C), and Tamil language is compulsory in SRJK(T). Additionally, a National School must provide the teaching of Chinese or Tamil language, as well as the indigenous languages, wherever practical, if the parents of at least 15 pupils in the school request that a particular language be taught.

In January 2003 a mixed medium of instruction was introduced so that students would learn Science and Mathematics in English. Due to pressure from the Chinese community, SRJK(C) teaches Science and Mathematics in both English and Chinese. However, the government reversed the policy of teaching Science and
Mathematics in English in July 2009, and the previous languages of instruction were reintroduced in stages from 2012.

National Schools are government-owned and operated and fully funded by the government. National-type Schools are mostly government-aided and partially government-owned. In government-aided National-type Schools, the government is responsible for funding the school operations, teacher training and pay, and setting the school curriculum, while the school buildings and assets belong to the local ethnic communities, which elect a board of directors for each school to look after the school properties. Between 1995 and 2000, the Seventh Malaysian Plan allocation for primary education development allocated 96.5% to National Schools, which had 75% of total enrolment. Chinese National-type Schools (21% enrolment) received 2.4% of the allocation, while Tamil National-type Schools (3.6% enrolment) received 1% of the allocation.

Previously there were also other types of National-type Schools. The English National-type Schools were assimilated to become National Schools as a result of decolonisation. Others, such as those for the Punjabi language, were closed down owing to the dwindling number of students. The role of promoting the Punjabi language and culture is currently fulfilled by Gurdwara (Sikh temple)-based organisations.

The division of public education at the primary level into National and National-type Schools has been criticised for allegedly creating racial polarisation at an early age. To address this problem, attempts have been made to establish Sekolah Wawasan ("vision schools"). According to this concept, three schools (typically one SK, one SJK(C) and one SJK(T)) would share the same school compound and
facilities while maintaining different school administrations, ostensibly to encourage closer interaction. However, this was met with objections from most of the Chinese and Indian communities as they believe that this will restrict the use of their mother tongues in schools.

1.4.2 Secondary Education

Public secondary education in Malaysia is provided by National Secondary Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan, SMK). National Secondary Schools use Malay as the main medium of instruction. English is a compulsory subject in all schools. Since 2003 Science and Mathematics had been taught in English. However in 2009 the government decided to revert to using Malay starting in 2012. As in primary schools, a National Secondary School must provide teaching of the Chinese and Tamil languages, as well as the indigenous languages wherever practical, if this has been requested by the parents of at least 15 students in the school. In addition, foreign languages such as Arabic, Japanese, German or French may be taught in certain schools.

Secondary education in Malaysia lasts for five years, referred to as Forms 1 to 5. Forms 1 to 3 are known as Lower Secondary, while Forms 4 and 5 are known as Upper Secondary. Most students who have completed primary education are admitted to Form 1. Students from national-type primary schools have the additional requirement to obtain a minimum C grade for the Malay subjects in the UPSR (National exam for primary school); a failure to achieve this results in their being required to attend a year-long transition class, commonly called "Remove", before proceeding to Form 1. As in
primary schools, students are promoted to the next year regardless of their academic performance.

Co-curricular activities are compulsory at the secondary level, where all students must participate in at least two activities for most states and three activities for the Sarawak region. Many co-curricular activities are offered at the secondary level, varying in each school, and each student is judged on the basis of achievement in these activities. Competitions and performances are regularly organised. Co-curricular activities are often categorised under the following: Uniformed Groups, Performing Arts, Clubs & Societies, Sports and Games. Students may also participate in more than the minimum required co-curricular activities.

At the end of Form 3, the Lower Certificate of Education (LCE) or Lower Secondary Evaluation is taken by students. Based on their results and choices, they will be streamed into either the Science stream or the Arts stream starting in Form 4. The Science stream is generally considered to be more desirable. Students are allowed to transfer to the Arts stream from the Science stream, but rarely vice-versa.

At the end of Form 5, students are required to take the Malaysian Certificate of Education examination (MCE), before graduating from secondary school. This exam was based on the old British ‘School Certificate’ examination before it became the General Certificate of Education 'O' Level examination, which became the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education). As of 2006, students were given a GCE 'O' Level grade for their English paper in addition to the normal English MCE paper. Previously, this was reported on result slips as a separate result labelled 1119, which meant students received two grades for their English papers. This separate grade is based on the marks of the essay-writing component of the English paper. The essay
section of the English paper is re-marked under the supervision of officials from the British 'O' Level examination. Although not part of their final certificates, the 'O' Level grade is included on their results slip.

A subset of the public secondary schools are known as National-type Secondary Schools. At Malayan Independence (1957) it was decided that secondary education would be provided in Malay-medium National Secondary Schools and English-medium National-type Secondary Schools. Fee-paying, English-medium schools owned and administered by missionaries/religious bodies were offered government aid provided that they adopted the national curriculum. Secondary schools using other languages as the medium of instruction, most of them Chinese schools, were offered government aid on condition that they converted into English-medium schools. In the 1970s, as the government began to abolish English-medium education in public schools, all National-type Secondary School were gradually converted into Malay-medium schools. The term "National-type Secondary School" is not present in the Education Act of 1996, which blurred the distinction between SMK (National secondary school) and SMJK (Chinese or Tamil secondary school). However, Chinese educational groups do not welcome this new development and continue to push for a distinction to be made between the 78 formerly Chinese-medium schools and the other secondary schools. The schools continue to have "SMJK" on the school signboards and boards of directors continue to manage the school properties, as distinct from the schools directly managed by the government. Furthermore, these schools usually have compulsory Chinese language classes incorporated into the school teaching hours, as opposed to other schools where elective language classes are conducted outside normal school hours. Unlike the Chinese secondary schools, the Tamil secondary schools no longer exist.
Other types of government or government-aided secondary schools include Religious Secondary Schools, Technical Schools, Residential Schools and MARA (National trust for indigenous people in Malaysia) Junior Science Colleges.

Within the national public school system are a few chartered public high schools. Admission is very selective, reserved for students who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement and potential at the elementary level, Year/Standard 1 to 6. These schools are either full-time day or boarding schools. Examples of these schools are Malacca High School, Royal Military College (Malaysia) and Penang Free School.

Residential schools are also known as Science Schools. These schools used to cater mainly for the children of the Malay elites but have since expanded into schools for Malays who are outstanding academically or who display talent in sports or leadership. These schools are modelled after the British boarding school.

1.4.3 Summary

The school system in Malaysia is complex, at both primary and secondary level. Many of these complications result from the desire to cater for the three main ethnic groups which make up modern Malaysian society, each of which has needs, not least in terms of language and culture. The historical colonial context also plays a part in this complexity, as does the desire to change the educational system in order to educate society to compete better in the international context.

Despite the educational, organisational and societal complexities in the Malaysian primary and secondary educational system some key commonalities are relatively consistent throughout the whole sector. Key among these is the common
curriculum and the common exam system used to assess this system. Thus despite a degree of complexity and change all schools are working to teach a largely common educational content which is assessed uniformly. So while there are differences exist in terms of the language of instruction and the ethnic drivers and identity of schools within the complex Malaysian education system, the common curriculum means that creativity should be taught similarly. Creativity, as defined by the curriculum, may be perceived and interpreted differently by different schools and ethnic groups despite the common curricular definitions and expectations.

1.5 The Malaysian Political System

In order to achieve even a basic understanding of public policy in Malaysia, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the country’s political system and its social structures. The Malaysian political system is based on parliamentary democracy and is ruled as a Constitutional Monarchy with His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (the King) as the Supreme Head of the country. Malaysia upholds a federal constitution which divides authority into legislative, judicial and executive authorities. The doctrine of the separation of powers and checks and balances is clearly stated in the Federal Constitution. The concept of federalism is the basis of Government Administration and the interconnections between the state and the federal government. This system has been largely effective in coordinating public policy formulation and the various processes used in policy implementation, with the assistance of the government machinery. Since independence (31 August 1957), the National Front Party (Barisan Nasional), which is composed of the United Malays National Organization, the Malaysian Chinese Association, the Malaysian Indian Congress and other affiliated
parties, has become the only ruling party in the country, and the three major ethnic groups are represented within it: the Malay, the Chinese and the Indian. Malaysia’s total population is estimated at 28.33 million in 2010, which makes it the 41st most populated country in the world. The Malays represent 60.3%, Chinese 22.9%, and the Indians 7.1% of the total population. The Bumiputras (the indigenous population) are about 9.7% of the total population. The structure of the society and how this is reflected in the political system has clearly influenced the development of the current Malaysian Education System through a series of reforms to the education policy to meet the current and future demands of the nation.

1.5.1 Important Features of Policy Formation

In Malaysia, the social and political systems are very closely related, and both are important in formulating public policy. The establishment of any public policy is complex owing to the involvement of various interested parties, each with its own, but sometimes conflicting, views during the process of reaching a decision. Public policy in Malaysia can be created through either a single or a combination of three processes or routes. The first is through a political channel: using this route policy is initiated directly through Cabinet orders or through the recommendation of several political reigning parties. The second route is through an administrative process at ministerial level. Since a policy has implications for the administrative machinery, the proposed policy is discussed at several high-level government meetings. The third route is through a combination of both previously described processes via an integrated interaction. As the Malaysian political system and multi-ethnic society is complex, with many groups often having conflicting or diverging views, special committees are often set up to study the policy in depth before it is presented. Hence, we can see that
with a complex system and a rapidly developing country and a changing world stage, important public policy in Malaysia such as the Education Policy is revised from time to time as it is adjusted to meet contemporary requirements better by means of applying these three policy formulation processes.

In general, the policy-making process in Malaysia goes through several stages as it is developed, implemented and reviewed. The process starts with identifying a problem or situation which requires a policy intervention and continues with recommending suitable alternatives, implementing the action required and coordinating various means to accord with the chosen policy, and ends with evaluating the policy effectiveness. With all these processes evaluation and policy revision is vital, especially in the broader context of the development of Malaysia in the modern era of complex societies. Besides the policy-making process, the roles played by certain groups are essential in providing a better quality input into the contents of any policy. Generally three categories of important groups can be identified: the politicians and government public administrators; the public; and the related interest group. The first group are the major players responsible for ensuring the success of the policy implementation. This group can be more precisely defined as Cabinet ministers, members of parliament, and high-level government officials. The policy is implemented under the jurisdiction of the Constitution and government regulations. Under the Constitution, the federal, state and local governments are each given constitutional rights to implement public policy. As for the public, they can act individually or form interest groups to express their ideas and needs for government consideration. However, these individuals and interest groups do not automatically have the power to formulate a public policy or even to play a major part in the process. Still, their movements can sometimes achieve a kind of strong public support through
various campaigns and activities, and they can help policy-makers understand a fundamental problem more clearly and thereby influence policy formation, implementation and adjustment.

In this section I have briefly considered important factors involved in policy formation in Malaysia in general. In the next section I shall consider the Malaysian education policy in more detail, its policy processes and their implementation, both before and after independence.

1.5.2 Education policy

Education in Malaysia is monitored by the federal government Ministry of Education. In July 2006, the Higher Education Deputy Minister Datuk Ong Tee Keat stated that a review of the controversial Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) would be held among Malaysian MPs. The ruling political alliance is composed of ethnically based parties, and one of the concessions allowed by the controlling Malay party is to allow the Chinese and Indian parties to set up colleges.

Implementation of Education Policy in Malaysia

Policy in Malaysia is designed generally according to the requirement of the political and social structure and the future demands of the nation as a whole. Since the Malaysian community is a multi-ethnic society, any public policy formulation has to be carefully studied by taking into consideration many political, social and economic factors in order to achieve an acceptable degree of satisfaction among its citizens. Therefore, in this section I shall briefly explain the influence of some of the
major factors which have been important in determining the current education policy in Malaysia.

**The Evolution of the Malaysian Education Policy**

During the period of British colonialism, the government of the time identified a need to establish a school system which would create a quality education for all ethnic groups in the country. However, this was carried out to satisfy the British interest and not that of the nation as a whole. In 1950, The Barnes Committee headed by L.J.Barnes (Oxford University) was set up to study how this requirement could best be met. The Barnes Report was published in 1951 and made the following recommendation. All Malay and English schools would be preserved and should be given priority. Vernacular schools would be closed and replaced by the National Schools. English would be the medium of instruction at the secondary level. Free education was guaranteed in the National Schools. However, the Chinese and the Indian people felt dissatisfaction with these recommendations and declared that their systems of education should also be emphasised. The Fenn-Wu Committee was then established to revise the education provision for the Chinese community. This committee recommended that the Malay, Chinese and Indian languages should be used simultaneously as mediums of instruction in the school system, and therefore all school books should use those languages. However, the government objected to such a proposal. In this case the British administration was trying to enforce its own education policy according to their understanding of the situation and not according to the Malayan nation’s interest.
At the end of the British colonial era, the Malays, especially several groups of educated Malays, started a movement to revamp the old colonial education system. The essence of this new national education policy was to make the educational system more representative of the nation. This post-colonial movement made the education issue a priority in the cause of ‘nation building’. Hence, the government agreed to set up a special committee led by Tun Abdul Razak (first Minister of Education and the second Prime Minister of Malaysia) in order to make several recommendations. This committee was composed of high-level government officials and education experts from various groups (local and foreign). Their comprehensive recommendations were known as the Razak Report (1956). This committee aimed at establishing a national education system which would promote the cultural, social, economic and political development of the nation as a whole, based on Malay language as the national language. Hence, the Malay language should be the main medium of instruction in the proposed education system. The content of the Razak Report was later to become the basis of the Education Ordinance (1957). Furthermore, the Malaysian Government at that time started to make several evolutionary changes especially of the educational curriculum in order to suit the aspirations of the Malaysians. The education policy is important and should be formulated to the satisfaction of all Malaysians and not favour any particular ethnic group or language nor be unduly influenced by the colonial past; this view had become a part of the political agenda of the ruling party.

To speed up the process of national integration and unity, the Rahman Talib Report was composed by a new special committee set up to review the education policy in 1960, and it became the basis of the Education Act (1961). This act provided the legal basis for enabling the national language, Malay, to be a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools and in all training colleges. This act required pupils
to have a satisfactory grade in the Malay language in the national examination in order to obtain a certificate of public education especially at the end of the lower and upper secondary levels. All schools using English as the medium of instruction were gradually adopting the national Malay language. Since the national language had already been accepted by the Chinese, Indian and other ethnic groups it was hoped that such a requirement would enable the whole of society to acquire proficiency in the Malay language.

In 1979, a report from the Special Cabinet Committee chaired by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (the Mahathir Report), who was the Minister of Education at that time (in 1981 he became Prime Minister), was completed after a six-year investigation. Its objectives were to achieve national unity in a multi-ethnic society, to increase the sense of patriotism, to produce skilled manpower for national development and to extend further the policy of the democratisation of education in order to strike a balance in all aspects of education between rural and urban areas. This report has become a guideline for reforming the education system in recent years. In 1995 and 1996 the Education Act was amended to meet the challenges of the 21st century and with the intention of making Malaysia a centre of excellence for education in the world. The national education philosophy teaches that it is essential to develop individuals who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, society and the nation at large. Pre-school education had become an increasingly important component of the formal education system after the Education Act was enacted in 1996. The Education Act (1996) guarantees access to pre-school education for children between the age of five and six in both urban and rural areas. The intention was to guarantee that the rural population would have the same opportunity to develop their social status through equal
access to a common quality education. The New Primary and Secondary Education Curriculum have been introduced to focus on developing a skilled and knowledgeable work-force for the whole nation.

From the brief explanation given, it is clear that the education policy in Malaysia is constantly being changed in order to meet current and future demands. It is also important to note that the policy will only be effectively implemented through collaboration between all ethnic groups and through its being made legally binding.

**Educational reform and policy implementation**

In brief, public policy in Malaysia can be created through legal action, planning, and the creation of programmes and projects. Education policy implementation combines most of the factors mentioned above. The education policy was initiated structurally by special committees which made several recommendations. The Minister and the public administrators in the Ministry of Education were held responsible for supervising these recommendations. Several inputs were made by a group of experts (an interest group) especially from the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) to strengthen the policy content. Finally, the proposed policy which contained a set of guidelines was issued for approval by the Cabinet Ministers who represent the political parties affiliated to the ruling National Front Party. Therefore once a decision was arrived at, it would be considered as representative by the nation at large. To enforce it, a set of regulations was introduced. The education policy was then made legally binding by the passing of the Education Act.
To summarise a complex process, the Education Act 1996 was prepared in conjunction with the guidelines set in the Education Policy. The public administrators in the Ministry of Education were responsible for gathering related materials to compose the bill to be passed in two versions: Malay and English, with assistance from experts in the Attorney-General’s Office before it was presented by the Attorney-General to the cabinet. After this draft had been drawn up, a memorandum (recommendation paper) was prepared to justify the proposed education bill. It was sent to the related ministries and to the central agencies such as the Ministry of Finance, the Economic Planning Unit, the Implementation and Coordination Unit, the Attorney-General’s Office and so forth, for feedback. This feedback is important to guide the Cabinet before it comes to a decision. This Bill was made ready before the Parliament session began: this is usually one month before the session starts. The Bill indicated certain parts of the existing law which would need amendment. After information was gathered at the Cabinet weekly meeting the Minister of Education gave approval for the memorandum and the drafted bill to be forwarded after getting clearance from the Cabinet Secretariat. This secretariat is under the Cabinet (Constitution and Inter-Government Relation Division, the Prime Minister’s Department headed by the Chief Secretary to the Government who is also the Head of the Government Civil Service). When the Cabinet approved the bill, this decision was conveyed to the Ministry of Education and the Ministries concerned. The Ministry of Education proceeded to obtain a notice of Presentation for the Bill to the House of Representatives and the Senate Office for debate and approval in both houses during the Parliament Session. The bill was passed by both houses (more than a 2/3 vote) and was submitted to His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong for the Royal Assent. The bill became law after being gazetted. Finally, the decision was conveyed administratively to the related parties and through several high-level government
meetings such as the meeting of the State Chief Ministers; the Meeting of the Secretary-Generals of Ministries and the Heads of Services; the Meeting of Heads of Federal Departments; the Meeting of Chief Executives of Federal Statutory Bodies; and the Meeting of the Liaison Committee Between the Federal and State Governments. This is the complex process which continues to be followed up to the present day.

1.5.3 National Education Blueprint

In 2006, the National Education Blueprint 2006–2010, was released. The Blueprint set a number of goals, such as establishing a National Pre-School Curriculum, setting up 100 new classes for students with special needs, increasing the percentage of single-session schools to 90% for primary schools and 70% for secondary schools, and decreasing class sizes from 31 to 30 students in primary schools and from 32 to 30 in secondary schools by 2010. The Blueprint also provided a number of statistics concerning weaknesses in education. According to the Blueprint, 10% of primary schools and 1.4% of secondary schools do not have a 24-hour electricity supply, 20% and 3.4% respectively do not have a public water supply, and 78% and 42% are over 30 years old and require refurbishing. It was also stated that 4.4% of primary students and 0.8% of secondary students had not mastered the “3Rs” (reading, writing and arithmetic). The drop-out rate for secondary schools was given as 9.3% in urban areas and 16.7% in rural areas.

The Blueprint also aimed at addressing the problem of racial polarisation in schools. Under the Blueprint, schools were required to hold seminars on the Constitution of Malaysia, motivational camps to increase cultural awareness, food festivals to highlight different ethnic cooking styles, and essay competitions on different
cultural traditions. Mandarin and Tamil language classes were a requirement in national schools, beginning with a pilot project in 220 schools in 2007.

The Blueprint has been subjected to some criticism. The academic Khoo Kay Kim (2006) has criticised the plan, saying:

‘We do not need this blueprint to produce excellent students. What we need is a revival of the old education system... meaning the education system we had before 1957. That was when we saw dedication from the teachers. The Malaysian education system then was second to none in Asia. We did not have sports schools but we produced citizens who were Asian class, if not world class.’ (p. 13)

1.5.4 The Language Issue in Malaysian Education

The history of issues in Malaysian education is intimately connected with issues of language, and, as discussed before, this started with the British government, in particular the Barnes Report back in 1951, whose policy was to unite all races by means of using the colonial language, English. The later Razak Report was produced to replace the unsuccessful Barnes Report. The Razak Report replaced the use of English as the common language in education with the Malay national language, and this system remains until today.

The issue of language and schools is a key issue for many political groups in Malaysia. UMNO (the Malay political party) champions the cause of using Malay as the medium of instruction in all schools. However, under the Razak Report primary schools using the Chinese and Tamil languages as the medium of instruction are retained. Up until 1981 in peninsular Malaysia (and some years later in Sarawak), there were also English-medium schools, set up by the former colonial government and Christian
missionaries. Following the severe race riots in Kuala Lumpur in May 1969, English-medium schools were phased out from January 1970, so that by 1982 these became Malay-medium schools (“national schools”).

The existence of national-type schools, the vernacular schools (Chinese and Tamil), is used by the non-Malay members of the ruling “Barisan Nasional” party to indicate that their culture and identity have not been infringed by the Malay people. Dong Jiao Zhong (the association of Chinese school boards and teachers) and other Chinese educational organisations took on the role of safeguarding Chinese education in the country and are opposed to the idea of Malay replacing Chinese as the medium of instruction in Chinese schools. They still shape much of the views of the Chinese educated community, which is a key electoral constituency.

In 2002, the government announced that from 2003 onwards, the teaching of Science and Mathematics would be done in English, in order to ensure that Malaysia will not be left behind in a rapidly globalised world. This paved the way for the establishment of mixed-medium education. However, this policy was heavily criticised by Malay linguists and activists, who were apprehensive about the policy eroding the usage of Malay language in Science and Mathematics. This led to a massive rally in Kuala Lumpur on 7 March 2009. Various Chinese educational groups were opposed to the policy as well, fearing that it might erode the usage of Chinese as the medium of instruction in Chinese schools. The government announced in 2009 that this policy will be reversed in 2012, when the teaching of both subjects would revert back to Malay.

Owing to the lack of Chinese students attending national (Malay-medium) schools, coupled with an increasing number of non-Chinese students attending Chinese national-type schools, the government announced in April 2005 that all national
(Malay-medium) schools would begin teaching Chinese and Tamil in order to attract more students, not as mother tongue courses but as elective courses.

Previous sections have explained the history and development of the present education system in Malaysia and have briefly attempted to show how this was influenced by government policy, ethnicity and language. This is important as this is the context of the present educational system and the context in which this study has been carried out. While this study is not political or ethnographic in nature, this context is required in order to situate and understand this research. The brief explanation of the history and development of the present education system in Malaysia does show how it has been influenced by ethnic and linguistic complexity and that while this study is not political or ethnographic it does take place in an ethnically complex and politicised context. The focus of this research is creativity and how it is promoted in the ESL curriculum within this broad context, using a single school based case-study. The following section considers the literature on creativity and reviews work done by the other researchers in the field.
2.0 CREATIVITY - A LITERATURE REVIEW

This section first discusses the origin of the word ‘creativity’. The discussion is then focused on different definitions of creativity, on conceptions and key theories about creativity, on creativity in education, the creative process, research on creativity in Malaysia and overseas, as well as on creativity in the ESL classroom. Finally I briefly consider my own personal definition of creativity and the definition I will use for this work.

2.1 The Origin of the Word ‘Creativity’

How societies have perceived the concept of creativity has changed throughout history, as has the term itself. The ancient Greek concept of art (in Greek, "techne"—the root of “technique” and “technology”), with the exception of poetry, involved not freedom of action but subjection to rules. In Rome, this Greek concept underwent modification, and visual artists came to be regarded as possessing imagination and inspiration like poets (Tatarkiewicz, 1980).

Although neither the Greeks nor the Romans had a word that directly corresponded to the word ‘creativity’, their art, architecture, music, inventions and discoveries provide numerous examples of what today would be described as creative work. The Greek scientist of Syracuse, Archimedes, experienced creativity in his
Eureka moment when he discovered the answer to a problem with which he had been wrestling for a long time.

A fundamental change came in the Christian period: ‘creatio’ came to designate God’s act of ‘creation from nothing’. ‘Creatio’ thus took on a different meaning from ‘facere’ (‘to make’) and ceased to apply only to human functions. The ancient view that art is not a domain of creativity persisted in this period (Tatarkiewicz, 1980).

A shift occurred in modern times. Renaissance men had a feeling of their own independence, freedom and creativity, and sought to give voice to this sense. The first person to actually use the word ‘creativity’ was the Polish poet Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595-1640), who applied it exclusively to poetry (Tatarkiewicz, 1980). For over a century and a half the idea of human creativity met with resistance, because the term ‘creation’ was reserved for creation ‘from nothing’. Baltasar Gracián (1601–58) would only venture to write: “Art is the completion of nature, as if it were a second Creator...” (cited in Tatarkiewicz, 1980). By the 18th century and the Age of Enlightenment, the concept of creativity was appearing more frequently in art theory and was linked with the concept of imagination.

It was only after Darwin worked out the processes underlying natural selection that several basic characteristics of creativity were brought into sharp focus, especially its significance in adaptation. Later, after Darwin’s death, Galton (1822-1911) attributed diversity to individual differences within an environment of known dimensions.
The understanding of creativity may need a multidisciplinary approach. Many works on creativity hypothesise that multiple components must converge for creativity to occur (Amabile, 1983, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Perkins, 1981; Simonton, 1988; Sternberg, 1985a, 1985b, 1996; Weisberg, 1993; Sternberg & Lubart, 1991, 1995). In general, confluence theories of creativity offer the possibility of accounting for diverse aspects of creativity (Lubart, 1994). For example, the partial domain-specificity of creativity, which is often observed, can be explained through the mixture of some relatively domain-specific components of creativity, such as knowledge, and other more domain-general components, such as the personality trait of perseverance. Often uni-disciplinary approaches to creativity have tended to view a part of the phenomenon as the whole phenomenon, resulting in a narrow, unsatisfying vision of creativity (Sternberg, 1999).

2.2 Definitions of Creativity

Many attempts have been made to define creativity. According to Amabile (1996), creativity includes the willingness to take risks, maintain a high level of self-initiation and to be task-oriented in striving for excellence. Gardner (1997, p. 48) has described it as “the ability to solve problems and fashion products and to raise new questions”. The UK National Advisory Committee’s Report (1999), states that, firstly, creativity always involves thinking and behaving imaginatively. Secondly, overall this imaginative activity is purposeful: that is, it is directed to achieving an objective. Thirdly, these processes must generate something original. Fourthly, the outcome must be of value in relation to the objective.
Other definitions of creativity which placed importance on outcomes are by Prentice (2000), who claimed that the productive outcomes of creative activity should be originality, value, risk-taking and the capability to cope with uncertainty in situations. On the other hand, Fawcett (2002) asserted that creativity is a complicated and broad concept because there is no standard principle by which we can define it precisely. He also stated that some people may think creativity only applies to the arts and that it is a gift or innate ability which cannot be taught.

However, creating means putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole, organising elements into a new pattern or structure, generating, planning, or producing something (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Lucas in Fisher (2002) says that it is “a state of mind in which all intelligences are working together”. According to Mouchiroud and Bernoussi (2008), creativity can be broadly defined as a combination of interacting individual and environmental resources leading to the production of valuable solutions. The authors concentrate on the type of creativity which can be expressed in solving social problems. Their findings indicate that social creativity performance is linked to socially relevant variables such as social competencies, popularity and parenting style. Finally, they discuss the relevance of a creativity approach in such social domains as violence prevention programmes and education. On the other hand, Bernstein’s typology of vertical and horizontal discourse argues that creativity needs to be re-defined in a way that recognises the value of principled, conceptual knowledge in vocational education, while acknowledging the socially constructed nature of creativity and knowledge (Thomson et. al, 2009).

Creativity has many definitions, some contradictory and contested. As researchers from various fields focus on different angles, creativity may be described from different views and perspectives, although it may refer to the same thing.
Wehner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Magyari-Beck (1991) examined 100 doctoral dissertations on creativity and found a “parochial isolation” of various studies concerning creativity. There were relevant dissertations from psychology, education, business, history, sociology and other fields. However, different fields tended to use different terms and to focus on different aspects of what seemed to be a basic phenomenon. Fisher and Williams (2004) claim that part of the reason for this diversity of definitions is that creativity can be seen as a property of people (who we are), processes (what we do) or products (what we make). Their broad characterisation of creativity as to do with either people, process or product is useful as it provides a way of characterising the ‘creativity’ without necessarily sharing a common definition. That is to say categorisation of the creativity as person, process or product can be applied no matter what the actual definition of creativity and forms some basis for comparison despite potentially different definitions. For this reason this categorisation forms part of my approach to analysis in this work.

2.3 Conceptions of Creativity

Sternberg and Spear-Swerling (2003) suggested that creative capacity consists of the ability which allows people to think creatively and adjust effectively to new situations. This involves insights, synthesis of perceptions and the ability to react to novel situations and stimuli. This is considered as the experiential aspect of intelligence and reflects how individuals connect their internal world with external reality. Sternberg and Spear-Swerling (2003) believe that more intelligent individuals will also move from consciously learning in a novel situation to automating the new learning so that they can attend to other tasks. Novel tasks or situations are good
measures of intellectual ability because they assess an individual’s ability to apply existing knowledge to new problems.

In organisations and businesses creativity is the process by which new ideas which make innovation possible are developed (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003). Runco (2004) viewed understanding creativity as the development of new ideas which have utility, and he locates the concept in a dual role of problem solving and problem finding. As developments in the communication industry demonstrate, creativity has a role to play in initiating change and evolution in organisations. In the business world these days, the word ‘innovation’ is frequently used. It is perhaps an external word that can be more easily ‘measured’. It generally talks about things that have been ‘tested’ and found to have ‘worked’ in the real world. Creativity, however, is perhaps more of an internal word. It is subjective and harder to measure or to define.

As for the school context, a recent study showed that student teachers’ conceptions of creativity were narrow, focussed mainly on practical investigations of matters of fact, and contained misconceptions. Teacher trainers are advised that student teachers’ conceptions of creativity can be grossly inadequate in several ways and that they may omit significant opportunities for creativity, involving, for example, the imaginative processing of scientific information and the construction and testing of explanations (Newton & Newton, 2009).
2.4 Key Theories on Creativity

Although intuitively a simple phenomenon, creativity is in fact complex. Creativity has been studied from the perspectives of behavioural psychology, social psychology, psychometrics, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, philosophy, history, economics, design research, business and management, among others. The behaviourist and cognitive views of creativity are among the schools of thought often acknowledged by researchers in education.

Behaviourist view of creativity

Skinner states that the environment acts upon the individual “determining that he will perceive it (the environment) and act in special ways” (*A Behavioural Model of Creation*, p. 269). This does not mean to say that there is no creation – there is in the sense that the product is new – but the autonomy, the volition of the perceived creative agent, is suspect. Thus the behaviourist believes that a person is not an initiating force in the creative act, but rather a focal point where environmental and genetic forces combine to create a common effect. Skinner (1972) concludes by saying that the task is to analyse the genetic and environmental histories responsible for an individual’s behaviour and then to create an environment in which creative behaviour can occur.

Maslow writes of creativity as an aspect of personality. This humanistic perspective states that creativity is a special way of thinking on the part of certain individuals. These people “live far more in the real world of nature than in the verbalized world of concepts, abstractions, beliefs, and stereotypes that most people confuse with the real world” (*Creativity in Self Actualizing People*, p. 88). That is to
say such people can see the raw, the fresh, the concrete as well as the generic, the abstract, the categorised, and the classified. He terms these people self-actualised and characterises them as having boldness, freedom, courage, and spontaneity. Creativity becomes an attitude displayed throughout the daily life of an individual.

Other qualities used by behaviourists to describe the creative personality include self-confidence, independence, and openness to experience. Creative people have a sense of humour and a playful child-like attitude, a preference for complexity, an acceptance of disorder, and a tolerance of ambiguity. Koestler (1905-1983) developed his views on creativity from the study of humour, literature and biology. He defined creativity as the juxtaposition of two self-consistent, but habitually incompatible frames of reference in the physical, psychological, and social worlds.

Cognitive view of creativity

In contrast to the behaviourist emphasis on interaction between the person and the environment, the cognitive view of creativity emphasizes mental processes. According to Amabile (1996) experimental results, evaluation and rewards have very similar results for creativity. The results depend upon the nature of the task. In Amabile’s theory of creativity three components are important:

i. Domain-relevant skills

The more skills the better, it appears, perhaps because they allow more choices. The ability to imagine situations and play them out mentally is important in many cases.
ii. Creativity-relevant mental processes

Creativity-relevant processes refer to the ability to change the way one looks at a situation, perceiving things differently from the way most people see them and keeping response options open as long as possible. Perceiving creatively includes using analogies and playing with ideas. When all else fails, Amabile suggests that one has to try something counter-intuitive. In order to be creative, one has also to concentrate one’s efforts for long periods and to be persistent in the face of difficulties. Therefore, elements of creativity include the willingness to take risks, maintain a high level of self-initiation and to be task-oriented in striving for excellence.

iii. Task motivation

Task motivation is the centre-piece, the most important component, in Amabile’s three-component theory. Intrinsic or internal motivation, as opposed to extrinsic motivation which comes from outside sources, is necessary to reach the highest level of creativity. Amabile states that there are some initial results on how intrinsic motivation does its work, and why extrinsic motivation does not work.

On the other hand, Brunt, Lerner, and Nicholas (2011) found that prizes have not only encouraged activity, but also spurred innovation. By analysing UK patent data from over 100 years, they found that prizes had a low impact, which suggests that prestige alone was sufficient for participants. Today, similar patterns are found within creative individuals, computer programmers or bloggers. This shows that extrinsic motivation is as important as intrinsic motivation in promoting creativity.
2.5 Creativity in Education

The US National Curriculum (2000) recognises creative thinking as one of the key skills in thinking and learning. These skills are embedded in all subjects and enable pupils to: generate and extend ideas, suggest hypotheses, apply imagination, consider things from alternative viewpoints; and look for alternative outcomes. It is the same in the Malaysian curriculum where creative skills are embedded in all subjects. However, the curriculum combines the two types of thinking – the creative and the critical (English Language Curriculum Specification, 2003, p. 3). As Fisher (2004) claims, “we need both critical and creative thinking, both analysis and synthesis, both the parts and the whole to be effective in our thinking. We need creative thinking to generate the new, but critical thinking to make judgements on it” (Fisher, 2004, pp. 10-11).

According to Craft (2005), creativity in schools deals with little ‘c’ creativity (LCC), which is a type of flexible, intelligent, imaginative response to everyday issues, not big ‘C’ Creativity (BCC), which transforms some field of human endeavour in a significant way. LCC (little ‘c’ creativity) means being open to possibilities and willing to try options. Lacking LCC may affect a person’s ability to cope with the basic challenges which life throws at him, through an inability to pose questions which may lead to possible ways around a blockage or problems (Craft, , 2001). This broad, school-based characterisation of creativity based on its potential or intended ‘scale’ or impact is useful not only because it is derived from a relevant school context, it also allows for a personal or contextual difference in the actual definition of creativity. Thus, like the Fisher and Williams (2004) characterisation of creativity as to do with either people, process or product, this characterisation of creativity as big ‘C’ or little ‘c’ can
be applied no matter what the actual definition of creativity and forms some basis for comparison despite potentially different definitions. For this reason these two categorisations were used to form two axes of relative scale, each independent of any actual definition, but capable of characterising and comparing individual definitions of creativity as part of my approach to analysis in this work.

The Creative Process

Most educators believe that they encourage creative behaviour in their classes (Stenberg & Lubart, 1991). According to a NACCCE report (1999), creativity can be developed and improved through education. Fleith (2000) added that developing a creative classroom is crucial for a student’s creative tendencies to survive.

Creativity occurs when you move out of the comfort zone, when you are challenged, and when you are in contention with yourself or with others. It occurs when we have the confidence to make mistakes; it happens when we are not tied to narrow targets but allow the spirit of play and imagination to tell us what to do. It means being open to chance and opportunity, to try the less travelled path, and to be open to doubts and uncertainties in seeking to generate what is new and original (OFSTED, 2003).

To establish a central role for creativity in schools firmly, proper opportunities, a supportive environment and keen motivation will be crucial (Meager, 2006). A Hierarchical Framework for the Study of Creativity by Runco (2007) accomplished several things: it re-organized the existing categories of research and education; it emphasized the distinction between actual performance and mere
potential; and it distinguished certain kinds of research in order to provide a detailed view of creative potential which could be easily used by educators.

**Creative Adults and Children**

Creativity is found in what is unique to each individual and original to children rather than what is original to the world (Shallcross in Beetlestone, 1998). Teachers’ perceptions of creativity and their descriptions of the ideal pupil do not coincide with the behaviours and traits commonly associated with the creative student (Dawson, 1997; Fleith, 2000).

Studies on creativity development have highlighted the impact of learning environments. One Chinese proverb says that a child is like a piece of paper: everyone who touches it would leave a mark; so one should make sure that these marks are positive. Mindham (2005) raised an issue which concerned providing for, recognizing and celebrating creativity in children’s play. It involved challenging the set of ideas about education, which had become generally accepted and yet seemed to be built upon sand rather than rocks.

Children’s creative performance is influenced not only by the type of task but also by the type of school (Besancon & Lubart, 2008). One of the essential ingredients of high-performing individuals, teams and organisations is creativity. To be creative means releasing talent and imagination. It also means the ability to take risks and, in some cases, necessitates standing outside the usual or accepted frames of reference. Creative people push the boundaries; they seek new ways of seeing, interpreting, understanding and questioning. They can accept the ambiguity of contradiction and
uncertainty. They can tolerate disorder and unpredictability. In fact, they thrive in circumstances which others might see as chaotic and disorderly (Harris, 2009).

**Creative Attitude**

At a young age children explore new things, come up with many thoughts and ideas and have unique and original thoughts. Once established, these attitudes tend to be continued (Craft, 2002; Duffy, 2002; Lowenfeld, 1987). Fisher (2004) views creativity as characteristic of people (our self-esteem and confidence), processes (the creative skills and knowledge we can use) and products (the outcome of our creative efforts).

Rowse (2007) highlighted nine attitudes of creative people:

i. Curiosity
ii. Seeing problems as interesting and acceptable
iii. Confronting challenges
iv. Constructive discontent
v. Optimism
vi. Suspending judgment
vii. Seeing hurdles as leading to improvements and solutions
viii. Perseverance
ix. Flexible imagination

Louise and Temperley (2009) claimed that creative leadership is an imaginative and thought-through response to the opportunities and challenging issues which inhibit learning at all levels. It is about seeing, thinking and doing things differently in order to improve the life chances of all students. Creative leaders also provide the conditions, environment and opportunities for others to be creative.
Creative Teaching

Creativity can be seen as a core value which should inform all teaching and learning processes. It is not an ‘add-on’ but is both integral and intrinsic to everything within and beyond the school curriculum (Roberts, 2006).

Countries throughout the world have taken initiatives to enhance creativity in the educational system. In China, for example, critics of education call for increasing students’ ‘creativity’ as the key to improving the nation’s education. One study examined the idea of children’s ‘creativity’in Beijing, associated with an education reform movement called ‘Education for Quality’. On the basis of ethnographic research in three elementary schools in Beijing, it was argued that efforts to increase students’ creativity founder both on structural impediments within the Chinese educational system and on contradictions inherent within the ideology of children’s ‘quality’ (Woronov, 2008).

In the UK Thomson, McGregor, Ethel, and Nafsika (2009) came up with Creative Partnerships which were aimed at changing how children learn and teachers teach, and were devised to bring about a total change in the school. Their research examined how schools took up the ‘cultural offer’ made by Creative Partnerships. Drawing on data from snapshot visits to forty English schools, the authors suggest that it made a difference to the school culture and to its purposeful practices. In many of the schools it has also spread beyond one-off projects to help teachers change their pedagogical approach more generally. They found a consistent trend across the schools toward cross-curricular and integrated approaches, which in some cases had also led to structural shifts in the use of space, time, and budgets and to the promotion of individual teachers. Some raise concerns about how performance regimes inhibit
what some schools are able to achieve, and others point to challenges for Creative Partnerships relating to assessment of creativity and concepts of social justice.

Kampylis, Berki, and Saariluoma (2009) claimed that the majority of the participants in their study reported that facilitating students’ creativity is included in the teachers’ role, but they (teachers themselves) do not feel well-trained and confident enough to realise this particular expectation. Three main research questions asked were: “What are the teachers’ conceptions about creativity in general?”, “What are the teachers’ theories of creativity in the context of primary education?”, and “How well-trained and equipped do teachers feel they are to play their key role in the development of students’ creative potential?”

Another study by Ellis and Lawrence (2009) on the Assessing Learning and Communication in Creative Learning Contexts project, funded by the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) Education Trust, aimed at offering teachers a view of creative learning development and a framework for teacher assessment. It set out to provide a close focus on the learner and a valuable source of information for curriculum planning. The study discussed the effect of working with the CLA (Creative Learning Association) on children’s learning and on teachers’ practice through a case study of one school involved in the project, and the implications for schools and classrooms from the perspectives of the researcher and the teacher.
2.6 UK Creative Partnerships and its relation to other contexts especially Malaysia

Creativity in general can be defined as the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality (Naiman, 2014). It is an ability whereby an individual gets to perceive the world differently; in a way that differs from other people. Runco and Jaeger (2012) stated that the standard definition of creativity is bipartite: it requires both originality and effectiveness. This idea of the dual identity of creativity as being both original and effective seems important in the definition of creativity in this particular study.

Creativity is one of the key 21st-century skills and is widely targeted by educators and decision makers around the world. There is, however, a discrepancy between the typical approach to “education for creativity” and what the research says about creativity. Runco (2014) identifies five reasons:

(1) First, there are multiple definitions of creativity and they are contested. Some are conflicting and not all agree (e.g., “Big C vs. little c” creativity are distinct from one another).

(2) There are numerous myths about creativity (e.g., “the art bias” and the expectation that creative students are troublesome).

(3) The nature of creativity can make it difficult for systematic, programmatic efforts. The originality that is a part of all creativity, for instance, cannot be predicted or guaranteed, so curriculum design is difficult.

(4) The traditional structure of education does not lend itself to support creativity. Several parts of the creativity complex are, for instance, contrary to the structure of the classroom. These include intrinsic motivation, incubation, playfulness
and autonomy. Additionally, creativity is risky. A person takes a risk whenever he or she shares an original idea. After all, if an idea is original, it is unconventional, and others may not like or understand it. Teachers are not in a position to take risks. Indeed, accountability and standardisation have increased in the last 10 years, and they make it nearly impossible to support creativity.

(5) Lack of support for creativity. Most disturbing here is duplicity by decision makers who claim to support creativity but, at the same time, undermine creativity by deciding how teachers and students should be creative and by carefully evaluating (thus inhibiting) all educational efforts.

The subject of creativity has become prevalent in England since the end of the 1990s. Numerous initiatives to foster individual and collective creativity have been implemented, some through partnership bringing together the arts, technology, science and the social sciences. In 2002, the government introduced Creative Partnerships in response to an influential report called “All our Futures”, published by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Educations (1999). The report responded both to fears that the National Curriculum’s heavy focus on Mathematics and literacy was driving out opportunities for creativity in education and that children’s creativity needed to be encouraged to prepare them for the challenges of the modern world of work. It ran as a pilot scheme in 16 areas for two years and was rolled out more widely in 2004, eventually being operated by 25 Area Delivery Organisations around England all managed by Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE).

Creative Partnerships supported thousands of innovative, long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals including artists, performers, architects and multimedia developers through the network of local Area Delivery
Organisations. Partners ranged from famous national institutions, such as the Royal Opera House, to individual local artists – and everything in between. Thus, the aim of the Creative Partnerships policy is “to give school children aged 5–18 and their teachers the opportunity to explore their creativity by working on sustained projects with creative professionals”. The objectives of the programme were to “make a major contribution to delivering some key priorities”, specified as:

a) a broader and richer curriculum, which will stimulate pupils’ imagination and excite their interest in learning
b) raising standards of attainment across the curriculum, including literacy and other basic skills
c) promoting creativity and innovation in teaching, right across the curriculum
d) improved teacher recruitment and retention
e) creating a distinct school ethos and strengthening the school’s place in the community
f) improved pupil self-confidence and attitudes to learning
g) equipping young people with skills that are in demand in the creative economy

The seven objectives bring together current policy emphases (Ofsted, 2003; QCA, 2002; QCA, 2005). It is clear that the UK government has put great emphasis on creativity and professional partnerships in their aim to foster creativity in schools. It traces the changing definitions and uses of the term in relation to agendas about raising standards in schools, promoting the arts and cultural education, and developing entrepreneurialism. In particular, it offers an analysis of the ways that these changing definitions influenced the Creative Partnerships programme, a national initiative to
encourage schools in England to work in partnership with the creative sector (Hall, 2010). According to Pat and Hall (2014), schools can learn and are learning from the pedagogies of creative practitioners, but that learning involves a deep encounter with the fundamental purposes and understandings of arts-related pedagogy, not only an assimilation of its surface techniques. Artists bring particular frames of reference and purposes with them from their practice outside the school. As they and teachers work together, they are able to create new practice.

Lamont, Jeffes and Lord (2010) evaluated the nature and impact of the Creative Partnerships programme on the teaching workforce. The research highlights the overwhelmingly positive impacts of involvement with Creative Partnerships. It corroborates the findings of the earlier case study work and provides a robust evidence base which promotes greater confidence in the potential of Creative Partnerships to engender a wealth of benefits for its programme participants. At the start of the research project, a typology of impacts was produced (Lord et al., 2010). This had been developed from previous research on the impacts of professional development activity on teachers (Lord et al., 2009).

Throughout the evaluation, this typology of impacts has been further developed and the impacts are now categorised into four domains: personal impacts (e.g., enhanced enthusiasm for job, own creative development, increased confidence, changed personal values, and developed personal learning) interpersonal and leadership impacts (e.g., improved skills for working with teaching colleagues, improved skills for working with creative professionals, and enhanced leadership skills) teaching and learning impacts (e.g., changed pedagogical values, use of increased/new creative language, new perceptions of pupils’ learning, development of classroom practice, development of skills to help children’s creativity, and curriculum
development) career impacts (e.g., impacts on career pathway, new roles and responsibilities).

A large proportion of respondents across the three school types (Schools of Creativity, Change Schools and Enquiry Schools) reported that Creative Partnerships had contributed to their professional journey ‘to a great extent’ or ‘to some extent’. This was reported most strongly by respondents working in Schools of Creativity; 95% of whom reported that this was the case (with over half (55%) reporting this ‘to a great extent’). Teachers in Change Schools also reported this strongly, 77% of whom reported this ‘to a great extent’ or ‘to some extent’. Just over two-thirds (67%) of Enquiry School respondents also reported this ‘to a great extent’ or ‘to some extent’.

Additional analysis revealed that the difference between the responses of teachers engaged in these different types of Creative Partnerships programme is statistically significant. Hence, Creative Partnerships appears to be making significant contributions to teachers’ CPD and development. Taking on responsibility for Creative Partnerships and being more heavily involved is likely to make the Creative Partnerships experience even more rewarding. Teachers in Schools of Creativity are also significantly more likely than teachers in Change Schools to rate their Creative Partnerships experience highly, and in turn teachers in Change Schools rate their CPD significantly higher than do those in Enquiry Schools.

This research has highlighted the overwhelmingly positive impacts of involvement with Creative Partnerships. High proportions of teachers consider themselves to have experienced a number of impacts, some of them very strongly, across the four impact domains. The value of the Creative Partnerships programme for teachers should not be underestimated. The robust nature of this enquiry, drawing
on the responses of 2,295 members of the teaching workforce across a range of schools and types of Creative Partnerships programmes, reinforces the findings of the earlier case-study phase, lending credible and very positive support.

A partnership project aimed at creativity and thinking skills like Creative Partnerships in the UK has been made by the Malaysian government. Thinking School International (TSI) is currently working closely with the Malaysian Ministry of Education on a major project to help develop thinking skills in all Malaysian schools. The Malaysian Government and Agensi Inovasi Malaysia (AIM) jointly created the iTHINK project to equip Malaysia’s next generation of innovators to think critically and be adaptable in preparation for the future. The Agensi Inovasi Malaysia (AIM) contacted 21st Century Schools to request assistance in developing curriculum modules/software for schools in Malaysia. The modules will not only support innovation and entrepreneurship development, which is essential to the success of Malaysia and its people, they will also develop critical 21st century survival skills as well as important habits and skills for being self-directed decision makers, working interdependently, and the ability to recognise and develop their unique talents and skills, especially creativity. The 21st Century Survival Skills highlighted are:

(1) Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
(2) Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence
(3) Agility and Adaptability
(4) Initiative and Entrepreneurialism
(5) Effective Written and Oral Communication
(6) Accessing and Analysing Information
(7) Curiosity and Imagination
This combination of promoted 21st Century ‘survival skills’ implicitly includes creativity as it encourages curiosity and imagination in the activities carried out with the students in schools. On the other hand the focus of this project is different from the UK Creative Partnerships which uses arts and culture directly as a base for inculcating creativity among students.

The curriculum will then be converted to media books which will be used by the children via tablets or other computers. Besides that, 21st Century Schools will be conducting professional development as well as ongoing project evaluation and support; it will also work with the teachers to create modules (or units) which students will use online, either on tablets or other computers. This very technology focused approach to creativity fits with the apparent focus on creativity as modernising, Westernising, international and entrepreneurial and is different from the UK’s more ‘artistic’ less focussed definition (iTHINK Malaysia).

The Ministry has realised that it is also important to ensure that teaching and learning themselves are framed to foster creativity. Under the current Malaysia Education Blueprint, the Malaysian government has introduced HOTS (High Order Thinking Skills) through the iTHINK programme at schools as one of the strategies to explicitly inculcate creativity and critical thinking among school students. It is in the hope that students go beyond rote learning and memorising. HOTS are skills which would equip students with the ability to apply, analyse, evaluate and think creatively in and outside the classroom. It is aimed at producing a generation of Malaysians who are knowledgeable, have good leadership qualities, are multi-lingual and have strong moral and religious values, qualities which would enable them to compete at the global level (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025).
Apart from that, in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the Ministry has identified 11 shifts needed to deliver the change in outcomes envisioned by all Malaysians. Each shift will address at least one of the five system outcomes of access, quality, equity, unity, and efficiency, with quality as the common underlying focus across all shifts because this is the dimension requiring the most urgent attention. Some of these shifts represent a change in strategy and direction. Others represent operational changes in how the Ministry and schools have historically implemented existing policies. Regardless of whether it is a strategic or operational shift, they all represent a move away from current practices. Collectively, these shifts address every stakeholder and the main concerns of the public. The Ministry hopes that this inclusiveness will provide the basis for a common focus that can be embraced by all Malaysians. The following section summarises each of these shifts.

**Shift 1: Provide equal access to quality education of an international standard**

The foundation for the success of a school system lies in its definition of what its students must know, understand, and be able to do. Malaysian students have historically excelled at reproducing subject content. However, this skill is less valuable in today’s ever-changing economy. Instead, students need to be able to reason, to extrapolate, and to creatively apply their knowledge in novel, unfamiliar settings. They also need attributes such as leadership to be globally competitive.

**Shift 2: Ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English**

Malaysia’s multicultural society makes it a natural environment for producing students who are proficient in more than one language. The current system produces commendably strong Bahasa Malaysia learning outcomes. There is widespread operational proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia among students, with 75% students
achieving a minimum credit in the 2010 SPM examination. Bahasa Malaysia also consistently shows the strongest pass rates out of the core subjects in the UPSR, Lower Secondary Evaluation or Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR), and SPM examinations. Operational proficiency in English is, however, much lower. Only 28% of students achieved a minimum credit in the 2011 SPM English paper against Cambridge 1119 standards. Poor English proficiency among fresh graduates has, since 2006, also been consistently ranked as one of the top five issues facing Malaysian employers.

**Shift 3: Develop values-driven Malaysians**

Today’s students will inherit a world fraught with challenges, from environmental degradation to armed conflict, on a scale that has never been seen before. Successfully navigating these issues will not only require students to have leadership skills, but strong universal values such as integrity, compassion, justice and altruism, to guide them in making ethical decisions. At the same time, it is important to balance the development of global citizenship with a strong national identity.

**Shift 4: Transform teaching into the profession of choice**

International research shows that teacher quality is the most significant school-based factor in determining student outcomes. The quality of a system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. While there are certainly many excellent teachers in the Malaysian education system, a 2011 research study found that only 50% of lessons were being delivered with effectiveness. This means that the lessons did not sufficiently engage students, and followed a more passive, lecture format of content delivery. These lessons focused on achieving surface-level content understanding,
instead of higher-order thinking skills. This statistic is particularly challenging as an estimated 60% of today’s teachers will still be teaching in 20 years’ time.

**Shift 5: Ensure high-performing school leaders in every school**

The quality of school leaders is the second biggest school-based factor in determining student outcomes, after teacher quality. International research on school leadership shows that an outstanding principal—one who is focused on instructional and not administrative leadership—can raise student outcomes by as much as 20%. The current selection criteria are, however, driven primarily by tenure rather than leadership competency. Additionally, 55% of today’s principals received no preparatory or induction training before or during their formative first three years of principalship. This means that principals may enter ill-prepared for their new role. With 40% of principals due to retire within the next five years, there is an opportunity to upgrade the cohort.

**Shift 6: Empower JPNs (State Education Departments), PPDs (District Education Departments), and schools to customise solutions based on need**

Both national and international data suggest that Malaysian schools are spread across a wide performance spectrum. For example, in the 2009+ PISA, 7% of participating schools were graded as Good, 13% as Fair, and 80% as Poor. Historically, many programmes have been designed according to a “one-size-fits-all” model. International evidence suggests that different sets of interventions are required in order to best serve schools at different performance levels.
Shift 7: Leverage ICT to scale up quality learning across Malaysia

The Ministry of Education has spent more than RM6 billion on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) over the past decade in education initiatives such as Smart Schools—one of the most capital-intensive investments the system has undertaken. However, ICT usage in schools continues to lag expectations, both in terms of quantity and quality. A UNESCO (2013) review found that ICT usage has not gone much further than the use of word-processing applications as an instructional tool. While ICT has tremendous potential to accelerate the learning of a wide range of knowledge and thinking skills, this potential, however, has not yet been achieved.

Shift 8: Transform Ministry delivery capabilities and capacity

Malaysia’s education delivery network is extensive. It employs approximately 6,800 officials and support staff at the federal level, almost 6,400 at the state level, and a further 6,000 at the district level. This is in addition to approximately 420,000 principals and teachers in schools, and more than 13,100 officials and support staff in IPGs (Teacher Training Institutions), IAB (Aminuddin Baki Institute), and matriculation colleges. Implementing policy across a network of this size is complex. Issues identified include overlaps in the responsibilities of the federal, state, and district levels; limited coordination across divisions and administrative levels; policies that are sometimes rolled out with inconsistent information or insufficient support; and weak outcome-based monitoring and follow-through.

Shift 9: Partner with parents, community, and private sector at scale

International experience makes it clear that learning happens well beyond the school walls and can occur at home and in the community. In Malaysia, approximately a quarter of a child’s time from the ages of 7 to 17 is spent in school. The priority is
thus to shift from “school learning” to “system learning” by engaging parents, the community, as well as the private and social sectors as partners in supporting student learning. Critically, international evidence is clear that some forms of involvement make more of a difference. For example, evidence from the OECD studies on PISA indicate that certain parent-child activities—such as reading to their children on a daily basis or discussing how their day was—can significantly raise student outcomes, regardless of socio-economic background. Similarly, international research has found that schools that engage with businesses, civic organisations, and higher education institutes enjoy benefits that include higher grades and lower student absenteeism.

**Shift 10: Maximise student outcomes for every ringgit**

In 2011, 16% of Malaysia’s annual federal budget was spent on education—the largest proportion among all ministries. Malaysia’s education budget, as a share of GDP, is also one of the highest in the world. This significant investment is an indication of the Government’s commitment to education. However, it is unlikely that substantially more funds can be diverted to the education system away from other priorities. Instead, it is critical for the Ministry to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its fund allocation and spending.

**Shift 11: Increase transparency for direct public accountability**

The Economic Transformation Programmes signalled a fundamental shift in Government accountability to the people. Anything less is now deemed unacceptable. This was reinforced during the National Dialogue where stakeholders frequently stressed the need for the Ministry to engage and communicate more with the public on types and progress of initiatives being undertaken and the results being delivered.
Only one of the eleven shifts focuses on partnerships as the central idea. It states that shifts to transform the system could involve partnering “with parents, community, and private sector at scale”. The following are the aims of the shift:

1) Equip every parent to support their child's learning via a parent engagement toolkit and online access to their child’s in-school progress

2) Invite every PIBG (Parent Teacher Association) to provide input on contextualisation of curriculum and teacher quality from 2016

3) Expand the Trust School model to 500 schools by 2025 by including alumni groups and NGOs as potential sponsors

It seems that the Malaysian government is trying to impart the idea that creativity is important for future development in an international context and is using existing mechanisms (curriculum and teachers) to add focus on creativity within the existing system to promote an international, entrepreneurial definition of creativity. While they may think it important for schools to work in partnership with outside organisations and partnerships, this is not how creativity in school is being promoted. This is in contrast with the UK Creative Partnership approach which used a wide variety of ‘external’ sources of creativity to promote creativity in schools.

Unlike in the UK where external creative collaboration is highlighted as the main focus, this idea is simply put as one among the other ten shifts in the Malaysian Blueprint. It may or may not succeed in achieving its aims since there are other different and various goals needing to be attained in our education system. The idea of creativity is not highlighted here and the main focus is given on partnerships and how this idea of partnerships can support the aims of Malaysian education. It also seems that the UK’s implied ‘definition’ of creativity is much more strongly aligned
with the arts and artistic approaches whereas Malaysia’s seems not only less
dominant but less explicit and more conflated with internationalisation, innovation
and entrepreneurship.

The approach used is also different in the UK. An independent report led to a
pilot study and then wider use and an evaluation stage. A range of external examples
were brought in although many of them were artistic. The intent was not to add
‘creativity’ to the curriculum but to use multiple external examples to inform and
motivate. In the UK it was then the teachers’ job to incorporate these examples or
ideas from them into their classrooms and they were free to take multiple definitions
or approaches. Malaysia’s approach was more defined and focused, not better or
worse, just different. In the case of iTHINK, the Ministry has sought input from a
broad range of stakeholders from educationists and academics to parents and
students, on what would be required to deliver on the aspirations identified. Given
the volume of input, there was a surprisingly high degree of consensus on some
topics such as the importance of raising teacher quality. There were also topics, such
as the future of language education, where there were mixed responses. The Ministry
reviewed these suggestions carefully, and integrated them into the Blueprint. The
UK’s creative partnerships talks about raising standards across the curriculum;
however, it does not link creativity with expected or ideal student behaviour.
Importantly, nor does it add creativity to the curriculum. It adds in external examples
as illustration and hopes to encourage teachers to use this to introduce creativity
where they see opportunity, although there is some expectation that creativity will
be increased as a result.
In the case of Malaysia, the insertion of moral values is one of its aims of creating knowledgeable students through higher order thinking and creativity. This is in line with Malaysia Educational Philosophy which states:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being to contribute to the betterment of the nation, family and society

(Ministry of Education, 1988)

This statement suggests a single social, ethnic and religious identity that actually is not there; even though it might be an ideal that government and society want to achieve. As mentioned earlier, the concepts that form the Malaysia National Education Philosophy are based on national ideology, cultures of Malaysian society, Five National Principles, and education reports. Based on all these materials a few factors actually determine the content and aims of the Malaysia National Education Philosophy:

Religious Factor

The quotation from the Malaysia National Education Philosophy “… Produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief and devotion to God…” suggests the religious factor present in it. Malaysia is a multiracial and multireligious country but with Islam as the official religion. While Islam is the official religion, other religions are also freely embraced and other religious worship, such as Christianity,
Buddhism, Hinduism is allowed. At the same time, based on the first maxim of the National Principles ‘Believe in God’ is made into a part of the Malaysia National Education Philosophy. Malaysia also focuses on the importance of religion being a part of a balanced person. The goal of education is to develop all aspects of the human person through a harmonious and balanced integration of the nature of man. Knowledgeable and educated students should have good morals and noble character; these thus become fundamental characteristics of a family, a community and a good citizen and educated person.

**Social Factor**

Another factor is the social factor that can be seen in the quotation “…to produce Malaysian citizens that are capable of achieving a high level of personal wellbeing to contribute to the betterment of the nation, family and society”. Malaysia is a land with various races. The harmony and prosperity of the nation depend very much on the practice of tolerance, cooperation and mutual respect among the various citizens. It is through the correct practice then we can attain the peace, harmony and the stability of society and nation.

**Political Factor**

The third factor is the political factor. The Malaysia National Education Philosophy was formulated according to the national ideology which is subsequently reflected in official documents such as Education Reports, Malaysia Plans and the National Principle. The Malaysian government’s aim of achieving racial unity was one of the basic considerations when formulating the Malaysia National Education
Philosophy. Socio-political factors have been very influential in the formulation and development of the Malaysia National Education Philosophy.

**Economic Factor**

Specialisation happens where Malaysians are trained with special skill in various fields to assist in developing the national economy by upgrading their productivity. Such an aim can be accomplished by producing individuals who are knowledgeable and competent, responsible and capable of contributing to the betterment of the nation, family and society. The great ambition of Malaysia in order to be a strong economic country becomes the prime objective of the Malaysia National Education Philosophy.

**Individual Factor**

The process of education is claimed to be able to develop the potential of individuals. These individual potentials cover intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects. Holistic development integrates all potential of individuals in such a manner that produce balanced and harmonious citizens. Following this, a positive attitude is inculcated in individuals to enjoy spiritual peacefulness and be ever ready to face challenges in life. Thus, the ambition to produce balanced and harmonious individuals is also one of the aspirations of the Malaysia National Education Philosophy.

**International Factor**

Another influential factor that could not be ignored is the international factor that spreads its influence through international education seminars and forums that
have a degree of influence in the design of the Malaysia National Education Philosophy. One example is lifelong learning which was discussed and adapted by UNESCO in the eighties. Its importance could be seen from the beginning where “Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort…” which clearly stated the concept of lifelong learning with respect to the globalisation of education.

Global cooperation also plays an important role in developing a nation. A good image and relationship with other countries gains many advantages. Because of this, Malaysia tries to play her role in the international arena, such as contribution to peace and prosperity and fostering good relationships with other countries. This effort is made sure to be followed by future generations. Hence the national education programme is moulded to produce educated, competent and moral citizens, who will be able not only to serve and contribute to the progress of the nation but also to provide their service to maintain international peace and stability.

The explanation of the factors involved in the formation of the National Education Philosophy has no direct connections with creativity discussed in this study but is highlighted to inform the readers of the reasons why the definition of creativity in the Malaysian education curriculum is what it is. There is more overt and explicit social and political influence on educational policy and this explains the policy on creativity in Malaysian schools and the implied governmental definition of creativity, which is linked to internationalisation, innovation and entrepreneurship. The idea of iTHINK is therefore very different from the UK’s ‘Creative Partnerships’ scheme which focuses directly on cultivating creativity through arts and culture.

The idea of developing creative partnerships in Malaysia has not yet become a priority in many schools. Some schools have many contacts with outside
organisations: others have little or none. Only certain schools (especially Sekolah Berprestasi Tinggi, SBP, MRSM so called High Performance Schools, HPS) enjoy the luxuries of the opportunities, funds, resources and training to create partnerships. For instance, some schools have more operative and effective alumni groups than others. The implementation of HOT skills may also vary from one school to another. Not every school has the same convenient infrastructure and opportunities. Due to the isolated nature and reduced teaching aids in rural schools, Malhoit (2005) asserts that rural schools should be given sufficient internet and information technology facilities. Unless good working conditions and teaching infrastructure are provided in rural schools, teaching quality and student achievement are likely to be impaired.

Although rural schools may differ from the urban schools regarding their facilities, the school studied in this research may represent most of the schools in Malaysia because it received the basic facilities all Malaysian schools possess. The students learn through the same standard curriculum and sit through the same standard examinations. In addition, Malaysia has one policy for the whole country even though the urban and rural areas are at different stages of development. The Malaysian education system does nurture and inspire a passion to explore and create; yet is also obsessed with passing examinations and collecting paper qualifications. Rules and regulations that stifle creativity and inhibit innovative thinking which underscore conformity and blind compliance need be removed. Malaysia has a good education policy but implementation-wise more needs to be done in order to develop a culture that appreciates creativity. As mentioned by a renowned Malaysian scholar Lim (2010):

An innovative approach is needed to raise the educational standard in rural areas to the level in urban centres. Since the jobs people do in rural places are
different, they must be provided sufficient knowledge and skills to perform those jobs more efficiently. This transformation process will bridge the innovation gap that now exists between the rural and urban sectors. What we need urgently is to put in place a culture that will encourage, recognise and celebrate creativity and innovation in all spheres. The private sector and the government must team up to identify the outcomes that are desired and design the strategy to develop the human capital, cultural capital, social capital and institutional support essential to build this ecosystem (p.2).

In summary, the Malaysian approach has a tighter and specific definition of creativity and uses the curriculum and existing academic structures and processes to introduce and encourage these practices, so there is a need for a degree of shared or common definition. Therefore, the place to look for this shared definition, if any, is in the cross-sectional working unit that I used in this research. This contrasts with the UK where they added a variety of different external examples of creativity and there was less need for a shared definition.

2.7 Developing vs. Shifting Creativity

Gulla (2007) stressed that if we want teachers to help students find their own voice and develop fluency as writers, we need to provide opportunities for teachers to engage in the same kind of work. Creative writing plays a role in helping teachers to find their own voice and identity. Development of creativity is influenced by multiple factors, including the environment, developmental changes in the students, and measurement tools. Creativity development is supported through active learning, student choice, access to varied materials, exploration, self-evaluation, problem
identifying, and problem solving. Additional analyses need to be conducted to uncover cultural and linguistic influences in schools (Maker, Jo, & Muammar, 2008).

Academic staff face pressures and challenges in attempting to develop innovative materials, yet they find that their enthusiasm for looking at new ways of teaching and learning is still fervent. Bluteau and Krumins (2008) explored the importance of giving academics the space to be creative in developing new teaching materials in the context of a government drive to increase the quality of the student experience, and what this means for ‘academic staff development’. Academics who have engaged with a UK Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in one institution were interviewed about their experiences of the creative process and the reward and recognition strategies put in place to support its activities. The results also showed that this study provided information to enhance students’ expression of sensitivity, fluency, flexibility, originality, and scientific creativity. Students’ creativity was motivated by the online interactivities and the teacher’s enquiry. According to Syh-Jong (2009), the difficulties and limitations of the teaching and learning environment included a strong attraction to the Internet, the students’ poor ability in word processing and discussion online, students’ utilitarianism due to the pressure of entrance examinations, and the large amount of time spent on explorative activities.

### 2.8 Obstacles to Creativity

Creativity does not flourish in an atmosphere of criticism, judgement or evaluation; these factors are some of the greatest cripplers of creativity (Amabile, 1979; Krippner, 1967). According to Adams (1986) in Thousand et al. (2002), there are several conceptual blocks to creativity, namely, the perceptual blocks, cultural
blocks, emotional blocks and language barriers. School-related factors which help to suppress the genius in students are testing and grading, labelling and tracking, textbook and worksheet learning, and tedium, whereas home-related factors are: emotional dysfunction, poverty, fast-track lifestyles and rigid ideologies. Culture moderates the channelling of individual abilities toward certain forms of creative behaviour (Bhawuk, 2003).

Another obstacle to creativity is feeling over-stressed. People need the stimulus of challenge, but a wealth of evidence suggests that when people feel threatened, pressurised, judged or stressed, they tend to revert to more conventional and less creative ways of thinking. The enemies of creativity are overload, innovation fatigue and the pressure of too many external demands (Fisher & Williams, 2004). Raghavan (2007) used the term ‘rural education’: the phrase conjures up unflattering images of broken blackboards and slates, lackadaisical teachers and students, rote learning and outdated teaching techniques and suppressed creativity.

Etelapelto and Lahti (2008) claimed that the main obstacles to creative collaboration were related to the emotional atmosphere and power relations of the group. A comparison of the contextual conditions of the least and most creative evaluated situations illustrate that the least creative situation was characterised by participants’ arguments, aimed at invalidating opposing opinions. Here, the group atmosphere was emotionally charged in a negative sense, and mutual consideration was lacking. The unsafe atmosphere made group members fear being emotionally bruised by other members. The most creative situation was characterised by complementarily in participants’ talk and by inclusive utilisation of one another’s views. The shared history of the group was an extremely important resource for group dialogue, allowing alternative future scenarios to be imagined. The emotional
scaffolding between students was rich, and the tutor’s resources were utilised. Results are discussed in terms of complementarity and of emotional and power relations.

**2.9 Research on Creativity in the ESL Curriculum in the Asian Region**

Kwek, Albright, and Kramer-Dahl (2007) discussed a pedagogical intervention project conducted in secondary English classrooms in Singapore, titled “Building Communities of Readers among Teachers”. The project was conceived as opposing the dominant instrumentalism of Singaporean approaches to creativity and promoting a socio-cultural stance with respect to creativity and criticism in English language education. The project seeks to improve the materials which the teachers are studying and to connect them with those provided for their students. The ultimate aim is to enable the teachers to reshape their pedagogical studies to encourage the creative and critical possibilities which these studies can bring to classroom practice and learning.

Recognising that arts education is important in facilitating learning and in enhancing student creativity, recent educational reforms in Hong Kong have sought to promote arts education and efforts to encourage creative expression through different art forms. Among different modes of creative artistic expression, drawing has been suggested as the best choice for encouraging creative expression by students with high ability in the visual arts. Therefore, the connection between students’ drawing and creativity warranted investigation. Chan and Chan (2007) explored the drawing abilities and creativity of Chinese students in Hong Kong based on their drawing performance and examined its relationship to students’ self-perceived artistic
characteristics and involvement in drawing activities. The sample comprised 105 Hong Kong Chinese primary and secondary school students, nominated by their schools to participate in the programmes for gifted students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Students completed two drawing tasks adapted from Clark’s Drawing Abilities Test and a self-reporting questionnaire which included the Artistic Characteristics Scale of the Scales for Rating the Behavioural Characteristics of Superior Students and the Drawing Activity Checklist. The drawings were rated according to the students’ drawing abilities and to their creativity as assessed by three Chinese visual artists as expert judges. The results showed that the judges agreed more on their ratings of students’ drawing abilities than on their ratings of students’ creativity. The drawing abilities and creativity which they judged were found to be moderately but significantly correlated. While the drawing abilities were found to correlate significantly with the students’ self-reported artistic characteristics and drawing activities, their creativity was found to correlate minimally with these variables. This study provided supporting evidence for the connection between drawing abilities and creativity. The findings also suggested that creativity enhancement via increased participation in drawing activities and a heightened awareness of artistic characteristics could be mediated by an improvement in drawing abilities.

Another popular field of research direction is the investigation of cultural differences in creativity and innovation. Chua, Mor, and Morris (2012) showed that when there is a multicultural social network, people are more likely to accept different ideas. While this seems rather intuitive, they also find that ideas are more creative
when a question addresses a global context than a local context. They speculate that those with greater multicultural networks will win in terms of innovation in the global marketplace, but they also emphasise that in order to harness the power of creativity in a global multicultural context, we need to think about how to connect with people from other cultures.

**Research on Creativity in Malaysia**


However, all the abovementioned studies used a quantitative approach. The present study, on the other hand, uses a case study with both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The rationale for using a case study was because single cases provide glimpses into complex interplays between policy, pedagogic practices, and institutional constraints (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007). This qualitative case study was an intensive, holistic description and thorough analysis of a single instance (Merriam 1998; Patton 2002; Yin, 2003) with the purpose of giving voice to a particular group and interpreting its significance. Adelman et al. (1976) added that the outcome of a case study can be used promptly for evaluative purposes and transformation of education policy. Nevertheless, in this case study, the effects would
not be as impressive but hopefully sufficient to prove and pinpoint substantial data on the policy and implementation of creativity in the Malaysian secondary school English Language curriculum.

Fipriyani (1997) investigated the creative thinking skills of Form 6 students using the Minnesota Tests of Creative Thinking. The research question asked was: “What are the creative thinking skills of Form 6 students?” The analysis revealed that there was a wide range of creativity among students. Their creativity was best in ideational fluency, but lower in ideational flexibility and originality. The findings also indicated that the students’ creativity in terms of figural flexibility was higher than their ideational flexibility; their figural originality was also higher than their ideational originality.

Malayani (1998) investigated the effect of computer use on creative thinking among Form 2 secondary school students. The results showed that students with low creativity gained significantly higher scores in all aspects of creativity except fluency where highly creative students obtained significantly higher scores.

Sing (1999) looked at creativity and its relationship with gender, IQ status and socio-economic status. The instruments used were: The Pearson Test and Analysis, The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, and The Cattell-Fari Test. The results showed that in terms of creativity there was no correlation with gender and socio-economic status. There was also no correlation between creativity and IQ.

Hassan (2000) carried out a study of creativity and its correlates among Form 4 students in selected secondary schools in Perak. The focus of this study was to obtain an insight into the creativity of Malaysian students. The purpose was to investigate the nature of the creative abilities of Malaysian secondary schools students
and the relationship between creativity and gender. The instrument used was The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. The findings indicated that girls are more creative than boys in certain measures. It was recommended that greater attention be given to steps which might help to improve the flexibility of the students’ thinking. Later, Hamsiah (2003) shifted the attention on students’ creativity to teachers’ creativity when she investigated the teachers’ creativity level and their practice in the classroom. More recently, Siti Rafiah (2008) carried out a quantitative study on the creativity of school children in Malaysia.

Much research has been done in the area of creativity. Most measure creativity among students using instruments such as The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking which measure the level of the individual’s creativity. The study proposed in this thesis intends to investigate how different conceptions of creativity impact on policy-making and its interpretation in the ESL curriculum. From the literature review it was found that very few studies have been done to understand better the conceptions of creativity among the stakeholders. This contributes to a lack of understanding of what creativity means. Azimah (1996) did a study similar to what the present researcher has proposed; however, her focus was only on the views of the teachers and the administrators in one school. Her findings indicate that the teachers have different definitions of creativity. Therefore, the proposed study intends to widen the scope of research by considering the views of all the stakeholders in the ESL curriculum. The results of this study will contribute to a better understanding of creativity and may lead to better ways of promoting it in the ESL curriculum.

In summary, most researchers of creativity in Malaysia favoured quantitative methods in their data analysis. Most used the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking as the main instrument. These key common findings point out that most of these
investigations were largely quantitative and attempted to measure creativity in different contexts relating it to other things such as IQ. Azimah (1996), for instance, has the same purpose of investigating how teachers define creativity; however, she limits her study only to teachers and administrators. The present study intends to take the investigation further by studying the definitions of creativity by other stakeholders, namely the students, the parents and the policy-makers.

**Research on Creativity in ESL in the Malaysian Context**

Ghazali (1997) investigated the levels of thought processes in teachers’ questions and tasks. The result of his study showed that most teachers asked low-level questions which did not encourage critical and creative thinking. Ghazali used the COGAFF Taxonomy (the integration of Bloom, 1956 and Krathwohl, 1964). Findings from Ghazali’s (1998) study on the use of questions in Malaysian schools indicated that most teachers have problems utilising the whole range of questions (low- and high-level thinking, convergent, divergent, literal and inferential questions) available to them. The problem was perpetuated when students in Malaysia were perceived merely as recipients of knowledge and the teacher as the ‘all-knowing’ feeder of knowledge to the students. This scenario did not encourage creativity at all.

Hussin (2006) carried out similar research to Ghazali’s (1997). His study investigated questioning as practised in Malaysian secondary school classrooms in order to determine teachers’ rationale for adopting certain questioning techniques and to use his findings to inform teacher education. This study employed an in-depth naturalistic approach and focused on everyday classroom events pertaining to questioning. It was found that the majority of questions set by EFL and science-as-
content-taught-in-English classes were low-level and factual, and not designed to encourage critical and creative thinking in learners; a mismatch occurred between what was stipulated by the national curriculum and how teachers actually taught in terms of posing questions. While the national policy stipulated that learners should be helped to become critical and creative thinkers, teachers seemed concerned with other, short term goals. For instance, teachers’ beliefs about their students’ academic needs and what teachers should do in a classroom made them tailor their questions so as to align them with the SPM (Malaysian Certificate of Education) examination with the result that more questions of a low-level factual category were posed. Supramani (2006) also came to the same conclusion in a more recent study.

Much earlier, Azimah (1996) had investigated the understanding of the idea of creativity in the school context. Semi-structured interviews were done with teachers and school administrators. The results showed the gap between the different types of rhetoric and reality in terms of teachers’ definition of creativity, their daily practices, emphases on individual interpretations and their expectations of the school system. Most teachers associated creativity with “originality”, “spontaneity”, “flexibility” and “newness”. Some gave more spontaneous descriptions, such as “doing differently” and “doing it your own unique way”.

Two other studies on creativity in language teaching were by Foozi (2002) and Majain (2004). Foozi (2002) attempted to identify creativity among Year 5 pupils by investigating their natural creativity and establishing its relationship with their English language performance (ELP). The components of creativity were measured by student ability in elaboration, flexibility, fluency and originality. The findings did not indicate any significant relationship between creativity and ELP which suggested that a good performance in ELP is not the predictor of creativity and vice versa. This study
was able to show that simple texts could be used to identify the creative and the non-creative personalities among the pupils. These tests could be used to assess a student’s natural creativity at puberty, which is a critical time for its development by teachers.

Majain (2004) sought the views of Form 4 students with regard to the classroom environment which is conducive to learning English. The study explored features found in the classroom physical setting and learning materials and the students’ participation and creativity. The results indicated that students attached great importance to the classroom learning environment. It was suggested that using appropriate strategies could cater for the students’ needs.

Previous research in South-East Asia, particularly Malaysia, has shown that the definitions of creativity given by the participants cover different fields and are interpreted according to their experiences and context. However, this study will elicit the views of different stakeholders involved in the Malaysian education system. As the education system in Malaysia is a top-down system, it is appropriate to look at each stakeholder’s definition and investigate the factors involved in the various definitions as well as how it affects education policy implementation. This study is not a study of creativity or a study that attempts to define it: rather it looks at the various definitions of creativity held by the key stakeholders in a case-study context with a view to examining the whole picture in an attempt to see how the policy is connected with the delivery and reception of that policy. With this in mind the next section will consider ESL pedagogy and creativity in this context.
Creativity in other Asian countries

Fostering creativity in education is intended to address many concerns (Shaheen, 2010) and what is regarded as creativity can vary across cultural groups and social contexts (Lopez, 2003). Tan, Manara, and Ragawanti (2009) claimed:

“As creativity has gained more prominence in both general education and language teaching itself, it is important to examine how the term ‘creativity’ is interpreted by teachers and students in various social and educational contexts”. From an Indonesian context creativity appears to be more about “honesty, reality, and truthfulness” (p. 75-84).

According to a study in Hong Kong, Chan and Chan (2007) stated that it appeared that Chinese teachers might value creative behaviours less or look on certain creative behaviours less favourably. Lam (1996) as cited in Rudowicz and Yue (2000) reported that, among a sample of 690 primary school teachers in Hong Kong, little incongruence was found between the teachers’ perceptions of a creative student with that of an ideal student, implying that a creative student needs to be well-behaved. In Taiwan, it is argued that creativity ought to involve some ethical standard (Wu, 1996, as cited in Rudowicz & Yue, 2011). In China, good moral behaviour has been reported as an essential element to the identification and development of creativity in gifted children (Liu, Wang, & Liu, 1997). It can be observed that a common feature to their views seems to be a moral component to understanding and developing creativity (Rudowicz & Yue, 2011).

Tan (2000) in his study reported that Singaporean adults (n = 162, age: 18-25 years) defined creativity as an ability to construct something. They also associated uniqueness, imagination, and art with creativity. As early as in the 1960s, creative imagination was regarded as one of the essential aspects of educational reform (Goh,
1972). In 1997, Singapore began an initiative called “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” which emphasizes more creativity, innovation, and critical thinking in classrooms. In order to further this goal into the 21st century the Ministry of Education is emphasising the following policies:

(1) Investment of billions of dollars in research and development for biomedical, nanotechnology, and other new sciences.

(2) A movement toward decentralization of the educational system, including the creation of “independent schools” (very much like charter schools in the U.S.) that have a greater degree of autonomy.

(3) An emphasis not just on promoting academic achievement but on getting children engaged in their own learning and passionate about school and education.

(4) The introduction of “niche schools” that focus on special areas, especially the arts. These niche schools teach all subjects but emphasise themes such as sports, art, music, and technology.

(5) Giving students and parents more choice, variety and flexibility so their children can choose different pathways to success.

(6) A heavy investment in teacher learning, including the development of professional learning communities through collaborative processes such as lesson study.

In the 1980s, the drive to foster creative minds increased its intensity (Lim & Gopinathan, 1990). In his opening speech at a conference, the Prime Minister (Goh, 1997) disseminated a framework on “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” (TSLN), which aimed at fostering higher order thinking skills (critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving) among Singaporean students. Creativity is part of the higher order thinking skills as stated in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy of the cognitive domain following Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). Thinking Schools, Learning
Nation, was launched by the prime minister in June 1997. It aims at developing all students into active learners with critical thinking skills and generating a creative and critical thinking culture within schools. Its key strategies include:

(1) Explicit teaching of critical and creative thinking skills

(2) Reduction of subject content

(3) Revision of assessment modes

(4) Greater emphasis on processes instead of outcomes when appraising schools.

It is observed that Singapore and Malaysia put emphasis on creativity through the implementation of higher order thinking skills in their education policy. However, implementation-wise Singaporean and Malaysian schools have long prided themselves on an examination-centric system and also on characteristics such as teamwork and discipline. The examination-centric approach is unhealthy for divergent thinkers, non-conformists, the imaginative and the severely critical-traited that usually characterise creative people (Ted Talks, 2006).

Many countries are still trying to find effective ways to frame relevant skills pertaining to creativity within a standard national curriculum. The further challenge is also to support longer-term continuous professional development in appropriate pedagogies and to shape major political and public shifts in mindsets to allow these approaches to be embedded in assessment and examination mechanisms (Gallagher, Hipkins, & Zohar, 2012). In East Asian countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, the challenge to inculcate creativity might be greater than in the European countries but it is clear that both countries are taking initiatives in fostering it.
2.10 Teaching creativity vs. teaching for creativity

The previous section has touched upon the pedagogy of ESL. This section will look at research done in other countries on creativity in ESL and in other academic subjects.

ESL and Creativity

Education in Singapore adopted the goal of nurturing creativity and developing creative efficacy among students and children. One study investigated Singaporean high school students’ creative efficacy based on the contemporary model of creativity (Amabile, 1983, 1996), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989, 1997) and inclusive education. The creative efficacy of high school students was measured. Five scales were developed with reference to the context of learning of the participants: creativity self-efficacy (cognitive style), creative self-efficacy (working style and personality trait), domain-specific efficacy with reference to everyday problem solving, civic responsibility and intercultural relationships. The participants were 510 high school students (46.5%, girls). Their age range was between 12 and 18 years old (mean = 15.43 years old and standard deviation = 0.87). The survey questionnaires were distributed to the participants who rated their responses on a five point Likert scale with anchors "1" "very much unlike me", "2" "unlike me", "3" "moderately like me", "4" "like me" and "5" "very much like me". The alpha reliabilities of all the scales were high, between .7 and .9, indicating the presence of internal consistency. Significant correlations were observed among creative self-efficacy (working style and personality trait), creative self-efficacy (cognitive style), and everyday problem-solving efficacy.
Exploratory factor analysis on the scales yielded one factor, creative efficacy, as accounting for 54.1% of variance. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on all subscales resulting in one factor model, with high fit indices (0.98) and Cronbach's alpha (.76). It was concluded that Singaporean high school students scored moderately high for creative efficacy, 80.5 (the lowest being 33, and the highest, 115). No significant gender difference was observed. The results were discussed with reference to developing efficacies in the context of creativity education in Asian and Chinese societies (Tan, Ho, & Yong, 2007). While this was an interesting study and used a reasonably large sample size, there was a considerable age range among the students and the statistical analysis, although thorough, did not explore interactions between factors. Indeed, one has to question whether this highly quantitative approach is really appropriate for investigating something as individual and hard to define as creativity.

Mark, Coniam, and Meimei (2008) looked at Year 9 (age 13) ESL learners in a secondary school in Hong Kong producing, with minimal input and support from their teachers, their own story-books, these being the final task outcome in a series of lessons focusing on creativity. Over a two month period, as an integral part of their ESL lessons, groups of students designed, wrote, and illustrated their own story books. They then visited nearby primary schools, where they read their story books to primary level ESL pupils and did follow-up tasks with them. The article describes the process from the perspective of one pioneering teacher and her class. The programme’s success has since led to its implementation across the board at Year 9 level in the school, with a subsequent expansion in the number of primary “buddies” reached by the programme. The article examines the place of authentic reading and writing as they are situated within the domains of creativity and task-based learning in
the school’s ESL programme. This is, perhaps, a good example of a creative approach to teaching creativity in ESL.

Another study investigated authentic writing through wikis by Year 7 ESL learners in a secondary school in Hong Kong. The wikis were used as a collaborative writing platform to produce, again with minimal input and teacher support, wiki content which describes the different facilities and features of their school. Over two months, as an integral part of their ESL homework, groups of students designed and put together, through a series of successive drafts, a description of their secondary school which they had joined from primary school a few months previously. After an initial overview of how wikis function in terms of editing and revision, the paper describes the process one group of learners experienced. Samples are provided of the students’ intermediate and final drafts, as well as snapshots of the amount and the types of writing produced at each stage. The students’ final draft became a printed brochure of their ‘new’ school to be distributed to parents. In the light of this real ‘outcome’, the paper discusses the place of authentic writing, situated within the domains of creativity and task-based learning, in a school’s ESL programme (Mak & Coniam, 2008). These papers are both good examples of creative teaching in an ESL context, and they also set out to teach aspects of creativity, or creative approaches, to the students. Although to some extent the context of these two studies is similar, in that this is ESL teaching in an Asian context, there are differences in Malaysia, which is more multi-ethnic and more multilingual. There are also differences in curriculum and assessment – particularly regarding the conformity expected between the curriculum document and the teachers in Malaysia. While this is very interesting (the use of wiki is a good example of relevant creative teaching), it is quite difficult to see
how this could be widely adopted in Malaysia in view of the present curriculum and the limited time available to cover the content for the exam.

Jackson and Davis (2000) noted that the main purpose of middle grades education is to promote the intellectual development of young adolescents. It is to enable every student to think creatively, to identify and solve meaningful problems, to communicate and work well with others, and to develop a basis of factual knowledge and skills as the essential foundation for these 'higher order' capacities. By enabling students to think creatively, allowing them to pursue interesting activities, and equipping them with the skills of democratic citizens in their classroom communities, middle-level educators can bear witness to the high expectations which young adolescents can fulfil and, more often, can exceed. The authors described multi-genre research projects and explained the role of a relevant and worthwhile curriculum as it relates to young adolescents and multi-genre research (Hughes, 2009).

Other Academic Subjects and Creativity

Ludhra (2008) draws on the creative experiences of new teachers prior to joining Initial Teacher Educators (ITE) and on classroom observation data. These examples, along with models of creative pedagogies, provide an overall picture of the current context and issues of creative practice in primary education. Throughout the article consideration is given to how ITE can seek to modify their own practices to support trainees better within the potentially problematic interrelationship between creativity and the curriculum. It particularly emphasises the need for teacher educators to address how they prepare trainees to take risks with innovative approaches and to what extent school-based mentors are either open to or hostile to creative practices of trainee teachers. While this paper emphasises the importance of ‘risk taking’ by
teachers to explore innovative approaches, the crowded and fixed curriculum and the need to prepare students for a common exam makes it very difficult for even experienced teachers to take risks in the Malaysian secondary school context.

Since 1992 Quebec’s Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture and Communications have been creating programmes designed to integrate a cultural dimension in schools, a process requiring partnerships between teachers and professionals in the cultural domain. This domain comprises the objects and practices pertaining to the realm of arts and aesthetics and the values associated with them, namely expressivity, subjectivity, emotions, sensitivity, singularity, imagination, creativity and feelings (Kerlan, 2004). What does this integration mean, according to Quebec’s official discourse? To answer this question, Cort and Simard (2008) relied on the ‘sociology of justification theory’ (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999, 2002; Boltanski & Thevenot, 1991) and used discourse and content analysis to examine Quebec’s official discourse. Their results suggest that this discourse relies on many definitions of culture and justice. This plurality blurs the meaning of the integration of the cultural dimension and requires that teachers delineate it by themselves (Cort & Simard, 2008). The fact that, unlike in Malaysia, the teachers have the opportunity and power to define creativity for themselves and to teach the full and fixed curriculum and the standard exam according to it makes this whole process difficult in the Malaysian context.

Herne, Burgess-Macey, and Rogers (2008) focused on a carnival in the curriculum project designed to revitalise the arts in the experience of students in Higher Education preparing to become primary school teachers. The authors discuss the relevance of a combined arts or trans-disciplinary art form to the remit of a visual arts education journal and explore carnival as a complex, inclusive, multi-faceted and
multi-dimensional cultural practice with deep historical and social roots. The study locates carnival within the theory and the debate about the arts in UK schools from the early 1980s. Drawing on an analysis of interviews with students and teachers in carnival project schools, issues and themes such as student involvement, creativity, artists working in schools, and cross-curricular learning are explored, leading to a conclusion that carnival in the curriculum provides an opportunity for innovation within the regulated official curriculum.

In another study Carmichael (2009) claimed that cultivating curiosity and interest in children for their own pleasure and with regard to their place in the world around them is a significant factor in each student’s well-being as well as in the future of society. He suggested that many educators think that schools no longer provide a curriculum with the ‘space’ or ‘freedom’ which can develop curiosity, creativity, and personal interests in young children. The library media specialist’s role in the student-centred curriculum can be important in nurturing this creative process. He suggested that library media specialists need to engage students’ hearts and minds in the learning process and emphasise the love of learning through personal interest, but perhaps this could be said to be true of all teachers. The “AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner” provides a fundamental resource for library media centres because the importance of personal interest is recognised both as a motivational factor and as a means to an end. This two-part article discusses the model used at the Independent Learning Centre Project at Concordia Lutheran College, an Australian K-12 co-educational day and boarding college. In the first part the author discusses how the applying the "AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner" in the Independent Learning Centre Project can revive the importance of library media centres and the role of the teacher librarian in affecting student learning. In the second part the author
discusses how developing creativity and personal interest in students through the Learning Centre Project can bring about changes and provide examples of student work. Although it is also true in the case of Malaysia, where educators think that the school can no longer provide ‘space’ for creativity, it is interesting to know that among them are those who believe that creativity can be promoted in any situation if the teachers themselves are creative.

Hay and Kapitzke (2009) write on rejecting notions of “creativity” as self-realisation through free expression. Their article argues that such discourses, currently driving education policy, comprise intellectual technologies for producing students’ ideas and conceptions required by neo-liberal contexts. This is explained by using a ‘governmentality’ framework, which locates the conditions of possibility for the creative subject within the dominant policy articulations of the global knowledge economy and the emerging rationalities of risk and uncertainty. Their analysis focused on an industry-school partnership formed by the state education system in Queensland, Australia, and several multinational corporations. It examined how the partnership emerged as a novel neo-liberal platform for creating new education figures such as the enterprising teacher and the entrepreneurial student-worker. These subjectivities were designed to implement the devolved governing strategy of social investment aimed at transforming relationships between students, schools and industry in Queensland. Although Malaysia has the same aim in preparing the nation for an international context, the different political context leads to the promotion of creativity being practised in a different way.

In many collegiate institutions the course goals mention habits of mind, or broad intellectual skills which will help students throughout their life after graduation. These goals, in various vague forms, appear in programme and course objectives
across the disciplines. But although these goals are widely recognised as important, as evidenced by their frequency of appearance, they are rarely defined in detail by educators in their course objectives. Perhaps even more importantly, there is often little mention of how the faculty teachers develop these habits of mind in students. Charbonneau, Jackson, Kobylski, and Roginski (2009) defined some of the key habits of mind and provided concrete examples of how to develop these qualities in a mathematics classroom. They defined those key habits of mind as creativity, work ethic, thinking interdependently, critical thinking, life-long learning, and curiosity.

2.11 Summary

The wide range of literature reviewed in this section provides some information about what has been achieved by previous researchers examining the subject of creativity. While an extensive literature informs this study, and some are, to a greater or lesser extent in a similar context, differences in context are very important. Furthermore, much of this literature was descriptive, looking at examples of creative teaching and/or ways of approaching creativity. This is interesting and provided many inspirational ideas for creative teaching. However, this is different from the situation under investigation here. For this thesis I have investigated the definitions of creativity by various key stakeholders in a single school cross-sectional case-study. I am not looking to impose a definition of creativity, nor am I looking at examples of creative teaching or evaluating the teaching of creativity in an ESL curriculum. Rather I am trying to take a broad view of how key stakeholders define creativity in this particular
context in order to illumine the problem and attempt to bring some objective clarity to a complex situation.

The definition of creativity is important in the Malaysian context because the government appear to be aiming at a fairly ‘narrow definition’ and is incorporating this into the National Curriculum. As the approach requires the existing school structure and processes (curriculum, teachers, classes, exams etc.) to produce the desired change it is important to examine the definitions of creativity in that context. In light of this approach and the lack of an explicit definition of creativity in the curriculum or supporting information despite a contested definition of creativity in the literature, in this work I allow multiple definitions of creativity. I am not imposing a single fixed definition of creativity but am using two relative scales as a basis to characterise and compare existing definitions within the system I am looking at. I would allow multiple definitions of creativity rather than forcing the concept into a single fixed definition. This is discussed more clearly in the next section.

3.0 DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The earlier sections have discussed thoroughly the political and language context in Malaysia as well as the pedagogy applied in ESL teaching. This section aims at defining the problem faced in Malaysia regarding implementation of the ESL curriculum pertaining to creativity. Much has been written concerning creativity and the creative process. However, there appears to be no definite consensus on how creativity is to be defined (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1998; Ford & Harris, 1992; Honig, 2000; Nierenberg, 1982; Perkins, 1988; Runco et al., 1998; Sorokin, 1962;
The creative process looks very different to different researchers (Isaksen & Treffinger, 1985; MacKinnon, 1978; Osborn, 1957; Martindale, 1989; Wallace, 1926). Without a clear consensus on the definition of creativity, particularly without the government, those involved in educational policy and the national curriculum, the schools and teachers who take responsibility for delivering that curriculum, lack a shared common definition of creativity; hence there is potential for confusion and a lack of the desired educational consistency. Few would dispute the need for creativity in the nation’s classrooms, but without consensus and clarity schools may struggle with inspiring the ‘right’ sort of creativity in their classes and students. How one goes about cultivating this ability in government schools has become a challenge for all teachers and teacher educators alike. Given that the Malaysian approach is to include creativity in the educational system via the curriculum and “normal” teaching process, there should perhaps be a common consensual definition of creativity.

Making space for creative behaviour involves entering an area of emotional and social risk-taking for all concerned, both teachers and pupils, and this endeavour inevitably benefits from careful preparation and follow-up; it therefore requires time to achieve. When their creativity is fostered, pupils can be seen to gain in confidence and in readiness to express themselves quite quickly, as well as in finding opportunities for initiative, decision-making and leadership (Craft et al., 2006). However, creativity does not flourish in an atmosphere of criticism, judgement or evaluation; these factors have been shown to be some of the greatest criplers of creativity (Amabile, 1979; Krippner, 1967). The current literature shows an unusual amount of interest in the genesis of creativity in individuals and in the characteristics
of creative people. Azimah (1996) was concerned with teachers’ ideas and views on creativity with regard to teaching: in contrast, this present study is concerned with a cross-section of different key stakeholders’ (teachers, students, parents, administrators and policy-makers) understanding of creativity in the changing Malaysian context. This study sets out to give them a voice for sharing their ideas and experiences with regard to creativity in the ESL curriculum and by so doing to help clarify the situation regarding the move toward an increased role for creativity in the curriculum.

3.1 The Purpose of the Study

This present study therefore aims at examining to what extent there is a shared consensual definition of creativity across a cross-section of key stakeholders that form a working unit of secondary English language teaching using a single case study approach. The purpose of this study is to extend the knowledge base on creativity with regard to the government education policy on creativity and its implementation in the Malaysian ESL curriculum. As such, its purpose is to understand how the different conceptions of creativity impact on the policy on creativity and on its implementation in the ESL curriculum.
3.2

Research Questions

To achieve its purpose the following research questions will be answered by this study:

1. How do the different stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, administrators and policy-makers) define creativity?
2. How do different conceptions of creativity impact on policy implementation?
3. What are the contextual factors which impact the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum?

The following chapter will discuss the methods used to investigate these questions and attempt to answer them. While it is clear that the context is complicated and that it would be possible to look at creativity in ESL teaching from an ethnic, social, political and/or purely educational point of view, the overall approach I have chosen is of a broad case-study of a particular secondary school. Although this approach is by necessity narrow, it does represent the views of stakeholders across a functional “working unit” of English language teaching. It examines a cross-section from government policy makers, through school managers and teachers to students and their parents. I recognise that there will be differences in other schools and other disciplines and between different contexts and individuals in what is a complex social and educational environment. However I hope there will
also be some generalisable similarities in views and relationships and it is hoped that this single cross-sectional working unit case study will illuminate the broader context to some extent. While this approach perhaps makes detailed academic discourse harder, it is pragmatically more achievable, and in my estimation defining the situation in a recognisable case-study using recognisable stakeholder view-points as the main source of data may actually provide a more approachable evidence-base for change and therefore may be more influential. Deeper, more “academic” discourse would have a narrower audience, and perhaps would not reach the right audience in terms of those with the power to effect change in the context under investigation.
4.0 Research Methods and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The overall methodology of this study is to take a relatively broad, cross-sectional case-study approach to examine the key stakeholders in a single, but to some extent representative school. This study probes the definitions of creativity of these key stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, administrators and policy-makers), examining how different conceptions of creativity impact on policy implementation, and exploring the contextual factors which impact the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum.

Focusing the research on a single school was done for two main reasons. Firstly, as briefly discussed in the introduction, the political and educational context of Malaysia is such that all schools work to a set curriculum measured by a common exam. In order to achieve this, the teachers, ‘management’ and administrative support systems within each school generally work to a fairly standard set of procedures. Thus there is a relatively high degree of curricular homogeneity within the Malaysian educational system. Furthermore, it is through the delivery of this curriculum that the government has chosen to try and introduce its desired focus on creativity. Therefore the data generated from this work is likely to be representative of the Malaysian secondary education sector to some extent. However the Malaysian context is politically and ethnically complex and, the findings may only be generalised for schools that share the same culture and ecology, although I hope that the similarities will be such that it will inform a broader context to some extent. Secondly, this is a
school where I have taught for five years and I therefore have a good relationship and cooperation with stakeholders and a familiarity with the environment and ethos of the school and its teaching.

Much of the literature on creativity sets out to use relatively large samples in an attempt to define creativity and to relate it to other things. Rather than trying to sample widely I have chosen to take advantage of some aspects of homogeneity in the education system and my familiarity with this single school and to concentrate on examining how creativity is defined in this school by the administrators and policy-makers who directly influence it, in an attempt to get a complete picture of this school as a cross-sectional working unit of ESL teaching. Given the circumstances I would suggest that this single school provides useful information which is fairly relevant to some extent and that it is possible to extrapolate conclusions drawn from it across the sector more widely.

This broad case-study methodology, looking at a single representative school and how its immediate administrative and policy environment influences as a working unit of ESL teaching, suggests that a mixed methods approach is needed. The research is mostly qualitative in nature in an attempt to probe and understand the individual key policy-makers’ definitions of creativity, but it uses some quantitative techniques to obtain data for definition and triangulation.

Mixed methods research is defined as that class of research in which the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. This method is also an attempt to make a legitimate use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or constraining researchers’ choices. It is an
expansive and creative, rather than a limiting, form of research. It is inclusive, pluralistic and complementary, and it suggests that researchers take an eclectic approach to method selection and to the thinking about and conduct of research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This approach was selected for this study because both quantitative and qualitative methods have their strengths and together could be used to investigate the overall picture presented by this case-study.

Although the mixed method approach was adopted, the focus of the research is on a qualitative approach which contributes to the bulk of the information. The reason for focusing on qualitative research is directly related to the aim of this study, which is to explore and understand the meaning which individuals ascribe to creativity in a particular and complex context and to extrapolate by induction from particular to general themes, which might allow a wider interpretation of the meaning of the data.

As Creswell (2007) stated, those who engage in this form of inquiry (a qualitative methods approach) support a way of looking at research which values an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning and the importance of considering the complexity of a situation. Niewiadomy (1993) adds that in this situation researchers seek to establish the meaning of a phenomenon based on the views of participants. It is a strategy of inquiry in which researchers ask individuals to provide stories about their experiences. This information is reshaped by the researchers to form a narrative chronology. In this process researchers set aside their own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study.

The overall methodology is therefore a mixed methods case-study approach, looking at key stakeholders in a single, but representative school together with its related administrative and policy influences as a ‘working unit’ of ESL teaching. The
aim was to take a fairly broad view of how these stakeholders define creativity, examining how these different conceptions of creativity influence the policy on creativity in ESL teaching and how they are implemented, and exploring the contextual factors which impact the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum. The hope is that, for reasons discussed before, the conclusions drawn from this case-study will be relevant more widely. The following sections briefly describe, first, more of the context and, then, the methods used in this study.

### 4.2 The Contextual Setting for the Research

The school selected was located in a suburban area in Gombak district of Selangor state. It has 3,800 students, which entitle it to be referred to as “sekolah sesak” (a crowded school). This is due to its location as the only secondary school in the area next to three primary schools. Therefore students from the nearby primary schools tend to continue their studies here when they start their secondary education.

This school was chosen for this study for several reasons. Firstly, this is a school I am familiar with, having taught here as an English teacher for five years, and this familiarity has contributed to the willingness of the school principal to allow the research to be carried out in the school. This familiarity also facilitates good access to the stakeholders (the teachers, the students and the administrators) and an awareness of the school procedures and broader ethos. Although my familiarity and position as an insider in the school potentially introduces the possibility of bias and a personal agenda into the research, I do not have strong personal views: rather I see myself partly as one of the key stakeholders, the teachers. I have used my position as an
insider not to influence or direct the views of others but to provide insight and a degree of expert context. As such I feel researching this case-study as an insider presents more advantages in terms of access and insight than it presents disadvantages in terms of undeclared bias.

Secondly, I chose to carry out my study in this school because of the characteristics which it presents. The students come from families with different socio-economic backgrounds, with parents working in different sectors ranging from labourers and lorry-drivers to professional occupations such as doctors and lawyers. The first settlers in the area were from the Indian community. Later, when the new housing area was developed, the Malay community moved in. Most Chinese students do not live in the housing area nearest to the school; instead they live in the centre of the town which is only around 2 kilometres away. This geographical separation is largely explained by the fact that most Chinese families are involved in merchandising and trading in this small busy town called Rawang.

Many of the teachers in this school completed their own secondary education in it. Indeed, the parents of some of them had also worked or studied in the school. This is not surprising as this school was the only secondary school in the town during the British occupation. It was opened in 1959 and was the first English secondary school in the district. At this early stage it did not have its own building and had to use a building in the Government English Primary School nearby. Only in 1968 did the school acquire its own premises with 16 classrooms including two science labs and an art room. Until today this school has had ten principals. Now the school has nine buildings, including a workshop, a canteen, a hall, a prayer room, a counselling room and three computer labs. The number of staff has grown from 27 teachers and 1400 students in 1969 to 150 teachers and 3600 students in 2009. With its large number of
students, the school handles 83 classes from Form 1 to Upper Sixth. There were also 14 general staff who work in the offices and labs.

In line with the development of its infrastructure the school has also developed its academic and sports activities. The results of PMR (Lower Secondary Assessment) and SPM (Malaysian Certificate of Education) show that the academic achievement of its students has improved every year. The percentage of students who passed the SPM, for instance, has increased from 61.9% in 1996 to 81.2% in 2008. In co-curricular activities the school has many times won the championship in football and other sports activities in Gombak district, and it is also famed for its participation in other co-curricular activities, such as the Police Cadets and the Scouts. Because of its multicultural community it was believed that this school would be the best choice for this study, insofar as it is based on an examination of different perspectives on creativity.

The school therefore provides a multicultural community which reflects the country as a whole and hopefully would yield rich data for this study. Whereas culture may constrain creativity, multicultural experience may foster the creative expansion of ideas. Through multicultural experiences people are also exposed to a range of behavioural and cognitive models for situations and problems. These new ideas, concepts, and models can be the inputs for creative expansion processes, because the more new ideas people have, the more likely they are to come up with novel combinations (Weisberg, 1999).

Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, and Chiu (2008) further suggest that exposure to other cultures has the potential to enhance people’s creativity, as the globalisation enthusiasts claim. The results of their study also show that attempts to promote
creativity by increasing intercultural contact can be easily thwarted when the situation
highlights the need for firm answers or when individuals experience an existential
threat which leads them to adhere even more rigidly to the typical ideas and practices
of their own culture.

Perhaps more importantly in terms of this case-study the school is fairly
typical of a school of this type and reflects the historical and multiethnic, multicultural
nature of Malaysia as a whole. The school location in a suburban area makes it a
suitable choice for this study as it does not have too many rural-urban differences.

4.3 Participants in the Study

The study involved stakeholders from various levels of the school together
with its related administrative and policy influences as a cross-sectional ‘working unit’
of ESL teaching, namely the policy-makers (the curriculum division officer, the state
education officer and the district education officer), the administrators (the school
principal, the assistant principal and the head of the language department), nine ESL
teachers, nine students, and six parents. Taken together these key stakeholders
represent the whole pathway from policy generation to its ultimate delivery by
teachers and its reception by the students and their parents.

4.3.1 Teachers

Each teacher selected had a degree in TESL (Teaching English as a Second
Language) or TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) or a
degree in another field with a Diploma in Education specialising in TESL or TESOL.
All of them had been teaching for more than five years and had experience teaching an upper secondary class (Forms 4 and 5). The teachers were all therefore relatively experienced and specialists in ESL teaching. The school has two sessions, a morning and an afternoon session. Six teachers were from the morning session and the three others were from the afternoon session. All of the teachers were female, as there are no male teachers teaching English language at the school, and the sample group included teachers from the three main ethnic groups at the school and in Malaysian society in general. They were selected on the basis of their area of specialisation and also their willingness to participate in the study.

As briefly discussed in the introduction, I taught in this school for five years from 2000 to 2005. However, in that period only four teachers worked directly with me in the morning session. My relationship with these four teachers was as colleagues: there was no personal relationship to complicate their participation in this study. The other five teachers were working in the afternoon session during the time I worked at the school, and this means that although I was only aware of their names, I never worked closely with them. Thus, while my experience at the school meant that I was familiar with this group of staff to some extent, and worked with four of them as colleagues, there were no complicated personal issues or relationships. As I left the school in 2005 the issue of professional relationships and potentially influential power relationships between myself as researcher and my ex-colleagues as subjects did not pose a problem.

### 4.3.2 Students

The group of students was selected on the basis of several criteria. First, they represented the ethnicity of the students in the school and indeed in Malaysia more
widely. The school student population is multiethnic with approximately one third each from Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic groups; this is broadly similar to Malaysia as a whole. Three male students and seven female students were involved in the group interviews. The students were from the Science stream co-educational class and had an intermediate level of English proficiency. Choosing students from this level of proficiency allowed me to explore further their perceptions and responses in relation to the study. The school administration recommended that I should work with a Form 4 class since a Form 5 class was busy preparing for the national year-end examinations. Other than the criteria for proficiency in English, the form to which they belonged, and my desire for the study group to contain individuals from the three main ethnic groups these students were chosen only for their willingness to participate in this study and to stay back after school for interviews.

### 4.3.3 Parents

Three sets of parents were chosen for interview, one from each of the main ethnic groups. All three sets have children studying in Form 4, who were interviewed as part of the student sample group. The Malay couple both work in the government sector, the Chinese father runs a small business in town, and his wife is a housewife but is also involved in a part-time online business. The Indian father works as a bank manager, and his wife works as a project coordinator. These three sets of parents are fairly typical of parents at the school and apart from my desire for the parents to be related to the student study population to aid triangulation and to have each of the three main ethnic groups represented, they were selected for interview solely because they were willing and able to participate.
4.3.4 The Administrators

Three administrators were interviewed to gauge their answers regarding the definition of creativity. They were chosen to represent each of the main levels of the administrative hierarchy at the school, shown in the following organisation chart. The individuals interviewed were the Principal (A1), one of the Assistant Principals (A2) who takes the lead in academic matters and the Head of the Language Department (A3). In Malaysian schools the main leader is the school Principal. A person in this position makes the decisions regarding the school’s administration and activities; however, even with this authority at school level, they must be guided by and abide by the rules and regulations given by the Ministry of Education. Brief contextual details of these individuals will now follow:

Fig. 1. The Organisation Chart of a School Administration
(a) The Principal

The Principal is a Malay lady in her 50s. She has had experience teaching in five different schools before being transferred to this school in 2008. She is the school’s tenth principal. She possesses a Bachelor in Education degree, majoring in the Malay language. Although her major field is not the English language, she has a satisfactory level of English communication. Therefore, I found it easy to communicate with her and to understand her views during the interview. It is worth noting that the Principal transferred into the school in 2008, after I had finished working there as a teacher, and therefore the research was not complicated by a previous relationship.

(b) The Assistant Principal

There are three Assistant Principals, all of a broadly similar experience and background. Their roles are to assist the Principal in managing the administration and, of course, to contribute to the core business of teaching the students. The Assistant Principal included in this study is an Indian lady, chosen because she was the only one available to participate in the interview. She majored in Biology and Moral Education. She had been teaching in the school for more than twenty years. In fact, she had had her secondary school education at this particular school. Her long association with the school and extensive professional experiences together with her joint teaching and administrative/management roles make her a potentially valuable source of rich and insightful data.

Although this lady worked at the school while I taught here between 2000 and 2005, we taught different subjects, and while I was aware of her as a colleague I
did not teach or work with her directly, and there were therefore no complicating professional or personal relationships influencing the interview data collection.

(c) The Head of the Language Department

The Head of the Language Department is a teacher in charge of all academic affairs concerning the language subjects taught in the school. The languages taught in this school are Malay, English, Tamil and Mandarin. The teacher is a Sikh lady who had been teaching in this school for nearly thirty years. Her specialisation is in Geography Education. All her children completed their secondary education in this school. This lady was Head of the Language Department when I taught in the school as an English teacher. During this time I had a positive professional relationship with her, although I did not work with her directly or know her well. Given the relatively superficial nature of our professional relationship and the time between my leaving the school and completing this study, our previous working relationship did not unduly influence the interview.

4.3.5 The Policy-Makers

(a) The Curriculum Division Officer

The Curriculum Division Officer served at the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education. She is in charge of the curriculum planning and acts as one of the committee members for the curriculum planning board at ministry level. Besides planning the curriculum, her role was to do research in schools and work
closely with the EPRD (Education Planning and Research Division). In addition to this her role is such that she is involved with other committee members in updating the curriculum from time to time.

(b) The State Education Officer

The State Education Officer is the person in charge of the planning and development of English language at the state level, in this case Selangor state. Selangor is divided into ten districts each of which has approximately 100 schools. In this role she is involved in making small decisions regarding state level policy and curriculum implementation. Her main role is to plan activities for schools across the whole state. Additionally, she also ensures that various educational activities are implemented as planned. Her work is linked closely with that of the Curriculum Division at the Ministry of Education so as to ensure that all the activities planned follow the curriculum as prescribed by the ministry.

(c) The District Education Officer

The District Education Officer is the person in charge of the planning and development of English language at the district level, in this case in 103 schools in the Gombak district. Her role is important in making minor decisions regarding the curriculum policy implementation at district level. Part of her job is to ensure that schools in her district implement activities outlined in the curriculum specifications as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Occasionally she visits schools and discusses issues raised by the school authorities.
Finally it is worth adding that as the researcher and observer I can also be considered as a participant in this study. In this sense I am also a person with a dual identity: as a former ESL teacher at the case-study school and also a researcher, I have a historical appreciation of the context and have access to the groups I am talking to. I am also familiar with how this functional unit normally works. This gives me not only access but a degree of empathy that will inform interpretation and aid data collection. However this past role also potentially brings a degree of bias to my observations as I am not observing as an impartial “outsider”. The timing of my presence is such that I hope to maximise the benefits of access and empathy but I also hope that my time away from the school offers a degree of separation that adds some objectivity to the data.

4.4 The Research Time-line

This study involved five phases. Phase 1 involved three steps. The first step in Phase 1 was to obtain approval from the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Prime Minister’s Department, to conduct research in a Malaysian school. This is the recognised and necessary way of obtaining ethical review and approval for this type of study in Malaysia. Approval was also sought and obtained from the Imperial College Research Ethics Committee (ICREC). It took almost a month to obtain the approval of both committees. The second step in Phase 1 was to collect the preliminary data on the participants involved in the study and on the school. The next step was to observe an English language lesson and to pilot the protocol for the teacher interviews. The context of the teaching and learning was also observed, so that I could note down factors which might influence the students’ creativity. Cornbleth (1990a) showed how
the setting or conditions of classroom teaching and learning influence what is taught and how and to whom it is taught (i.e., the curriculum in use).

Phase 2 involved collecting documents from students, teachers and the school administrators. The documents collected were: the Curriculum Document, a selection of the teachers’ lesson plans, and the students’ worksheets.

Phase 3 involved interviewing the school community members. They were the administrators (the Principal, the Assistant Principal and the Head of the Language Department), the ESL teachers and the students. The teachers were also given simple survey forms to complete, so as to elicit their conceptions of creativity and to record their personal data before the interviews. The face to face interviews were conducted using a common procedure for the state and district administrators, the school administrators, and teachers in order to ascertain their perspectives on creativity. However, group interviews were deemed more suitable for the students. In this way students had more opportunities to discuss the topic, and there was the possibility of their ideas developing during the discussion. It was also felt that group discussion would minimise the fear factor and anxiety level in students and would therefore facilitate the process of discovering their thoughts.

Phase 4 involved interviewing the parents. Face to face interviews were carried out with each of them at their convenience. The interview technique used was the same as with the teachers, namely the semi-structured interview.

Finally, Phase 5 involved interviewing the stakeholders at the ‘higher level’. This was done last because the arrangements needed to meet these people took more time. Appointments had to be made weeks earlier and were liable to be changed because of their tight schedules. Furthermore, first obtaining data from the ‘lower
level’ stakeholders, who are the ‘recipients’ of the policy made and implemented by the ‘higher level’ stakeholders, could reveal issues to be discussed at the higher level. The same interview technique was used but fewer questions were asked as the policy-makers had less time available and proved able to generate a rich discussion on the basis of only a few important questions. Less probing was needed with them compared to other stakeholder groups.

The whole data collection process took place over an intensive period of seven months, starting from April and October 2009. Table 1 summarizes the data collection procedure.

Table 1

*Research Time Line*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>Approval from EPU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>Approval from ICREC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>Preliminary data collection on the background of the participants and the school. Piloting teacher interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>July-August 2009</td>
<td>Collecting documents from students, teachers and the school administrators. Content analysis process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Interviewing the whole school community. Distributing and collecting the survey forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>Interviewing parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>Interviewing the stakeholders at the higher level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

This research used a mixed methods approach but concentrated on obtaining good qualitative data. Semi-quantitative data collection was largely used for support and triangulation, given that the numbers involved were too small to produce meaningful quantitative conclusions.

4.5.1 The survey form

Survey forms (see Appendix A) were given out to all teachers before they were interviewed. The forms were prepared based on recommendations made in the literature. The productive outcomes of creative activity should be originality, risk taking and the capability to cope with uncertainty in situations (Amabile, 1996; Harris, 2009; Rowse, 2007; Prentice, 2000). In addition, Amabile (1996) maintained that creativity includes the willingness to take risks, sustain a high level of self-initiation and to be task-oriented in striving for excellence.

The purpose of giving the survey form to the teachers is to introduce teachers to the language of creativity, so that they would be aware of what was to be discussed during the interview. It was not given to the students to avoid arousesing their anxiety. I also felt that it was inappropriate to give the forms to the parents, as they might feel it was too formal and because doing so might inhibit the informal discussion with them. It was felt that introducing the policy-makers to the language of creativity was unnecessary, given the time pressure for data collection in this group, as they were already well versed in the conception of creativity in the education system, given that they were the people involved in preparing the Curriculum Document.
Frequency counts and percentages were employed to study the data derived from the survey form. The data were triangulated with the interview data to confirm and verify the findings. This helped minimise the possibility of bias in the study while giving confidence in the findings when the data were to be analysed later (Freeman, 1998). Significantly, having data from differing sources provided a better understanding of the situation under study, since I was able to view it from different perspectives.

4.5.2 Face to face interviews

Merriam (1998) stated that since qualitative research focusses on process, meaning and understanding, the product of this research is richly descriptive. Data in the form of the participants’ own words and direct citations from documents are therefore likely to be included in order to amplify the findings of the study.

Interviews were chosen as the main data collection procedure for this study, as this method was resource intensive and a more personal mode of research compared to the use of a questionnaire. McNamara (1999) claimed that interviews were particularly useful for eliciting the story behind a participant’s experiences. In this way the interviewer could pursue in-depth information around the topic.

Interview protocols were prepared for each stakeholder (see Appendix B) as a guideline for me during the interviews. Interview data were recorded using an MP3 recorder. All the interviews were semi-structured. This technique was used to collect qualitative data by using guide questions to set up a situation which allowed the participants the time and scope to talk about their opinions on the subject and provided the opportunity for probing for further clarification and depth, using secondary questions and prompts as required. The focus of all the semi-structured interviews for
all stakeholders was the concept of creativity, with adjustments being made to take into account the particular stakeholder group’s context.

The objective was to understand the respondent's point of view rather than to make generalisations about behaviour. The interviews used open-ended questions, some planned in advance to prompt and guide the interview and others which arose naturally during the interview. As a researcher I tried to build up rapport with each of the interviewees, and in this way the interview resembled a conversation. This aspect of the work was greatly aided by my knowledge of the school and of the educational context of the subject under investigation. Questions were asked when I felt it was appropriate to ask them. Some were prepared questions and others were questions which occurred to me during the interview. The wording of the questions would not necessarily be the same for all respondents. As is common in semi-structured interviews, I used a general interview guide for all stakeholders, an approach which provides focus for the intended area of discussion but which still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in obtaining the information from the interviewees. The duration of the stakeholder interviews varied between 30 and 40 minutes. As researcher I also took notes while conversing with the stakeholders. Any unfamiliar behaviour or non-verbal communication observed was noted.

I then transcribed the interview by listening to the recorded conversation and using the contemporaneous notes as required to aid understanding and interpretation. Written transcripts were produced (see appendix C) and were analysed using the multi-dimensional axis of big & little ‘C’ creativity (Craft, 2005) and creativity seen in terms of “person, process and product” (Fisher, 2004) as a framework to characterise and compare the individuals’ definitions of creativity.
The next stage of analysis involved re-examining the transcripts to determine contexts and how the various indicators and definitions of creativity apparent were linked. These individual indicators of personal definitions of creativity, which were identified in the raw data, were compared and considered in new ways in order to begin to assemble the “big picture”. Context, descriptive details of the individual’s personal definitions of creativity, and the ramifications of these in relation to context and the views of other stakeholder groups, were identified and explored. Consequently, the research built up a conceptual model of the possible individual definition(s) of creativity and the similarities and differences in definition between stakeholder groups, noting how this may or may not impact on the policy for teaching creativity in ESL teaching and how this policy is implemented in this case-study school.

Finally, the conceptual model was translated into the story line. Although these analytical stages are described here in a linear fashion, in practice they occurred simultaneously and repeatedly. Revisions were made several times to the initial understanding and interpretation, leading to a re-examination of the raw data. The transcripts were then used as reference points during the writing stage, so that their findings are quoted in order to illustrate and support the narrative argument of this study.

4.5.3 Document Analysis

Another invaluable source of information was document analysis. Content analysis was performed on the Curriculum Document (see appendix G) and other documents (see appendix D & E). Documents were read carefully and any content
relating to creativity was summarised and note taken of it and its broader context, if apparent. In common with the interview analysis, the multi-dimensional axis of big & little ‘c’ creativity (Craft, 2005) and creativity seen in terms of “person, process and product” (Fisher, 2004) were used as a framework to characterise and compare the definitions of creativity explicit and implicit in the documents analysed and to provide context for the findings. This document analysis was performed according to simple standard protocols as described in Miles and Huberman (1994). This document analysis was not the analytical focus of this work but was used as triangulation to provide confirmatory evidence and to strengthen the credibility of the interview findings and to provide evidence of context and show how the stakeholders’ definitions may have been translated into practice.

(a) The Curriculum Document

The document, English Language Curriculum Specifications for Form 4 (see appendix G), is a document which defines the curriculum for the whole country and aims at fulfilling the National Education Philosophy so as to prepare students to face the economic and globalisation challenges. This document presents teaching and learning strategies based on various activities and resources. Teachers are encouraged to use their own creativity to choose, adopt and adapt the suggested activities depending on the students’ level of English language proficiency.

Content analysis was done to determine the presence of words relating to the concept of creativity within the Curriculum Document. I analysed the presence, meanings and relationships of definitions of creativity, in order to make inferences
about the underlying messages within the text, specifically in terms of how creativity was ‘officially defined’ within the common curriculum which all schools must follow.

(b) Lesson plans

Lesson plans were collected from the teachers taking part in the interviews. Teachers prepared their lesson plans by referring to the skills which needed to be taught on the basis of the Curriculum Document. There is a standardised format for writing lesson plans prescribed by the school, and this is a common approach used by all schools in Malaysia. Teachers wrote their lesson plans in a thick book referred to as *Buku Rekod Mengajar* (Teaching Record Book).

Content analysis was performed in a similar way as for the Curriculum Document with the presence of words relating to the concept of creativity identified and analysed in terms of meanings and relationships to definitions of creativity. In the case of the lesson plans Bloom’s Taxonomy, which is a long established and accepted definition of levels of learning, was used to analyse the material to be communicated in the lesson apparent within the plans (see Appendix F). The key verbs from the six levels of learning identified by Bloom were identified in the worksheets and used to categorise the intended level of thought processes based on the six levels of thought processes in Bloom’s Taxonomy. The analysis of this text focussed on how creativity was used within the official lesson plans of the teachers interviewed. While this does not translate absolutely into how creativity was taught, it is an indicator of this and perhaps provides a link between creativity as defined in policy and the curriculum and how this is interpreted and “delivered” by the teachers.
(c) Students' worksheets

A selection of worksheets was taken from the students’ exercise books and hand-outs distributed by the teachers. These were examined in the same way as the lesson plans using Bloom’s Taxonomy to analyse the material to be communicated in the worksheets. The analysis of these texts focused on how creativity was expressed by students in response to the assignments set by the teacher. While this does not absolutely capture the notion of creativity as apprehended by the students, it is perhaps a useful indicator of the final stage in which creativity passes from policy and the curriculum definition into the minds of the students, and it is one indicator of how they understand what they are taught about creativity in ESL.

4.5.4 Other Sources of Data

(a) School year plan

The school year plan consists of activities planned for both the teachers and students for the whole year. The plan outlines both the curricular and co-curricular activities including major events such as the school sports day and the open day for parents. The plan is derived from a discussion between the principal and other senior teachers (the assistant principals and the head of department for all the subjects taught in the school). The information in the school year plan gives a broad contextual overview of school activity and is used to help contextualise and situate the other data at a ‘whole school’ level.
(b) School annual magazine

More information about the school context and the school community can be obtained from the school annual magazine. It highlights the curricular and the co-curricular activities carried out in any particular year, besides highlighting important school achievements in both areas. The information from the school annual magazine provides a background for all the school activities and achievements throughout the year summarised in its own ‘voice’ produced for both an internal and external audience. As such, it helps with the broad context and is particularly good at identifying particularly noteworthy activities or successes that are unrelated to pedagogy and may therefore be missed out. It also represents in some sense an indicator of the broad culture of the whole school.

4.6 Ethical Approval

4.6.1 Economic Planning Unit

As the data collection was to be made in Malaysia, it was compulsory to obtain approval from the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister’s Department, which is the standard procedure for obtaining ethical approval for such research in Malaysia. The application process was carried out online in May 2008, and approval was received a month later. No data were collected until after the research proposal had been approved. Data collection started with the collection of background information on the participants in the school in July 2008.
4.6.2 Imperial College Research Ethics Committee (ICREC)

As this work was undertaken as part of an Imperial College Ph.D local ethical approval was also sought at Imperial, despite the fact that no data were to be collected at Imperial College. The research proposal was considered by the Joint Research Office and, given the low risk nature of the work and the fact that it had already received ethical approval in Malaysia, ethical approval was granted by the Imperial College Research Ethics Committee (ICREC) by chairman’s action.

4.7 Trustworthiness of Research Methodology

Trustworthiness of the research is an essential element to be taken into consideration in qualitative studies. This study illustrates the “trustworthiness of research methodology” based on Shenton (2004) in relation to the study conducted.

4.7.1 Credibility

According to Shenton (2004), “the development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations” is crucial in enhancing the credibility of the research. I was previously working as a teacher in the chosen school for five years and was aware of the culture. In order to know more about the involvement of parents and the community I read about the school online before proceeding with the data collection.
Another way to ensure credibility is to adopt well-established research methods. This study employs data collection methods in line with qualitative works by Stake (1994) and Yin (2003). Lincoln and Guba recommended prolonged engagement to establish a relationship of trust between parties. As researcher I conducted two preliminary visits to the school to establish a “relationship of trust” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I firstly asked for permission from the school Principal and built rapport with the school staff, including some old friends, new teachers, clerks and administrators with the hope of getting mutual support and cooperation. I also stated clearly the research objectives and showed them the interview protocols and research proposal to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the research would not be compromised. However, I believe I was not so immersed in the culture of the site that my judgement was compromised. My historical connection to the school gave me context and good rapport and access, but was long ago enough so that I was not still embedded in the local politics and practices. Thus I hope my past connection to the school gave me good contextual connection and awareness while the separation lent a degree of “outsider” objectivity.

According to Shenton (2004), another form of triangulation may involve the use of a wide range of informants and data sources. This appears to contribute to credibility. This study took into consideration of this and interviewed people from different groups; among them are the parents, students, teachers, administrators and policy makers. The study also cross-referenced with the curriculum document (Refer to Appendix G). As a researcher, one of the key elements in case study qualitative research is to ensure “honesty in informants”. It is worth indicating that I was doing the research as part of the Ph.D thesis requirements and not part of any government or private organisations. Participants can, therefore contribute ideas and talk of their
experiences without fear of losing credibility in the eyes of the organisation managers (Shenton, 2004).

4.7.2 Transferability

I acknowledge Shenton’s (2004) argument that since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is actually impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations. Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000) recognise the importance of the contextual factors in a case. This cross-sectional case study captures the view at a single time in a single school, but despite the complexity of the wider context, the situation of creativity in a national curriculum means that the broader conclusions may be transferable beyond the single case study school to some extent. Thus, while recognising the complexity of the political, ethnic and cultural differences between different schools, this study does not reject the prospect of transferability totally, although the case presented is unique in itself (Denscombe, 1998; Stake, 1994). In order to assess the extent to which findings may be true of schools in other settings, similar studies employing the same methods but conducted in different environments would be of great value. This may warrant future research in this field.

4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative case studies can be problematic as the unique nature of each experimental context means that reproduceable results cannot be expected even if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods
and with the same participants. However, despite the unique nature of the case-study there is merit in heeding the suggestion by Shenton (2004), to provide detailed explanations of the process of the research, especially in research design and data collection methods so that future researchers could at least replicate the case study in other settings. Even if the results may differ in detail, the conclusions drawn may be similar and indicate a degree of “dependability”.

4.7.4 Confirmability

“Confirmability”, in Guba (1989, cited in Shenton, 2004) implies that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, instead of the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. This is especially relevant in this work as my past connection to the school and previous role as an ESL teacher could potentially contaminate my views and role as a researcher. The role of triangulation, as previously mentioned, can promote confirmability as alternative views from various sources are put forward for discussion, thus diluting the writers’ influence and preferences. It is also important to recognise that while my previous role as an ESL teacher may have introduced some bias, it also gave me contextual knowledge and insight. I have attempted to recognise my previous role may influence my views and interpretation but have attempted to reduce “investigator bias” by analysing and coding continually while attempting to be explicitly aware of my past role as teacher and my present role as researcher.

Another way to ensure confirmability is to provide detailed methodological description which enables the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In this case study, I presented as much meaningful findings and quotes in the data analysis
section to facilitate readers’ understanding of the context, which then contributed to confirmability of the research.

4.8 Summary

The overall methodology underlying this research is a mixed methods cross-sectional case-study approach, looking at key stakeholders from policy-makers and implementers through the administrative and management levels to teachers as the ultimate ‘deliverers’ of policy and to students and their parents as the ultimate ‘receivers’ of the policy on creativity in ESL teaching. This multi-level approach attempted to capture the available views at every level of what could be considered a complete ‘working unit’ of ESL teaching. A single but representative school was used as a case-study in order to take a broad but contextually situated view of creativity in ESL teaching, examining how different definitions of creativity may impact on the policy on creativity in ESL teaching, and its implementation, exploring the contextual factors which impact the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum.

The bulk of the data were gathered from qualitative semi-structured interviews of representatives of each of the stakeholder groups, and this was supported by a short questionnaire survey of the most important group, the teachers, and a document analysis of key documents (the Curriculum Document, lesson plans and student worksheets) together with broader overarching sources, namely, the school year plan and the annual school magazine. Where possible this data were collected from related sources to maximise the opportunity for triangulation and to enrich the
contextual depth of the data. While a mixed-method approach was adopted, the qualitative analysis of the interviews formed the bulk of the work with the more quantitative questionnaire and document analysis used largely to establish context and for triangulation.

The following chapter will outline the findings obtained using these methods. They will be reported with discussion in order to facilitate understanding and build up a coherent narrative argument, as, although a fairly broad look at a single school case study is relatively simple, the overall situation is very complex. In order to make sense of the findings and how they relate to one another and this complex situation, some embedded discussion in the findings chapter seems more appropriate than to have a separate self-contained discussions chapter.
5.0 Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and briefly discusses the findings of this study considering data from each of the key stakeholder groups in turn, relating data from the various sources and then relating the data from the stakeholder groups with one another. The intention is that this approach will form a narrative argument that characterises the various definitions of creativity identified in the case-study school and ultimately provide answers to the three research questions, which will later be considered in turn. The data of the study comprise responses from the teacher survey forms, the teacher interview transcripts with their associated field notes, together with the example lesson plans and the student worksheets. This is accompanied by transcripts from the three student focus group interviews, the parent interview transcripts, the administrator transcripts and finally the policy-makers’ interview transcripts together with the Curriculum Document content analysis.

5.2 How do Different Stakeholders define Creativity?

In this section data from the various stakeholder groups, namely the teachers, students, parents, the administrators and the policy-makers, will be presented and discussed in an attempt to characterise each group’s definition of creativity.
5.2.1 Teachers

In many ways the teachers are the key stakeholder group as they have the ultimate responsibility for interpreting and delivering the policy on creativity. They are the policy enactors. Additionally, most teachers strive to teach creatively and to inspire creativity in their pupils as a part of their normal teaching role. I shall therefore consider this stakeholder group first.

(a) Data from the survey forms

The survey forms (see Appendix A) were given to the teachers two days before the interview and helped prepare them for the discussion during the interview session. The form has three questions and required teachers to tick the appropriate column based on their views. These questions will be considered in turn.

Table 2 presents the answers given by teachers to the first question – What is creativity to you? The numbers in the frequency column show the teachers that agreed with the criteria listed as parts of the definition of creativity as a number and as a percentage. The count and percentage value at the bottom of each teacher column shows how many of the possible definitions of creativity each teacher agreed with. Whilst percentage values are not very helpful with such small sample sizes, they are used here, together with the actual count, only to help highlight patterns and trends in the data.
### Table 2

**Teacher Survey Analysis (Question 1 - What is creativity to you?)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Total</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>6 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>7 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>7 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>1 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Ideas</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>4 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuable Ideas</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>5 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Expression</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>9 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divergent Thinking</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>1 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Thinking</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>6 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Products</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>2 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing connections</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>4 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking risks</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>8 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being flexible</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>7 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>2 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being different</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>6 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being practical</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>5 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task- oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>7 8 12 9 10 8 9 9 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>41 47 71 53 59 47 53 53 47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The potential choices of definitions available in question 1 are taken from a wide range of definitions of creativity in the literature, and the findings reveal that the teachers each chose to tick multiple boxes, which suggests that they all had multiple definitions of creativity when prompted by the questionnaire. Most indicated agreement with around half of the definitions, eight or nine of the seventeen possible definitions of creativity. There was only relatively little variation between teachers in terms of the breadth of definition in the questionnaire. Teacher 1 perhaps expressed the narrowest range of definitions and only indicated her agreement with seven (41%) of the seventeen, while Teacher 3 agreed with more (12 of the 17 or 71%) of the possible definitions than any of her colleagues. Their answers revealed little in the way of any apparent consensus or pattern, although all teachers seemed to associate creativity with self-expression, and eight out of nine (89%) teachers reasoned that creativity had to do with the willingness to take risks, while seven out of the nine (78%) teachers agreed that other criteria related to creativity were innovation, discovery and flexibility. These are the definitions associated with the highest degree of consensus and agreement between the teachers. There was also consensus that for this group of teachers creativity was not associated with being task-oriented and some degree of consensus that creativity is not associated with aesthetic products and intrinsic motivation, with each only garnering two ‘votes’ (22%), nor with appropriateness and divergent thinking, with each receiving only one ‘vote’ (11%).

Although all teachers agreed that creativity is related to self-expression, only two teachers chose aesthetic products from the list. This is interesting and suggests perhaps that, while all teachers sampled viewed creativity as being to do with individual self-expression, this was not being interpreted in an artistic way that typically might result in aesthetic products. Perhaps the teachers are thinking of self-
expression in an academic sense. It is also peculiar that teachers did not seem to
associate aesthetic products with drama and role-play (as they claimed later in the
interview) which they carried out in their ESL classes in order to promote creativity.
This apparent paradox may occur owing to a misunderstanding of the English
terminology, although this is unlikely given the experience and level of competence of
the teachers and the relative simplicity of the terms. Perhaps the teachers see the
relatively aesthetic drama and role-play that occur as part of their teaching, not as
aesthetic or artistic products, but as scholarly activity, because of their academic
context. Although it is impossible to be conclusive with such a small and simple data
set, the teachers’ choices in response to this question are consistent with their viewing
creativity as being concerned with the ‘person’ and/or the ‘process’ more than the
Furthermore, even these simple data show the complexity involved in defining
creativity in this context.

The following Table 3 summarises the responses to the second question on
the characteristics of creative students.
Table 3

*Teacher Survey Analysis (Question 2 - A creative student...)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is curious</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is optimistic</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perseveres in difficulties</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confronts challenges</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suspends judgement</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has flexible imagination</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pushes boundaries</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeks new ways of seeing</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepts ambiguity of contradiction</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sees problems as interesting and acceptable</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tolerates disorder and unpredictability</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sees hurdles as leading to improvements and solutions</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>7 9 5 5 7 8 7 7 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>58 75 42 42 58 67 58 58 58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the data from the teachers’ definitions of what makes a creative student, again with the possible choices based on a variety of different definitions from the literature. As with the previous question, the teachers all chose to tick multiple boxes, suggesting complex and multiple definitions of creativity. As with the previous table the numbers in the frequency column showed the teachers that agreed with the criteria listed as parts of the definition of creativity as a number and as a percentage. The count and percentage value at the bottom of each teacher column shows how many of the possible definitions of creativity each teacher agreed with. In
contrast to the first question, which asked for a general definition of creativity as a concept, this question asked them to define a creative student by choosing specific attributes or behaviours. This gives a clear context to the definition of creativity.

Once again there was no clear pattern in the choices made, but eight out of the nine (89%) agreed that a creative student sought new ways of seeing, while seven teachers (78%) believed that creative students ‘confront challenges’ and ‘see hurdles as leading to improvements and solutions’, and six teachers (67%) agreed that a creative student is ‘curious’, ‘optimistic’ and ‘tolerates disorder and unpredictability’. There was consensus in the group that ‘accepting ambiguity of contradiction’ did not appear to be part of the definition of a creative student, while only one teacher viewed ‘suspending judgment’ as being creative. While statistical analysis of such a small sample would be inappropriate, the teachers are a little more consistent when answering this question, as indicated by the slightly narrower range of response. Perhaps this is unsurprising given the more defined and specific context of this question.

It is interesting that none of the teachers thought that ‘accepts ambiguity of contradiction’ was associated with creativity in students, but that six (67%) chose ‘tolerates disorder and unpredictability’ as being a characteristic of creativity in students. These seem to be very similar attributes or behaviours, although perhaps ‘accepting ambiguity’ is a little more abstract. This apparent inconsistency among the teachers’ choices may be due to their relative familiarity with the words used or perhaps because the more abstract definition is harder to understand. Perhaps they did not want to take the risk of choosing definitions containing words unfamiliar to them. Once again with these data it is not possible to give a definitive answer, although given the experience and level of qualifications of the teachers it would be surprising
if none of them understood the terms. This does however show that teachers seem to be aware of the implications of their answers when completing the survey form.

As stated earlier, the criteria used in this questionnaire were adapted from Rowse (2007) who postulated nine attitudes in creative people: curiosity, seeing problems as interesting and acceptable, confronting challenges, constructive discontent, optimism, suspending judgement, seeing hurdles as leading to improvements and solutions, perseverance and having a flexible imagination. Additionally, Harris (2009) found that creative people push the boundaries; they seek new ways of seeing, interpreting, understanding and questioning. They can accept the ambiguity of contradiction and uncertainty. They can tolerate disorder and unpredictability. In fact, they thrive in circumstances which others might regard as chaotic and disorderly (Harris 2009). While all of the phrases used as possible choices in this question came from the literature and represented to some extent defining characteristics of creativity, the teachers sampled did not agree with all of them, although most seemed to agree with most of them.

The third question in the survey form requires teachers to identify criteria they thought defined a creative teacher. Their answers can be seen in Table 4. As with the previous tables the numbers in the frequency column showed the teachers that agreed with the criteria listed as parts of the definition of creativity as a number and as a percentage. The count and percentage value at the bottom of each teacher column shows how many of the possible definitions of creativity with which each teacher agreed. As with the previous question and in contrast to the first question, this question gives a clear context to the definition of creativity, in this instance asking for definitions of a creative teacher.
### Table 4

*Teacher Survey Analysis (Question 3 – A creative teacher is...)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Total %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects every day</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 8 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticises positively</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 6 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspires students</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 7 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts students’ ideas</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 8 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attends to students’ opinions</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 6 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks open-ended questions</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 8 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages students to be reflective</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 8 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds on students’ questions</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 5 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes students’ mistakes as a way of learning</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 7 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages students to participate by giving cues</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 6 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opens opportunities for students to do things their way</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 8 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>7 10 5 11 11 8 7 10 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>64 91 45 100 100 73 64 91 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4 shows, the survey revealed that all teachers agreed that a creative teacher opens opportunities for students to do things their way. Eight of the teachers (89%) believe that a creative teacher reflects every day, accepts students’ ideas, asks open-ended questions and encourages students to be reflective. Seven of them (78%) see inspiring students and taking students’ mistakes as a way of learning as being creative. While six teachers (67%) think that a creative teacher criticises positively, attends to students’ opinions and encourages students to participate by giving cues, only five of them (56%) viewed building on students’ questions as being creative.
As with the last question, asking for a definition of creativity in a more specific context resulted in a more homogeneous set of responses. The teachers ticked more and seemed to agree that many of the attributes listed were characteristic of a creative teacher. Two of them thought all eleven (100%) were associated with a creative teacher, while a further two chose 10 (91%). All but Teacher 3 agreed with most of the phrases listed: Teacher 3 only chose five of the eleven (45%).

It is interesting that, while all of the phrases had reasonable support from the teachers as being characteristic of a creative teacher, those that were least popular with only 5 or 6 of the 9 teachers choosing them (‘builds on students’ questions’, ‘criticises positively’, ‘attends to students’ opinions’ and ‘encourages students to participate by giving cues’) all involved what might be perceived as fairly intensive teaching activity. This might conceivably be due to their consciousness of the time needed for these intensive teaching activities given the pressure of time needed to finish the syllabus. Alternatively these fairly pragmatic activities might have been seen as simplistic and therefore less creative when compared to the more open-ended phrases that ‘scored’ more highly. Once again these relatively simplistic data do not provide a definitive answer.

One phrase that three of the teachers did not choose is ‘criticises positively’. Here it is possible that ‘criticises’ may be seen only as perceiving flaws and linking it to the word ‘positively’ may be seen as awkward or linguistically confusing, and perhaps this discouraged them from choosing this option.

All teachers agreed that a creative teacher ‘opens opportunities for students to do things their way’, which suggested that these teachers saw the value in a student-centred approach to learning and encouraged students to seek out and experiment with
new things or ideas. This is perhaps somewhat at odds with the crowded curriculum and the tendency for a traditional didactic approach in order to cover the material required for the common exam, but it is very valuable to discover that teachers in the ESL classes think this way and that they are very open to their students using their own way of thinking, and this certainly encourages creativity.

Summary

It is obviously difficult, to say the least, to ‘measure’ creativity, and these three tick box questions are certainly not the best way to do it. However, while giving this survey form to the teachers was intended primarily to collect data to define their experiences (used to define the group in the methods section) and to use some phrases from the literature in order to introduce the group to the language of creativity and encourage them to reflect more on this matter, there were some interesting findings.

In general, there was no clear consistent shared definition of creativity: rather, with all three questions the teachers seemed to favour a multiple definition of creativity. There was slightly more consistent agreement when the potential definitions of creativity were linked to the context of the student or the teachers rather than in a more general, open and abstract way.

The teachers’ choices of how to answer Question 1, which asked them for a general personal definition of creativity, were consistent with them all viewing creativity as concerning the ‘person’ and/or the ‘process’ rather than being about the ‘product’, when considered through the lens of the Fisher and Williams (2004) definition of creativity. The wording of Questions 2 and 3 precluded this type of consideration, as the possible choices were all presented as attributes or behaviours
and therefore could only be seen as being about the ‘person’ or the ‘process’. None of these basic questions provided data that could be considered in terms of big ‘C’ (BCC) or little ‘c’ (LCC) (Craft, 2005) creativity.

These fairly simplistic data were not suitable for detailed analysis and were too few for statistical analysis; the survey was not designed for this. Rather it was designed partly to prime the teachers for interview, and the interview data are considered in the next section.

(b) Data from the interviews

While the teachers’ responses to the questionnaire questions described earlier were interesting and a useful way of introducing them to thinking about creativity, to obtain a more in-depth view of the teachers’ understanding of creativity semi-structured interviews with each teacher were undertaken. The findings from the teachers’ survey were triangulated with the findings from the teachers’ interviews in order to explore consistencies and inconsistencies and in an attempt to reveal the underlying view of the teachers. In this section I shall consider the interview of each teacher in turn and relate this to the views expressed in the questionnaires. As before, I shall use the two axes of creativity as big ‘C’ (BCC) and little ‘c’ (LCC) (Craft, 2005) and of creativity as ‘person’, ‘process’ and ‘product’ (Fisher & Williams, 2004) as the structure to aid my data interpretation. I shall then draw the data together and summarise the views of this stakeholder group overall.
Teacher 1 (T1)

Teacher 1 is a Malay lady with seventeen years of experience, who teaches in the morning session of the school day. When directly asked to define creativity Teacher 1 initially defines it as being about process, giving simulation and drama as examples. She also expressed a BCC-type definition, not just because of the use of less practical examples like drama, but also because she thought that it was important that the students were given a chance to ‘experiment themselves’ and be given a chance of inventing.

“I think big ‘C’ [BCC] students have to experiment themselves” (T1, line 18).

Teacher 1 also clearly recognised the difference between critical and creative thinking and saw them as separate skills in the curriculum. Having said this, later in the interview Teacher 1 appears to be defining creativity much more in terms of LCC:

‘if a person is creative enough, he or she can survive in any situation.’

(T1, line 28)

As this quote shows, she still seems to be thinking of creativity as a process. She also states that, while creativity is “not commonly used” in English classes, she thinks it may be used in other situations and suggests “when looking for jobs” as an example. Once again she seems to see creativity as something to be used rather than as an inherent part of a person’s skill set or as a creative product, suggesting that she is thinking of creativity much more in terms of process than of either person or product. The linking of creativity to the example of looking for work again supports a very practical, LCC definition of creativity by Teacher 1. Although she thinks that creativity is not widely used in English language teaching, when she does refer to creativity in the context of English teaching, she links it to the process of reading and hopes that her students can “relate what they read to daily life”, another example of
the combination of a process and practical LCC definition of creativity. In this way Teacher 1, when asked directly, supported a BCC definition of creativity, but much of what she said later in the interview suggested that she seemed to be thinking of creativity in a much more practical LCC way. She was, however, consistent throughout her interview in appearing to define creativity as a process.

During the interview Teacher 1 mentioned several things that she thought limited creativity in her English classroom. She identified a lack of time together with a full and rigid syllabus as being important limiting factors. This is perhaps related to the other things she mentions, the students’ lack of English language ability so as to enable them to work creatively within the syllabus and the desire of the students to work strategically towards completing the syllabus. She says: “students rely on it [reference books with answers] and don’t think”. She also expressed the view that most teachers follow the syllabus and teach specifically to the exams.

“Most teachers teach for the exam purpose.” (T1, line 41)

While these limiting factors are not surprising, and many teachers would recognise the limitations imposed by a rigid, full syllabus and a lack of time, this is consistent with Teacher 1’s views of creativity. At least in terms of the process/product/person axis, if one regarded creativity as an inherent component of the person, this would be less likely to be inhibited by a lack of time, whereas creativity as a process to be managed requires extra time. Teacher 1 is not directly critical of the syllabus. However, these limiting factors suggest that, despite recognising that Creative and Critical Thinking Skills (CCTS) are in the Curriculum Document and stating that both she and her students follow this document, somehow the time and/or opportunity for creativity is missing.
To some extent the responses of Teacher 1 in the interview are consistent with the breadth of her definitions in response to the questionnaire. In interview she once again gave a complex, multiple definition of creativity. Although there did seem to be more consistency behind her responses at interview, her discussions around the topic tended most often to suggest a personal definition that viewed creativity as process and in terms of a practical LCC view.

Teacher 2 (T2)

Teacher 2 is a Malay lady with ten years experience, who teaches in the afternoon session of the school day. Throughout the interview Teacher 2 consistently takes the view of creativity as being LCC and linked with the practical and problem-solving. When asked directly, she immediately answers LCC, and all her other comments are aligned with this view. Teacher 2 also seems to think of creativity as being about ideas:

“Creativity means creative ideas in order to get the students interest.” (T2, line 11)

Here Teacher 2 is talking about creativity in the classroom, but she has a very practical, pragmatic view and thinks that creativity should have a ‘real-world’ value.

“We are facing the real world, so students should know how to use what they learn in school in real life.” (T2, lines 18-19)

Teacher 2 recognises the difference between critical thinking and creative thinking in the CCTS curriculum specification, but feels that they are related and sees both as being required for problem-solving.

“I think they are related to each other. Critical thinking and creativity is both needed when solving a problem.” (T2, lines 30-31)
This is consistent with her apparent LCC definition of creativity and aligns well with the definition of creativity in the curriculum and policy. In terms of whether Teacher 2 defines creativity as person, product or process her comments during the interview are less revealing. Her very practical LCC definition and her linking of creativity to ideas suggest that it is the creative thinking process that is central to her personal definition of creativity. However, there is also an indication that she may also be partly thinking of creativity as being a personal characteristic. She says: “Maybe they [school] can conduct a course or competition for students to develop their creativity.” (T2, line 51) Later she also says: “their [creative students’] ideas are different from the others, they are able to express themselves.” (T2, line 63) Here she seems to suggest that creativity is a skill or ability that can be developed within a person, rather than as what they can do (process) or what they can make (product). Teacher 2 seems to see creativity as being jointly associated with both person and process to some extent, and more definitely as being practical and LCC.

In terms of barriers to creativity Teacher 2 identifies the lack of time and conflicting priorities; she particularly bemoans clerical work and ‘non-teaching’ duties. However, she is not critical of the curriculum nor the support from the school for developing creativity. She feels able to include creativity in her classes, and, although there is limited time, she seems to feel that being creative in class is possible, and that this depends on individual teachers.

“Creativity does not depend on time. In short time you can be creative if you want ... it [opportunities to be creative] depends on the teacher, whether to take it or not.” (T2, lines 112-114)

Teacher 2, who defines creativity as being LCC and a practical process and associates it with both process and a personal trait that can be developed within
individuals, recognises that there are constraints, particularly time, but feels that the potential for creativity is within the teacher’s grasp. Teacher 2 seems to feel personally empowered to be creative and to be able to encourage creativity in her classroom. The responses of Teacher 2 in the interview are consistent with the breadth of her definitions in response to the questionnaire. In the interview she expresses a complex, multiple definition of creativity. Although there is perhaps more consistency in her interview responses, suggesting that she was able to accept multiple definitions of creativity, her discussions around the topic tended most often to suggest a personal definition that viewed creativity as process and to some extent person and in terms of a practical LCC view. This is very similar to Teacher 1.

Teacher 3 (T3)

Teacher 3 is a Malay lady who teaches in the morning session of the school day. Throughout her interview Teacher 3 refers to creativity in terms of its being a talent or skill possessed by an individual. She considers that everybody has the potential for creativity but that they need not just the opportunity but also support to help them express and develop their inherent creativity.

“Everyone is gifted, it’s in them but it’s just that the opportunity maybe is not right. There’s no one to sharpen them. There is no awakening.”

(T3, lines 20-21)

Teacher 3 consistently refers to creativity as being about the person rather than seeing it as a process or product throughout the whole interview. She recognises the difference between LCC and BCC definitions of creativity and between creativity and critical thinking skills. She thinks that the curriculum and the school should focus on the more practical LCC type of creativity. Teacher 3 agrees with Craft (2005) that in the school context BCC is not possible.
“the big one [BCC] is not something that we can achieve in school because our system itself is not right.” (T3, line 10)

“Creativity is something to do with talent like inventing; it cannot take place much because our education system is such. There is not much room for the students to show their talent, their ability, their capability, to expand their knowledge out of the field, to apply what they have learnt by inventing something. We don’t have space for all this in our schools.” (T3, lines 14-18)

Interestingly, she sees this as being largely due to problems or limitations within the school and wider educational system. Her belief in creativity as being universally present within the individual (person) is such that, although she says school should concentrate on LCC, she believes in the potential for individuals to express their creativity in a BCC, more significant way given the right conditions. As Teacher 3 sees creativity as an inherent part of the person and thinks all students have at least the potential for BCC-type creativity, perhaps it is not surprising that she seems to see the syllabus and system as general and not applicable to every individual:

“The syllabus is just a guideline. Not applicable to all students. Again it falls to the system, the system is not right. It looks at general whereby the students are so different.” (T3, lines 54-55)

Although Teacher 3 is critical of the system, she recognises that the system is necessary; it is perhaps more that, as she sees creativity as very individual, it is hard for such a system that is designed for all to work for everybody on a very individual basis.

“it [the school] still follows the system. Because at the end the examination is what you are looking at. So, in order to prepare students for the examination, you have to follow the system.” (T3 lines 60-62)
Teacher 3 sees creativity as individualistic and being part of the person and, while she seems to think that the system fails to facilitate this for all students, on a pragmatic level she recognises that the system is about preparing them for the exams. Having said that, she does consider both the lack of time and the exam focus of the system as obstacles to creativity:

“Because the system is more of exam-based curriculum. It does not allow them [students] to be creative. It’s like 20 minutes for you to give them a task to make them creative.” (T3, lines 116-118)

While this view is consistent with Teacher 3’s apparent personal definition of creativity, it may also be influenced by the fact that despite believing that all her students are capable of creativity, when she is talking about creativity in the school context, she seems to conflate the potential for creativity with academic and specifically language ability.

“For example, the literature component. It’s a good way for students to express themselves, especially for a good class. You can introduce the genre then do lots of activities that can be related to their personal life and all that. But the same short story that you have to introduce to another class, they cannot relate anything because it is too much for them.” (T3, lines 62-66)

“I ask questions, they [creative students] answer in a manner that is beyond my expectation. I wouldn’t expect that student to answer in that manner. So that shows that a person is very creative” (T3, lines 99-101)

Teacher 3’s personal definition of creativity as BCC and being personal and individualistic is at odds with the more LCC- and process-focussed view of creativity as defined in the curriculum and Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (CCTS). Perhaps it is not surprising that she is quite critical of the lack of time, money and resources that combines with the large number of students and the exam focus to limit
creativity. When asked what she would change to promote creativity, she immediately addresses the very individualistic nature of creativity as she sees it and answers:

“*We should not ignore the students’ interest, their talent. Not only focus on academic work.*” (T3, line 144)

It is not so much the barriers she identifies: it is that she sees them as preventing her from helping her students develop their individual and inherent creativity.

Teacher 3, who defines creativity as being BCC and associates it very much with the person, is very consistent about this throughout her interview and is quite critical of the system which she seems to see as failing individual creativity. The responses of Teacher 3 in the interview are partially consistent with the breadth of her definitions in response to the questionnaire. However, in the interview she has a tighter definition, suggesting that, while she is able to accept multiple definitions of creativity, when thinking more deeply, her BCC, personal definition comes more to the fore. In this she is different from Teachers 1 and 2.

**Teacher 4 (T4)**

Teacher 4 is an Indian lady who teaches in the morning session of the school day. When asked about her definition of creativity Teacher 4 defined it in terms of students using their knowledge to come up with something new and different.

“They [students] can use their knowledge to come up with something new, something different from others.” (T4, lines 5-6)

When prompted about whether the school should focus on LCC- or BCC-type creativity, she was clear that she thought that LCC-type creativity was more important,
although she seems to see LCC as a ‘lower-level’ type of creativity that can lead to what she seems to regard as ‘higher-level’ BCC.

“I think the second one [LCC]. The other one [BCC] is a bit high, too high level for our students.” (T4, line 11)

“If they [students] can manage the small ‘c’ [LCC] well, the big ‘C’ [BCC] will be no problem to them. Managing the basic first then go to a higher level.” (T4, lines 17-18)

From her initial definition and throughout the interview Teacher 4 seems to regard creativity as being mostly of the LCC, practical type. In terms of ‘person, process and product’ she seems mostly to favour a ‘product’- or ‘process’-type definition of creativity with no evidence of her seeing creativity as a personal trait. Teacher 4 recognises the difference between creativity and criticality in the CCTS syllabus and thinks that criticality is important partly because it allows students to be aware of different perspectives, and she thinks that this is important in both practical problem-solving and creativity, again expressing a very LCC-type view of creativity.

“If they [students] are not critical, they are looking at things from one perspective. You cannot be creative and cannot overcome certain problems.” (T4, lines 31-33)

Teacher 4 also links both criticality and creativity to knowledge and the exam.

“Exams require CCTS but our students are not critical enough. I think this is because of their lack of knowledge. They only read and memorise. You can see that in their answers. They are not creative." (T4, lines 26-28)

This is consistent with her ‘process’ and ‘product’ view of creativity. Because the students’ processes are not creative “They only read and memorise” and their
‘product’ (exam answers) is not creative, they (she implies the students) are not creative. This is different from Teacher 3, who saw all students as having the potential for creativity regardless of conditions. But in common with Teacher 3, Teacher 4 saw the strategic, exam focus of both the students and the wider school system as being problematic and as an inhibitor of creativity.

“Most of them [students] are too exam orientated. They are more interested in getting all ‘A’s rather than to excel themselves. Now many get A1 but they are unable to express themselves in terms of work, they lack creativity.” (T4 lines 52-55)

“It’s too exam orientated. The ministry wants the school to produce good results. So they are the ones who curb creativity. There’s no room for the students to be creative and express themselves.” (T4, lines 58-60)

Indeed, her major criticism of the curriculum is that it is too exam-focussed:

“It’s [the curriculum or system] very exam orientated. Not much creativity, they are not bothered, just a paper chase. We have to go along with the system you see.” (T4, lines 84-86)

While it is not completely clear here who “they” are in this quote -- it could be the students, the school, the Ministry or the entire system -- it is clear that Teacher 4 thinks that the overall exam focus inhibits creativity but that she feels compelled to go along with it. She also mentions other barriers to creativity, most obviously the lack of time and resources with teachers being overburdened with administration, especially as this is combined with large numbers of students. She also considers that the students’ ability in English is low and that this limits their ability to express themselves and therefore limits their potential for creativity in the English classes. She
is also quite critical of the students’ effort and expresses the view that technology has made things ‘easy’ and limited creativity in the English class.

“They [students] lack the basic knowledge, how can they be creative? They are not industrious, not hard working. They do assignment also they just ‘cut and paste’. Life is too easy for them. Sometimes I feel that the technology curbs their creativity.” (T4, lines 89-91)

Teacher 4, who defines creativity as being LCC and associates it with both process and product rather than with the person, is consistent in the breadth of her definitions in response to the questionnaire. In terms of her LCC process-associated view of creativity she is similar to both Teachers 1 and 2, but in common with Teacher 3 she is quite critical of the system, which she sees as too exam-focused and inhibiting creativity.

Teacher 5 (T5)

Teacher 5 is an Indian lady who teaches in the morning session. When asked about her definition of creativity Teacher 5 defined it in terms of process, the ability to use one’s own ideas and imagination, and when asked about either a LCC or a BCC focus for school she clearly thought the LCC focus was more appropriate. In common with Teacher 4, Teacher 5 seemed to imply that BCC was a higher order creativity that perhaps should be left to later education.

“At school level I think we should start with small ‘c’ [LCC]. They [students] will catch up the big ‘C’ [BCC] later, maybe in College or University, at a later stage.” (T5, lines 12-13)

Teacher 5 is fairly consistent throughout the interview in expressing her views on creativity in terms of seeing it as LCC and as a process.
“They [students] need to find solutions, to solve problems. Here they need to be creative to generate ideas and find alternatives.” (T5, lines 115-16)

“Creativity is more on how you generate ideas.” (T5, line 24)

In common with other teachers who expressed this view of creativity, Teacher 5 does not seem to think that creativity is inherent within individuals, and she links creativity with a practical and socially useful process or skill.

“Not everybody is creative. I think school can play its role to educate students to be more open in dealing with any situations they face. Then when they go back to society they will have an open mind with positive thinking.” (T5, lines 36-39)

In common with the other teachers Teacher 5 clearly differentiates criticality and creativity in the CCTS part of the curriculum, but describes both in terms of practical cognitive processes.

“Critical is when you deal with situation where you need to give opinions or ideas. For example to judge whether something is right or wrong. Whereas creativity is more on how you generate ideas so that there are more options to choose. (T5, lines 23-25)

Teacher 5 also links creativity with confidence and communication in students:

“They [creative students] are more vocal, very confident in giving opinions. They can say no to you. They are smart students.” (T5, lines 68-69)

“These [creative] students are not scared in voicing their thoughts. Sometimes they argue with you. But they are not lazy, they are hardworking and smart.” (T5, lines 71-72)
Both these quotes also show that she links creativity, confidence and communication skills with hard work and academic ability in her students. Perhaps these links are not surprising given the academic context in which creativity is being discussed. Although Teacher 5 links creativity with academic ability and particularly communication skills and she sees creativity very much as process and in a LCC sense, at times she is clear that the lack of communication in English need not inhibit creativity for both student and teacher.

“There are so many ways to communicate if they [students] are willing to.” (T5, line 134)

“Experienced teachers will see the opportunities to tackle students’ needs – Well, that’s creativity.” (T5, lines 88)

However she does recognise that ability plays a part in fostering creativity in English classes, and in common with some other teachers she thinks the exam focus does not help her promote creativity in her classroom.

“We are too exam oriented. If our children do not get good result, we are outdated. Creativity can be promoted but it depends on the teacher and what kind of students they get. If you get good students there is lots that you can do.” (T5, lines 81-83)

Teacher 5 is not really critical of the curriculum or the system and feels that, although there are some barriers to creativity, creativity is possible.

“We teachers are given freedom to be creative. It’s just that there are so many things going on at the same time.” (T5, lines 102)

As with all her colleagues, Teacher 5 sees the lack of time and too much administrative work as being a significant barrier to creativity.
“To be frank, teachers have so many things to do. Too much paper work. Not to mention creativity, sometimes we don’t have time to think. We just go to class and teach.” (T5, lines 92-94)

Teacher 5, who defines creativity as being LCC and a practical process, recognises that there are constraints, particularly time and extreme exam focus, but feels that the potential for creativity is possible in the classroom. Teacher 5 is not really critical of the curriculum or the system despite the constraints she identifies. Her interview responses are consistent with the breadth of her definitions in response to the questionnaire. Although there is a somewhat tighter, more consistent definition of creativity in her interview responses, her discussions around the topic tend most often to suggest a personal definition that viewed creativity as process and in terms of a practical LCC view.

Teacher 6 (T6)

Teacher 6 is an Indian lady who teaches in the morning session of the school day. When asked about her definition of creativity, Teacher 6 defined it in terms of process, the ability to think and express ideas, views and feelings in a personal and original way.

“Creativity ... I define it as the ability of the students to express their feelings, views in their own way. It could be in writing, arts or in any form of expression.” (T6, lines 6-7)

This definition is very student- and school-focused and also includes the suggestion of a BCC-type definition with the reference to writing, the arts and self-expression, which in the version of the definition of BCC that I am using in this work all have at least the potential to change the world and are not practically focused. Despite this, when asked about either a LCC or a BCC focus directly, Teacher 6 clearly thought LCC was more appropriate. In common with Teachers 4 and 5 there
was also the implication that BCC was a ‘higher-order’ creativity that perhaps was less possible in the school context.

“Definitely the second one [LCC]. The first one [BCC] is too ambitious, unless we have the technology and the students are excellent in their thinking. They [students] should be given the opportunity to do experiments or to perform, but then again I think in school right now we don’t have the facilities. But if you give them the opportunity the good students will show their creativity.” (T6, lines 11-15)

This quote also shows that Teacher 6 tends to see creativity as being about process, with the focus on opportunities to perform and showing creativity, but the statement that “good students will show their creativity” also perhaps suggests a little of both the person- and product-type definitions of creativity. Later Teacher 6 describes an example of creativity in one of her classes, and here she seems to be thinking of creativity more as product (the student’s description) rather than the process of describing or thinking or of the student’s innate ability to describe or think creatively.

“In one of my classes I asked the students to describe a picture of a house. Most of the students describe it as big, this and that ... but there was one student who described it as a haunted house. The description was different. This is creativity.” (T6, lines 25-28)

Again the teacher did not choose a practical example of creativity related to problem-solving but a more BCC-like literary one, although she does recognise the applied practical importance of creativity.

“They [students] do need creativity because when they go out of school they face a lot of situations, so what we teach here is just basic, for them to apply.” (T6, lines 17-18)
Teacher 6 also talks of creative students in a way that suggests that she views creativity as the more pragmatic and process-based cognitive skills of putting and defending an argued, informed view.

“They [creative students] were able to defend their views, they can think in many ways, they can put forward their ideas and argue on their ideas. They can justify their choice and elaborate their points. They are knowledgeable. They are extrovert types, very talkative.” (T6 lines 84-87)

In common with the previous teacher (Teacher 5) Teacher 6 links creativity with confidence and communication skills and with academic ability. She also recognises that communication in English is a barrier to expressing creativity in the English class.

“They [students] might have creativity but the language is a barrier. They don’t have the words to express themselves. Everyone has creativity, it’s just that for English they don’t have the basic words to express themselves.” (T6, lines 32-34)

While all the other teachers discussed thus far express clearer, narrower definitions of creativity in their interviews than the multiple definitions apparent in all their questionnaire responses, Teacher 6 does not. Her interview seems to suggest both LCC- and BCC-type definitions and aspects of creativity as person, process and product.

Teacher 6 recognises limitations to creativity in class. As with all the other teachers, she cites the lack of time as a problem:

“The problem is the time constraint. We can’t have it [creative activity] every lesson.” (T6, line 91)
She also links this lack of time with the difficulty of having to cope with large numbers of students:

“*The number of students in a class should be less. Then, teachers can perform; otherwise it’s difficult to do creative activities. There are too many students. We don’t even know their difference and their needs. Very difficult to mould the students to be creative, time is also limited.*” (T6, lines 106-109)

Teacher 6 also talks about the limiting effect on creativity in school of teaching to exams:

“*What we [teachers] do is more for exams. We teach them how to answer questions and the techniques, because our end result is the grades, that matters.*” (T6, lines 95-96)

She also links this strategic, exam-focussed approach to the parental expectations and the pressure that this adds.

“*Parents also want them [their children] to get good grades. They don’t bother about how the kids learn, whether they are creative or not.*” (T6, lines 98-99)

Teacher 6 displays as broad a definition of creativity in her interview as she did in her questionnaire response with answers that suggest both BCC and LCC views and which suggest creativity as ‘process’, ‘product’ and ‘person’. In common with other teachers she recognises that there are constraints to creativity, particularly time, student numbers and too great a focus on exams, but she is not really critical of the curriculum or the system despite this.
Teacher 7 (T7)

Teacher 7 is an Indian lady who teaches in the morning session of the school day. When asked about her definition of creativity, Teacher 7 defined it by using a BCC-type definition, referring to the arts, music and language but not in a practical LCC-type way. Interestingly, she distinguishes language and the arts from science and technology, which she does not seem to view as being creative, perhaps because, as a non-scientist, she sees these subjects as being much more practical and about problem-solving, which does not fit her BCC-type definition of creativity.

“It [creativity] is hands on ... for example arts and music to attract attention, in language; it’s how to use language to create something innovative. I always think how I can use this to create this. You can be creative in language and arts, not science; in science it’s just invention.” (T7, lines 10-13)

“In maths and science they are innovative you know, but they can’t create ... you improve from here to this. Whereas in language you create something out of nothing.” (T7, lines 27-29)

It seems as though for Teacher 7 there is a distinction between innovation in science and technology and creativity in the arts and language. The implication from numerous references throughout her interview is that innovation seems to be viewed as practical and LCC, whereas she regards true creativity in BCC terms and therefore only recognises it in the arts and languages. Despite her BCC-type, non-practical definition of creativity Teacher 7 thought that the school should focus on LCC-type creativity and problem-solving.

“I think at school level we should focus on the small one [LCC] like how to solve problems in teenage crisis for example ... focus on [the] smaller circle. As they [students] grow you can focus on more global matters.” (T7, 23-25)
This quote clearly shows that she is aware of the more practical LCC-type creativity and thinks that the school should focus on it. However, it also reveals her creative nature in her choice of example and suggests that perhaps she considers BCC creativity important and capable of larger scale influence. Perhaps this is also reflected to some extent in her definition of a creative teacher:

“A creative teacher is a survivor. They can survive with whatever means to teach and attract students to learn.” (T7 lines 63-64)

This is not referring to practical skills (LCC) but the use of more BCC to achieve the more general aim of teaching and inspiring students to learn.

The answers Teacher 7 gives throughout the interview suggest that she sees creativity in terms of process and product rather than in terms of person. She consistently talks about creating and what is created rather than about the innate creativity of the individual.

“In language it’s [creativity] how to use language to create something innovative. I always think how I can use this to create this.” (T7, lines 10-12)

“when I go in and I smile and let them be what they are and I tell them in ten minutes I want to see this product. They are so creative.” (T7, lines 31-33)

In her second quote Teacher 7 refers to allowing the students to “be what they are”, but it seems to be more the process and the product that she sees as creativity, and through this she sees creativity in the children. This is different from Teacher 3, who seems to see creativity as inherent in the children and the process and product as a way of expressing this.
“The whole class just enjoyed it [a creative role-play exercise]. I was so surprised. So you see ... the knowledge is there, but you just don’t give them chance to create.” (T7, lines 52-54)

Here in it (creative role-play) she sees the potential for creativity in her class, but it needs the opportunity of a process or the production of a product for her to recognise creativity. She does not define the potential for creativity in the students, which she can recognise as creativity, as perhaps Teacher 3 did. As she seems to see creativity as being more to do with process and product, Teacher 7 seems less bothered by how this may be affected by poor communication skills or by students who are less academically able. She simply adjusts the process to suit the situation.

“They [creative students] always want to take part in language. I have a group of weak students that I teach to express themselves by using drums. They perform using dustbins and things around them. From there they will start speaking.” (T7 lines 66-69)

Teacher 7 also thinks that rules and discipline get in the way of creativity, perhaps because they inhibit or limit the creative process.

“Let them [students] loose, so they become creative. Again discipline is one way that curbs the child’s creativity. When you put rules around them they can’t think out of the box.” (T7, lines 33-35)

She seems to follow this through in her teaching, and in contrast to the other teachers interviewed she does not feel inhibited by having to stick to and finish the syllabus.

“English language you don’t have to go by the books. It’s up to you [the teacher] to be creative. Not like maths, science and bio, they have to follow by the books. As long as you see the child is speaking, the child is writing ... you have done your job. I don’t believe in finishing the syllabus.” (T7, lines 43-46)
Although Teacher 7 does make a couple of minor references to the time pressure, she does not seem to see it as a major problem, nor does she see the focus on syllabus and examinations as being an issue for creativity. Perhaps this is because she seems willing and able to ignore these constraints and teach creatively to encourage creativity.

Teacher 7 displays a narrower, more focused definition of creativity in her interview than she did in her survey response with answers that suggest a clearly BCC-type definition of creativity and those that suggest she views creativity as ‘process’ and ‘product’ rather than as residing in the ‘person’. While she recognises that there are constraints to creativity, particularly time, she is perhaps less concerned about student numbers and exam focus than her colleagues and is not critical of the curriculum or the system. Once again perhaps this is because to some extent she seems able and willing to work around or outside the syllabus.

Teacher 8 (T8)

Teacher 8 is a Malay lady who teaches in the afternoon session of the school day. When asked about her definition of creativity, Teacher 8 defined it in terms of her role as a teacher. She seemed to be thinking of creativity as process and perhaps product rather than as inherent in the person.

“To be creative is to create activities that attract students ... make them enjoy, for example drama and simulation. Your own interpretation of what you are doing.” (T7, lines 6-7)

Whether she views creativity in terms of the practical LCC or as BCC is not so clear from the interview. She uses the example of a friend who has decorated her record book with pictures as an example of creativity, which implies an arty BCC-type definition, but when asked if she associated creativity with the arts she replied that she
saw it in “all aspects of life actually” (T8, line 10), and when asked specifically about creativity she thought that the school should focus on LCC and that BCC would be too much to achieve, particularly given the focus of the system on exams.

“Small ‘c’ [LCC] our education focuses on exams so the big ‘C’ [BCC] will be too much to achieve.” (T8, line 17)

Teacher 8 used role-play as an example of classroom activity that promoted creativity, but in contrast to the previous teacher (Teacher 7) she saw this as limited to some extent by the academic ability of the students, particularly with regard to their ability to express themselves.

“"I like to do role-play, students can express themselves, but you can only do [this] for your good class, [for] the weak ones you have to cater other things.” (T8, lines 35-36)

The use of role-play as an example fits with Teacher 8’s process-based definition of creativity, but even with this view the activity was not without its problems:

“I did activities like group work in class to let them [students] express themselves. But it created other problems. The class was so noisy ... not with English but with the native language.” (T8, lines 31-33)

It seems that, while Teacher 8 may regard such activity as creativity, the need to link this with teaching the ESL curriculum raised some issues. While Teacher 7 was happy to see even drumming on dustbins as creative and potentially leading to language development, Teacher 8 saw communication in the native language as noise and a potential problem. Perhaps this was at least partly because she may not have been very clear about what was expected of creativity in the ESL classroom:
"[curriculum documents] don’t give a specific way of how to carry it [creativity] out in class. It should give more information on how to go about it. A bit confusing I can say." (T8, line 24-25)

In common with other teachers interviewed Teacher 8 saw the lack of time as being a problem, especially combined with the administrative workload teachers face.

“The time constraint, not that we don’t want to do [creative activity]. We have lots of paperwork.” (Teacher 8, line 44)

She also mentioned the exam focus as being a potential inhibitor of creativity and brought into this argument the fact that the students also saw it as a problem. Her example suggests that at least some students saw efforts to promote creativity much less valuable than what they saw as studying for the exam and so were strategic in their approach.

“The system is exam based. So the students only want to do things related to exams. At one time, a group of Chinese students told me ‘We don’t want to play, we want to study’ at that time we were doing problem solving activities. So it’s very discouraging, so at the end of the day, you will say ‘what is the point of doing something extra’, just teach by the book.” (T8, lines 50-54)

This quote also shows how discouraging it can be for a teacher, who, it seems, does not have a clear personal definition of creativity and feels perhaps not well informed and supported, to try and add creativity to a class when there is pressure from both the system and the students simply to prepare for the exam strategically.

Teacher 8 displays a less distinct definition of creativity in her interview than any of the previous teachers interviewed. She appeared to see creativity more as process and possibly product than person, but was not really clearly LCC or BCC-aligned. In common with most of her colleagues she recognises that there are
constraints to creativity, particularly time and the exam focus of both the system and to some extent the students working within it. Despite this, her only real criticism of the system other than the exam focus is that she felt the syllabus did not guide her sufficiently about how to include creativity in her classes.

Teacher9 (T9)

Teacher 9 is also a Malay lady who teaches in the afternoon session. When asked about her definition of creativity, Teacher 9 defined it in LCC terms:

“If they [students] are not creative they will be caught in a situation, whereas if they are creative they can get out of the problems they face.” (T9, lines 13-15)

Teacher 9 uses a typically practical LCC-type example of a creative activity in one of her classes:

“For F6 [an upper form class] I give them a newspaper to solve different situations.” (T9, line 29)

The use of the newspaper links the creative problem-solving exercise, which she generates from it when working with her students, very much to the ‘real world’ and makes it a very practical approach that typifies a LCC-type definition of creativity. When asked directly, Teacher 9 thinks the school should focus on LCC-type creativity and in common with some previous teachers and with Craft (2005) she believes that with young students in the school context BCC is not possible.

“I think the small one [LCC] because I think at the young age they still cannot come out with something big like a great innovation.” (T9, lines 10-11)
Teacher 9’s definition of creativity in the practical LCC sense is consistent even when she is discussing teaching, where her responses suggest that she sees creativity as something very practical.

“[A] creative teacher is one who can adapt different situations to suit their needs and who accept students’ answers no matter what it is.” (T9, lines 39-40)

Although Teacher 9 recognises that language can be a problem, she does not see creativity as an academic skill, and this is partly how she differentiates it from criticality, which she does see as academic.

“Critical is more aptitude, creative is more attitude. We don’t need intelligent student to be creative. If you get something out of the ordinary, then it is creative.” (T9, lines 22-23)

In contrast to all the other teachers interviewed Teacher 9 thinks that students who are academically weaker can be more creative as they rely on this creativity to survive in school.

“I think the weak students are more creative. Those students who are weak, they rely on their creativity to survive in school. For example, they have to come out with all sorts of reasons why they don’t want to do work.” (T9, lines 17-19)

Again this is consistent with the LCC, process and perhaps product definition of creativity which she expresses throughout the interview.

In common with all the other teachers interviewed Teacher 9 identifies the time constraint as a potential obstacle to promoting creativity in the ESL classroom:
“Time is a factor, the need for class control. Sometimes unexpected things happen when you [the teacher] do something out of the ordinary.” (T9, lines 42-43)

She also mentions the need to control the class, but suggests that, if the teacher does something creative, “out of the ordinary”, unexpected things can happen implying that despite the limitations creativity is possible. She also recognises the limitations of teaching within a very exam-focussed system, and she thinks that the focus is less on creativity and the relative ‘freedom’ of the teaching of oral language skills and more on teaching written English for the exam:

“Now the focus is more on writing for the exam. We are very exam orientated, so the focus is on grades.” (T9, lines 50-51)

Teacher 9 defines creativity as being LCC and a practical process. She recognises that there are constraints, particularly time and too great a focus on exams, but despite this she seems to feel that there is potential for creativity in the ESL classroom. Teacher 9 is not really critical of the curriculum or the system despite the constraints she identifies. The responses of Teacher 9 in the interview are consistent with the breadth of her definitions in response to the questionnaire. Although there is a tighter, more consistent definition of creativity in her interview responses, her discussions suggested a personal definition that viewed creativity as process and in terms of a practical LCC view.

Overview of the Teachers’ interviews

While the survey data (described above, section 3.2.1(a)) showed that the teachers shared a multiple definition of creativity, a more consistent and tightly focused definition of creativity emerged from the interview data. During the
interviews the first question asked for the interviewees’ personal definitions of creativity. Participants’ initial answers to this direct question produced some common themes. The most common view, expressed in one way or another by seven of the nine interviewees, was the idea that creativity involved producing or doing something new, novel, unique, different or individual. This was aligned with the views of Prentice (2000), who asserts that one of the most important productive outcomes of creative activity should be originality.

Four of the teachers interviewed formulated their initial definitions from a very clear teaching perspective, and all of them linked creativity specifically to being able to attract or engage students. Regardless of the multiple definitions they gave, teachers seemed very sure of their personal definitions of creativity; all of them answered immediately and without any significant hesitation. However, some of the words they chose in the survey forms (refer to Appendix A) did not appear at all during the interview. Among the words missing from the interview definitions were ‘taking risk’, ‘flexible’, ‘reflective’, ‘seeing connections’, ‘motivation’ and ‘divergent thinking’. This situation is not unusual; Fawcett (2002) posits that creativity is a complicated and broad concept because there is no standard principle by which we can define it precisely. Also in the survey the teachers were able simply to choose from terms given to them, whereas in the interviews they were using their own terms. In this sense the interviews reflected their own views more, and so the more tightly focused definitions that emerge from the interviews are not unexpected.

Early in the semi-structured interview all participants were also asked directly about whether they thought the school should focus on the more practical LCC-type creativity or the BCC-type creativity with its potential for significant change and wider impact, with a brief clarification of what these terms meant. All the teachers
interviewed except one (Teacher 1) were very clear that they thought that the LCC-type creativity was more important at school. Even Teacher 1 who answered the question with: “I think Big ‘C’ [BCC], students have to experiment themselves.” (T1, line 18) went on in her interview answers to suggest that she personally held a LCC-type definition of creativity and thought that this was important. Interestingly, five of the nine teachers interviewed implied in their answers that, while they thought LCC-type creativity was most important in the school context, they thought that BCC-type creativity in some ways represented a ‘higher-order’, more significant type of creativity and that this was too much to expect the school and/or the students to deal with. Some suggested that teaching and supporting LCC creativity would prepare the students for potential BCC-type creativity later. Craft (2005) defined BCC-type creativity as the sort of creative activity that ‘transforms human endeavour’ in some way, the sort of creativity that has a larger-scale impact, and concluded that BCC is not seen in the school context. It seems that these teachers share this view. In my analysis I have taken a looser definition of BCC as creativity that has the potential to have a large-scale importance, creativity that is not just pragmatic problem-solving but the sort of creative thinking and approach that could potentially transform human endeavour.

In terms of analysing the teachers’ definitions of creativity I have used the two-dimensional analysis framework with one axis based on Fisher and Williams (2004) -- creativity defined as characteristic of people (our self-esteem and confidence), processes (the creative skills and knowledge we can use) and products (the outcome of our creative efforts) -- and the other axis on my version of Craft’s (2005) definition of creativity as being either little ‘c’ creativity (LCC) or big ‘C’ Creativity (BCC). I used this framework to look at all the whole interview
transcripts for indications of personal definitions of creativity; I did not simply use the participants’ answers to the direct questions briefly considered above. However, with the exception of Teacher 1, all the interviewees were remarkably consistent in their views, and their answers to the direct questions about creativity were consistent with how they referred to creativity in the whole interview.

In terms of the Craft (2005) LCC - BCC axis of my analysis framework most (five out of the nine) of the teachers were very clearly and consistently expressing LCC-type, practical and pragmatic definitions of creativity. Only two (Teachers 3 and 7) seemed to be clearly thinking of creativity in BCC-type terms. Of the remaining two, Teacher 6 said things that suggested she thought of creativity in both LCC- and BCC-type terms, and Teacher 8 appeared from her responses not to be clearly thinking of creativity in either way.

In terms of the Fisher and Williams (2004) people, processes and products axis of my analysis framework, the majority (eight out of the nine) of the teachers interviewed consistently talked of creativity as a process, the creative skills and knowledge that are used, rather than as a product or as an innate part of the person. Although for two of the teachers (Teachers 4 and 8) some aspects of their interviews suggested that they also thought of creativity in terms of product at times, only one teacher, Teacher 3, seemed clearly and consistently to see creativity as being an innate part of the person and the person’s confidence and abilities.

While the data from the teacher survey forms were interesting, they could not be analysed in terms of this analysis framework and in general showed only that the teachers adopted a multiple definition of creativity. The data from the interviews were therefore much more revealing and suggested that by far the most common view in
this group was of creativity as a practical LCC-type process. This very pragmatic process-focused view of creativity also fits in with that of Prentice (2000), who argued that the productive outcomes of creative activity should be originality and the capability to cope with uncertainty in situations.

The Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM) in 2001 was introduced by the MOE in order to meet the challenges of the new millennium. CCTS (Critical and Creative Thinking Skills) were included with the aim of preparing students for these challenges. All the teachers interviewed were clear about the difference between the critical and the creative in terms of the CCTS in the ESL syllabus. All teachers tended to see the critical and the creative as related to one another and described both very much in terms of being practical skills, particularly related to problem-solving. Criticality seemed to be seen by many as a part of the process of practical creativity, but the implication was that being critical was relatively simplistic and need not contain any of the originality they associated with creativity. Perhaps Teacher 9 expressed it best and most succinctly when she said: “Critical is more aptitude, creative is more attitude” (T9, line 22).

Many of the teachers recognised the connection between their students’ creativity in ESL classes and academic ability, particularly with regard to the students’ ability to communicate in English. The general view was that in the ESL setting creativity was much harder to foster in classes and individuals where the language level was low. The teachers did not seem to be suggesting that the problem was intelligence per se, just that English communication skills represented an important limiting factor. What is more, not every teacher shared this view: Teacher 3, who defined creativity in terms of the person, saw innate ability in all her students, regardless of their present ability, although she too admitted that language ability
could be a problem. Teacher 7’s view of personal creativity is such that she seems less restricted by the communicative ability of her students, using drumming where language was a restriction, and Teacher 9 expressed the view that in many ways the less academically intelligent students could actually be more creative. Some researchers believe that creativity is the outcome of the same cognitive processes as intelligence and is only judged as creativity in terms of its consequences (i.e., when the outcome of cognitive processes happens to produce something novel), a view which Perkins (1981) has termed the ‘nothing special’ hypothesis. Torrance (1981) added that a high degree of intelligence appears to be a necessary condition for high creativity but is insufficient on its own. While there is a positive correlation between creativity and intelligence, this correlation disappears for IQs above a threshold of around 120, a view accepted by many researchers, although not unchallenged.

Wycoff (1991) believes that the traits of creativity can be taught, but she points out the near total failure of the educational system to encourage and teach these characteristics. In fact she argues that the schools are teaching the opposite traits (e.g., discipline, conformity, silence, and ‘safe’ thinking). This view is certainly shared by Teacher 7, who also thinks that rules and discipline get in the way of creativity:

“Let them [students] loose, so they become creative. Again discipline is one way that curbs the child’s creativity. When you put rules around them they can’t think out of the box.” (T7, lines 33-35)

She apparently follows this through in her teaching and does not feel inhibited by having to stick to and finish the syllabus.

According to the interviews, the teachers seemed to enjoy having creative children in their classrooms. However, the literature shows that many teachers’ perceptions of creativity and their descriptions of the ideal pupil do not coincide with
the behaviours and traits commonly associated with the creative student. Perhaps not all teachers feel able to follow Teacher 7’s view and “let them loose”, preferring more manageable behaviour even at the expense of creative potential. An example of this is Teacher 8 who wanted to encourage the creative process with group work, but saw the ‘noise’ generated by the activity as a problem:

“I did activities like group work in class to let them [students] express themselves. But it created other problems. The class was so noisy ... not with English but with the native language.” (T8, lines 31-33)

While Teacher 7 was happy to regard even drumming on dustbins as creative and potentially leading to language development, Teacher 8 saw communication in the native language as noise and a potential problem.

Studies have shown that many teachers fail to identify creative children (Dawson, 1997). This may be due to a lack of teacher awareness of the characteristics that define creativity. Many times the creative child is not identified as creative, but rather as defiant, and out of favour with the teacher owing to some behavioural issues (Dawson, 1997). All the teachers interviewed reported that they could readily identify creative students in their classes. Perhaps Teacher 8 might have failed to recognise potential creativity in her noisy role-play class:

“I did activities like group work in class to let them [students] express themselves. But it created other problems. The class was so noisy ... not with English but with the native language.” (T8, lines 31-33)

However, her colleague Teacher 9, who thought ‘weaker’ students had more potential for creativity even if only for creating excuses and “reasons why they don’t want to do the work” (T9, 19), and Teacher 7, who commented that discipline and rules inhibited creativity, would, it seems, not mistake creativity for defiant or ‘bad
behaviour’. While all the teachers claimed they could identify creative students in their classes, none of them associated particular strengths or weaknesses in creativity with the ethnicity of their students, although some did mention a tendency towards particular learning approaches or strategies, such as the tendency to prefer to take notes quietly rather than ‘get involved’, which could indirectly influence the potential for creativity, or rather limit the opportunity for individuals to express their creativity in the ESL classroom context.

While none of the teachers interviewed were very critical of the school, the syllabus, the students or the wider educational system, all of them readily identified barriers to creativity. The lack of time was mentioned as a limiting factor by all the teachers interviewed, particularly when combined with the large numbers of students and limited resources. The amount of time teachers had to spend doing ‘non-teaching’ activities, such as administration, and the conflicting priorities of such activities, was also mentioned by many. As already mentioned, many teachers realised that the students’ ability to communicate in English could also limit creativity in the ESL classroom, but this was not a view shared by all. The other major limitation raised by most of the teachers was the full and rigid syllabus, linked to a very exam-focused system. This tended to result in strategic behaviour by both students and teachers and pressure from parents to focus strategically on exam success rather than on such things as creativity, where the potential benefit in terms of exams is often less obvious.

None of the teachers interviewed was really critical; two of the nine were more critical than their colleagues. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 both criticised the curriculum and the wider system for being too full, rigid and exam-focused to allow an opportunity for creativity. While Teacher 3’s very BCC- and person-focused definition of creativity perhaps puts her at odds with the very LCC- and process-focused
approach promoted by CCTS in the curriculum, this is the very approach which
Teacher 4 shares, and she is equally critical. Thus, while a differing personal definition
of creativity may not help, it does not explain the criticism, at least in any simplistic
way. Perhaps the fact that these two more critical teachers are the two least
experienced (six years post qualification) may be relevant. While they are not
inexperienced novices, perhaps they have yet to build up the strategy or confidence to
work within the system as comfortably as their more experienced colleagues, or
indeed to work outside it, as Teacher 7 seems to do. Teacher 3 and Teacher 7 both
think the syllabus restricts creativity. Teacher 3 criticises, but Teacher 7 does not: she
simply works outside or around the syllabus.

Summary

In summary, the interviews with the teachers were much more revealing than
the survey questionnaires in terms of the teachers’ personal definitions of creativity.
The teachers as a group were fairly clear and confident in their answers, and each
teacher tended to give answers that suggested a fairly consistent view. In general, as a
group, the definition of creativity which they presented was of a practical and
pragmatic LCC-type of process-focused creativity. The teachers tended to link
creativity with novel ideas and an ability to use them to solve ‘real-world’ problems.
This seemed very well aligned with the creativity presented in the CCTS part of the
syllabus. Only two of the nine teachers differed in any significant way from this view.
All the teachers saw obstacles to creativity, particularly a lack of time in the face of
large numbers of students, lack of resources and often conflicting administrative and
other ‘non-teaching’ duties. The very full and rigid syllabus and the pressure to be
exam-focused and strategic were also identified as important limiting factors.
(c) Data from the Teachers’ Lesson Plans

In Malaysian schools teachers prepare and write their lesson plans in a journal called *Ringkasan Mengajar* (*Teachers’ Record Book*). Certain items are normally required to be included in the lesson plan, as specified by the school. In this case this school requires the teachers to include details of the topic, the theme, the level of students (Forms 1, 2 or others), the learning outcomes, the activities, teaching aids and the teacher’s reflections relating to each lesson in the lesson plan (refer Appendix). Only one page of the journal is allocated to each day, and teachers normally have at least three lessons in a day; so space is limited.

All the teachers were asked to provide example lesson plans, but only four of the nine (Teachers 1, 2, 3 and 6) actually made plans available. Interestingly, and in contrast to all the other teachers, Teacher 7 claimed that despite the common requirement that all teachers keep their lesson plans in their Buku Rekod Mengajar (*Teaching Record Book*) she did not use lesson plans in this way.

The example lesson plans received from the teachers were initially analysed using the same two-dimensional framework as applied to the interview transcripts. However, perhaps because of the degree of compulsion as to content and the very limited space available in their record books all the lesson plans were found to be very simplistic and formulaic and almost seemed to be written using a ‘short-hand’ of stock phrases linked to activities. This structure seemed largely to follow the items required to be included by the school and little else. The lack of available space also meant that, at best, even these items were covered very briefly. Overall the structure of the four example lesson plans were very similar, Teachers 1, 2 and 6 all shared an identical overall structure with the page divided into three, one for each of the lessons for the
day. Each of the lesson sections was then divided with a few words under each of the required headings: topic, theme, level of students, the learning outcomes or objectives, the activities planned, teaching aids required and some reflective comments. These three teachers also all failed to use all of the limited space available to them, perhaps an indication of the very superficial and minimalistic approach they took to the task. Teacher 3 was slightly different, and, although she followed a broadly similar structure, she used all of the available space and included a little more detail. She was the only one for whom the limit of one page in the record book may have actually restricted what she included. Of the teachers who made lesson plans available she was the least experienced, and perhaps the others have simply developed a more effective ‘minimalist short-hand’ in order to satisfy the requirements for what they seem to be approaching as much more of an administrative or bureaucratic task than as a real attempt to plan the lesson and the potential learning. Certainly the section for reflective comment, in which one might expect a teacher actually using a lesson plan to aid teaching and personal development to include a little more thoughtful comment, is limited in all four teachers to indicating the proportion of students that completed the task. There are no comments about the learning achieved or even how the planned activities ran or might be run differently. These lesson plans seem to be used in a very superficial way by all the teachers sampled.

The nature of these lesson plans meant that there was little to analyse using the big ‘C’ (BCC) and little ‘c’ (LCC) (Craft, 2005) and creativity as ‘person’, ‘process’ and ‘product’ (Fisher & Williams, 2004) axes. Given the superficial approach taken by the teachers and the very short-hand, formulaic nature of the content, the language used to describe the activities and the expected learning, the plans revealed nothing about creativity or the opportunities for creativity in the
classes. Nowhere in any of the plans was creativity mentioned or even indirectly referenced. All the plans were written from a very teacher-centred approach and listed activities that the students would carry out rather than the learning the students might achieve or the experience they might gain. In the text relating to the lessons several phrases seemed connected to possible opportunities for creativity on the part of the students. Student discussion and debate around written or required reading was one such opportunity offered in the lesson plans of both Teachers 1 and 2, while Teacher 3 included opportunities for students to work collaboratively in pairs and participate in peer reviews of work. Teacher 6’s plan was so minimal that it included nothing that clearly suggested even the possibility of creativity in the class. Given that the analysis framework was not useful for the lesson plans, the only potential indicator of possible creativity was the intended learning activities that the students might undertake. The text in the plans that referred to teaching and/or learning activities was examined with a view to looking at the levels of intended learning as described in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson, & Krathwohl, 2001). The key verbs from the six levels of learning posited in the taxonomy were identified in the lesson plans and used to indicate the intended level of thought processes as defined in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. While the level of learning and thought process does not translate absolutely into creativity or into how the class was taught, it is perhaps in a simple way an indicator of the potential for creativity in an academic sense and may provide a link between creativity as defined in policy and the curriculum and how this is interpreted and ‘delivered’ by the teachers.

According to Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (see Appendix F), the level of tasks as given in the example lesson plans is limited to Bloom’s Levels 1 and 2, ‘remembering’ and ‘understanding’. These are ‘low-level’ thinking skills and perhaps
contain less potential for creativity than the ‘higher-level’ activities, such as ‘analysing’, ‘evaluating’ or ‘creating’. No planned activity falls under these ‘higher-level’ thinking skills in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. The absence of the higher level of thought processes in the lesson plans does not suggest that teachers do not encourage creativity in their lessons since the teachers claimed in their interviews that they do a lot of activities that encourage thinking and that they recognise value and encourage creativity in their classrooms. Rather, it seems that the teachers view lesson plan completion as a daily administrative routine that needs to be carried out by all teachers and may actually be part of the workload that limits creativity. As stated earlier, the limited space in the Record Book may be one of the reasons teachers did not give a thorough explanation of what they intended to do in class. Besides, creative and critical thinking skills are not part of the requirement that needs to be written up in the record book.

The only teacher who did anything that suggested that this was the case was Teacher 7, who claimed that she did not complete the required lesson plan. This different, somewhat ‘non-standard’ approach seems to be consonant with the views she expressed in the interview. She claimed that:

“discipline is one way that curbs the child’s creativity. When you put rules around them they can’t think out of the box.” (T7, lines 34-35)

As she did not “believe in finishing the syllabus.” (T7, line 46) it seems as though she extends this view to her own behaviour and creative approach and does not let the ‘rules’ get in the way of her teaching. Most of the teachers complained about the lack of time and the administrative or bureaucratic work that competed with teaching and limited creativity. It appears as though Teacher 7 has acted upon this view and has chosen not to complete this task.
(d) Data from the Students’ Worksheets

All the teachers were also asked to provide examples of marked student worksheets, but only four of the nine (Teachers 1, 2, 3 and 6) actually made their worksheets available (see Appendix E). The worksheets were therefore as far as possible ‘paired’ with the lesson plans, considered previously. Each of the example worksheets covered lessons that were included in the teachers’ lesson plans, giving a view not only of what the teacher planned for the class but what the students were expected to do and did as a result.

Teachers 1, 2 and 6 all provided example worksheets for the same lesson based on reading a passage in a text-book and then completing short answer questions to show comprehension. The passage and questions were exactly the same for these three teachers, although Teacher 6 also included or expected a vocabulary list that the other two did not. Teacher 3’s example is for a different class, and rather than a passage from a text-book it uses some tabulated information describing key places of interest and requires the students to show comprehension by reading and understanding this and to provide short answers to questions posed in a slightly more practical way. The context of the examples used by Teachers 1, 2 and 6 examines comprehension using an example text with a sociological context, while the example used by Teacher 3 is based on tourism and is perhaps a little less academic and more practical. However, the overall structure and set-up is very similar, reading and comprehension assessed by using written short answer responses.

All the example worksheets matched the lesson plans, and, as far as one can tell without actually being present at the lesson, the worksheets suggest that the lessons were conducted according to the plans and that the intended learning outcomes
in terms of the students producing written answers seemed to have been achieved by these students. The worksheets do not, however, capture the class discussion included in the lesson plans and that may have occurred in the class, nor do they show collaborative work between the students, or indeed anything but the end result of collaboration between student and teacher. Perhaps it is in this more ‘open’ part of the lesson that creativity may have been more likely to find the scope to reveal itself.

In all examples the students were successful, as measured by their providing the correct and expected answers to the questions. The students tended to produce very similar, if not identical, answers. Perhaps this was not surprising given that the questions simply asked students to identify appropriate words or phrases from the given text and that they simply copied these in their answers. In the example from Teacher 3 two different student worksheets are given, but the answers are the same and there is no evidence of any collaboration between the students in the document, although collaborative work was expected according to the lesson plan. In each of the examples the teacher’s formative feedback comments were minimal and largely limited to such as ticks and the odd word of encouragement.

Although the nature of the expected learning captured in these worksheets was fairly simplistic, there was no evidence of activity beyond the worksheet, as, for example, asking the students to use the key words and phrases they have correctly identified from the given text in a new sentence, perhaps in a context of their own choice unrelated to the given text. This could perhaps have allowed the students to express more creativity while still working with the same lesson plan and learning outcomes. Although this type of activity would have taken more time, the fact that the students in the examples given were all completely correct in the tasks as set suggests that at least some students had the potential to do more.
The examples of marked worksheets were initially analysed using the same two-dimensional framework as applied to the interview transcripts. However, as the worksheets were simplistic, analysis using the big ‘C’ (BCC) and little ‘c’ (LCC) (Craft, 2005) and creativity as ‘person’, ‘process’ and ‘product’ (Fisher & Williams, 2004) axes was not very informative. Given that this analysis framework was not useful, the students’ learning activities were examined by looking at learning activities and comparing them to the levels of learning as described in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The key verbs from the six levels of learning posited in the taxonomy were identified in the example worksheets and used to indicate the intended level of thought processes as defined in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. As with the lesson plans, while the level of learning and thought process expressed in the worksheets does not translate absolutely into creativity or into how the class was taught, it may be a useful indicator of the potential for creativity in an academic sense and may provide a link between creativity as defined in policy and the curriculum and how this is interpreted and ‘delivered’ by the teachers.

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy can be useful as a template, framework or checklist to ensure that the most appropriate type of training or learning is developed. It is used by teachers to prepare lesson plans and design lessons in order to ensure that they cover all levels of thought processes (LOTP). Therefore, the taxonomy may be used to indicate the LOTP in each question given in the student worksheet. The questions given in the task were categorised based on the different levels described in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.

Table 5
### Analysis of the Teachers’ Questions in the Worksheet Given to Students based on Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions asked in the worksheet</th>
<th>LOTPs (Levels of Thought Processes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Example 1:</em> From paragraph 5, which phrase has the same meaning as the word ‘escape’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example 2:</em> The word they in line 24 refer to...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Identifying</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example 1:</em> State one social ill these youths were involved in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example 2:</em> Define the role of school counsellors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Describing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example:</em> From each of the descriptions below, name the places of interest that the following people should visit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Reasoning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example 1:</em> Give two reasons why parents neglect their children (answers can be taken from the text given to the students)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example 2:</em> Explain why there is benefit from cooperation between schools and parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Summarising</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example:</em> Based on the passage given, write a summary of the role of parents and schools to help the youths.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings from the analysis of the worksheet against Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy show that all the questions asked were at Level 2 (remembering, understanding). The worksheets, like the lesson plans they were related to, reflected no attempt to promote thinking at the highest level (which is creativity) in the questions and tasks given to the students in their lessons. Does this phenomenon happen coincidently, or is it due to the teachers’ negative perceptions of the ability of students to innovate, so that they do not prepare a Level 6 task? Could it be influenced by other factors, such as time, space or workload, so that the teachers do not have the
time to bother about the level of the questions and tasks which they prepare for the students? Could it be due to the lack of an explanation in the Curriculum Document? While definitive answers to these questions are not possible, the questions are all worth considering and are derived from the teachers’ comments in the interviews. While the teachers mentioned the linguistic ability of the students as a potential limitation for creativity, not all teachers see things this way. Teacher 3, who defined creativity in her interview in terms of the person, recognised innate ability in all her students regardless of observed ability, although she too admitted that language ability could be a problem. Even her example worksheets showed no evidence of trying to explore this potential. The fact that all the student examples from all the teachers were completely correct suggests that at least for these students and these tasks academic ability was not a limitation. Perhaps therefore there could have been some ‘extra’ tasks set that could have been aimed at creativity, although it should be remembered that the perception of an academic limiting factor in most or all but the exceptional students may still discourage teachers from preparing for this ‘extra’ work, if time and resources are an issue (as they are reported to be here). Even if teachers recognise that not all students are limited by ability, as the students are of different proficiency levels and backgrounds, it is not easy to tap their creativity with a standardised curriculum which is prescribed for all.

Although, as I shall discuss in more detail later, the Curriculum Document outlines both creativity as a problem-solving skill [LCC] and creativity as self-expression [BCC], there is no further explanation of how the teachers should carry out these activities or what is the actual achievement expected from the students.

(e) Teacher Stakeholder Group - Summary
In many ways the teachers are the key stakeholder group in this work, as they have the responsibility for transforming policy into practice and hopefully transforming their students as they learn. Their views on creativity were sampled using a survey form, and this was followed by a series of semi-structured interviews. Examples of lesson plans and student worksheets were also examined for evidence of how these views of creativity may be expressed in practice.

The survey forms helped to prepare the teachers for discussing creativity at interview and pre-exposed them to a variety of definitions of creativity from the literature, at least in terms of introducing them to the language. Unsurprisingly, the survey did not reveal much in the way of a common or consistent group definition of creativity. Rather, it revealed that the teachers were capable of multiple definitions, and, although options for analysis were limited, it suggested that they tended to view creativity more as a process.

Nonetheless, the interviews produced much richer data that were broadly consistent with the survey data, although in general indicating more consistent tightly focused and contextual definitions of creativity. While there was variation between teachers, overall the group shared relatively similar views. As a group they associated creativity with the process of doing something new, different and individual. They tended to take the view that creativity was more about process, and that this was linked with a very practical, LCC-type definition of creativity. Although this was a widely expressed group definition of creativity, it was not uniform. Two teachers stood out as being different from their peers in their views of creativity. In contrast to their colleagues Teachers 3 and 7 were more aligned to the BCC-type definition of creativity and were less focused on the more pragmatic and practical problem-solving view. Teacher 3 also clearly defined creativity as being about the person, an innate
personal ability, rather than being a process or product of creative activity. This variation notwithstanding, there was reasonable consistency between the teachers’ survey and interview data.

As a group the teachers were not critical of the curriculum, the school or the wider system, although they readily identified barriers to creativity in the context of their work. Chief amongst these barriers was the lack of time, particularly given the large numbers of students, the limited resources and the pressure to spend time on non-teaching and administrative duties. Another major limitation was the full and rigid syllabus coupled with an exam-focussed system which tended to pressure both students and teachers towards taking a strategic, exam-focussed approach. Perhaps this was illustrated best by the example lesson plans and student worksheets. In many ways these very simplistic and strategic lesson plans and student worksheets are not well aligned with the teachers’ complex definitions of, and enthusiasm for, creativity as expressed in the survey and interview responses. It seems that the rigid and restrictive requirement for standard lesson plans together with the rigid exam-focused syllabus have resulted in formulaic and strategic plans and student worksheets that showed little opportunity for creativity and were focused on a low level that did not really require the students to think beyond remembering and understanding information, although the evidence was that they did this very successfully. Of course, this is based on a small number of example lessons and may not be representative. Although the restriction implicit in the required lesson plan is constant across the whole sector and the teachers were invited to submit example plans and worksheets as part of a study on creativity, still one might reasonably expect them not to submit their worst examples.
Generally the teachers’ LCC-type, process-based, practical problem-solving ‘real-world’-linked definition of creativity was well aligned with the Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (CCTS) curriculum introduced by the MOE in the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM) in 2001. Indeed, the teachers’ personal definitions of creativity may be influenced by the curriculum specification, and to some extent they may feel the need to comply with the ‘official view’, although they were aware that their views would be anonymised in any publication, and certainly some teachers were willing to criticise. Two of the teachers were perhaps a little more critical than their peers. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 both criticised the curriculum and the wider system for being too full, rigid and exam-focused to allow opportunity for creativity. While Teacher 3’s personal definition of creativity perhaps puts her at odds with the very LCC- and process-focused approach promoted by CCTS in the curriculum, this is not true of Teacher 4, and she is equally critical. Interestingly, the other teacher (Teacher 7), whose personal definition is at odds with the definition promoted by the CCTS curriculum, did not criticise, although perhaps this is because she appeared to rebel somewhat and work outside the system to some extent in a way more aligned with her personal definition of creativity. Thus, while a personal definition of creativity differing from that expressed in the curriculum may not help, it does not automatically explain criticism, at least in any simplistic way. It seems as though the breadth of definition of creativity available to the teachers and their professionalism allows them to accept the challenge of promoting creativity in the context they encounter, even with the barriers they recognise.

In conclusion, all teachers were able to give definitions of creativity and are aware of its importance. In general the teachers’ definition is aligned with and may be influenced by the definition of creativity linked to the CCTS curriculum. While
teachers recognised the barriers to creativity within their teaching context, and this did seem to influence their lesson plans and teaching to some extent, they accepted the challenges in promoting creativity in their context. How these data and the definitions and views of this key stakeholder group impact on policy implementation in the ESL curriculum will be discussed after the data from the other stakeholder groups have been considered, so as to present them in as full a context as possible.

5.2.2 Students

The students are the next stakeholder group under consideration. While the teachers’ group could be said to be key as they are responsible for implementing the policy on creativity and transforming it into educational change, in many ways the students are the most important group in that they are the focus. Everything from the policy-makers down through the system is focused on educating these children about creativity in order to prepare them for a changing modern world. Although they are the focus, we should remember that they have little power or control over how creativity is taught, and they may have, at best, a relatively naive view of creativity in the broader context. All the students were from the Form 4Science stream co-educational class and had an intermediate level of English proficiency. Coincidentally all students were from a ‘middle-class’ socio-economic background, but this is also representative of the school in general. Students were chosen to represent the ethnic mix of the school and wider society on the basis of their willingness to stay behind after school to participate in the interviews. Given the age of the students and their English language ability, brief group interviews were conducted with groups of three students from the same cultural and linguistic background in the hope that this would help minimise nervousness and anxiety and facilitate expression of their views. I
intend to consider each of these three group interviews in turn, before briefly discussing the student stakeholder group as a whole.

Malay Students

In this interview group there were three Form 4 (aged 16) Science stream co-educational students, one boy (MS1) and two girls (MS2 and MS3). When they were asked directly to define creativity, the Malay students group’s initial definitions all shared the common aspect of creativity as about being different from others, unique. To some extent this is similar to the teachers’ initial response, which combined this sense of being different with also being new, something the students did not.

“Creativity...doing thing your way, something different from others.” (MS1, line 6)

“Creative is...when you have different ideas, not the same with other people. Like when you draw, your drawing is different from others.” (MS2, line 7-8)

“Explore more than others do. Creative...like artists they draw nice pictures. Or when you write poems or songs with your own ideas and words...that’s creative.” (MS3, line 10-12)

Their answers were very person-centred with some reference to creativity as a process, but with no references to creativity as a product. So, for example, when expanding their initial ideas on the definition of creativity the students referred to creativity as a personal process.

“When I tie my scarf, I can do different styles.” (MS2, line 16)

However, although creativity is defined in a personal way as an activity that they or somebody else does, they are not defining creativity as being a personal trait,
as it would be if creativity were classified as ‘person’, but rather as ‘process’ on the Fisher and Williams (2004) axis. In this example it is the tying in different styles that is creative, not the person doing the tying. There are similar examples of the other students seeing creativity as doing things, as ‘process’, for example: “play guitar” (MS1, line 21) and “Do craft” (MS3, line 22). They also retain this very ‘process’-focused definition when they talked specifically about creativity in the English craft classes, recognising activities such as: “using words that others don’t use.” (MS1, line 26), “Discussion in groups.” (MS2, line 27), “Group presentation.” (MS3, line 28) and “Role-play.” (MS3, line 35) as being creative. When asked about the creative activities that they themselves do, once again these were framed in activities such as the music class and playing computer games.

In terms of the LCC / BCC axis these students tended toward BCC-type definitions of creativity. They linked creativity with the arts such as drawing and music, and, although they were fairly process-centred, their definitions tended not to be of the more pragmatic, problem-solving LCC-type.

Perhaps not surprisingly given their age and level of English language, the students often answer in their native language and need prompting in this language (when this occurs, a translation is provided in the transcript). The answers also tend to be very brief, and none of the students really expand on their ideas or discuss much. Often one student, mostly MS1, will answer the question, and the others will agree and perhaps furnish examples. There is no evidence of disagreement about the definition of creativity.
Chinese Students

In this interview group, as before, there were three Form 4 Science stream co-educational students, one boy (CS3) and two girls (CS1 and CS2). When they were asked directly to define creativity, the Chinese students group’s initial definitions all shared the common aspect of creativity as being about being different from others, unique. This is very similar to their peers in the Malay group and to some extent to the teachers’ initial response.

“Do things you like, your own way. You don’t copy others.” (CS2, line 6)

“Do weird things.” (CS3, line 7)

As with the Malay student interview group, these students tended to have a process-based definition of creativity and a tendency to relate their definitions of creativity to the arts and to a more BCC-type. Again their definitions are quite personalised, and they refer a lot to activities that they or their friends do. There is some suggestion that creativity is a group activity with a sense of freedom and independence.

Anything else like enjoying free time with friends the way you like.” (CS1, line 14)

Perhaps this is a natural extension of this view of creativity as a personalised activity or process and part of being a child.

When asked about creativity in the English class, this group identified group discussion, role-play (“acting”, CS1, line 18) and presentations, like their peers in the Malay group. They also included answering difficult questions in comprehension activities and solving puzzles like word mazes and doing treasure hunts.
Although this group, like the last, tended to have a group BCC-type, process-based definition of creativity with no evidence of any disagreement, one student did volunteer that:

“One day I will create my own game network.” (CS1, line 44)

This is a much more LCC-type ambition and would in all likelihood depend on the sort of practical creativity and entrepreneurship that the government may be hoping to encourage by promoting creativity at school.

In contrast to the Malay student interview group, the Chinese students did not revert to their mother tongue during the interview but spoke in English throughout. They were prompted in Malay, but only twice during the interview. As before, when this occurred, an English translation is included in the transcript. While the English language ability of this group was the same as that of the Malay students, they did not share a mother tongue with me as researcher. Perhaps then there was less temptation for all concerned to revert to a common mother tongue during the interview.

Indian Students

In this interview group, as before, there were three Form 4 Science stream co-educational students, one boy (tS3) and two girls (tS1 and tS2). When they were asked directly to define creativity, the Indian student group’s initial definitions once again all shared the common aspect of creativity being about being different from others, unique. This is very similar to their peers in the other groups and to some extent to the teachers’ initial response.

“Doing what you like.” (tS1, line 5)

“Do different things than others.” (tS1, line 5)
Similar examples of creativity being defined as ‘process’ emerge when these students talk about creativity more generally as doing things, for example: “dance class” (IS1, line 36), “Help my mum cooking” (IS2, line 37) and “Sketching anime characters” (IS3, line 38).

Once again these students were inclined to associate creativity with the arts, particularly painting and dancing, and in general they tended to talk about creativity in a less practical, more BCC-type of way. When guided specifically away from the arts by the interviewer, they did come up with non-artistic and more practical examples of creativity, such as “solve mathematical problems” (IS2, line 14) and “cook something new, create a new dish.” (IS1, line 15). However, they did not talk about creativity as if they thought about it as being practical and what Craft (2005) would define as LCC-type.

When asked about creativity in the English class, this group again readily identified group work, role-play and presentations, like their peers in the other groups. Interestingly, when talking about creativity in class, while they all recognised creative activity and said that they enjoyed it, one student remarked: “sometimes there is a lot of noise.” (IS2, line 28). This somewhat negative and critical comment may suggest that, while students recognise and enjoy creative activities in the English language class, this particular student somehow sees it as disruptive. The implication behind the complaint about the noise may be that there is a reduction in the quality of the learning environment.

As the group of Chinese students, this group of Indian students did not revert to their mother tongue during the interview but spoke entirely in English. Once
again a few prompts were given in Malay by the interviewer, and, when they occurred, they were translated into English in the transcript.

**Student Stakeholder Group - Summary**

Overall the three groups of students interviewed were remarkably similar in their definitions of creativity. They all associated creativity with something new and individual and tended to talk about creativity as a personalised process. That is to say, they seemed to define creativity as a process, but they often associated that process with something they or their friends did. There was no evidence in any of the interviews that anybody in this stakeholder group defined creativity as an individual trait (‘person’) or as a product. Also the stakeholder group shared an association between creativity and the arts, particularly music and dance. They certainly tended towards a BCC-type definition of creativity rather than the more pragmatic LCC-type, although this was less clear than their definition of creativity as a process.

Students’ views may be influenced by their cultural background. Since in Asia creativity is focused more on aesthetic values such as the arts and dance, students may view creativity in a very limited perspective. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), creativity is a very complex interaction between a person, a field and a culture. Although people may vary in their native capacity for creativity, it is in the individual’s interaction with the macrocosm that creative expression can be found. In keeping with this approach a look at Asian culture in relation to its impact on creativity is in order.

The students’ answers and discussions were all fairly brief and simplistic, and of course this may be due to their relative inexperience of using English and their
reluctance to talk to a researcher relatively new to them. While there was no evidence of any reluctance or embarrassment during the interviews, the students are not used to this sort of research interaction. Interestingly, language was not the only inhibitor of more in-depth discussion, as the Malay group, who shared a common mother tongue with the interviewer, also tended to be brief and simplistic, despite no compulsion to talk in English. Perhaps then this fairly simple definition of creativity as a process linked to the arts and activities they recognise as being creative is representative of creativity for this group. They certainly recognise creative activities in the English language class: they reported that they enjoyed such activities, although there was some suggestion in the Indian group that they were noisy, with the implication that this was a negative thing and perhaps not good for learning. The aspects of creativity in the English class that the students recognised were well aligned with the creative activities that the teachers planned and reported carrying out in class in order to try and encourage creativity.

5.2.3 Parents

In some ways the parents could be considered part of a shared stakeholder group together with the students. Perhaps it could also be argued that parents have a role teaching their children and influencing their views on creativity and in some ways act as teachers, although not working to the same curriculum and under the same procedural limitations. Parents also indirectly influence the policy-makers in that they form the population that elects the government and represents the country that the policy-makers are attempting to support. Having said that, although this stakeholder group’s influence is potentially wide-reaching, it is perhaps more peripheral to the ‘case-study’ school but obviously often very central as an influence on their children.
In this section I shall briefly consider each interview with a set of parents from each representative ethnic group before summarising the views of the stakeholder groups as a whole.

The parents interviewed came from the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. In order to connect the information and aid triangulation, each of the three sets of parents interviewed were parents of one of the children interviewed as part of the student stakeholder group. The Malay parents’ daughter is MS2, the Chinese parents’ daughter is CS2 and the Indian parents’ daughter IS1. Broadly they were from a middle-class socio-economic background. Two of the parents were government officers; another had a small business in town. All the parents were willing volunteers, but given their professional situation it was quite difficult to arrange mutually acceptable times for the interviews, and time was an issue. In order not to exhaust their good will interviews were kept as short and focused as possible.

Malay parents

The Malay couple both work in the government sector. They have a daughter (MS2), who was interviewed as part of the student stakeholder group. As both the parents and the interviewer are native Malay speakers, this interview was conducted in the Malay language, but the interviewer’s translation of the transcript is provided, and the quotes used here are all translated.

When they were asked directly for their definition of creativity, this was linked to doing things differently, in a personal and original style or way. Both the father (MPf) and the mother (MPm) seemed to agree readily with this definition.
“Creativity ... the freedom to do things you like in your own way, which is different from others.” (MPf, line 7)

“Do something extraordinary.” (MPm, line 9)

In thinking about how their daughter was creative both the father and the mother maintained the idea that creativity is linked to personal individuality, connecting this with their daughter’s sense of style and dress.

“She likes fashion. So whenever she dressed up, she has a style of her own. I think that’s part of creativity because she creates her own style.” (MPf, lines 11-12)

“She is full of ideas. I think she is alert to her surroundings and absorbs what she observes and from there comes out with her own idea.” (MPm, lines 13-14)

Whether they are talking about creativity in the abstract or talking about their daughter’s creativity, the sense of creativity as about being different and original is a strong and consistent theme. In terms of the definition of creativity as person, process or product (Fisher & Williams, 2004), these parents seem to see creativity as ‘process’. It is doing things differently that is linked with creativity, not the product of this process or the person doing it. Even when talking about their daughter, they do not seem to see creativity as being a trait within her, although they think that she is creative. Rather it is she that is capable of and does creative things.

“She designs her own ‘baju kurung’ [traditional Malay dress] for example. She combines the old fashion and the new one to make it more attractive. Then she’ll make a sketch and show me what she wants.” (MPm, lines 16-18)
When it comes to considering their definition of creativity in terms of whether it is the more practical LCC-type or the BCC-type with a potentially broader impact, it is a little less clear, although in general both parents seem to associate creativity with being practical and to consider it a necessary life skill.

“We all need to be creative in life. To make it more interesting than ordinary.” (M_PM, lines 33-34)

“It [creative activity] does not have to be academic. It’s something that they like to do and they can do best out of it. Then, they can be different from others out there and survive in the real world.” (M_PF, lines 38-40)

They also clearly consider the extra-curricular ‘kelab rakan sebaya’ [peers’ or friends’ club] activity that their daughter does as a creative activity and specifically link it to sharing views and solving problems. In this sense they seem to consider creativity as being a pragmatic LCC-type definition with ‘real-world’ value.

This is also supported by their views of creativity in school. Their initial answer was to suggest that the place for creativity in school is in the co-curricular activities, that is to say, not as part of the curriculum, although they did not say this directly.

“Yes [creativity should be promoted in school], through co-curricular activities. They have societies and uniformed bodies in school.” (M_PF, lines 24-25)

When asked directly about creativity in academic subjects, they both agreed that it might be important in certain subjects, giving as examples “science and mathematics”. Given that they thought creativity is important and useful in everyday life, it seems counterintuitive that these parents do not seem to think it an important
part of the school curriculum, seeming a little unsure about it and initially thinking its role was extra-curricular. Their choice of academic subjects in which it may be important is also surprising, not the more obvious music and the arts but science and mathematics. This is, however, consistent with their process- and LCC-type definition of creativity.

There is a good level of consistency and triangulation between the views that the Malay parents expressed about creativity and what their daughter said in her completely separate interview. Their daughter independently gave her ideas on fashion as the way in which she expressed her creativity at home, and both the parents and daughter associated creativity with being individual and different, and both seemed to define it as more of a process than anything else.

**Chinese parents**

The Chinese father runs a small business, and his wife is a housewife but is also involved in an on-line business part-time. They have a daughter (CS2), who was interviewed as part of the student stakeholder group.

When they were asked directly, their definition of creativity was, as that of the previous parents, linked to doing things differently. Once again both the father (CPf) and the mother (CPm) agreed in this definition.

“Creative is when you are able to stand out. Do something you like and you have talents which is better than others.” (CPf, lines 9-10)

“Creative is when you do something different. You excel more than others. That’s what I always remind my daughter. You want to do something, you do it to your best. You must be extra than the others so
that people will recognise you. If not you’re just the same and nobody notice you.” (CPm, lines 11-14)

Interestingly, both parents introduced an element of competition, linking creativity with being better than others or better than the norm. They repeated this theme throughout the interview when discussing creativity, and standing out by being ‘better’ was clearly important to them.

When discussing creativity in terms of their daughter, both parents agreed that their daughter was creative and gave her skill at playing the piano and composing her own songs as the main example of her creativity. Both thought creativity was important at school, linking it with programmes and competitions and also with the ability to tackle problems and learn. Like the previous parents, they did not seem to link creativity specifically to subjects or the curriculum. While the Malay parents seemed to see it as an extra-curricular activity, these parents saw it perhaps more as integrated with and supporting learning in general.

“I think so [creativity is important in academic subjects]. But more on how they tackle the subjects and try to make sense of what they learn.” (CPf, lines 30-31)

They also both agreed that creativity was encouraged in their home and is important in ‘real life’. Consistently throughout the interview both parents seemed to be defining creativity as a practical LCC-type process. Even though the example they gave of their daughter’s creativity centred around music, it was her playing and writing that they saw as creative, not her innate musical ability. When giving examples, they tended to cite creativity as potentially providing a practical solution and being relevant on a day-to-day basis, a very LCC-type approach.
As with the previous parental interview there was agreement between both father and mother and a good consistency and triangulation between the views they expressed and the views of their daughter in her separate group interview. She also saw creativity as being different and individual gave her music and composing as examples and seemed to see creativity more as process than person or product.

Indian parents

The Indian father works as a bank manager, and his wife works as a project coordinator. They have a daughter (IS1), who was interviewed as part of the student stakeholder group.

Their direct definition of creativity was, as with both previous sets of parents, linked to doing things differently, being an individual. Yet again both the father (IPf) and the mother (IPm) agreed on this definition.

“Creativity is something you cannot force. It has to be of your interest.” (IPf, lines 6-7)

“Like what he [her husband] said .... I always support what they do. So that they [her children] can express the way they like.” (IPm, lines 11-12)

Here perhaps the idea of creativity being different is secondary to its being individual and about choice. This emphasis is a little different from both previous sets of parents, for whom being different seemed to be more important. Interestingly, the father went on to qualify his definition of creativity somewhat.

“I will support whatever they [his children] are interested in so that they have space to show their talent. Of course as long as it is something positive and it doesn’t affect their studies. They need to manage their time wisely.” (IPf, lines 7-9)
Here the father qualifies his definition that creativity cannot be forced and is to do with personal interest by implying that he would support and facilitate this as long as it did not affect academic study and was “positive”, the implication being that he saw his parental role as deciding what was positive and helping his children to “manage their time wisely”.

When talking about creativity in their daughter they used her ability and fondness for traditional Indian dancing as an example of her creativity.

“she can dance very beautifully. You just play the music, she will dance. She creates her own steps.” (IPm, lines 15-16)

“The teacher also said she’s good.” (IPf, line 17)

This is in line with their previous abstract definition of creativity being personal, but the inclusion of the fact that she is skilled and creates her own steps adds more emphasis to her being different and standing out. This is something that comes out even more clearly when they are asked if creativity is an important element in life, whereupon the father immediately answers:

“Of course it is important. So that you can stand out. If not you’re just the same like others and nobody notice you.” (IPf, lines 19-20)

So, while their initial direct definition of creativity did not seem to highlight creativity as being different, this aspect came out later on in the interview, elucidating their definition of creativity as being personal, individual and different, more in line with those of the other parents interviewed.

When asked about creativity in school and whether it should be promoted, the father replies:
“Yes, they have co-curricular activities, I guess that’s when the kid’s talents are being explored.” (iPf, line 27)

The mother agrees. When asked about creativity in the academic subjects, both parents agree that in this context it is the teachers’ creativity that is important. Although they also mention that the students need to be creative, they do not seem to think of creativity as being directly part of the system, although they claim it is important.

“I think here [academic subjects] the teacher should be creative. She should be able to attract the students to learn what she is teaching.”
(iPm, lines 31-32)

“I agree, not only students must be creative. Teachers’ creativity is more important, you know, to handle all sorts of students.” (iPf, lines 33-34)

These parents also give numerous examples of how they and their children are creative at home, mentioning chess and puzzle-solving, sewing and solving everyday family and financial issues. There is some evidence of inconsistency here as, when talking about creativity in family life, the father links his own creativity specifically to everyday, pragmatic problem-solving:

“solving everyday issues in the family, financial … I’m not into arts.” (iPf, line 45)

But when talking in more general terms about creativity in everyday life both parents were less sure and suggested that it was not necessary for most people most of the time, only if you want to do something different from others.

“Depends … if you just lead a normal life … everyday you do the same routine, then there is not much of being creative.” (iPf, lines 36-37)
“Yeah, unless you want something different from others.” (tPm, line 38)

While there may be inconsistency between these two statements, there is consistency in seeing creativity as related to being different.

Overall these parents see creativity as being about a personal approach and being different, but their definitions are harder to judge in term of process, person or product. They are talking about creativity as process in terms of dance, chess, problem-solving and even teaching, but there are also some aspects that verge on suggesting a person-type definition. They mention the teacher “being” creative rather than just teaching creatively, and they also mention creativity as “talent” several times, which can be seen as being more about the person. These parents also present a somewhat mixed definition of creativity on the LCC-BCC scale. At times they are clear that creativity is pragmatic and practical, but they also link it to the more BCC-like, less practical definition based on the arts and dance. As with the other parents, there is consistency and triangulation between their definition of creativity and examples and that of their daughter in her completely separate group interview.

**Parent Stakeholder Group - Summary**

Overall the three sets of parents interviewed were remarkably similar in their definition of creativity. They all associated creativity with something new and individual and tended to talk about creativity as a personalised process. That is to say, they seemed to define creativity mostly as a process, but they often associated that process with something practical. This was very consistent with the views of their children, who were interviewed separately. There were some differences however: the parents also to some extent saw creativity as being associated with ‘being talented’
and also to do with standing out from others in terms of being ‘better’ or more noticeable. There was a definite sense that they saw this as being a good thing or at least to have the potential to lead to good things. In this sense perhaps they were showing their concern that their children would be successful in life in terms of having good jobs and being able to accept everyday challenges in life. Perhaps their views were influenced by the nature of their work and social background. Out of six parents interviewed, five were working and one was a housewife. None of them was involved directly in the arts, although some related creativity to talent. Their working experience may have given them a realisation of the importance of creativity in life.

The linking of creativity with being different and standing out in a competitive sense also has possible links not only with the ‘middle-class’ striving for financial success and social mobility, but also perhaps even more with what not long ago were immigrant ethnic populations moving into Malaysia because of the opportunities it offered.

In comparison with the teachers, the parents as a group believe creativity is important at school; they also associate creativity with interest; and they believe that creativity is important in their children’s learning and development. These views are not surprising and are well aligned with the views of the teachers, who also thought creativity to be important for children and their learning. However, in contrast to the teachers, the parents seemed to associate creativity with co-curricular activity rather than with academic study. They saw it as an extra or additional supporting part of their children’s education rather than as an integral part of the curriculum.

Most parents seem to feel that it is their job to teach their children to use their minds in a creative manner. According to them, that is the essence of adulthood,
taking responsibility for their own lives and for the lives of those that depend on them. A parent gave an example of how her daughter showed her responsibility by helping others. She explained:

“My daughter is in the ‘kelab rakan sebaya’ [peer club] where her role is to help others of the same age solve their teenage problems. They share views and come to good solutions. Most of these teenagers, they are not willing to share things with parents and teachers, but they do with friends.” (MPm, lines26-29)

Similarly, teachers posit creativity as the ability to face everyday challenges. The difference is that only two teachers associated creativity with aesthetic value. According to Runco and Johnson (2002), the development of creativity in children is dependent on the environment. Two active and influencing components are the adults who are significantly involved with the children and the culture in which this interaction occurs. Whatever the level of creative potential present in children, they will be guided by their interactions with their parents and, perhaps to a lesser extent, their teachers. In this sense it is perhaps important that parents and teachers share to a great extent a similar definition of creativity. Both groups associated creativity with the process of doing something new, different and individual. They tended to take the view that creativity was more about process, and this was generally linked with a very practical, LCC-type definition of creativity. Differences exist between individuals and in detail, particularly about the place of creativity within the curriculum, but there is a good deal of commonality.

5.2.4 Administrators
Three administrators were interviewed to determine their answers regarding the definition of creativity. They were the Principal, the Assistant Principal and the Head of the Language Department. They were chosen to represent each of the main levels of the administrative hierarchy at the school. The Principal of the school is the leader and makes decisions regarding the school’s administration and activities. However, principals all have to abide by the Ministry of Education rules and regulations.

Administrator 1 – the Principal (A1)

The Principal is a Malay lady in her fifties, who had experience teaching in five different schools before transferring to this role in 2008. She possesses a Bachelor of Education degree, majoring in the Malay language. Although her field is not English language, she has a satisfactory level of English communication, and it was easy to communicate with her in English and to understand her views during the interview. It is worth noting that the Principal transferred to the school in 2008, after I had finished working there as a teacher. So the interview and this research were not complicated by any previous relationship or inappropriate power relationship.

When asked directly, the Principal (A1) seemed to be basing her definition of creativity around its being something new and innovative, different from the norm and appreciated by others as such.

“To me creativity is something abnormal, does not exist at present…well-liked by everyone when it is created…must be innovative.” (A1, line 5-6)
The idea of creativity being appreciated and somehow better than the norm was consistent throughout the interview and came out several times, perhaps most notably when she said:

“I think one who is creative would be a better person compared to one who is not.” (A1, line 14)

According to the Principal, creativity enables students to look at problems from different angles and provides them with a tool to solve everyday problems. This is because she feels that creative individuals may have more options to choose from; so they can generate more ideas compared to the less creative.

“If you are creative, it is easier to solve problems although you have a much more challenging life. You will have more options to choose.” (A1, lines 14-16)

Later, when responding to a question about whether creativity should be promoted in schools, she answers:

“Yes, to be more competitive in the global exposure.” (A1, line 24)

Both of these answers suggest that the Principal views creativity as a fairly practical and pragmatic thing and associates it with solving problems on both a personal and even a national level. She therefore has a LCC-type definition of creativity.

In terms of whether the Principal views creativity as involving person, process or product, the interview is less revealing. On balance it seems that she sees creativity as being a personal talent or trait. She gave several examples when talking about creativity in this way:
“I think one who is creative would be a better person compared to one who is not.” (A1, line 14)

And later, when talking about how schools can help promote creativity, she says:

“[Schools can] prepare a venue for students to show their creativity.” (A1, line 47)

“I believe there must be a way to encourage students to express themselves and use their talents to the fullest.” (A1 lines 20-22)

Also, when talking about creativity in teachers, she says clearly that “Teachers themselves have to be creative.” (A1, line 19) In these examples she is referring to the person, students and teachers as being creative, as if it were a trait which they possess rather than as something which they do or produce.

In common with her teachers, at least in the sample of those interviewed, she clearly recognises the distinction between creativity and criticality in the curriculum. Her views were also well aligned with those of the teachers in recognising some of the barriers to creativity in schools. She readily identified the lack of money and material support for teaching creativity and also agreed that student numbers added to the pressure and made teaching creativity and teaching creatively difficult, although she did not directly refer to time pressure, which was very high on the teachers’ agenda as a creativity inhibitor. Perhaps this is not surprising given that she no longer actually teaches, and this pressure may therefore be less obvious to her. Like some of the teachers and indeed the parents interviewed, at times she gave examples of creativity more in extra-curricular activities, such as PSS [School Library] week and PPSMI [teaching Mathematics and Science in
English] camp. Although in contrast to the teachers she sees the Curriculum Document as “just a guideline” (A1, line 19), she agrees with them in considering the exam focus in school as an inhibitor of creativity. In her view ESL classes are rigid and exam-oriented. However, she feels that the Curriculum Document does promote the teaching of creative thinking skills. She reconciles this apparent conflict by suggesting that, although the curriculum is exam-focused, creativity can still be promoted by “challenging activities” and more student-centred, less didactic teaching.

“Let them [students] do topics that interest them and discover things by themselves. Teacher can facilitate, but don’t spoon feed them.”
(A1, lines 43-45)

When asked about how she would improve the present curriculum in order to encourage creativity better, she again referred to taking a less didactic, less exam-focused approach and suggested:

“I think a student centred approach is needed, not just talk and chalk; 80% should be allocated for coursework, only 20% for exam”
(A1, lines 67-68)

She also believed that students were individuals with varying degrees of intellectual ability. Therefore, creativity could be the medium to bridge the gap between the students and allow the academically weaker students to show their ability in different fields.

“They [teachers] have to know their students’ needs. Creative teacher know how to tackle their students. I believe there must be a way to encourage students to express themselves and use their talents
“to the fullest. It is just up to the teachers to find ways to discover it.””

(A1, lines19-22).

Although there are co-curricular activities in the education system, whereby students involve themselves in societies and uniformed groups, the opportunities for displaying talents and abilities for non-academic students are not widely open. In some cases the co-curricular activities are also monopolised by the academically good students because they are more responsible and reliable in the teachers’ eyes. However, students’ participation in these kinds of activities can enhance their abilities to express themselves in other areas. If students are brave enough to show their creativity without having to think about others’ perceptions, creativity can be a tool to bridge the gap between good and weak students. It is also interesting that here the Principal clearly sees this as the teachers’ responsibility, perhaps despite the curriculum and not aided by it.

Administrator 2 – the Assistant Principal (A2)

The Assistant Principal is one of three, all of broadly similar experience and background. Their roles are to assist the Principal in managing the administration and to contribute to the teaching. The Assistant Principal interviewed for this study is an Indian lady who majored in Biology and Moral Education. She is the Assistant Principal for academics, while the other Assistant Principals focus on co-curricular activities and student affairs. She has been teaching in the school for more than twenty years and completed her own secondary school education at this same school. Although this lady worked at the school while I taught here between 2000 and 2005, we taught different subjects, and, while I was aware of her as a colleague, I did not teach or work with her directly. There were therefore no complicating professional or personal relationships influencing the interview data collection.
The Assistant Principal’s (A2) initial definition of creativity was very similar to that of her colleague, the Principal. Both saw creativity as being something original and innovative.

“To me creativity is the ability to innovate, to create and develop something new and original.” (A2, lines 5-6)

In her original definition of creativity in response to the first direct question she not only defines creativity as being about innovation by referring to it as an “ability”, but she implies that her definition may be a person-type view of creativity rather than a process or product. This is something she does throughout the interview, often referring to creativity as ability and to both students and teachers as “being” creative. She clearly seems to have a person-based definition of creativity. Perhaps this is expressed most clearly when she says:

“Creativity is something gifted I think, not everybody is creative. If one is not creative, no matter what you do to motivate them, they are simply not creative.” (A2, lines 31-33)

In respect of whether she defines creativity in LCC or BCC terms, the Assistant Principal expresses a clear and consistent LCC-type definition of creativity throughout the interview. She repeatedly refers to creative individuals as being practical and able to solve problems, again consistently with her person-type view of creativity.

“If students are creative they are able to solve any problem they face independently, without the assistance from others. People like this can survive in any situation because they have several options in mind. They look at different angles before making decisions.” (A2, lines 15-17)
This single quote illustrates both her person- and LCC-type definition of creativity, which she expressed consistently. It is clear here that she thinks it is the person who is creative rather than anything they are actually doing or producing, and that this trait is seen as having a real, pragmatic, practical advantage.

In common with the Principal and the teachers interviewed, she clearly recognises the distinction between creativity and criticality in the curriculum and seems to see criticality as a cognitive process while seeing creativity as an ability.

“Critical thinking and creative thinking are two different things. The first one is the thinking that is able to evaluate or to criticise something, but not necessarily can solve problems. On the other hand, the latter is the ability to analyse and solve problems. We are now trying to promote CCTS to encourage the students to use both.”  
(A2, lines 9-12)

This is also internally consistent with her apparent person- and LCC-type definition of creativity.

As a teacher she recognises that, although there is support for creativity, there are issues in terms of resources. She is also very clear that the system is very exam-focused and that this is a major inhibitor of creative potential. She says quite clearly:

“The system is such, you come to school to get good grades, not to show your talent or creativity. There is no space to let it out. Nobody cares whether you’re creative or not actually.” (A2 lines 66-68)

“The system itself is more towards critical thinking, not creativity. If you look at the exam questions for instance, they are more to critical thinking.” (A2, lines 29-31)
Although in these quotes, while not actually critical, she seems to blame the “system”, in common with the Principal she sees the Curriculum Document as “just a guideline”, and in this she differs from the teachers interviewed. Later in the interview she suggests that it is not the actual curriculum that is at fault: rather she thinks it is the rigid, exam-focused curriculum implementation.

“What the students are learning now is too rigid, no soul, it’s too exam orientated, paper chase that’s it. When they go out in the real world, they don’t know what to do, they can’t survive. That’s what’s happening today. The guidance is in the curriculum, but I think the implementation fails.” (A2 lines 79-82)

This criticism of the implementation suggests some criticism of the teaching, and elsewhere in the interview the Assistant Principal, when talking about teaching creativity in ESL classes, says:

“The [curriculum] document is only the guideline. It is not enough to guide teachers to teach in a creative manner. We can still see most of the teachers prefer teacher centred compared to student centred methods when teaching. Teaching and learning should be more student orientated, only then can students be encouraged to think.” (A2, lines 20-23)

Here, in line with her views that a restricted exam-focused approach limits creativity teaching and that learning should be more student-centred, she seems to criticise the teaching of the curriculum and the teachers’ approach rather than the curriculum itself. She also later suggests that the teachers’ role is secondary to that of the parents in encouraging creativity in the children.
“Everything has to start at home. Parents should play a role in encouraging their children to express their talent and creativity. That’s how I think ... the teachers’ duty is to just polish what the children already brought from home.” (A2 lines 42-44)

One must not forget that she is both an administrator with particular responsibility for academic affairs and a teacher. As such she occupies a sort of middle ground, linking management and administration with teaching. Her criticisms are not direct, and she is broadly supportive of the curriculum, training and the Ministry, although she does recognise that barriers exist. She is critical of the exam-focused, rigid approach and, while not critical of the Ministry, she is critical of the ‘system’, and, although she seems to blame the teachers and perhaps the parents to some extent, she also feels that the power to effect any change comes from ‘above’ her, when she says:

“*We can suggest lots of things here, but those up there, who make decisions, you know, they should realise that things down here need changes. We can’t do much if they don’t.*” (A2, lines 84-86)

**Administrator 3 – the Head of the Language Department (A3)**

The Head of the Language Department and coordinator of teaching English as a Second Language is the teacher in charge of all languages taught in this school (Malay, English, Tamil and Mandarin). This teacher is a Sikh lady, who has been teaching in this school for nearly thirty years. Her original specialisation was in Geography Education, and all her own children were educated in this school. This lady was Head of the Language Department when I taught in the school as an English teacher. During this time I had a positive professional relationship with her, although I did not work with her directly or know her well. Given the relatively superficial nature of our professional relationship and that more than five years have
elapsed since my leaving the school and completing this study, our previous working
relationship and former power relationship did not unduly influence the interview.

The Head of the Language Department (A3) spoke good English, but
throughout the interview gave very short and succinct answers to questions and did
not really engage in discussion as much as her colleagues. English language did not
seem to be the limiting factor, but these administrators, who also teach, are very
busy, and it may simply have been that the time she was able to devote to the
interview was short. Her initial definition of creativity was simply “Having a lot of
ideas.” (A3, line 5), which does not reveal very much, although as far as one can tell,
it does seem to link with a general view of creativity as being a sort of thought
process linked to the potential of problem-solving. So when questioned about the
difference between creative and critical thinking and whether she thought creativity
was useful to students, she gave a series of short answers that suggests she saw
creativity in this way:

“one has to be creative to be critical.” (A3, line 8)

“[creative] students will have various solutions to a problem. If one
solution doesn’t work others might.” (A3, lines 11-12)

So, while her individual answers are short and not particularly revealing, it
is possible to gather from the interview that the Head of Languages seems to view
creativity as a practical thought process that is linked to practical ‘real-life’ problem-
solving. In this sense her definition seems to be a LCC-, process-type definition.
Unlike her colleagues there was no clear suggestion that she necessarily viewed
creativity as having to be about what is new, different or original.
This lady is fairly critical of the curriculum. She does not think creativity is an important element to be emphasised in school and thought that “Lessons are mostly monotonous and boring.” (A3, line 17). Although, having said this, later she does agree that the school plays a vital role in promoting creativity by “conducting interesting activities involving students.” (A3 line 33). She offers examples throughout the interview of these types of interesting activity. When talking about how to nurture creativity, she suggests that it is a good idea for children to be encouraged to “Carry out outdoor activities.” (A3, line 25) and in class suggests “Group activities such as role-play.” (A3, line 31). These views are consistent with those of her colleagues in the administrator stakeholder group and to some extent with those of the teachers and indeed the parents who tended to see extracurricular activities as being important in encouraging creativity. When giving an example of what could be done in class, she chose examples of student-centred interactive teaching rather than the more traditional didactic transmission, and this suggests that she too recognises the limitations of this approach to some extent. Although she does not say this directly in her interview, this comes out again when she talks about how the situation could be improved with regard to promoting creativity in school, when she says:

“I think teachers shouldn’t be tied up with syllabus and textbooks. Flexibility in conducting lessons can improve creativity.” (A3, lines 49-50)

Here she seems to suggest that teachers need flexibility in the curriculum in order to teach. Given her criticism of the curriculum and her other views and examples, it seems reasonable to infer from this that her views are aligned with those of others involved with teaching in recognising that a more flexible student-centred
approach to curriculum delivery facilitates creativity, while a rigid exam-focused one inhibits it. While her brief answers are consistent with this view, this has to be inferred from her responses, since she does not say this directly.

This view, together with her view of creativity as a sort of personal mental process, is also apparent when she talks about the major obstacles that students face in being creative. Interestingly, the main barriers to creativity that she identifies are “Attitude is the main drawback.” (A3, line 37) and “Parents and teachers by imposing a lot of don’ts.” (A3, line 39). It seems as though, having a personal definition of creativity as a sort of mental process, she sees self-imposed attitudinal limits and externally imposed rules as the main obstacles. Perhaps, given this personal definition of creativity, it is not surprising that she is critical of a rigid imposed curriculum and thinks that space and flexibility are what is required to promote creativity.

**Administrator Stakeholder Group - Summary**

The three administrators who were interviewed (the Principal, the Assistant Principal and the Head of the Language Department) represented each of the main levels of the administrative hierarchy at the school. Together they administer and support the management and decision-making regarding curriculum implementation and adherence to Ministry of Education rules and regulations. They are the link between the Ministry and the teachers. They may also teach and, although they have some local power at the school, ultimately they have to abide by the Ministry of Education rules and regulations.
Overall the three levels of administrator interviewed presented a fairly consistent definition of creativity as being about being different and individual, and at the same time all three tended to see it as being a practical, relevant and important activity and inclined therefore toward a LCC-type definition. In terms of process, product or person, two seemed to see creativity as a process, while the third viewed it as an individual trait or gift and therefore had a more person-based view of creativity.

There was a good deal of consistency and triangulation with the views of the teachers in that all three administrators clearly recognised the distinction between creativity and criticality in the curriculum. Their views are also well aligned with those of the teachers in recognising some of the barriers to creativity in school. Despite their relative positions of power and responsibility within the school, this stakeholder group also identified the potential shortfall of resources to support the teaching of creativity given the student numbers, although as a group they did not directly refer to time pressure, which was very high on the teachers’ agenda as an inhibitor of creativity.

While they were not overtly critical, they also agreed with the teachers’ views that a rigid exam-focused approach to the curriculum was an inhibitor of creativity. They also concurred that the solution was more flexible, student-centred approaches to teaching. In this they tended to blame both the ‘system’ and to some extent those above them in that system and the teachers for their lack of will to exploit the flexibility in the curriculum which as administrators and managers they identified as being there. Perhaps this is not surprising and just reflects the common position of those at a ‘middle-management’ level, who in some ways are in a position to see how the system they superintend might be better managed, although as they are not faced with the day to day practicalities of the implementation themselves, they are perhaps
unaware of the barriers to the same extent. Similarly they can also look above them and see some of the problems but feel powerless to act. Given this ‘middle-management’ position, it is perhaps surprising that they are not more critical.

5.2.5 Policy-Makers

The policy-makers interviewed were the officers from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. All of them are from an education background, either teachers from schools who have been promoted or senior administrators in the government education offices. At this level they make decisions regarding education policy implementation and advise the school administrators and teachers regarding the curriculum and co-curricular activities. The subjects interviewed in this stakeholder group are positioned in the overall organisation chart for the Ministry of Education. While they are significantly involved in educational policy, they are relatively junior in this structure, working under the Director of Curriculum Development, a position four tiers below the Minister of Education. This is a top-down process, in which any orders from the Ministry will first go to the state level before being implemented at the schools in each district. These policy-makers are involved in curriculum planning and development and in implementing the curriculum and educational policy down to district level.

(a) Data from the Interviews

The three policy-makers interviewed are directly involved in decision-making and planning and in passing the various policies and the curriculum down from the Ministry of Education to the district in which the ‘case-study’ school is
located. They are very busy people, and therefore the interviews were kept as succinct as possible.

Policy-Maker 1– the Curriculum Division Officer (PM1)

The Curriculum Division Officer (PM1) works at the Curriculum Development Centre, in the Ministry of Education, working under the Director of Curriculum Development. She is a Malay lady who came into this policy role from a teaching background, and she is in charge of the curriculum planning and acts as one of the committee members for the curriculum planning board at Ministry level. Besides planning and working with a committee involved in updating the curriculum, she works closely with the EPRD (Education Planning and Research Division) researching education at schools.

When she was asked directly to define creativity, the Curriculum Division Officer’s views were that creativity had to be useful and that it required some sort of purpose. She said:

“It [creativity] involves the production of a product. It needs to have an aim, objective and has to be useful. Well either, a product or a process...also a kind of problem solving.” (PM1, line 5-6)

While at first glance it seems that in this quote creativity is viewed as a product, in fact here she is talking about producing a product and the process as being creative rather than the product itself. Also here there is a clear and definitive connection between creativity and usefulness and problem-solving. So in this her opening definition the Curriculum Division Officer’s definition of creativity seems to be a process-, LCC-type view of creativity. She is fairly consistent in maintaining this definition of creativity throughout the interview, although later there is also some
suggestion that she may incline to a slightly person-type definition of creativity, when she says:

“I think everybody has the potential to be creative. It can be tapped, but the degree of creativity of course depends on the individual.” (PM1, lines 27-28)

Here, although she is still consistent in maintaining the process-type of definition when talking about the “potential to be creative”, it is also possible that she has in mind the sense of being a creative person rather than doing something creative.

When talking about the curriculum, the Curriculum Division Officer briefly described its production, but perhaps she was a little defensive, almost building in an apologetic explanation despite just being asked to “talk a bit about the curriculum”.

“The preparation of the document involved many . . . teachers, lecturers etc. so we do listen to many actually. We don’t simply make decisions on our side. But of course we cannot invite everybody [to contribute].” (PM1, lines 8-10)

The other point to note here is that by referring to “we” several times, she acknowledges her role and responsibility for the Curriculum Document. When asked whether she saw any problems with the curriculum implementation, she was fairly quick to be critical of the teaching and to some extent the teachers.

“I think the problem in school now is that teachers skip steps of teaching.” (PM1, line 12)

“I don’t know what their [teachers] problem is, whenever I see them they will complain of not enough [training] courses. This depends on our budget too.” (PM1, lines 14-14)
This tends to suggest that she is aware of problems with the curriculum implementation, but she seems to see this as a problem of teaching rather than curriculum content. The second comment perhaps suggests an antagonistic relationship between the policy-maker and teachers, and it actually does not align well with the views of the teachers or indeed the school administrators interviewed for this study, who were not overtly critical of the Ministry or of the training it provided. Perhaps this is because, when she does have to interact with teachers, it is to sort out some problem or complaint, and this has coloured her view of the group as a whole.

The Curriculum Division Officer recognised other issues with implementation. In common with the teachers she considered the lack of time as being a major inhibitor of creativity in schools.

“Time allocation is also not considered in the syllabus. The analogy is like we are putting everything in a cup...the cereals, sugar, creamer...but we never thought of the amount that the cup could bear. The problem about the time factor had been raised during meetings; however, there was an order from up there for us to put it aside. So, we follow orders and do what we can...it’s difficult to say. But we have done our best.” (PM1, lines 18-23)

In this example she suggests that the issue of lack of time for successful curriculum delivery was recognised as a potential problem during curriculum development, but that pressure from higher up in the Ministry resulted in this not being fully addressed. Such a complicated provision often involves compromises in order to produce something that can be widely applied, and this may reflect that, and/or it could also be a more political attempt to deflect personal blame from involvement in producing the curriculum.
Later in the interview the Curriculum Division Officer talked about plans for revising the ESL curriculum over a two- to three-year period. When asked whether this new curriculum would still include the Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (CCTS) programme, there was an emphatic ‘yes’ followed by the revelation of a change in the programme terminology.

“Yes, of course. But we use a new term, it is creative innovation [kreativiti inovasi].” (PM 1, lines 34-35)

When asked to explain the differences, she answered that there would be a greater focus on creative teaching and teaching for creativity with some continued implied criticism of the teaching.

“The new curriculum will focus on creative teaching and also teaching for creativity. The lesson must be creative and the opportunities should be given to the students.” (PM1, lines 37-38)

When she was challenged over the implication that there was a lack of creative teaching at present, her answer once again suggested that she did indeed think that not all teachers were creative, although she did agree that some were.

“Not many [teachers] are creative. But there are teachers who are creative. They enter competitions here and there and win … that’s good.” (PM1, lines 40-41)

This is consistent with her earlier implied criticism of teachers and teaching, but it goes further and states that she thinks that few teachers are creative. Although she does think that some are, her example of competition success is very simplistic and superficial.
Policy-Maker 2– the State Education Officer (PM2)

The State Education Officer is a Malay lady who came into this role from a teaching background. She is in charge of the planning and development of English language at the state level, in the case of the ‘case-study’ school, Selangor State. Selangor is divided into ten districts, each of which has around one hundred schools. At state level across these ten districts she is involved in making decisions regarding the policy and curriculum implementation. Her main role is to plan activities for schools across the whole state. Additionally, she also ensures that the various educational activities are implemented as planned. Her work is linked closely with that of the Curriculum Division at the Ministry of Education, and she works under the Curriculum Division Officer in ensuring that all the activities planned follow the curriculum as prescribed by the Ministry.

The State Education Officer’s initial definition of creativity in response to a direct question was centred around creativity being something new and outside normal expectations. There were also aspects of both a person- and a process-type definition of creativity in this first statement.

“Creativity means doing things out of the normal boundaries. Therefore a creative person can innovate or produce something.”

(PM2, lines 5-6)

Here she refers both to a “creative person” and also to the fact that they can do something creative, so it is unclear whether this either represents a person- or a process-type of definition of creativity or both. Later in the interview she is clearer in her more process-type definition of creativity, for example:
“We provide enough computers so that teachers and students can be creative in the teaching and learning process.” (PM2, lines 65-99)

In this brief example she refers to both students and teachers as using computers so as to be creative. While being creative can refer to being a naturally creative person, linking it to the use of computers to “be creative” suggests that she is thinking of being creative as doing something creative rather than being a creative person. She also seems to see creativity as being an important practical skill, particularly useful for problem-solving, for example when she says:

“Creativity enables students to look at problems from different angles or aspects and provides them with the best tools to solve everyday problems.” (PM2, lines 13-14)

The State Education Officer seems therefore to associate creativity with being different and new and to have a process- or perhaps a person-based, LCC-type definition of creativity.

She gives many examples of creativity in school in general and in the ESL classroom in particular. Interestingly, these are very well aligned with the examples given by the teachers and others and perhaps reflect her teaching background. She cites role-play and public-speaking as examples of creativity in the English class, and these were also given by both teachers and students alike. Perhaps more surprisingly, given her role in the curriculum, many of her examples were from non-curricular or co-curricular activities such as “inter-class competitions”, “mural painting” and celebrations for Independence Day and Teachers Day.
Interestingly, she links her practical view of creativity as a problem-solving tool with academic activity and thinks that creativity can help students bridge intellectual gaps.

“Students are individuals with varying degrees of intellectual [ability]. I am sure that creativity can bridge the gap between them and allow academically weaker students to compete on a level playing field.” (PM2, lines 21-23)

She also clearly shares the view commonly held by the teachers interviewed that the rigid exam focus in school inhibits creativity.

“Exam based culture urges teachers to finish the syllabus. This also leads students to become book worms. Space to promote creative thinking skills is very limited. There is one saying I remember ‘creativity in an exam based culture will die a natural death – it is either one or the other’.” (PM2, lines25-28)

Later, when talking about obstacles to creativity, she clearly states the main one as:

“The exam based culture that insists the students answer to an accepted and rigid answer scheme.” (PM2, lines 52-53)

The State Education Officer clearly sees the rigid exam focus as inhibiting creativity, and later, when asked about possible improvements to promote creativity in schools, she again comes back to this and suggests changing the exam process.

“I think the present curriculum needs improvisation in the context of promoting creativity. For example, the curriculum should not be exam oriented. I suggest that we should allocate 50% for the course work and the exams can take up another 50%.” (PM2. Lines 71-73)
Unlike her colleague, the Curriculum Division Officer, she is not critical of teachers and the curriculum implementation, but rather is more aligned with the teachers and sees the fault as being the rigid exam focus.

Policy-Maker 3– the District Education Officer (PM3)

The District Education Officer is a Malay lady who came into this role from a teaching background. She is in charge of the planning and development of English language at the district level, in this case in the one hundred and three schools in the Gombak district. Her role is important in making small decisions regarding curriculum policy implementation at district level. Part of her job is to ensure that the schools in her district implement the activities outlined in the curriculum specifications as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. She works under the State Education Officer to plan and implement curriculum and policy decisions, and she occasionally visits schools and discusses issues raised by the school authorities.

Her initial definition of creativity was “Thinking and doing things ‘out of the box’” (PM3, line 5), a common modern phrase often used in business to mean doing something different from the norm and perhaps unrestricted by expectations. Many of her answers to questions were fairly brief, but throughout the interview when talking about creativity her views seemed to be that creativity is a practical process, and therefore she seems to hold a process-, LCC-type personal definition of creativity. For example, she says that creativity “helps them [students] to think and choose something that is different from others” (PM3, line 12), and her examples of creativity are mostly practically relevant processes such as “discussions”, “problem solving”, “group activities” and “field work”. Although her answers are brief, she is supportive of including creativity in ESL lessons. She says that “ESL lessons should be student
centred and fun” (PM3, line 15) and creativity should be emphasised in the lessons “in order to make the lessons interesting and lovely.” (PM3, line 17) She clearly not only associates creativity with a practical, problem-solving approach, but she also sees it as a way of making the lessons more student-focused and enjoyable.

The District Education Officer was very interesting when discussing the things that promote and inhibit creativity in school in general and particularly in the ESL class. She recognised that a rigid exam focus could inhibit creativity, but did not seem to think this was too great a barrier. She suggested this could be countered by teaching using “student centred activities, discussions and language games.” (PM3 line 21) and by using “contextual based exam questions” in the examination. Again this is consistent with her apparent personal definition of creativity. She thought that the most significant obstacles that ESL teachers faced in promoting creativity were: “I think fear of the subject, attitude and lack of interest.” (PM3, line 39). While she is not generally critical of teachers’ delivery of the curriculum, this statement contains an implied criticism of the teachers, suggesting that their attitude and lack of interest in teaching creativity was the major barrier. She considers that the training the Ministry provides is adequate and promotes creativity, and when asked about what improvements she would make, she again returns to this theme and says:

“ESL teachers should be well trained and proficient in the subject. The present curriculum is adequate; however, the implementation should be revised.” (PM3, lines 63-64)

Once again this suggests that the issues are with curriculum delivery by the teachers rather than with the curriculum itself and with the rigid exam focus of the broader system. Despite this view she does not really criticise teachers directly and seems to think that training provides a solution.
Interestingly, the District Education Officer also mentioned the role of parents in promoting creativity in their children directly. She said that she thought parents cared about developing creativity in their children and qualified this by adding “especially educated parents”. When asked to explain this view, her explanation was very well aligned with her process-, LCC-type definition of creativity, and she explained that educated parents “well, they know the importance of creativity in the cyber and competitive age.” (PM3, line 45). This statement also suggests that she links these pragmatic, LCC-type views with education, not only in the ESL classroom but also in the wider social context.

(b) Data from the Policy Document

To be better able to understand more of what the policy-makers and others may be trying to say about the policy, the Curriculum Document (Ministry of Education, 2009) was briefly analysed to bring out examples of how it presented creativity to the groups required to apply it. The document outlines a comprehensive content and skills programme, and it is expected that school administrators and managers and indeed teachers will refer to it and be guided by it. All English language teachers in the schools are given a copy of the document to refer to when preparing their lesson plans. The document is used as guidance to enable teachers to identify the skills to be taught and as a source of ideas for appropriate lesson activities. During teacher training the document is widely used to support trainee teachers as they learn how to plan lessons and teach.

In order to prepare and revise this document a committee was formed comprising lecturers from the universities and teacher-training colleges, Ministry of
Education officers, selected teachers and individuals from other identified educational organisations. In this sense it can be said that the document contents reflect the ideas and input of representatives of all the stakeholders involved.

The Curriculum Document (Ministry of Education, 2003) is a 37-page document with two main sections (learning outcomes and specification, language content) stating overall aims, detailing the syllabus and providing teachers and other interested parties with advice and examples of how to deliver the syllabus. In the following summary of its structure I highlight the items related to creativity and other aspects relevant to comments made in the interviews with policy-makers and others.

The initial section of the document is the National Education Philosophy. This sets out the overall educational philosophy which underpins the Curriculum Document (Ministry of Education, 2003), using inspirational and motivational language. This section includes the following:

“Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potentials of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.ii)

While this quote does not refer directly to creativity, it clearly expresses the desire for an integrated, holistic approach to education and links this to the societal context. Later the document refers directly to the aims and objectives of ESL teaching.
“The English language syllabus aims to extend learners’ English language proficiency in order to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace needs.” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 1)

“The English language curriculum enables learners to:

i. form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence; take part in social interactions; and obtain goods and services;

ii. obtain, process and use information from various audio-visual and print sources; and present the information in spoken and written form;

iii. listen to, view, read and respond to different texts, and express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written form; and

iv. show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation.” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 1)

In this quote, relating directly to ESL teaching, the first thing to note is the clear desire that the purpose of learning English is to meet the needs of everyday life and that this should be linked to eventual employment needs. This is a very practical and pragmatic aim for language tuition and the curriculum. Later in the objectives, which again echo this desire for a practical approach, objective (iii) clearly states the desire that learners should be able to “express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written form”. This clearly articulates the need for creativity in a fairly prominent position within the document, but does not attempt to define what is meant by creativity.

The main body of the English syllabus describes and specifies, in detail, the content to be taught at all schools from Form 1 through to Form 5. The English language curriculum is organised for reflecting the way English is used in society in everyday life. Three areas of language use are delineated, and these are the
Interpersonal, the Informational, and the Aesthetic. The curriculum content of the syllabus outlines these three main sections, indicating the ‘Learning Outcomes’ to be achieved by learners, the ‘Language Content’ to be incorporated into lessons, and the ‘Educational Emphases’ to be woven into materials and activities. The ‘Learning Outcomes’ of the syllabus specify the skills learners should achieve in the three areas of language use, the ‘Interpersonal’, the ‘Informational’ and the ‘Aesthetic’. These areas incorporate the integration of the four language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The Language Content outlines the grammar, the sound system and the word list to be taught, while the section on Educational Emphases incorporates worldwide developments in education, such as thinking skills, ICT skills and the theory of Multiple Intelligences.

Thinking skills are mentioned in general (only in one sentence), and specific reference is made to critical and creative thinking. However, no explanation of the difference between critical and creative thinking is given.

“Critical and creative thinking skills are incorporated in the learning outcomes to enable learners to analyse information, make decisions, solve problems, and express themselves accurately and creatively in the target language.” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 3)

Later, in sections detailing specific suggestions for teaching and learning activities, the Curriculum Document states:

“In order to bring about effective learning, learners must be given every opportunity to engage in real or simulated activities that require them to use the language i.e. lessons should be activity-based and learner-centred and revolve around real-life tasks to ensure relevance. Learners must be able to cope with the task that is set and care should be taken to ensure that they are not operating at a
frustration level. Teachers may need to control structures and vocabulary to ensure successful completion of a task or activity.” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 5)

Once again this highlights the very pragmatic, practical intention for language learning and clearly states that the teaching should be student-centred and empower teachers to adjust the level and detailed content to suit the level of their students.

When referring to the ESL curriculum evaluation and assessment the Curriculum Document advises teachers that evaluation is part and parcel of the teaching-learning process and that continuous feedback is essential if learners are to keep track of their progress. After every lesson teachers are encouraged to assess their set of learners through simple questioning techniques or other tasks, so that they can pace the lessons in accordance with their learners’ progress. This together with the summative assessment of the intended learning outcomes of the syllabus contributes to the exam focus mentioned in many of the interviews. The learning outcomes set in the syllabus are intended to be achieved by the end of Form 5. Ample examples are given in the document to aid teachers. Skills specifications are also clearly listed with examples of activities to guide teachers. Topics are also given in the document for guidance. In practice these topics serve as the subject-matter through which the three main areas of English language are taught.

Thus overall the Curriculum Document is more than just a syllabus. It contains examples and various forms of guidance for the teachers and others involved in ESL education and forms a functional blueprint for the teaching. Although direct references to creativity are limited, they are there, despite the fact that nowhere in the
document is creativity defined. Given the repeated practical and pragmatic contextual basis for the desired ESL teaching, it is reasonable to assume that creativity here would be the pragmatic, functional LCC-type of creativity.

(c) Policy-Maker Stakeholder Group - Summary

The three policy-makers interviewed, although relatively low ranking within the Ministry of Education structure, represented real power over the curriculum and policy development and implementation within the district of the ‘case-study’ school. As a group their views were relatively consistent; they all seemed to share a process- and practical LCC-type definition of creativity, and this was also consistent with the Curriculum Document, which they had a significant part in producing and implementing. The two more ‘junior’ policy-makers also shared the view that creativity involved being or thinking differently. All three seemed to recognise the major barriers to creativity identified by both the teacher and administrator stakeholder groups, particularly the limitations of resources and time and especially the problems associated with a rigid, exam-focused system. Policy-maker 2 (PM2), the State Education Officer, even went so far as to suggest changing the system to one that included the equal weighting of exams and coursework in student assessment as a way of combating this. In general though this group was, unsurprisingly, supportive of the Curriculum Document and, like the administrators, tended to see it more as guidance for teaching than the teachers’ group, which seemed to view it as more directive and limiting. This stakeholder group tended to be more critical of the implementation of the Curriculum Document than of the Curriculum Document itself, especially the most senior of the group, who in contrast to both teachers and administrators blamed to some extent those above her in the Ministry of Education and
those below her for its implementation. Perhaps this was to be expected of somebody in her position.

5.2.6 Summary of Stakeholder Views and Their Relationship

The teachers’ views on creativity were sampled using a simple questionnaire, and this was followed by a series of semi-structured interviews. Examples of lesson plans and student worksheets were also examined for evidence of how these views of creativity were put into operation. The questionnaire’s primary role was to collect basic information and to sensitise the teachers to the variety of definitions of creativity in the literature. The survey questions did not reveal a common group definition of creativity: rather it revealed that the teachers were capable of multiple definitions, and, although options for analysis were limited, it suggested that they tended to view creativity as a process.

The richer interview data were broadly consistent with the data from the survey and suggested that the teachers’ group held similar views of creativity. The teachers associated creativity with the process of doing something new, different and individual. They tended to take the view that creativity was more about process, and this was linked with a very practical, LCC-type definition. Although this was a widely expressed group definition, two teachers (Teachers 3 and 7) were less focused on the pragmatic and practical problem-solving view of creativity and more aligned to the BCC-type definition of creativity. Teacher 3 also stood out as being different from her colleagues by clearly defining creativity as being about the person, an innate personal ability, rather than being about process or the resulting product. The teachers’ explicit
definitions of creativity in both the questionnaire and in the subsequent interviews and their implicit definitions of creativity apparent from their interviews are consistent for each individual and fairly consistent across the whole group. However, their lesson plans and example student worksheets were simplistic, strategic and not well aligned with their definitions of, and enthusiasm for, creativity, particularly as expressed at interview.

The teachers readily identified barriers to creativity in ESL teaching and the school in general. The most prominent and almost universally identified of these barriers was the lack of time, particularly given the large numbers of students, the limited resources and the pressure to spend time on non-teaching duties. Another major limitation was the full and rigid syllabus coupled with an exam-focussed system, which tended to pressure both students and teachers towards taking a strategic, exam-focused approach. It seems likely that this pressure for an exam-focused approach together with the rigid and prescriptive requirement that teachers all produce standard format lesson plans may explain the lack of alignment between the teachers’ definitions of creativity and the evidence of how this was put into effect in the lesson plans and the example student worksheets.

Despite recognising the barriers to creativity the teachers were not overtly critical of the curriculum, the school or the wider system, perhaps because, in general, the teachers’ largely LCC-type, process-based, practical, problem-solving ‘real-world’- linked definition of creativity was reasonably well aligned with the Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (CCTS) in the ESL curriculum.

The student stakeholder group also shared a remarkably similar definition of creativity. In common with their teachers in their initial explicit definition of
creativity they all associated creativity with something new and individual but tended to talk about creativity as a personalised process, something they or their friends did. The students generally defined creativity as an individual trait (‘person’) or as a product, and shared an association between creativity and the arts, particularly pictorial art, music and dance. This more BCC-type definition of creativity contrasted with that of their teachers, who largely shared the more pragmatic, LCC-type definition. Thus, while there was consistency within the group and consistency with the teachers’ initial definition of creativity as being individual and new, there was some difference in how the students and their teachers defined creativity. While the teachers on the whole shared a pragmatic, process-based, LCC-type definition of creativity, which was aligned with the Curriculum Document, their students expressed more of a BCC-type, person-based view. So the students tended to see creativity as being associated with creative individuals, who expressed this creativity in the arts, music and dance rather than in the more practical problem-solving valued by their teachers.

The three sets of parents interviewed were also remarkably similar in their definition of creativity. In common with both their children (students) and the teachers, the parents all associated creativity with something new and individual. Overall the parents’ views of creativity were consistent with the views of their children, who were interviewed separately. However, there were some differences: while the students defined creativity as being about the ‘person’, the parents, like the teachers, defined it more in terms of ‘process’. Also the parents, like the teachers, tended toward the more practical LCC-type definition of creativity, while their children’s definition was more of the BCC-type. The parents also valued creativity as
a potentially important differentiator that enabled individuals to ‘stand out’ and therefore to lead to increased opportunities.

The parent group appeared to believe that creativity is important at school and in fostering interest and supporting their children’s learning and development. These views are not surprising and are well aligned with the views of the teachers, who also thought creativity to be important for the children and their learning. However, in contrast to the teachers, the parents seemed to associate creativity more with co-curricular or extra-curricular activity than with academic study. They seemed to see it as an additional supporting part of their children’s education rather than as an integral part of the curriculum. Their children did not value creativity in the same way: they valued it as an ability but did not see it as a ‘life skill’, facilitating their own development or as a pathway to opportunity.

Taken together the parents and the students could be said to represent the recipients or consumers of the policy on creativity: these are the ‘target audience’. Their definitions are generally well aligned and triangulate well, although the students tend to think of creativity more as a BCC-type, person-associated trait or ability, while their parents see it more as a LCC-type process. This may reflect the relative naivety of the students, who may not yet have the experience to see the practical applications of creativity in a ‘real-life’ context and therefore tend to connect it more with exceptional people capable of exceptional things. Their parents are more focused on the pragmatic, process-orientated aspects of creativity and seem to see it as having the potential to facilitate their children’s education and development, to allow them to ‘stand out’ and therefore to present them with opportunities. Again, this definition probably reflects the concerns and aspirations of most parents for their children. The openness of teachers to complex, multiple definitions of creativity means that,
although as a group they are better aligned with the parents’ more pragmatic definition of creativity, they are able to recognise and work with the definition common to the students. As they are the ‘translators’ of the policy on creativity, this is crucial in applying the curriculum to educating the students. While their lesson plans and example worksheets reflect the fact that they work within a somewhat rigid, exam-focused system, their comments at interview show that they still strive to develop creativity in their students, although the pressures of time and resources mean that perhaps in ESL classes they focus their efforts on those with the language skills likely to benefit most with the resources available.

The administrators’ group represented the main levels of the administrative hierarchy at the school and reflected the management of the school and of the curriculum development and implementation according to the rules laid down by the Ministry of Education. They are the link between the Ministry and the teachers. As the other stakeholder groups, the administrators presented a fairly consistent definition of creativity as being different and individual. In common with both the teachers’ and the parents’ groups they considered creativity as being a practical, relevant and important activity and tended therefore towards a LCC-type definition. In terms of defining creativity as process, product or person, two adopted a process-based definition, while the other administrator viewed it as an individual trait or gift and therefore held a more person-based view of creativity.

There was good consistency and triangulation between the views of the administrators and those of the teachers in that all recognised the distinction between creativity and criticality in the curriculum. Their views were also well aligned in respect of recognising the barriers to creativity in school. The administrators agreed
with the teachers’ views that a rigid, exam-focused approach to the curriculum inhibited creativity. They also agreed that the solution was more flexible, student-centred approaches to teaching. This level of consistency and concordance was encouraging, given that together the teachers and the administrators represent the translators and implementers of the curriculum, and that at the school they set the agenda for how creativity is taught, although they are bound by the curriculum and the rules, regulations and directives of the MOE, as communicated by the policy-makers.

While, like the teachers, the administrators were not overtly critical, they tended to blame the ‘system’ and those above them in that system for problems. They also thought that there was some flexibility in the curriculum regarding creativity and criticised the teachers for their lack of will to make use of it. Perhaps this is not surprising and just reflects the common position of those at ‘middle-management’ level, who in some ways are in a position to see how the system they manage might be better implemented, although, as they avoid the day to day practicalities of its implementation themselves, they are perhaps unaware of the barriers to the same extent. Similarly, they can also look above them and see some of the problems, but feel powerless to act. Given this ‘middle-management’ position it is perhaps surprising that they are not more critical.

The policy-makers interviewed, although relatively low-ranking within the Ministry of Education structure, represented real power over the curriculum and policy development and implementation within the district of the ‘case-study’ school. As a group they expressed a consistent, common process- and practical LCC-type definition of creativity, and this was also consistent with the Curriculum Document, which they had a significant part in producing and implementing. The group seemed to recognise
the major barriers to creativity identified by both the teacher and administrator stakeholder groups, particularly the limitations of resources and time and the problems associated with a rigid, exam-focused system. The group was, unsurprisingly, supportive of the Curriculum Document and, like the administrators, tended to see it more as guidance for teaching than did the teachers’ group, which seemed to view it as more directive and limiting. This stakeholder group tended to be critical of the implementation of the Curriculum Document rather than of the Curriculum Document itself.

If the students and their parents represent the target audience for the MOE policy on creativity, then the policy-makers are the originators responsible for defining policy and together with the administrators and the teachers form an axis of delivery and implementation. It is encouraging therefore that all these stakeholder groups share a common definition of creativity to a great extent. While there is individual variation, in general the LCC-type, process-based definition of creativity implicit in the Curriculum Document is largely shared by those responsible for every stage of delivering it. There is a good overall consistency and triangulation both within and between the stakeholder groups both in terms of the definition of creativity and in recognising the issues surrounding it.

Having summarised both the explicit directly expressed and the more implicit views of creativity apparent for each of the stakeholder groups and taking into account all of the sources of information examined, in the next section I shall discuss these views in terms of the research questions.
6.0 Analysis: What Answers do the Data Suggest?

In this section data from the various stakeholder groups discussed in turn will be considered in an attempt to answer the research questions set out at the beginning of this thesis, namely:

1. How do the different stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, administrators and policy-makers) define creativity?

2. How do different conceptions of creativity impact on policy implementation?

3. What are the contextual factors which impact the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum?

The first research question explores the different definitions the stakeholders have of creativity, and this has been considered in detail on a group by group basis in the previous sections. While teachers have multiple definitions to represent creativity, other stakeholders seemed to have a restricted view and focused on certain areas when describing it. Teachers’ views may be influenced by the Curriculum Document prescribed to them as well as by their own knowledge of creativity. To make the definitions more complicated, the contextual factors and work burden lead teachers to promote creativity in their own way in order to suit their situation. On the other hand, other stakeholders are more focused in their views. The policy-makers tend to give a definition that is more ‘formal’ and frequently referred to the Curriculum Document. The students, on the other hand, focus their definitions on their interests and things that differentiate them from others. The parents also associate creativity with interests but link it to responsibility and how one can be successful if one is creative and more
outstanding than others. Although the discussion concerns only one particular word ‘creativity’, it is interesting to see how various stakeholders define it differently.

Bently (1966) attempts to clarify the relationship between creative abilities and academic achievement. Creativity Test Scores, Miller’s Analogies Scores (MAT), and achievement scores, representing Guilford’s categories of Cognition, Memory, Divergent Thinking and Evaluation, were obtained for 75 graduate students in education. The results indicated that creative test scores correlated significantly with divergent thinking and evaluative abilities; no correlation was found between creativity and cognitive and memory scores. MAT scores correlated with all mental operation categories, although the relationship was less for divergent thinking and evaluative categories. No differences were found between MAT scores and creative scores in predicting academic achievement. Since most academic examinations favour memory and cognitive abilities, it was concluded that the highly creative student is often penalized unduly. However, in Kunsel (2004) the results of the study indicated that the abilities measured by the MAT are shared with other cognitive ability instruments and that these abilities are generalisable and valid predictors of academic and vocational criteria, as well as evaluations of career potential and creativity. These findings contradict the notion that intelligence at work is wholly different from intelligence at school, extending the voluminous literature that supports the broad importance of general cognitive ability.
6.1 The Different Words and Phrases used to define Creativity

Stakeholder 1 - Teachers

It was found that teachers relate to the above notion in many different ways and using different words. This can be seen in some of their responses (refer to Appendix C). Out of nine teachers, four used the word “different” to define creativity. Teacher 3, Teacher 4 and Teacher 9 shared similar views. However, only Teacher 3 used the phrase “appreciated by many”.

“Creativity is the ability of someone to come up with something that is different, unique, and can be appreciated by many.” (T3, line 5-6)

“They can use their knowledge to come up with something new, something different from others.” (T4, line 5-6)

“Creative is...new, innovative, inventions, different.” (T9, line 5)

On the other hand, three teachers seemed to have an understanding of creativity as something which had elements that can attract attention. In the interview three teachers mentioned that something creative should attract the attention of students/others. The word “attract” is used by Teacher 1, Teacher 2 and Teacher 7. The definitions given by the teachers were the following:

“Creativity is something that can attract more students, based on the teacher’s ability that is not done before.” (T1, line 5-8)
“Creativity means creative ideas in order to get the students’ interest. You are creative when you can come out with ideas in order to attract students’ interest.” (T2, line 10-11)

“It is hands on...for example arts and music to attract attention. In language, it’s how to use language to create something innovative.” (T7, line 10-11)

Other words used were “express feelings” and “imagination”. Only Teacher 6 used the phrase “express feelings”, while Teacher 5 used “own ideas” and “imagination”.

“Creativity...I define it as the ability of the students to express their feelings, views in their own way. It could be in writing, arts or any form of expression.” (T6, line 6-7)

“Creativity is the ability to use own ideas and imagination.” (T5, line 6)

The word “new” also appears several times. Teacher 1, Teacher 4 and Teacher 9 used the word “new” to describe creativity. However, they also used other words to support their views. Other words that appear in teachers’ definitions of creativity were “talent”, “unique”, “innovative”, “inventions” and “enjoy”. Teacher 8 used the word “enjoy”, which is not mentioned by other teachers.

“To be creative is to create activities that attract students...make them enjoy.” (T8, line 6)

Interestingly, Teacher 7 used the word “survivor” when describing a creative teacher. The word “survivor” implies that she viewed creativity as a fundamental skill that every teacher should possess. She also used the words “teach
“A creative teacher is a survivor. They can survive with whatever means to teach and attract students to learn.” (T7, 59-60)

Teacher 7 also highlighted that, considering the limitation of facilities and resources, teachers were able to make use of what they had in order to teach in the best way possible. Limitations can be a good thing to motivate creativity. Incidentally, teachers need to find strategies to generate ideas. The ability to generate new ideas is an essential work-skill today. Teachers can acquire this skill by consciously practising techniques that force their minds to forge new connections, break old thought patterns and consider new perspectives. Along with practising these techniques, teachers need to adopt enabling strategies too. These enabling strategies help in creating a positive atmosphere that boosts creativity.

**Stakeholder 2 – Students**

Most students used the word “different” to define creativity. Five students (S1, S2, S4, S5, S9) used the word “different” when asked the question “What is creativity to you?” However Student 5 added the word “nice” in her definition of creativity. Two other students (S3, S6) used the phrases “own ideas” and “own idea” respectively. Despite not using “own idea”, Student 8 used “own way” and “explore more” in her definition. Interestingly, only Student 7 related creativity to craft work.

The words used by students were also analysed using the lens of the Fisher and William (2004) definition of creativity. They claim that creativity can be referred
to in the sense of three main subjects: person, process and product. The various words used can be seen in Table 6:

Table 6

*Words Used by Students to Answer: “What is Creativity to You?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Words/phrases used</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>do things your way</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>something different</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>different ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>own ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>something different</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>different and nice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>own idea</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>craft work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>explore more</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>own way</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no rules</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>do something different</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that most students refer creativity to ‘process’ and ‘product’ in their definitions compared to ‘person’. Their definitions are focused on things they can see literally and things they do. It may be difficult for students at their stage to see creativity as a personal trait or characteristic, as this involves a quite complex judgement of the quality of a person.
Stakeholder 3 - Parents

When asked about creativity, parents also often used the words “different” and “interest” when describing it. A Malay parent relates creativity to freedom:

“Creativity .... the freedom to do things you like in your own way, which is different from others” (MPf, line 7)

According to a Chinese parent, being creative is when one is able to stand out, do something one likes and has talent, and doing it better than others (CP, line 8-9). Later, she used the word “different” in her explanation:

“Creative is when you do something different. You excel more than others. That’s what I always remind my daughter. You want to do something; you do it to your best. You must be extra than others so that people will recognise you. If not, you’re just the same and nobody notice you.”(CPm, line 10-12)

Most parents associated creativity with talent and interest. They maintained that creativity also comes naturally and cannot be forced. A father claimed:

“Creativity is something you cannot force. It has to be of your interest. Like my children, I will support whatever they are interested in so that they have space to show their talent. Of course as long as it is something positive and it doesn’t affect their studies. They need to manage their time wisely.” (IPf, line 5-8)

Stakeholder 4 – Administrators
Unlike teachers, parents and students who favoured the word “different”, none of the administrators used “different” to define creativity. The words the administrators used varied from each other. Administrator 1 employed words like “abnormal”, “well-liked” and “innovative” in her definition. Administrator 2 used “innovate”, “new” and “original”, while Administrator 3 used words/phrases like “solve problem”, “own way”, “useful”, “meaningful” and “positive”. Parents too used the word “positive” when explaining what they expected their children to do (refer to Chapter 4, page 22). Words like “innovate”, “new” and “own way” were also employed earlier by teachers, students and parents.

**Stakeholder 5 – Policy-Makers**

Unlike the four stakeholders mentioned earlier, the policy-makers used more words to describe creativity. This may reflect their uncertainty about what creativity actually means, or it could also reflect their expectation of how creativity is implemented in the curriculum. Words used by the policy-makers can be seen in the following Table 7:

**Table 7**

*Words Used by the Policy-makers to Answer: “What is Creativity to You?”*
Words such as *different*, *innovate* and *own ideas* have also been mentioned as having been used by other stakeholders earlier in the discussion.

**Summary**

The various stakeholders examined used a variety of terms to describe creativity. The most frequent word used by all the stakeholders was “different”. It seemed that for most stakeholders in order to be creative one needs to be different or to do something differently from others. This difference makes one stand out from among others and therefore makes one attract others’ attention to what one is doing. This fairly consistent definition of creativity as being different and individual was not only present in their direct answers to questions about creativity but also more broadly and implicitly in their conversations. Most stakeholder groups seem to consider creativity as being a practical, relevant and important activity, and therefore they tended towards an LCC-type definition. Perhaps the exception to this was the students’ group who, perhaps naively, see creativity more as something which is less practical and more BCC-type. In terms of defining creativity as process, product or person,
most stakeholder groups seemed to see creativity as being process-or person-based. However, more person-based views of creativity were particularly expressed by the students, perhaps in connection with their tendency for a more BCC-type definition.

### 6.2 The Different Conceptions of Activities related to Creativity

The various stakeholder groups gave multiple examples of activities that they think represent creativity. I shall briefly consider these in turn.

**Stakeholder 1 - Teachers**

Teacher 1 claimed that she did simulation in her lessons. In doing simulation her students had a great time and enjoyed the lesson because they were doing something different from what they usually do in class.

“I do elections. We do simulation in class. Students have great time giving speech. For literature I do drama. They act based on their talent.” (T1, line 12-13)

She also relates creativity to the teachers’ willingness to think and spend time to create interesting activities for their lessons (T1, line 41-44). When asked what else
she could do to promote creativity, she claimed that she was not ready, and nor were her students.

R: “Besides drama, what else do you think you can do to promote creativity?”

T1: “I’m not ready, the students are not ready.”

R: “Why?”

T1: “When they read they have to think beyond their mind…choosing wrong or right. Students can relate to real situation. But they can’t.” (T1, line 54-55)

Teacher 2 thought that the school can play its role in promoting creativity to students and teachers in order to develop a thinking society by:

“conducting a course or a competition for the students to develop their creativity. Parents can give their opinions of how to make their children more creative during open day when they come to school to collect their children’s report cards” (T2, line 48-51).

When asked what activities can be done to promote creativity in her English lesson, she added:

T2: “Role play, story-telling...”

R: “How do you think these activities can promote creativity, for example story telling?”

T2: “They can create their own costume to suit the story, or maybe they can adapt story like the snow white based on Malaysian culture.” (T2, line 56-57)
In addition, she also does other activities with her Form 4 students which she thinks are creative.

“I do with my Form 4 students. For example I asked them to write a letter to any of their friends in class...for example you are so kind...write something positive to a friend. So everybody got so excited to see what they get.” (T2, line58-60)

Teacher 3 believed that group work can enhance creativity.

“Give them more on group work so that they have opportunity to be creative. They get opinions from other, and then they agree, disagree. Agree and disagree is already part of creativity.” (T3, line 72-74)

However, she found problems in group work where there were students who acted as ‘sleeping partners’. They waited for others to fulfil the task given and refused to do oral activities. On the other hand, Teacher 6 believed that one has to read a lot in order to be creative. From reading, creativity will emerge in their writing. She claimed that she can identify creative students on the basis of the essays written by them.

“Ok, let’s say in writing they must have a lot of imagery thing, for that they must read a lot. Otherwise they can’t be creative. We can ask them start with a small paragraph, make them expand that. For example in one of my classes I asked the students to describe a picture of a house. Most of the students describe it as big, this and that...but there was one student who described it as a haunted house. The description was different. This is creativity.” (T6, line 23-28)

Sadoski (1995) claimed that the mental imagery that we experience while reading, either spontaneously or induced by instruction is now known to have powerful effects on comprehension, memory, and appreciation of text. This may seem self-evident today, but it was not long ago that purely language-based theories of cognition and memory prevailed. Most often the mental picture will draw on a
student’s past experiences, connecting the content of the reading to the reader's prior knowledge.

According to Teacher 6, among the activities done in her lessons are simulation and role-play. When the students role-play they put themselves into other people’s situations and try to understand something different. They learn new things and add to their knowledge, something which later could be used when needed. She added that creativity actually happens naturally. She claims that we cannot force people to be creative, because she believes that not everybody is creative. She thinks that the school can play its role to educate students to be more open in dealing with any situations they face. Then, when students go back into adult society, they will have open minds with positive attitudes.

Teacher 9 gave example of her students doing a rocket project (T9, line 24-25). According to her, the students invented their own rockets for their science project, and she saw that as being particularly creative. When asked about creative teachers, she viewed them as teachers with creative ideas. She claimed that a creative teacher can manipulate things to make the lesson interesting, “For instance, just bring a coin to the class and ask about the coin. Ask them questions like who created the coin...from there generate ideas by asking more questions.” (T9, line 40-42). Although teachers faced many obstacles in promoting creativity, she believed that it depends on the teacher to be positive and move on with what they have. As she said, “creativity can be developed in all components and areas in the curriculum.” She added that making reading an active rather than passive process stimulates the mental interplay of new ideas and past experiences. It serves as a springboard for memory recall and retention. She shared her experience:
“Throughout the reading process, stop and ask students to visualize the specific details just read. Have students share their sensory impressions with each other. If necessary, prompt student responses with specific questions like "What do you hear?" and "What do you see?"” (T9, line 28-30)

Teacher 5 also gave her opinion. In her view, teachers should challenge students to think, only then can the teacher herself be creative.

“I think a creative teacher is one who challenges the students through his questions and tasks. You know, through higher order questions which need the students to think. For example, problem solving activities.” (T5, line 72-74)

Stakeholder 2 – Students

Students also thought that they were being creative when doing certain things. Student 6 was of the opinion that she was creative when she tied scarves (most Malay women and girls use scarves to cover their hair). This particular student claimed that every time she tied her scarf she would think of a different way to do it, and that made her a creative person.

R: “Is there anything you do that you think is creative?”

S6: “Emm…when I tie my scarf.”

R: “How?”

S6: “I can do different fashion (styles)...” (S6, line 16-19)

In Malay culture creativity is expressed through art products, as in dancing, weaving, carving, martial arts and many others. Malay people express their creativity and aesthetic thoughts in the form of producing materials and other creations of
aesthetic or other significance. This art is created by and collectively owned by Malay people; therefore the Malay arts represent the Malay culture. Malay art could be considered as the creation of the Malay people in response to an understanding, interpreting and answering the variety of problems and contextual factors they face. Traditionally then creativity is more significantly seen as a BCC-type activity with the connected expression of this in a creative ‘product’. This is perhaps at odds with the more LCC-type and process-related creativity promoted by the curriculum and expressed by the stakeholder groups in this investigation.

Another student felt that he was creative when doing craft work. He took an elective subject named *Kemahiran Hidup (Life Skills)* in school. Whenever doing project work with his friends he always achieved good grades, and he claimed that the teacher praised them because they were creative.

*R: “Is there anything you do that you think is creative?”*

*S2:* “Yes, when I do project work in *Kemahiran Hidup (Life Skills)* with my friends.”

*R: “Who told you that you are creative?”*

*S2:* “The teacher praised us. We get good grades.” (S2, line 23-26)

In this example the craft work could be considered as both BCC-type creativity and, given the ‘life skills’ context of the elective, it could also be practical LCC-type creativity. Interestingly, the student also associates it with ‘worth’ by having his work rewarded with good grades. It was not just that he thought the activity was creative: the teacher concurred and praised him for it.
Stakeholder 3 – Parents

Parents’ interviews also explored their different conceptions of activities related to creativity. Interestingly enough, many parents believe that taking art-related classes and working on creative art projects is one of the best ways to learn how to think creatively. When they were asked whether anything that their children do is creative, these are an illustrative selection of their answers:

_Father:_ “She likes fashion. So whenever she dressed up, she has style of her own. I think that’s part of creativity because she creates her own style.” (MPf, line 11-12)

_Mother:_ “She has full of ideas. I think she is alert of the surrounding and she absorbs what she observes and from there she comes out with her own idea.” (MPm, line 13-14)

Here the mother in a Malay family went on to give examples of how her daughter designed and produced her own ‘baju kurung’ (a traditional Malay dress) by combining the old traditional fashion with modern additions to make it more contemporary and attractive. She also pointed out that in the process her daughter sketched out her ideas and plans. Here the design, the drawing and the ideas all seemed to be considered creative by the parents. The example given by the father in a Chinese family was also quite traditional.

_Father:_ “Yes, she is. She plays piano very well and now started composing her own songs. She’s very good, very creative. She is the type that knows what she wants. You cannot say no.” (CPf, line 16-18)
He later added:

“Yes, we let them do what she likes during her free time. Like I said it’s always her music. Sometimes we travel together.” (CPf, line 38-39)

The father’s examples were centred around music, which he clearly saw as being creative and praiseworthy or different from the norm. The mother added a more practical example and talked about how both parents thought that travelling broadens their children’s knowledge. She believed that, when they travelled as a family for holidays, their children learnt a lot from understanding other people’s culture and became more open. This is quite a practical and less BCC-type example of creativity. The parents in the Indian family interviewed also gave very traditional BCC-type examples of the creative activity that their daughter did.

*Father: “She likes to dance. We send her for traditional Indian dance.”*  
(IPf, line 14)

*Mother: “Yes, she can dance very beautifully. You just play the music, she will dance. She creates her own steps.”* (IPfm, line 15-16)

Once again this example shows how creativity is associated with doing something new, different and original, and the mother points out the quality of the activity. The father added that, even if their daughter wanted to be a professional dancer, she had to study first. This was a very pragmatic statement that attempted to separate the creative activity, of good quality and valued though it seemed to be, from the need to study. He later claimed that in other parts of the world people value talent and creativity more, but that in his view in Malaysia one had to be practical and take study as a priority. In this example the parents gave a very BCC-type example of
creative activity, which they clearly valued, but then went on to separate it explicitly from the pragmatic day to day realities as they saw them.

Parents were also asked whether they thought creativity should be promoted in school. The Indian parents expressed their views that creativity is important and linked it both with the students and their learning and with the teaching:

“*Yes, they have co-curricular activities. I guess that’s when the kids’ talent are being explored.*” (IPf, line 27-28)

“I think here the teacher should be creative. She should be able to attract the students to learn what she is teaching.” (IPm, line 31-32)

The father added that not only students must be creative. He claimed that the teachers’ creativity is more important in order to handle all sorts of students. When asked whether they encourage creativity at home, they expanded their views. These showed some level of agreement with their previously expressed support for creativity being important in that they were readily able to produce examples of creativity in home life:

“*Like [name], she dances a lot. The boys are not interested, but they do other things like playing chess.*” (IPm, line 41-42)

“Yes, the youngest likes puzzles. I think that’s creative too, you do a lot of thinking.” (IPf, line 43)

However, they admitted that they do not consider themselves creative in that they are not into the arts, but they did claim some creativity in dealing with everyday family issues, such as family finances. Interestingly, their examples of their children’s creativity tended to be artistic and BCC-type, while the only examples they could think of relating to themselves were very pragmatic and LCC-type.
The Malay parents also believed that creativity should be promoted in school, although they thought this should be achieved through the co-curricular activities, such as through societies and voluntary groups wearing uniforms such as the scouts. The mother gave her views:

“My daughter is in the ‘kelab rakan sebaya’ [peer club] where her role is to help others of the same age solve their teenage problems. They share views and come to good solutions. Most of these teenagers, they are not willing to share things with parents and teachers, but they do with friends.” (MPm, line 26-29)

The father added that he approves whatever the children like to do as long as it is something positive. It does not have to be academic as long as it is something that they like to do, and they can get the best out of it. He claimed that in this way by being creative they can be different from others, and that this will help them survive in the ‘real world’. When asked whether he and his wife are creative, he said that they did not really think about creativity and claimed that they were not into the arts and that they therefore assumed that they were not very creative. Again this is perhaps a contradictory position, on the one hand, equating creativity with a BCC-type definition and artistic endeavour, and on the other, seeing it as a very practical, LCC-type activity with a ‘real world’ survival value.

Stakeholder 4 – Administrators

The administrators also gave their views, supporting the idea that activities should be carried out in school to promote creativity. When asked whether it is possible to promote creativity in the exam-based culture, an administrator said:
“Yes, it can be done. For example by preparing creative questions to stimulate the students’ mind and brain.” (A1, line 26-27)

She added:

“This can be done through the school activities...Allow more competitions on certain subjects and prepare prizes to motivate students and teachers. By doing this, we will get better involvement of students. Of course this would need financial help from the school.” (A1, line 34-36)

She discussed a science project as a good example of the type of challenging activity that can promote creativity. According to her the students should be given freedom to choose their own topics which interest them and learn how to explore things themselves. She urged teachers not to spoon-feed their students and reminded them that the teachers’ role was just to facilitate the students’ learning by sharing their views and encouraging them to proceed with their work. Here creativity in the classroom is being seen as connected to a very student-centred approach to teaching and learning by a senior school administrator, a school principal. This is perhaps somewhat at odds with the very strategic, exam-focused and content-driven approach encouraged by the system.

The administrators were also asked whether they actually had anything in mind in order to promote creativity in school when they were planning the yearly school programmes. One claimed in discussion that creativity could be enhanced through aspects of teaching and learning and suggested some activities that she thought illustrated her point:

“Through their folios and assignments...you can see from there. Those who are not creative will just copy notes from the information they get...”
from the internet. But the creative ones will make the reading interesting. They know what to take, how to expand, at the same time adding their own ideas.” (A2, line 50-53)

She clearly believed that the school played a vital role in encouraging creativity, and this was apparent throughout her interview.

Administrator 3, the Head of Languages, also gave her views and suggested that creativity could be promoted in the ESL classroom by having more project work and group activities such as role-play (A3, line 19-25). She believed that teachers should not be tied to the syllabus and text-books but should be more flexible in the way they conducted lessons and suggested they should, for example, carry out outdoor activities to tap students’ creativity (A3, line 49-50). Once again this relatively senior administrator (educator) in the school, the Head of Languages and an experienced teacher, suggested a very student-centred approach to teaching and learning as a way of encouraging creativity.

Stakeholder 5 – Policy-Makers

As with the administrator stakeholder group, policy-makers affirmed the view that creativity in the curriculum can be encouraged by focusing on inter-class activity such as drama competitions, debates and mural painting (for example: PM2. Line 36-38). She believed that schools were the place where students were exposed to many different cultures, languages and ways of thinking. This exposure, if channelled in the correct manner, would help students to develop and sustain their creativity (PM2, line 48-50). She added:
“Activities such as role-play based on the literature component encourage creativity. It also provides an interesting diversion to the ‘chalk and talk’ method. Public speaking also encourages creativity.” (PM2, line 44-46)

“We provide enough computers so that teachers and students can be creative in the teaching and learning process. In fact the ministry allocate funding for innovation programmes to encourage innovation among teachers and students.” (PM2, line 65-67)

Policy-maker 3 agreed that student-centred activities such as discussions, problem-solving, language games, group activities and field work could promote creativity (for example, PM3, line 36-37), while the most senior policy-maker interviewed, the Curriculum Division Officer (PM1), asserted that the Ministry was in the process of revamping the present curriculum and was likely to propose a new one which focused more on creative teaching and teaching for creativity. The rationale behind this is to help ensure that teachers are creative in preparing lessons and that opportunities are given to the students. This is well aligned not only with the stakeholder groups’ views that creativity should be more activity-based and student-centred but also with her claim in interview that at the moment there were not many creative teachers (for example PM3, line 41-44). She is somewhat critical of the teachers and seems to be ‘blaming’ them for not being creative; she is suggesting curriculum change and a direction to teachers to improve this. The question seems to be whether this will help, given that the stakeholder groups involved with curriculum design and delivery (policy-makers, administrators and teachers) all seem to agree that the problem is more to do with the rigid, exam-focused curriculum and that creativity is only likely to ‘improve’, if a more student-centred and activity-focused approach is encouraged.
Summary

Most stakeholders seemed to take the view that creativity can be promoted through activities that can challenge one’s mind. Teachers, administrators and policy-makers believed that group work such as role-play and group discussion can tap students’ creativity. Thus these groups, who represent the policy-makers, interpreters and deliverers, seem to agree that a more interactive, student-centred approach is needed to counter the somewhat rigid, exam-focused approach and to promote creativity. On the other hand, the students viewed creativity more individually and as arising from personal interests and accordingly thought that it could be enhanced by doing things which they like and by being outstanding or different from others when engaged in these things. Parents expressed similar views to their children when they described activities like piano-playing and designing clothes as creative. It can be clearly seen that parents and students, who in this case-study represent the policy ‘consumers’ or ‘recipients,’ associated creativity more with individualistic, BCC-type activities like the arts, than the stakeholders who form and deliver the policy who focused more on practical, LCC-type activities.

In answer to the first research question:

How do the different stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, administrators and policy-makers) define creativity?

My data show multiple definitions of creativity with a reasonable overlap of common definitions across all stakeholder groups. Having said that, different
stakeholder groups have different focuses in defining creativity. While the teachers have multiple definitions of creativity, the policy-makers and the administrators focused more on the teaching and learning process in promoting creativity and believed that the teachers themselves needed to be creative in order to produce creative students. These stakeholder groups (policy-makers, administrators and teachers) represent the portion of the educational ‘system’ that defines and delivers policy, and there is reasonable coherence and consistency in their seeing creativity as a pragmatic, LCC-type activity, being aware of the limitations of the very rigid and exam-focused system when it comes to delivering the creativity that they all agree is valuable.

The parents and students, who are the ‘consumers’ or ‘recipients’ of the policy on creativity, are more focused on creativity as a BCC-type activity and being more about how one uses one’s individual skills and abilities to stand out from the crowd. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these two stakeholder groups’ views are very similar. Despite having a different focus of definition and emphasis these groups value creativity and want it as part of a general education, although perhaps they see it more as an extracurricular activity. It is perhaps owing to their definition of creativity being such as it is that it seems harder to fit ‘creative activity’ into a school curriculum.

Although the stakeholders have different focuses in defining creativity, they are all aware of what creativity is and its importance. They value creativity, and there is a sufficient overlap and flexibility in their definition of it for them to accept the situation as it is.
6.3 How do Different Conceptions of Creativity impact on Policy Implementation?

The analysis of the findings reveals four themes. They are:

(i) the teachers’ uncertainties about the definition of creativity or the lack of a clear common definition;

(ii) the difficulties which teachers face in promoting creativity in an exam-based system;

(iii) the complications of teaching creativity in a complex context; and

(iv) the need for policy-makers to understand the teachers’ situation when formulating policies on creativity.

Although each theme is presented in turn individually, the themes are not mutually exclusive. There is a considerable overlap and interrelationship between these themes and how they impact or may impact on policy implementation, only increasing the complexity of promoting creativity in the ESL curriculum.

(i) Uncertainties regarding the definition

Views on creativity differ from one teacher to another, although they all seemed capable of holding and expressing multiple definitions. They discuss the same word ‘creativity’, but describe it with different phrases and examples. While there was variation between teachers, overall the group expressed relatively similar views. As a group they associated creativity with the process of doing something new, different and individual. They tended to take the view that creativity was more about process, and this was linked with a very practical, LCC-type definition of creativity. Although
this was a widely shared group definition of creativity, it was not uniform. There seem to be two types of teacher, one which treats creativity as a special gift and another type which believes that, in order to be creative, one has to possess a certain level of intelligence. This is in line with the views of some researchers who believe that creativity is the outcome of the same cognitive processes as intelligence and is only apprehended as creativity in the light of its consequences, i.e. when the outcome of a cognitive process happens to produce something novel, a view which Perkins (1988) has termed the "nothing special" hypothesis.

The first group believes both good and weak students can be creative, as stated by Teacher 3, for example:

“Everyone is gifted. It’s in them but it’s just that the opportunity maybe is not right. There’s no one to sharpen them. There is no awakening. There’s no one to awaken them and say you have this in you. So again it goes back to the education system itself. Many students do not realize that they have certain ability in them you know so if they were given the right opportunity to channel to the right way, maybe they will discover that they have talent and creativity. Now it has been left undiscovered in them.” (T3, line19-24)

Teacher 3 expressed her frustration that many students do not realise that they have a certain ability in them that can enhance their creativity. She blamed the education system for not offering students the opportunity to discover their talents. Indirectly she is suggesting that the school administrators and the teachers need to fulfil their roles in tapping students’ creativity. Having said that everyone is gifted, in addition Teacher 3 believed that a creative person sees opportunities and knows how
to exploit them. Those who are not creative may not take an opportunity because they do not recognise it.

She further claimed:

“A creative person, with the little opportunity that they have they can do a lot of things. They can come out with so many things. Another person who is not creative given with the same opportunity will not come out with anything.” (T3, line 30-32)

Interestingly, Teacher 9 had a different view. In her opinion weak students are more creative. She said:

“Those students who are weak rely on their creativity to survive in school. For example they have to come out with all sorts of reasons when they don’t want to do work. The good students not much. They may be more critical though.” (T9, line 16-18)

Teacher 9 viewed creativity as a “survival technique”, which is essential for effective problem-solving throughout life. She said further that one needs constantly to think ‘out of the box’ to survive, instancing how weak students give various reasons and develop creative strategies for escaping from doing school work. In her view the good students are not so creative, but they are perhaps more critical. Another teacher, Teacher 4, has a different opinion regarding this issue. She averred that one has to be critical before becoming creative:

“You have to be critical first so that you can contribute ideas, then you can be creative. If they are not critical, they are looking at things from one perspective. You cannot be creative and cannot overcome certain problems. Even we teachers also we are not that creative.” (T4, line 31-33)
Teacher 4 claimed that while academically ‘weak’ students can be creative in the arts, being ‘weak’ in English language limited the students’ ability to express themselves and therefore diminished their creativity in this context. She said:

“In arts yes, but in terms of language...their proficiency is very low. When we do oral exams, half of them cannot even get 50% out of 100%. The excellent ones are very few. They cannot express themselves.” (T4, line 48-50)

She further expressed her view:

“I think kids nowadays they don’t know how to manage their time. If they can manage their time well, I think they can be more creative. But they are more to entertainment nowadays you see. Everything must come easy they cannot work hard a bit you know.” (T4, line 93-95)

Teacher 5 agreed with Teacher 4’s opinion that academically or linguistically ‘weak’ students have difficulty in communication as they have very limited English language. Therefore she focused her lessons on grammar rather than on carrying out interactive activities to boost her students’ creativity. She explained:

“With good classes yes. The weak ones...they have limited language to communicate, so it is quite difficult to do interactive activities. Normally for them I focus on grammar.” (T5, line 48-49)

This was also because, in her view, the good students like to talk and have more freedom. In contrast the weak students prefer to listen and take notes. Furthermore, she said the weak students come to school only because they want to meet their friends. She described this in her interview:
“The good ones they like. They like to talk and have more freedom.”
(T5, line 48)

“The weak students prefer to listen. Sometimes to take notes also they are lazy. They come to school just to meet friends.” (T5, line 52-55)

Another teacher also agreed that having limited language acts as a barrier to being creative, at least in the ESL context. However, she believed that creativity can be nurtured and that the responsibility for this lies in the teacher’s hands:

R: “Do you think creativity can be nurtured?”

T6: “Yes, it’s the teachers’ responsibility to promote creativity.”

R: “How about the weak classes?”

T6: “They might have creativity but the language is the barrier. They don’t have the words to express themselves. Everyone has creativity, it’s just that for English they don’t have the basic words to express themselves."

R: “What are the activities that you think you can do with the weak students to promote their creativity?”

T6: “They don’t have the language, so it’s difficult.” (T6, line 28-36)

This variation in the precise definition of creativity by the teachers is associated with how they link creativity to academic English language ability and what this means in terms of how they can teach or promote creativity in the ESL class within the time and resources available. In many ways these teachers did not necessarily believe that creativity was dependent on academic intelligence, rather that in the context of their ESL classes linguistic ability was often a limiting factor on how creativity could be expressed in that context.
Besides the uncertainties and variations of definition, the interview data also allude to the fact that the teachers felt that they did not receive enough support to help them understand the concept of creativity within the context of the ESL curriculum. Teacher 4 claimed that she never saw any support from the Ministry of Education concerning creativity:

*R: “Do you see any support from the ministry in terms of creativity?”*

*T4: “In terms of creativity...never come across. Not sure.”* (T4, line 79-80)

Another teacher added:

*R: “How about the support from the ministry?”*

*T3: “It is always budget. When you go to ketua panti [head of the subject taught in school] also ‘ohh my budget is so limited. Even to photocopy.’”* (T3, line 162-164)

The teachers complained that they were not given enough courses to update their knowledge. The reason given by the administrators was the tight budget. The allocation for staff development was very limited, as most of the budget went to yearly events such as the school sports day and the co-curricular day. The large number of teachers also prevented the school from fully meeting all the teachers’ needs. Communication may suffer because of overcrowding and the resource constraints facing the majority of Malaysian schools.

Besides that, the lack of explanation of what the Ministry actually meant by the word ‘creativity’ in the syllabus also resulted in some confusion among teachers and school administrators. Their personal definitions of creativity were flexible and reasonably well aligned, but there still seemed to be a need for some reassurance and
guidance to explain exactly what was expected in terms of creativity. While the data show there was a reasonable alignment in the definition of creativity between teachers, administrators and policy-makers, this was not necessarily explicit to these groups. Perhaps if there were more explanation of creativity in the context of the curriculum and Ministry policy and expectation through courses and workshops, an explicit and consensual definition of creativity might emerge, and the situation might not be so complicated. One teacher described her experience:

“I have been teaching for more than 10 years. We survive on our own. Most of the time we use our money even to photocopy materials for students. The school always gives the same reason...it’s always budget. Very rarely we do get the chance to go for courses, only a few teachers can go (attend courses on creativity organised by the Ministry). Those who go are supposed to come back and share with us, but it never happens. We don’t have enough time for that.” (T3, line 75-78)

Most teachers agreed that the curriculum specification document has given them enough guidance in understanding what creativity is. However, despite saying that the guidance is enough, teachers make their own interpretation of what creativity is and how to promote it in the classroom context, and this may be different from one teacher to another. They assume that they know what creativity is, but the data show that there is at least the potential for multiple and overlapping definitions. However, some admitted that they do not really pay attention to the meaning of the term ‘creativity’ in the context of the curriculum.

R: “Do you think the curriculum specification helps the teachers in understanding what is creativity? Or will there be any confusion because critical and creative is mentioned together as CCTS?”
T6: “Teachers will know. Teachers should know. But sometimes we overlook that. We don’t really pay much attention to the term. Anyway, teacher will definitely understand.” (T6, line 45-49)

In fact Teacher 2 suggested that some teachers do not even refer to the syllabus. This was possibly simply due to a lack of time and as a consequence of the complacency that results from having taught for a long period. As she said:

“I think enough, but some of the teachers do not refer to the syllabus. They don’t have enough time to look at the syllabus. Some have years of experience in teaching, so they feel that they are good enough.” (T2, line 39-41)

Generally, in her view, the syllabus gave enough guidance to the teachers as the document gave examples and suggestions to guide the teacher.

“I think yes because the suggested activities are given. So, it depends on the teacher to vary them.” (T2, line 43-44)

Undoubtedly, from the teachers’ perspective the Curriculum Document failed to guide teachers on what ‘creativity’ meant in the ESL curriculum, although from the policy-makers’ point of view, while they recognised that there were limitations in resources and training, there was sufficient guidance. Teachers, students and school administrators made their own assumptions regarding the definition of creativity. In fact there was a flexible and reasonably well aligned definition of creativity: the problem was that this was not made explicit to all concerned, and exactly how creativity was expected to be defined and treated within the specific ESL teaching
context was not made clear, which left room for differences and a lack of certainty. Given the lack of resources and the constricting exam focus, this may have contributed to a failure of implementation. The understanding of the term ‘creative’ in the syllabus by the teachers and the students and what it means in a general sense did not necessarily result in creativity being promoted in the classroom. This was evidenced by the relative lack of creative activity evident in the teachers’ lesson plans and in the students’ worksheets. Although both groups claimed to understand the meaning of creativity, this somehow did not routinely translate into implementation in the form of teaching and learning activities designed to promote creativity in their lessons.

(ii) Difficulties in dealing with the education system

Do schools today kill creativity and create conformity? In Malaysia, research in the area of creativity, mainly undertaken by postgraduate candidates from the University of Malaya since the 1980s, have shown us that our secondary and tertiary students not only have creative potential, but also that their creative abilities and skills can be enhanced through empirically tested creativity training programmes. However, it seems strange that our authorities have not ventured to take advantage of creativity training, so that our students can be properly trained in creative thinking skills before they leave school (Joseph, 2012). Many attribute this to the restrictive nature of a rigid, exam-focused system. Teacher 3 gave her opinion:
“Again it falls to the system...the system is not right. It looks in general whereby the students are so different. If you compare the weak and the good ones, the range is so huge, when you compare the good class and the last class. There’s so much difference. Their ability and all that, but you actually teach them the same thing. The syllabus is the same. It should be different.” (T3, 51-55)

Many teachers opine that the education system is the main obstacle curbing creativity in Malaysian schools. The system seems to be too exam-orientated, so that scores and grades are of the utmost importance. They see the school curriculum as being standardized in the interests of conformity and control and rarely as being designed to address the diverse talents and learning styles of the students or to promote those harder to examine, but no less desirable, attributes such as creativity. This was not unnoticed by the teachers in this study, for example, Teacher 4, who declared:

“It’s too exam oriented. The ministry wants the school to produce good results. So, they are the one who curb creativity. There’s no room for the students to be creative and express themselves.” (T4, line 58-60)

It is often argued that there is no context for creativity, and creativity would often be suppressed as an undesirable deviation rather than encouraged as unique and noteworthy. Because the education system is such as it is, the opportunity to be creative is also limited. A teacher communicated her views on this matter:

“They don’t get enough opportunity, because the system is more of an exam-based curriculum. It does not allow them to be creative. It’s only like 20 minutes for you to give them a task to make them creative. How long can you give a task, that’s it. So, it’s not enough. Their ability is actually more than that. There’s no opportunity, maybe outside the
timetable if we channel their talent based on their interest then they can be creative. The school system does not provide that.” (T3, line 112-116)

At the same time she claimed that it was almost impossible to promote creativity among weak students. She observed that there was a lack of opportunity and space for creativity to flourish in the Malaysian education system, because there was a limit that a teacher could do given the time and space available and the pressure to conform to an exam-driven system.

“Yes, but the school abides by the system, it still follows the system. Because at the end the examination is what you are looking at. So, in order to prepare students for the examination, you have to follow the education system.” (T3, line 57-59)

She gave the literature component in the English Language syllabus as an example.

“It’s a good way for students to express themselves, especially for the good class. You can introduce the genre, then do lots of activities that can be related to their personal life and all that. But the same short story you have to introduce to another class, they cannot relate anything because it is too much for them. For example ‘Looking for the Rain God’, it’s like too high for them to relate to their own personal thing so it does not happen. The most you can do is to introduce the story and get feedback from them. They can’t even answer one good sentence in English, it’s hard for them to give their personal opinion and relate to their personal experiences.” (T3, line 60-66)

Another teacher, Teacher 5, agreed with her concerning this matter. She clearly articulated the view that the exam-based system is to be blamed for limiting creativity in the ESL classroom:
“We are too exam oriented. If our children do not get good results, we are outdated. Creativity can be promoted but it depends on the teacher and what kind of students they get. If you get good students there are lots of stuff you can do.” (T5, line 78-80)

Therefore there are teachers who are forced to accept the principle of exam-focused teaching early in their careers, and, having become used to this restrictive approach, they persist in preserving the traditional teaching culture of “chalk-and-talk” or “spoon-feeding” in their lessons. Teaching and learning become focused on the content and more specifically on what is measured by the examination at the expense of the broader needs of the learner and of such valuable but harder to examine attributes as creativity. Prosser and Trigwell (1999) argue that the answer lies in determining how students perceive their unique learning situations. More specifically, in classes where teachers describe their approach to teaching as having a focus on what they do as teachers and on transmitting knowledge, students are more likely to report that they adopt a superficial approach to the learning of that subject. Conversely, but less strongly, in classes where students report adopting significantly deeper approaches to learning, teaching staff are more likely to report using approaches to teaching that are more oriented toward students and to changing students’ conceptions.

Additionally, students and their parents, who are the recipients of this very exam-focused and content-driven approach to education, are also dragged into this monotonous way of learning and are being indoctrinated with the notion that lessons are given only to ensure that the students would be able to answer exam questions well. The recipients of this approach have little alternative but to collude with it. This is perhaps evidenced to some extent by the tendency for both students and parents to
value creativity but to associate it with extra-curricular activities. Teacher 2 related her experience:

“I think because they are used to the situation where teachers do not apply CCTS in their lessons. So when we want to do something different and creative they [the students] refuse.” (T2, line 135-136)

Teacher 2 also claimed that students rejected creativity because they were unused to it. They became passive students and were only willing to accept knowledge, not to contribute and share what they know. Their focus was only on the end product, that is, the exam results, not the process of gaining knowledge and learning through experience. Another teacher described her experience of the negative attitude of her students:

“We have students who are very very passive meaning they only want to read they only want to pass it up back. They refuse to answer or respond to oral kind of activities. If you give group work they will just sit in the group, listen to everyone and hardly speak. When you ask them questions to make them speak, they will just say yes, no...just a few words to make you happy. Normally they are from Chinese school or Tamil school during primary.” (T3, line 83-87)

This situation may be due to the Hindus’ beliefs in shiksha (education) as value-based worthwhile learning (Chinta Mani Yogi). They believe that through education one can attain the skills essential for living/survival, but that vidya is attained for life. However, the need for being a shikshak was only emphasised for the males of the community, and the females’ right to education was out of the question. In the formal education system teaching and learning take place under a set curriculum, and the educators are qualified specialists in their fields. In comparison,
the traditional teaching methods involved teaching and learning in an informal context. However, the modern education system has brought numerous changes to the teaching and learning style of the Indo-Fijian community. In this case students were reluctant to speak perhaps because of a language barrier rather than the traditional cultural view of learning.

The adoption of the teacher-centred approach in the teaching and learning process is worrying, as it impedes the development of students’ creativity.

“Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status... Truthfully what happens is, as children grow up we start to educate them progressively from the waist up. And then we focus on their heads. And slightly to one side.” (Ted Talks, 2008).

A teacher says that students nowadays focus too much on examinations, causing them to lack other good qualities as individuals.

“But most of them are too exam oriented. They are more interested in getting all As rather than to excel in themselves. Not like those days you know, the students may not get straight As but they are quality students. Now many got A1 but they are unable to express themselves in terms of work...lack of creativity, lack of knowledge, they cannot generate ideas. Even the government also is talking about creativity.” (T4, line 52-56)

As stressed by the Malaysian Prime Minister:

"If we are to continue to compete in the new global economy, we must make the most of the talents of all our people and not just some of them...reaching out to the Malays, Chinese, and Indians alike and uniting in the spirit of 1Malaysia to enable each to play their part. We are determined to develop and adapt, and when you invest
in Malaysia's transformation programme you will now get over US$440 billion in opportunities” (Rajoo, 2011). Today, a programme named ‘Creative Malaysia’ is proud to have a healthy growth environment in the thriving digital content industry and the tremendous support and commitment offered by the Malaysian Government. Malaysia now has a competitive advantage, and the world sees Malaysia as an attractive Asian hub, conducive to digital content development for the whole world and with concomitant advantages.

Having heard enthusiastic words from the government, teachers on the other hand, express their dissatisfaction with the education system. Teacher 3 argued that the system does not give space for the students to show their talents and interest. She claimed:

“What should change is the chanelling of the students itself. When we talk about education, we should not ignore the students’ interest, their talent. Not only focus on academic. Like what our Falsafah Pendidikan says ‘pendidikan menyeluruh’ (holistic education) ... but it does not happen. That has to happen. If that’s going to happen, it will be costly. Ours is free education, so if we want that to happen it is not possible. But in private school it’s possible. Students have the opportunity to express themselves. They also have time because they go back at three, four o’clock. And the school can provide whatever because it is all paid for by parents. Here it is free, it cannot be implemented.” (T3, line 143-150)

Another teacher gave her opinion, blaming the parents’ expectations and the students’ attitude:

“Exams. Parents also want them to get good grades. They don’t bother about how the kids learn, whether they are creative or not. Interest too, the students do not have much interest. They don’t really
enjoy school. There are so many other things they like.” (T6, line 98-100)

On the contrary, the parents showed more concern regarding their children’s success rather than blaming the education system. They put the responsibility on the teachers to be creative enough to attract the students. Although parents did consider study and exams of primary importance, they tended to think of creativity as an extra-curricular activity. Parent 2 declared:

“I think here the teacher should be creative. She should be able to attract the students to learn what she is teaching...not only students must be creative. Teachers’ creativity is more important you know to handle all sorts of students.”(P2, line 29-32)

There is a need to be farsighted and to take appropriate measures to enhance the creative thinking abilities and skills of our students. Creative thinking has not been neglected in the Malaysian school curriculum, and teachers have been doing what they can to encourage creative thinking among students. Educators, too, have emphasised the importance of promoting favourable conditions for the development of students' creativity. However, the reality is that in our school system so called right-brain or creative thinking is given only cursory attention, while priority is given to the development of the left-brain or logical thinking, which emphasises knowledge, recall and reproduction, not least because this is more easily measurable and therefore can form the object of an exam-focused approach.

(iii) Complexity of teaching
The teaching profession is no longer seen as a challenging one, nor does it create much interest anymore in Malaysia (Markandan, 1984). Malakolunthu et al. (2010) identified seven factors which contributed as major causes of stress for schoolteachers in Malaysia. They were: irregularities in the administrative services, the time demands on teachers, poor student motivation, conditions of professional advancement, the class environment, professional demands and the parent-teacher relationship. Another study found that the secondary schoolteachers are dissatisfied with their pay and working conditions. This finding confirms that the Malaysian schoolteachers are not satisfied with the poor pay system, nor with the poor working conditions especially in the rural schools (Parasuman, Abdullah, & Uli, 2009). The complexity of teaching issues faced by teachers is multi-factoral.

Many of the factors mentioned (irregularities in administrative services, time demand on teachers, poor student motivation, conditions for professional advancement, class environment, professional demands and the parent-teacher relationship) can interact and act as a barrier to the idea of promoting creativity in students, despite this being highlighted in the curriculum specification. Most teachers interviewed agree that planning and designing for promoting creativity in schools is good. Unfortunately, in practice the implementation has perhaps been somewhat disappointing for a variety of reasons. Teacher 3 claimed that implementing creativity in the education system is hindered as the policy-makers only looked at the theoretical level but were insufficiently aware of the practical problems of implementation.

“The thing is the whole system is wrong. Everything they are doing now is all at the theory level.” (T3, line 154-155)
In contrast some teachers claim that there are a lot of opportunities for including creativity in class and feel there are few significant barriers (for example: T7, line 39-43; T2, line 91-92). Could the teachers’ views of the barriers and difficulties be because of their attitude toward creativity and teaching in general? While some complained that they faced a lot of difficulties which frustrated their intention to promote creativity, others did not. Besides the system itself, other challenges teachers faced were the students’ attitudes, the pressures of limited time, a lack of suitable teaching and learning space and language barriers. As is often the case, the teachers interviewed in this study frequently seem to be lamenting the pressures of time and space and the limitations these impose on their teaching.

**Overcrowded classrooms**

On the basis of my observations as a teacher (who has previously worked at this school), the school is over-populated with students. There are five old blocks and two new blocks to cater for 3,600 students. Each form of students (Form 4 in the case of this study) is divided into 14 different classes depending on their exam results, which means that there are about 45 to 50 students per class. The school is quite noisy, as there are too many students and recess time is divided into two sessions. Classes are not conducive to effective study as there are simply too many students for the available space. This is further complicated by the physical conditions, for example, the school does not allow the cooling fans to be switched on before recess time to save electricity. Therefore the overcrowded space can become very hot and uncomfortable, which is a further disincentive to effective study. A few teachers commented on these problems during their interviews.
“The school is overflowing with students. Classes are not conducive, very hot. Especially in the afternoon, no concentration you see. Not to talk about creativity, basic things also we don’t have.” (T4, line 40-42)

Another teacher added:

“They have good plans. Basically the planning comes from teachers’ ideas. On paper it’s nice, when it comes to implementing it there are lots of problems. Especially the number of students is too big, too many of them.” (T4, line 44-46)

Teacher 6 complained that the huge enrolment reduces teachers’ time with individual students and causes difficulties in understanding their individual abilities and needs. She explained:

“There are too many students. We don’t even know their difference and their needs. Very difficult to mould the students to be creative, time is also limited.” (T6, line 103-104)

Somewhat surprisingly, parents did not complain about this matter during their interviews; perhaps they assumed that this is normal in a public school. One parent noted:

“Well…what do you expect? Overpopulation is something normal in a public school. For those who can afford, just send your children to a private school. Everything will be taken care of.” (IP1, line 26-28)

However, some students did complain about the overcrowding, which is of course something they experience more directly than their parents. A student shared her experience:
“We don’t even have our own classroom. We have a ‘floating class’, meaning we have to move wherever is vacant. Most of the time we have lessons in the lab, with sinks and old apparatus that irritate us. We have no choice.” (CS2, line 42-44)

The excessive number of students also contributes to many other problems. Students find themselves trying to learn while jammed into spaces never intended as classrooms, such as libraries, gymnasiums, laboratories, and even the canteen. Both students and teachers agreed that overcrowding negatively affected both classroom activities and instructional techniques. A student expressed her views:

“I don’t like working in groups. The group is too big. Too many of them speaking. We cannot study much.” (IS2, line 20-21)

A view echoed by teachers, for example:

“It is okay to have many students in a good class. They can manage themselves well. What about the weak classes? Do you have time to entertain everybody?” (T1, line 20-23)

Crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for students to concentrate on their lessons, but inevitably they limit the teachers’ opportunities to use innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work or indeed to teach using anything beyond the barest minimum of material and space. In addition, because teachers must constantly struggle simply to maintain order in an overcrowded classroom, there is the ever-present likelihood that they will suffer from stress and possibly ‘burnout’ earlier than might otherwise be the case. Undoubtedly, the limited space and resources and the high student numbers put pressure on teaching and learning and significantly affect the opportunities for creativity.
Teachers having become conditioned to an exam-focused approach

Another obstacle is that teachers have been conditioned or pressured into assuming a very prescriptive, limited exam-focused approach to teaching that is content-driven rather than student-centred. This prescriptive approach does not encourage creativity. Again, the barrier is the interaction between time, student numbers and resources and the fact that the curriculum and its delivery are controlled by the policy-makers. This was confirmed by a teacher:

“Well...we can’t do much. We need to finish the syllabus, that’s what we were always told. Those up there they don’t know what we are facing. They follow the theory, but implementation wise, it’s not like that. Like my students...they like to do something different. I did things with them, but the school doesn’t like it. Yeah... because of the noise, they thought that we were playing, not learning. You know, they actually learn a lot through what they called playing. That’s why I think the rules curb creativity. No freedom to be creative...” (T7, line 45-49)

As claimed in OFSTED (2003), creativity happens when you move out of your comfort zone, when you are challenged, and when you are in contention with yourself or with others. Although teachers in Malaysian schools are willing to ‘think out of the box’ and move out from their comfort zone, problems arise when the system, the curriculum and the exams pressure teachers into taking a more teacher-centred, behaviourist or cognitive approach to learning than they otherwise would.
**Teachers being overburdened**

Besides the obstacles mentioned earlier, most teachers agreed that the biggest challenge to their creativity is their workload. They believed that the curriculum was good in theory but was difficult to implement owing to the heavy workload and the time and resource constraints. Most teachers commented to some extent that they found the paperwork, which according to them was not part of their core teaching role, stressful. A few teachers gave their views:

“Teachers have heavy workloads, so most do not have time to think about creativity. We are mostly doing clerical work in schools and among our duties include collecting irrelevant data, attending courses, organising programmes and doing correspondence work. Also, since some schools were now Sekolah Berprestasi Tinggi [high prestige school], we are required to do plenty of documentation work every day ... we are unable to focus in class.” (T2, line 99-103)

“Maybe work burden. We are doing a lot of paperwork. No time to come out with a real lesson plan to encourage the students to be creative. I don’t know why now they come out with lots of paperwork. Sometimes no time to think. The syllabus is okay, it’s the other work than comes in. Everything is done in a hurry manner.” (T4, line 35-38)

“Yes, the problem teachers face is that we have a lot of paperwork. The pantiita report [report from each subject learnt in school], co-curriculum work, minutes for the meetings....in a week at least like three times that I have to bring work home. We also have to mark books, exam papers .... A lot la [a local expression to show a huge amount of workload]. If we have less of these then, I think teachers will be more creative and enjoy their work.” (T6, line 113-116)
Despite having complaints from the teachers, perhaps unsurprisingly, the administrators looked at these problems from a different angle: they tended to avoid responsibility and blame the teachers. One administrator noted:

“Teachers should not complain much. That is part of the challenges of being a teacher. A teacher needs to be creative in every way. Take obstacles as challenges. Work smart and complain less.” (A3, line 30-33)

**Being lenient vs. classroom control/management**

The elements of classroom management vary. For the purposes of this study I am using the term ‘management’ to refer to issues of supervision, refereeing, facilitating, and even maintaining academic discipline. In promoting creativity teachers believe that students need to be given the freedom to express themselves. On the other hand, teachers need to maintain class control, so that their students do not disturb the class next door. This is particularly relevant when considered in conjunction with the issues of overcrowding and limited resources already discussed. An American community activist, calligrapher and author states: “Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun.” (Cook, 2007). In reality, there are many rules which students have to obey in school. For example, they are not allowed to make a noise or move around as they like. How are students going to have fun, if there are too many rules? One teacher viewed rules as an obstacle to creativity:
“When I’m too strict with them they cannot come out with anything. But when I go in and I smile and let them be what they are and I tell them in 10 minutes I want to see this product. They are so creative. Let them loose, so they become creative. Again discipline is one way that curbs the child’s creativity. When you put rules around them, they can’t think out of the box.” (T17, line 29-33)

Parents, on the other hand, thought that rules are necessary in order to discipline their children so that they can produce something worthwhile. This is illustrated by the parent who expressed her view:

“We need rules in life. Doing anything you want does not mean that you are creative. It’s doing something people can look up to you I think is creative. To come to that one needs to discipline oneself.” (MPm, line 28-30)

In contrast, a student thought differently. She agreed rather with Teacher 7 that rules curb creativity. She said:

“How are you going to think when you cannot do this and that. We need freedom to think and do things our way.” (MSf line 20-22)

**The need for policy-makers to understand the teachers’ context when formulating policies on creativity**

The findings reveal different conceptions of creativity among the stakeholders. Teachers have been conditioned and pressured by the restrictive system into carrying out prescriptive exam-driven and content-focused teaching which does not fit in with the more interactive and flexible student-centred approaches which most people agree are better able to stimulate and encourage creativity. The administrators
do their best to follow the instructions from the policy-makers and hence force the teachers to implement them.

“We have the syllabus as a guideline. It was prepared by the Ministry based on research and discussions among professionals. So, we teachers in school need to take it as responsibilities. If we are asked to promote creativity, then we need to do it. Try to discover how to go about it, not just complaining about things.” (A3, line 24-27)

Despite this understandable pressure from the administrators to comply with a rigid system some teachers had their own views of how creativity should be encouraged among their students, leading them to prepare lesson plans to please the administrators and the ‘system’, but in practice ignoring them and implementing what they believed was needed to encourage creativity in their lessons. Some teachers also believed that creativity came naturally and was not something one could plan for. Both these ways of thinking may help explain why it seemed that in practice most activities carried out in the classroom were not in line with what was stated in the formulaic and restrictive lesson plans. The lesson plans were required and needed to fit a prescribed structure: the teachers provided them, but did not necessarily limit their teaching to what was contained in them.

“We have to follow certain guidelines when preparing our lesson plan. Most of the guidelines are the same but slightly different among schools. Normally the same district will follow the same sub-headings you know…topic, main-skills, soft skills. We do teach what we write but not everything we teach we write. There’s no space, we have so many classes to teach and we have to write for each. I do believe creativity is not something you can write in the lesson plan, it’s difficult. It just occurs when you start teaching.” (T1, line 30-37)
The policy-makers also speak a different language from the teachers. Often the terms used are different largely owing to the indirect communication between the two parties. Misunderstandings occur as the information from the upper level does not effectively reach the implementation level, resulting in potential misinterpretation by the ‘implementers’, namely, the teachers. The Curriculum Document is also too general in nature. For example, there is no explanation of the difference between Critical and Creative Thinking Skills. What the different stakeholders do is to try their best to accommodate their roles to one another in such a system. Somehow despite the potential for multiple and overlapping definitions of creativity among the stakeholder groups there is still misunderstanding or misinterpretation, seemingly more as a result of the individuals being required to fit into a rigid, exam-focused system with issues of overcrowding and limited resources than because of the different definitions of creativity held by the groups or individuals concerned.
6.4 What are the Contextual Factors which impact the Definition and Understanding of Creativity in the ESL Curriculum?

Context is defined as “the whole situation, background, or environment relevant to some happening” (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994, p. 18). Since context is often extensive and complex (Fink, 2000), the discussion of findings in this section focuses on different aspects of the context that are particularly relevant to this study, namely, external context (e.g., the parents and home life) and internal context (e.g., the teachers, students, the school culture, language instruction). Different contexts often bring varied and contradictory values, beliefs and purposes (Fink, 2000). Cornbleth (1990) explains that context powerfully shapes teaching and thus students’ opportunities to learn. The setting or conditions of classroom teaching and learning influences what is taught, how it is taught and to whom. Context not only influences the learning; according to Cohen and Barnes (1993) factors in the classroom teaching environment influence how teachers define the goals and means of teaching and learning and how well they realise their vision of educational practice. The contextual factors influencing educational outcomes include the educational system, school climates and the curricular structures as well as other related factors such as the language of instruction, students’ attitudes and classroom facilities.

Contextual factors are important and need to be considered both when teaching and, in the context of this study, when interpreting data. As this study looks at stakeholder groups from the viewpoint of the policy-makers, through that of the administrators and teachers (the groups that define and deliver curriculum and policy) to that of the students and their parents (the groups that receive the curriculum and
policy) in a single representative ‘case-study’ school, much of the internal context has been captured in some way. This internal context may have been explicitly and/or implicitly included in the interviews and the subsequent interpretation and discussion. While the parents’ interviews and to a lesser extent the students’ interviews capture some of the external context, this is less complete.

The culture of learning

As for the students, many of them claim that they have lots of ideas but have problems in expressing themselves owing to a lack of language ability. Most reveal that they are shy and uncomfortable in speaking English. They do not want to risk making mistakes in front of their friends or in front of the teachers who will be assessing them. A study by Charles and Runco (2000) found that, as they learn, students may retain the capacity to think divergently, but that their evaluative tendencies change. Even though they have original ideas, they may decide to self-censor them and not share them with others. They value ‘fitting in’ with others and the reactions of their peers, and this may consequently depreciate their tendency for self-expression and originality. Having said this, a teacher in this study did not see language as a barrier to communication when asked if she viewed language barriers as part of the conceptual blocks to students’ creativity.

“Not really. There are so many ways to communicate if they are willing to. But, most of them just do not want to think.” (T5, line 125-126)

According to Amabile (1996), one factor leading to creativity is extrinsic motivation, such as reward. In the Malaysian education system there is no reward for being creative in the curriculum beyond, perhaps, the praise of an enlightened teacher.
The most obvious rewards go to those who perform well in academic tasks (i.e., obtain excellent exam results with many A’s). In addition, in the Malaysian system the exam questions focus more on facts and details that need memorisation rather than creativity and application. If there is a section of the exam testing the Critical and Creative Thinking Skills part of the English Language syllabus, it is likely to be the critical thinking skills that are tested rather than the creativity. This is much easier to ‘measure’ in an exam context. This matter is mentioned by one of the administrators interviewed:

“I don’t think it is possible. The system itself is more towards critical thinking, not creativity. If you look at the exam questions for instance, they are more to critical thinking. Creativity is something gifted I think, not everybody is creative. If one is not creative, no matter what you do to motivate them, they are simply not creative. They just can’t perform.” (A2, line 28-32)

On the other hand, examinations are not the only rewards, and both students and teachers referred to receiving or giving praise for creative work. There are also other ways of promoting and rewarding creativity through less directly exam-focused school activities, as was suggested by another administrator:

“This can be done through the school activities...Allow more competitions on certain subjects and prepare prizes to motivate students and teachers. By doing this, we will get better involvement of students. Of course this would need financial help from the school.” (A1, 34-36)

Analysing the data collected from all the stakeholders provides some understanding of why different definitions were given to the simple question “what is creativity?” The teachers define creativity according to their own experiences and are
influenced by the contextual factors around them. These factors contribute to their understanding of creativity in the particular context of the ESL curriculum. As a result, given the context and its inherent limitations, most teachers do not see creativity as something that can be promoted in a busy school culture.

In contrast, the curriculum developers generally do not appear to understand and appreciate the challenges facing teachers. The exception to this is when particular curriculum developers are more closely involved with teaching, perhaps through frequent classroom observation or as a result of having had previous relevant experience as a teacher. Even when curriculum developers visit a school in order to observe, the situation they see generally would not represent the ‘real’ situation in the school. Normally, the pressures of the hierarchical system are such that both the teachers and the students are on their best behaviour when there are important visitors to their school. Perhaps that is why during the interview with an officer from the Curriculum Division, a policy-maker, she expressed her doubts about what the teacher had been doing in school.

“I don’t understand what is their problem, whenever I see them they will complain tak cukup kursus [not enough courses concerning creativity]. This depends on our budget too. There are teachers who are creative, they enter competitions here and there and win...that’s good. But most of them only complained this and that. To me they have not done enough.” (PM2, line 30-33)

As for parents, most of them seem to view creativity more as being related to interests and talent rather than directly to the curriculum. Perhaps, as they did not relate creativity to academic activity or to academic rewards, which they valued, they did not see obstacles to creativity in school as being harmful.
“One of my kids likes to draw. She can come out with great pictures. Since she was small she has started drawing. I think that is creative. I don’t see why I should not support her, as long as she knows how to manage time between arts and academic.” (P3, line 12-14)

The educational system in Malaysia focuses more on the academic subjects, and parents view the arts more as recreational. Most parents are aware of the importance of the arts to encourage creativity but see academic success, which they do not associate with creativity, as the priority to ensure their children’s success in life. They therefore tend to separate creativity from school in all but the extra-curricular activities.

The culture of teaching

Teachers have been conditioned into carrying out prescriptive teaching, which concentrates on knowledge transfer aimed largely at providing the information needed to pass examinations. This prescriptive approach does not leave much room for creativity. Again, the teachers perceive the barrier to be the need to deliver the content required for the exam with limited resources and time. The time pressure is significant, and working within a rigid system and with limited time applies a significant pressure on the teacher to take a very superficial approach to teaching. An example of this view comes from a teacher’s interview:

“We need to do a lot of things in school, not just teaching. Yet we need to finish the syllabus. Every time during meeting the principal will remind us again and again that we need to finish the syllabus. Everything we do is ad-hoc, need to rush. I sometimes feel that I don’t have time to think much. Just do what is instructed. You do what is required you are safe.” (T5, line 23-26)
In addition, but related to the obstacles mentioned earlier, most teachers interviewed agree that one of the biggest challenges restricting their creativity is their workload. They believe that the curriculum is good in theory but is difficult to implement in practice due to the combination of a heavy workload and time constraints. Most teachers are stressed by the quantity of paperwork and administrative duties which they view as an unnecessary burden unrelated to their core business, teaching.

“Teachers have heavy workload, so most do not have time to think about creativity.” (T2, line 99)

“Maybe work burden. We are doing a lot of paperwork. No time to come out with a real lesson plan to encourage the students to be creative. I don’t know why now they come out with lots of paperwork. Sometimes no time to think. The syllabus is okay, it’s the other work than comes in. Everything is done in a hurry manner.” (T4, line 35-38)

“Yes, the problem teachers face is that we have a lot of paperwork. The panitia report, co-curriculum work, minutes for the meetings....in a week at least like three times that I have to bring work home. We also have to mark books, exam papers .... A lot la. If we have less of these then, I think teachers will be more creative and enjoy their work.” (T6, line 113-116)

The teachers also complain that those at the higher level (policy-makers) do not understand the difficulties and obstacles faced at school level. From their perspective the syllabus does not cater for the students’ needs and interests, as it is based almost
exclusively on lower level fact-based learning and simplistic knowledge transfer. Here are some illustrative comments:

“Maybe those who are sitting up there may not like it, they are not implementing. We are entering the classroom. We know that the syllabus cannot be implemented. We need to find something more creative.” (T3, line 125-127)

“What should change is the chanelling of the students itself. When we talk about education, we should not ignore the students’ interest, their talent. Not only focus on academic. Like what our Falsafah Pendidikan says pendidikan menyeluruh... but it does not happen. That has to happen. If that’s going to happen, it will be costly. Ours is free education, so if we want that to happen it is not possible. But in private school it’s possible.” (T3, line 135-139)

Another teacher viewed the rules imposed by the system and the hierarchy as an obstacle to creativity:

“When I’m too strict with them they cannot come out with anything. But when I go in and I smile and let them be what they are and I tell them in 10 minutes I want to see this product. They are so creative. Let them loose, so they become creative. Again discipline is one way that curbs the child’s creativity. When you put rules around them, they can’t think out of the box.” (T17, line 29-33)
6.5 Summary

The data analysed show that all stakeholders defined creativity in their own way, although there was considerable flexibility and overlap of definition. Although different words are used, most agreed that one needs to be different or original in some way in order to be appreciated as creative. *Whatever definitions are offered by researchers, most agree that creativity involves something new, novel, original and appropriate. A creative act should accomplish a purpose and needs to be useful to a particular person or persons involved in the creation.* The extent that people view novelty as appropriate or important to any degree is the value they attribute to it (Weiner, 2000). Thus novelty alone does not constitute creativity: there has to be some mutually recognised value or utility. This would appear to be the case, no matter whether the creativity is LCC-type or BCC-type or framed as being ‘person’, ‘process’ or ‘product’.

Another interesting finding is that most stakeholders’ understanding of creativity does not relate to artistic or aesthetic values. Certainly the stakeholders in the axis of curriculum and policy production and delivery (the policy-makers, administrators and teachers) seem to take an almost universal view of creativity as being of the pragmatic LCC-type. And when asked about the relationship between creativity and aesthetic values, they do not seem to consider them as important and claimed that they are only a small part of creativity. In this they are well aligned to, or perhaps limited by, the curriculum and the system they are working with or in. While the stakeholders are not really concerned with either aesthetic or artistic creativity,
they agree that this is in fact an enviable talent that can undoubtedly contribute to the quality of the teaching and learning experience. The interview transcripts suggest that there is little purposeful reflection about creativity or its place in the ESL classroom: in fact some teachers claim that they have no time to reflect owing to their excessive workload. However, even though the lesson plans are simplistic and produced to comply with regulations, teachers do think about what and how to teach, at least with their better students, where they are less limited by the students’ linguistic abilities.

The findings also suggest two types of teacher:

i. Teachers who were willing to promote creativity despite all the obstacles faced and who regarded obstacles as challenges to promote creativity.

ii. Teachers who blamed all the factors around them for their inability to promote creativity.

Most teachers associated being creative with the level of linguistic proficiency and perhaps more general academic proficiency and viewed the syllabus as either being too rigid and/or not providing adequate guidance and opportunity to teach creativity. Most teachers, policy-makers and administrators considered they were clear about what creativity was, although there was some variation. Sometimes individuals tended to give one definition but implement something else in practice. This could perhaps be because they are ‘trapped’ between the concept proposed by the Ministry and the system that they are working in and their own personal knowledge and perception of creativity, which they may have acquired as a result of personal study or experience. This conflict may have arisen partly as a result of the creativity component of the curriculum having been formulated, communicated and implemented on a top-down basis.
Finally, the findings suggest that, while there are different definitions of creativity among the stakeholders, there is perhaps sufficient flexibility and overlap for this not to be too problematic. Rather, it seems to be the combination of too many students and too few resources and a rigid exam-focused system which is identified as limiting creativity implementation in the ESL classroom. This is compounded not so much by the lack of a common definition of creativity, but perhaps by a perceived lack of a common appreciation or understanding of the contextual challenges to its implementation by the different stakeholder groups. In the next chapter I shall briefly revisit each research question and attempt to draw together the findings and discussion in order to formulate some conclusions. I shall then consider some of the limitations of this study before suggesting some recommendations based on my findings.
7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this study considering data from each of the key stakeholder groups in an attempt to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. The intention is that this approach will examine creativity in the ‘case study’ school at every level from policy definition and direction at Ministry level down to the students and their parents, who are the ultimate recipients of the policy. Given the overview of the ‘case study’ school as a complete ‘working spectrum’ and the educational context of Malaysia, where all schools work to a set curriculum measured by a common exam and generally work to a fairly standard set of procedures, it is hoped that the ideas and conclusions generated will be generalisable to some extent to the wider Malaysian secondary education sector. While this cross-sectional case study captures the view at a single time in a single school within a politically, ethnically and culturally complex wider context, the situation of creativity in a national curriculum means that the broader conclusions may be transferable beyond the single case study school to some extent.

Qualitative and to a lesser extent quantitative methods were used to analyse the data. The qualitative process was applied to analyse the stakeholders’ interview transcripts and other sources of data namely, the Curriculum Document, the school yearly plan, the school yearly magazine, the teachers’ lesson plans, the students’
worksheets and my field notes. Content analysis was carried out on the Curriculum Document and the other documents taken from teachers and students. This was done in order to compare the actual content with the intended content. As researcher I established the unit of analysis and analysed contextual phenomena to provide context for the findings. In addition, the survey questionnaire data were then analysed quantitatively using frequency counts and percentages. The data were triangulated with the interview data to help confirm and verify the findings. This helped to minimize the possibility of bias in the study while giving confidence in the findings when the data were later analysed (Freeman, 1998). Significantly, having data from differing sources provided a better understanding of the situation under study, since I was able to view it from different perspectives; while at the same time recognizing the possible unconscious bias arising from my personal experience, history at the school and personal views of creativity in an ESL teaching context.

While the data have been discussed in the findings section, the following section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and attempts to bring them together and generate some recommendations that could perhaps be applied in the wider context.

7.2 How do the Different Stakeholders Define Creativity?

This is the first and fundamental research question posed in this thesis, and the answer to it has already been discussed to some extent in the findings section as the data from each stakeholder group were presented. In this section I would like to bring
this discussion together, examine it in a little more depth and formulate an answer to the question posed.

The individuals and the various stakeholder groups all defined creativity in their own way, although often they seemed to be using different words to describe some broadly common views. Indeed, there was a seemingly more consistent agreement when the potential definitions of creativity were linked specifically to the context of the students or the teachers rather than when they were considered in a more general, open and abstract way. Furthermore, there was some flexibility and overlap of definition between individuals and groups with most agreeing on the importance of novelty and originality being applied such that it had some recognisable value or utility. The stakeholders were seemingly able to ‘adjust’ their personal definitions of creativity and have the flexibility to reach a degree of consensus in the context of creativity within the ESL curriculum.

The literature suggests that developing creativity is not only beneficial for the individual: it is beneficial also for education and ultimately good for society. Twenty-first century creativity is now often seen more as generative of problem-identification and problem-solving throughout life (Craft, 2001; Craft, 2005), and regarded as a life skill essential for twenty-first-century living. This is certainly a view of creativity well aligned with that seemingly desired by the government; who seem to see creativity as an entrepreneurial modernising asset rather than in an artistic way. It also fits with their strategy of adding creativity to the curriculum. In England government and researchers have also placed creativity on the agenda as a central element in education (Craft, 2005; Fisher & Williams, 2004; Wilson, 2005). In 1999 a report by the British National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), titled ‘All our Futures’, observed that no education system can be world-class without valuing and
integrating creativity in teaching and learning. This report launched the Creative Partnership research projects and research cooperation on the concept of creativity. While this initiative was an attempt to address a perceived deficit in creativity as a result of previous changes in curriculum and a greater focus on ‘the basics’, it did not explicitly add creativity or an expectation of it to the curriculum. Rather, it introduced multiple external examples of creativity, often ‘artistic’ from outside the normal educational context to stimulate greater creativity in both teachers and children.

As such, findings from this study with regard to how stakeholders define creativity become significant, particularly with the Malaysian approach which specifically added creativity to the curriculum and therefore perhaps needed a more consensual definition. What then is the place of creativity in the current educational scenario?

In the case of this study, while individuals and the various stakeholder groups all defined creativity in their own way, there was some flexibility and overlap of definition in as much as they were relatively consistent in the view of creativity more as concerning the ‘person’ and/or the ‘process’ rather than being about the ‘product’, when considered through the lens of Fisher and Williams’s (2004) definition of creativity. Fisher and Williams (2004) claim that part of the reason for this diversity of definitions is that creativity can be seen as a property of people (who we are), processes (what we do), or products (what we make). So overall the stakeholder groups seem to share a definition of creativity as being a property of people and the creative process in which they engage when it is examined through this lens. This was not only reasonably consistent across the stakeholder groups, but it was also apparent in interviews, documentation and in the survey questionnaires. Although it could be argued that this may have been because of the context of this study, examining creativity in the taught
ESL curriculum which perhaps inevitably focuses on the persons, students and the process, their learning. This definition of creativity aligns with the Malaysian curriculum and is actually common to most groups and most individuals within the stakeholder groups down to the students’ definition of creativity.

Stakeholders at a higher level, with more ‘power’ (e.g. the policy-makers) preferred to use the term ‘thinking out of the box’ to describe creativity. As much ‘thinking within the box’ can now be performed by technology, so the capacity to be one step ahead of the computers takes on an additional importance for the future. Employers now require “people who can adapt, see connections, innovate, communicate and work with others” (NACCCE, 1999, p. 13). This is consistent with the more widely agreed definition of creativity as being about ‘people’ and ‘process’, but it is interesting that this definition and this terminology were limited to this higher-level stakeholder group. While this definition is still ‘person’ and ‘process’ the language used is much more closely aligned with the more entrepreneurial, 21st century ‘problem-identification and problem-solving throughout life’ definition (Craft, 2001; Craft, 2005) favoured by the government. Perhaps it is not surprising that this ‘higher’ level stakeholder group is aligned with this governmental view of creativity, or at least is familiar with and has taken on the language of that definition.

The difference in the words used to describe creativity among the stakeholders may be due largely to their experience and their roles in the education system. The policy-makers viewed creativity on the basis of their perspective as definers and directors of policy and the curriculum, while the teachers and the administrators were more pragmatic and perhaps more realistic and based their views on what their experience told them could actually be implemented in the real situation. Students and parents focused more on personal ‘interests’ and ‘likes’: they did not link
creativity so much to academic activity as to activities and particularly to things that expressed individuality and had the potential to distinguish themselves from others. Among the words missing from the definitions of all these groups were ‘take risk’, ‘flexible’, ‘reflective’, ‘seeing connections’, ‘motivation’ and ‘divergent thinking’. These words seem to focus on business creativity, as mentioned by Amabile (1998). According to Amabile, “Creativity within each of us is a function of three components: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and motivation” (p. 78). One wonders why these words are missing from the definitions of all the stakeholders. It is interesting that even the teachers, who are charged with both teaching creatively and teaching creativity, are seemingly not thinking mechanistically of the creativity process either generally or in the more specific business sense. Rather they seem to focus on their role of attempting to deliver creativity within the curriculum context.

On further analysis it seems that the answers to the first research question showed that all the stakeholders have a different focus when defining creativity. While the teachers have multiple definitions of creativity, parents and students are more focused on a certain subject, namely ‘interest’ or ‘talent’. On the other hand, the policy-makers and the administrators focused more on the teaching and learning process in promoting creativity and believed that the teachers themselves needed to be creative in order to produce creative students. Although the stakeholders have different focuses in defining creativity, they all share an awareness of what creativity is and of its importance. Yet it is interesting to note that all of them failed to use words such as ‘take risk’, ‘flexible’, ‘reflective’, ‘seeing connections’, ‘motivation’ and ‘divergent thinking’ in defining it. During their interviews all the stakeholders agreed that creativity is important in order to survive in this challenging world (e.g: T2, line 15-17).
Many consider ‘real’ creativity is a highly experiential, developmental type of creativity, which allows one to work in real time on real problems. Key features in these skills can improve individuals’ approach to problem-solving and equip them with techniques they can use daily. These skills develop creative and confident individuals who can rely on their resourcefulness, creativity and skills to break new ground, solve problems and perform well in whatever they do. Therefore it seems that something significant is missing.

Besides the three aspects of creativity that have drawn much attention, namely, the creative process, the creative people and the creative products, creativity is often thought to exist on the level of LCC and BCC. The teachers’ definition of creativity was more on the level of LCC, as they relate it to the context in school, while policy-makers looked at a broader view BCC-type of creativity that relates to innovation. Being creative is about bringing new solutions to old problems and fresh perspectives. On the other hand, innovation is the implementation of something new. BCC-type of creativity focuses more on the production of a product, while LCC-type of creativity focuses more on the process of being creative. Once again it is interesting that the policy-makers’ definition being more BCC could be considered to be more about the desired or potential impact and therefore more closely aligned with the entrepreneurial, 21st century ‘problem-identification and problem-solving throughout life’ definition (Craft, 2005; Craft et al., 2001) favoured by the government. Again, perhaps it is not surprising that this ‘higher’ level stakeholder group are aligned with this governmental view of creativity.
7.3 How do the Different Conceptions of Creativity Impact on Policy Implementation?

There is a fairly consistent, or at the least flexibly overlapping definition of creativity in the groups except for the students and the parents, perhaps because these latter did not face the same challenges with regard to adding creativity into a curriculum as other stakeholders. The other stakeholders, namely the teachers, the administrators and the policy-makers, were all more aware of the issues caused by time constraints, limited resources and large student numbers. Interestingly, parents and students often referred to creativity as an extra-curricular activity, perhaps because this was their main avenue for experiencing it, but also perhaps because at some level they recognised the difficulty of integrating it into the curriculum. Perhaps to some extent the creativity in the curriculum was not seen in the same way as the more personal, artistically focused definitions that they expressed. This is speculation, and the question was not explored explicitly in the interviews because it only became apparent later during data analysis. This could have been explored if secondary follow-up interviews were performed and should be considered in future work in this area. Additionally, the rigid exam focus, widely recognised across the stakeholder groups, exacerbates the situation. The definition of creativity is perhaps not the problem: rather it seems that the system tends to pressure everybody to teach strategically and study for the exam, whereas the exam does not really test creativity (which is hard to assess), and therefore this aspect of the test tends to become minimalized (except perhaps when the most able students are concerned).

Some teachers have strong personal views on how creativity needs to be encouraged among their students. This leads them to prepare lesson plans not to please the administrators, but to implement what they believe to be more creative approaches
in their actual lessons. Perhaps the apparent discrepancy between the teachers’ views on creativity and their lesson plans should also be attributed to some extent to their belief that creativity is a process that arises naturally and is not something which one can plan. This may go some way to explain why it seems that often classroom activities are not in-line with what the teachers state in their lesson plans. The lesson plans were prescribed and produced in a strategic and formulaic way in order to link them to the Curriculum Document, which was rarely translated into practice completely. However, unfortunately the implementation of rigid and prescribed lesson plans was problematic and at best somewhat superficial and simplistic. The actual teaching itself however, was more creative and was only guided by the plans and not restricted by them. I am aware of this because of my experience and what the teachers and students said in interviews, but it would have been more powerful to have included some teaching observation and gathered data on this. Once again this would be important to consider in any future work.

There may be teachers who felt more constrained by the rigid and simplistic approach encouraged by the formulaic plans, resulting in pressure to preserve the traditional teaching culture of the “chalk-and-talk” or “spoon feeding” methods in their lessons. Consequently, the students, who received this form of ‘education’, are also recruited into this monotonous teaching and learning process, and they too can become indoctrinated with the notion that only lessons conducted in this simplistic, transmission-focused way will ensure their ability to answer exam questions successfully. The administrators are also in some ways complicit in this by trying their best to follow the policy-makers’ instructions.

The policy-makers speak a different language from the teachers when talking about creativity. Often the terms used by the two parties differed owing to the indirect
communication between them. This may be attributed to the many organisational levels in the education system. Words from the policy-makers do not go directly to the teachers: instead they pass through the State Education Officers and the District Education Officers. By the time the information reaches the implementers (the teachers) its meaning has often become diversified. Misunderstandings sometimes occur when information from the upper level did not reach the implementation level, leading to its misinterpretation by the implementers, the teachers. The policy-makers are more ‘senior’ and arguably more closely and directly connected to the government and perhaps it is therefore not surprising that while there is a broadly shared definition of creativity in some senses the words used are much more related to the entrepreneurial problem-solving type definition of creativity. The Curriculum Document, which might be considered the vector of direct communication between government and policy-makers and teachers, could also be argued to be too general in nature, assuming a common understanding and definition that may not exist. There certainly was no explicit definition or explanation of the difference between critical and creative thinking skills in the curriculum documentation. In practice what the different stakeholders did was to try their best to accommodate their roles within such a system. Indeed, perhaps this was not problematic, as the key stakeholder groups, the teachers and the administrators, all seemed to recognise clearly that critical and creative thinking skills differed, even though perhaps they did not share a completely common definition of what each was. The interviews did not reveal any problems or issues in this respect. All the teachers and administrators had good, reasonable answers to questions exploring these two aspects.

This is actually what Cornbleth (1988) observes. The disappointments with curriculum theory in practice mostly come from treating the curriculum out of context
both conceptually and operationally. Conceptual de-contextualisation has meant separating the curriculum as product (e.g., a document such as a syllabus or a course of study, a package of materials accompanied by directions for their use) from curriculum policy-making, design and use. Operational de-contextualisation has meant treating the curriculum, however defined, apart from its structural and socio-cultural contexts, as if it were independent of its location in an educational system, society and history. When recognised, the isolation of the curriculum from its multiple, interacting contexts is an absurdity; yet this isolation remains a commonplace in curriculum discourse and practice (Cornbleth, 1988). It is unfortunate that 25 years on the findings of my own study still mirror the situation described by Cornbleth.

7.4 What are the Contextual Factors Affecting the Definition and Understanding of Creativity in the ESL Curriculum?

The influence of contextual factors which impact the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum is complex, but even within this single school case study it can be observed in several different relevant areas.

Policy

Many claim that the main obstacle curbing creativity in Malaysian schools is the education system. It seems to be too exam-oriented with scores and grades being accorded the highest importance. The school curriculum is standardised in the interests of conformity and control, and it rarely addresses the needs of diverse talents and learning styles. There is no context for creativity, which may even be suppressed as an undesirable deviation rather than encouraged as something unique and noteworthy.
Another issue is that teachers seem to be or at least to feel pressured into a prescriptive approach that does not easily support or encourage creativity. They claim that the main barrier to promoting creativity is the prescriptive and rigid approach instigated by the policy-makers in an attempt to exert some control over limited time and resources. According to Ofsted (2003), creativity happens when you move out of your comfort zone, when challenged and when in contention with yourself or others. Creativity happens when we have the confidence to make mistakes. It happens when we are not tied to narrow targets but allow a spirit of play and imagination to inform our actions. It means being open to chance and opportunity, to try the less travelled path, to be open to doubts and uncertainties in seeking to generate what is new and original. It is hard, if not impossible, for this to happen if a rigid and prescriptive approach is followed in order to comply with a narrow, exam-focused system. As discussed in the earlier chapter, Malaysia has a rigid exam-oriented system whereby students are required to sit for the standardised national examinations at the end of the lower secondary and upper secondary period. This situation almost definitely does not encourage creativity per se, as all stakeholders tend to attach more importance to the exams, as they invariably seem to be what is more valued in this system and in the community. Interestingly, Malaysia has chosen to use the formal curriculum, teaching and consequently exam ‘route’ as the way of introducing the required creativity. While this has the advantage of being controllable and almost ubiquitous because of the national curriculum, the formality and constrictive nature of the system can actually inhibit the very creativity it seeks to encourage.
Context and Culture

Analysing data collected from all the stakeholders goes some way to explaining why different definitions were given to the simple question “what is creativity?” The teachers tended to view creativity on the basis of their experiences, and they were influenced by the contextual factors existing around them. This relationship with their professional context influenced their understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum as something that it is challenging to promote.

Most teachers did not see creativity as something that could be readily promoted in their busy schedule with the help of the resources available to them and in view of the numbers and levels of their students. There are issues of the work culture, the local culture, the teaching culture and the learning culture. For it to emerge, a culture-based creativity demands from the teacher personal abilities which include the ability to think laterally and to be imaginative. A social context involving an education and learning environment that encourages and appreciates creativity is crucially needed. This helps to promote well-being, to create a lifestyle conducive to creativity and to stimulate confidence in communities. In some ways it could be argued that the UK’s ‘Creative partnership’ approach which did not introduce creativity into an existing curriculum but encouraged multiple external examples might be free from the systematic constraints of the system and more likely to result in a change of creativity ‘culture’. However, being less linked to curriculum it could also be seen as being peripheral and less relevant and could also be more easily ignored.

On the other hand, the policy-makers viewed creativity from a more theoretical viewpoint. They would perhaps not be expected to understand the day-to-day challenges facing teachers, unless they had frequently taken part in classroom
observation or had personal experience as teachers. Again Cornbleth (1988) opines that how we conceive of the curriculum matters, because our conceptions and ways of reasoning about the curriculum reflect and shape how we think and talk, study, and act with regard to the education we provide to students. Concern with concepts is not “merely theoretical”. Concepts grow out of and enter into practice. Even if observations are made, the situation in which they are made would not represent the real situation in the school.

Besides the education system, other contextual factors affecting the definition and understanding of creativity in the ESL curriculum were the heavy workload, the overcrowded classrooms, language barriers and the time factor, which have all been discussed earlier in the Findings chapter. Taken together, these factors have imposed a burden on the teachers and administrators as ‘implementers’ to such an extent that some have felt that it is almost impossible to promote creativity in the ESL classroom. Theoretically, the English language classroom should be a place of fun and enjoyment, which should provide the freedom students need to explore in order to be creative. But even with these contextual factors on hand it is difficult to carry out what the policy prescribes, even when all those concerned agree that creativity is good and worthy of promotion. These contextual pressures and inhibitors appear to be more of a barrier to promoting creativity than any lack of a common definition and an agreed understanding of creativity. The definition of creativity given in this work is fully broad enough for the absence of a shared understanding not to be a limiting factor in the promotion of creativity in practice.
7.5 Pedagogical Implications

Implications for Research

In recent years researchers and educational writers have extended the general meaning of creativity to incorporate ideas about inventiveness and imagination. The understanding that is gained from this study on the policy and implementation of creativity in the ESL curriculum shows that different stakeholders in the Malaysian education system have their own definitions of creativity. There are some differences in definition, but the definition seems to be broad and to some extent flexible, so there is significant overlap and commonality. The problem does not therefore seem to be one of differences of definition, but of differences in the contexts that influence how that definition is applied in practice. These differences have a great influence on creativity promotion policy implementation in schools. Future research might look at ways of minimising these differences and how to overcome the barriers to creativity. It would be desirable to take socio-cultural factors into consideration, since these factors may contribute to the formation of different conceptions of creativity. Students have to be made aware of the importance of creativity, and researchers can investigate further the link between imagination and practice. If the students only hold a mass of ideas in their minds, but take no action, they are merely being imaginative: they are not being creative.

Implications for Curriculum Development

The findings of this study have implications for creativity development in the ESL curriculum. They indicate a rich range of creative activities in schools, strongly,
but not systemically, supported by the positive attitudes of all stakeholders, who are very much aware of the need and importance of creativity. The problems and barriers detected arise not from a lack of shared will, awareness or definition of creativity, but from the contextual difficulties and pressures that make the creativity implementation in the ESL classroom challenging. In some sense they arise more from being a part of the formal taught and assessed curriculum and the processes and attitudes associated with that system than from any real or perceived lack of common definition. It is important for the policy-makers in developing the context of education policy (autonomy, commissioning, personalisation) to give more consideration to the challenges teachers face at the implementation level, to offer opportunities for embedding creativity in education. If curriculum specification were made more flexible, there would be more potential for creating creative classrooms. Stronger connections between creative teaching and the emerging policy context in education should be established, so that creativity is embedded in these developments and, reciprocally, these developments could be enhanced by creativity input. We need to construct a more coherent ‘creativity offer’, which is then to be actively introduced into a new context of school and personal autonomy. A renewed curriculum that emphasises these matters is therefore crucial; one that does not just demand creativity, but is alert to the contextual difficulties which it faces and provides the space and encouragement which it needs to develop. It is also possible that by combining the approaches used in Malaysia with those of the UK’s Creative Partnership approach we might get the best of both. So perhaps we might have a very powerful effect by adding creativity to the curriculum with more space and better integrated embedding, together with multiple external examples to encourage and empower individual approaches mediated between students and teachers.
Implications for Practice

Since the real purpose of education is not to have the instructor perform certain activities but to bring about significant changes in the students’ behaviour patterns, it is vital to recognise that any statements of school objectives should be a statement of the changes which should take place in the students (Tyler, 1949). The findings of this study indicate that it would be wise for teachers to base their teaching not only on the syllabus provided but more on the interests of their students with the aim of making them creative. It would therefore be helpful if teacher-training could highlight this matter and make teachers aware of the importance of creativity for the students to survive in the challenging world. The existence of a distance between teachers and students is important to allow interaction and the generation of ideas. Students need to be encouraged to respond without being constrained by the need to give right or wrong answers. This assurance allows them to feel a sense of freedom and empowerment with respect to their own learning. On the other hand, giving teachers the freedom to teach in their own way without being restricted to a specified syllabus and giving the students the space to explore their talents may lead to the discovery of the missing or new alternate words in their personal lexicon of creativity definitions.

Although the subject-matter discussed in this section is based on the ‘case study’ school, the data derived from this research can be generalised to some extent to all secondary schools in Malaysia, and at least in as far as Malaysia practises a standardised curriculum for all schools with standardised National Examinations as an evaluation tool. It is this standardised curriculum that the government has chosen as a vector to implement desired changes in creativity practice. While the complex contextual factors previously discussed mean that this single case study school can in no way be
considered as being representative of all schools, at best it represents other similar schools. There is some similarity in the structure and general function of the working unit of stakeholders across a wider range of schools and all have to work with the standardised curriculum. Thus, while context and individual definition will vary greatly, the interconnections revealed in this single school may illustrate the process more widely. However caution must be exercised with such attempts at generalisation and this should be tested in further research.

7.6 Limitations of this Study

This study involved stakeholders at various levels in the ESL curriculum, namely, the directors of school divisions, the Curriculum Development Officer, the District Officer, the School Principal, the Assistant Principals, the Head of the Language Department, the ESL coordinator, nine ESL teachers, nine students and nine parents. Teachers, students and parents were selected from different ethnic groups with different socio-economic backgrounds. However, given that the case study focused on ESL teaching in a single school, the results of this study should not be taken to be representative of all students, teachers and administrators in other schools in Malaysia. Hence, the results of this study should be regarded from the viewpoint of the context in which they were obtained.

However, as all schools in Malaysia have the same system, I would contend that this single school as a complete cross-section of a ‘working spectrum’ is representative to some extent of the wider sector, and that these findings are therefore valid and can represent many similar schools within the sector. I recognise that there will be differences in schools in differing contexts and that the specific location (for
example, urban versus rural) and the cultural, ethnic and religious context are all likely to influence individual definitions of creativity and how it is interpreted within that local context. The specific context and time-frame of the case-study school does limit the degree to which the conclusions may be generalised in all but their broadest and most superficial interpretation, bounded as they are by the complex national, socio-cultural and linguistic system in which data were collected. However, I hope that some of the broad ideas generated are transferable to some extent, if only to stimulate research in other contexts so that the wider interpretation can be further tested.

Relatively few people were interviewed, and the interviews were quite brief and not very detailed (often perhaps partly because of language problems, although this was to some extent unavoidable because of Imperial College’s requirement that the data be collected in the language of the thesis, English). Most stakeholders involved, especially the teachers, were busy; therefore the interviewing process needed to be kept brief in order to obtain compliance and agreement from the participants. On the other hand, although brief, the interviews sample a cross-section of stakeholder groups across the complete ‘working spectrum’ of the school, from students right up to policy-makers, in a single, representative ‘case-study’ school. This was done to ensure minimal discrepancy and to represent as far as possible the whole system, which, although by necessity it was not examined in equal depth at every stage, did provide an overview of the whole working spectrum. Moreover, the stakeholders’ views were sampled in a similar way and analysed using the same two axes of relative scale, each independent of any actual definition, but capable of characterising and comparing individual definitions of creativity across the whole cross-section. While interviews with the stakeholder groups did capture a cross-section of views, performing just one round of interviews did limit this to a single ‘snap-shot’ in time. Many of the
stakeholders were busy and multiple interviews would have been difficult to organise and may have consequently limited participation. However, follow-up second interviews would have allowed me to check my interpretations and understanding of their personal views of creativity and garner their opinion of the overall stakeholder definition I had attributed to their group. They would also have allowed me to investigate participants’ opinions of my interpretation of the definitions of creativity held by other stakeholder groups and their views of how meaning is negotiated between the stakeholder groups on both a day-to-day and broader conceptual basis. Secondary interviews would have also allowed me to check and triangulate information from other sources which would have added to both depth and quality.

While I was able to obtain and analyse teachers’ lesson plans and student worksheets as an indirect indicator of how creativity was actually being taught in ESL classes and how this may been influenced by how the teachers’ individual view of creativity interacted with how they interpreted creativity as defined by the curriculum and the ‘management’ imperative, this was not very effective as the plans were brief and formulaic. This approach also failed to capture how the teachers’ attempts at creativity were engaged with by students and how this may have been influenced by their own personal and ‘family’ definitions. It would have been much more powerful to also observe some ESL teaching, seeing first-hand the student-teacher interaction as the teachers strive to teach creatively and to foster creativity in students. While the document analysis of the lesson plans and student worksheets from teachers I interviewed together with my own past experience of teaching provided some insight and information, teaching observations would have provided much richer data. While this study did capture the views and definitions of creativity in a working cross-section spectrum of ESL teaching in the school, it failed to examine this in light of the actual
business of teaching and putting these various definitions into practice. This is a major weakness and something that should be addressed in future work.

It is also important to recognise that while my historical role as an ESL teacher at the school gave me context and good rapport and access it may also have introduced some bias. I have attempted to recognise my previous role may influence my views and interpretation but have attempted to reduce ‘investigator bias’ by analysing and coding continually while attempting to be explicitly aware of my past role as teacher and my present role as researcher. I contend that my previous role at the study school was sufficiently distanced for me to be no longer embedded in the local politics and practices but I did retain useful context and access to subjects and data. I also hope that my experience helped me empathise and contributed to more comfortable and productive interviews. Thus I hope my past connection to the school gave me good contextual connection and awareness while the separation lent a degree of ‘outsider’ objectivity.

As a relative (previous) insider who has had the experience of working in the ‘case-study’ school for five years, I can see a ‘truth’ in the teachers’ voices on the issues that inhibit creativity in school, or at least my perception of it. As discussed earlier, the contextual factors play a major role in making creativity promotion in this school a success or a failure. This may also apply in most government schools in Malaysia, which face the same challenges in promoting creativity. On the other hand, as a researcher and as a teacher I am hopeful that there is always something that can be done to improve the situation.


### 7.7 Recommendations for Future Work

Perhaps the first and most obvious future work required would be to enhance the present study by completing the additional work required to address the limitations of the present study. Secondary interviews with the stakeholder groups would allow future researchers to check interpretation, triangulate information and delve deeper into areas of interest. Another issue that could perhaps be addressed in subsequent interviews, which would no longer be subject to Imperial College regulations, would be that, particularly with some groups they could be conducted in the appropriate native language rather than English. This might encourage deeper conversation and capture richer data. By comparing views and interpretation between interviews conducted in English and in a native language one might also be able to comment on the influence of the language and adjust interpretation appropriately. While secondary interviews would be the ideal, I do recognise that all the stakeholders are busy, some especially so; hence sending stakeholders summary interpretations and asking for further comment may go some way to achieving some of the benefit but may be more achievable. Similarly, observation of actual ESL teaching would allow me to assess how personal and curriculum definitions of creativity interact during the teaching and learning. This could be done with both general classes and with classes aiming to have a particular focus on creativity and perhaps the observation could be followed by further interviews or brief focus groups with students to further investigate insights gained from observation and to attempt to determine how the meaning of creativity is negotiated between teacher and student in practice. As this study only involved the officers in the Ministry of Education to represent the policy-makers, steps could also be taken to interview holders of higher-ranking posts, such as the directors at the Ministry of Education, to get a more direct
view of government policy and intent with regard to creativity in teaching and the curriculum.

Future research could also be carried out at other schools to see whether the similar comparable results are obtained, and this might be a step toward investigating other factors that may influence implementation of creative teaching and learning. A similar or secondary investigation in the same school with a larger number of teacher respondents (and also of other stakeholders) would not only validate the findings of the present study but might extend it to look more productively at, for example, the influence of ethnicity and culture within the present case study. Testing the data derived from this study in a similar but different school would add depth to and therefore improve the validity of its conclusions.

There are two other ways in which the sample base could be usefully extended in Malaysia. The first would involve including a range of private schools and the second the inclusion of government schools in rural areas and regional centres in Malaysia. Such a more widely sourced sample would take into account the differences between ethnic groups and other cultural and socio-economic groups in Malaysia. It would allow the ideas and conclusions generated in this case study to be examined and tested in the wider, diverse national context and would therefore perhaps produce conclusions and recommendations that could be more confidently generalised across the national system.

It would also be useful to carry out comparable studies in other countries, both in those of established nations and in those that have emerged from colonial rule in the last half century. In many ways creativity, particularly artistic creativity is culturally located and embedded in local customs, history and practice. However, in contrast to this, the entrepreneurial, problem-solving innovation and creativity is
perhaps more international. Studies examining the interplay between these two views of creativity both within and between national boundaries would be very interesting.

The internet and advanced technology could be an interesting area on which future researchers into creativity could focus. Hence, future studies could take into account whether exposure to the two media mentioned has influenced the way people think about creativity. There is also the interplay between local and ‘international’ views of creativity and the internet. We are now in an age where all but the most remote places have ready access to the rest of the world via the internet. In most places the internet content is very open and free and could be considered an almost ideal medium for sharing certain forms of creativity. It would be useful to see both how local expressions of creativity are ‘diluted’ by international or multinational creativity from the internet and how examples of local creativity transcend their local geographical boundaries and spread more widely because of the internet.

Creativity has been pegged to conducive environments, perfect collaborators, personality traits, serendipity, and even spiritual muses. While research psychologists are interested in increasing innovative thinking, clinical psychologists sometimes encourage patients to use artistic expression as a way to confront difficult feelings. In the field of education, creativity is also a key prerequisite for academic research: it drives scholars to ask new questions and find innovative answers. A creative learning environment fosters the freedom to think in participating students and teachers and stimulates the combination of different elements in new and unexpected, interesting and useful ways.
7.8 Conclusions and Recommendations

Creativity can mean different things to different people. For some it means being imaginative or inventive, taking risks or challenging convention. For others it is about original thinking or producing something that nobody has come up with before. Some believe that the term “creativity” only applies to those who possess artistic talents. Traditionally, creativity has been associated with the achievements of extraordinary people such as Mozart, Einstein and Leonardo Da Vinci, and a good deal of the early research into creativity has focused on the work of highly creative people or those considered to be geniuses.

Focusing on extraordinary individuals, however, simply perpetuates the myth that creativity is about special people doing special things. Research (De Bono, 1992; Claxton, 1998; Robinson, 2001) shows that there is no specific personality type associated with creativity. It is possible to be creative in any activity that engages our intelligence, because intelligence itself is essentially creative. Creative processes are rooted in the imagination, and our lives are shaped by the ideas we hold on to in order to give them meaning.

The understanding gained from this study shows that all stakeholders are aware of the concept of creativity. Although each one used different words and phrases to describe creativity, all stakeholders were aware of the importance of promoting creativity in the ESL curriculum. The findings provided answers to the three research questions and gave evidence of how creativity was understood by the stakeholders who play important roles in the curriculum. The findings of this study could be generalised to some extent to apply to most public schools in Malaysia, as all these schools use the same standard education system. This study therefore
provides useful information for educators with regard to creativity promotion in the ESL curriculum, and its findings could be used as a guide to its promotion in Malaysian schools.

However, not many stakeholders mentioned that something creative needs to be useful and appreciated by others, as has been stated by many researchers. Whatever the definitions given by the stakeholders, most agreed that creativity involved something new, different, original and appropriate. A creative act has to achieve a purpose, and it needs to be useful to a particular person or people involved in its performance. Weiner (2000) analyses how understanding creativity is tied to broader contemporary patterns, including intellectual concerns with postmodernism; trends in the arts; the changing status of women; the power of the electronic media; multiculturalism; developments in ‘psychology, science and technology; and the dramatic political, economic and social transformations of our age’.

Most teachers associated being creative with a level of proficiency and viewed the syllabus as either being too rigid or otherwise inadequate to provide guidance to them. However, most were clear what creativity means, although some tended to give one definition but to implement something else. This could be because they were trapped between the concept proposed to them by the Ministry and their own understanding of creativity, acquired previously either by reading or experience. This conflict arose because the communication between the two parties took place on a top-down basis.

Finally, the study uncovered the factors which contributed to the different definitions elicited from the stakeholders. If a more transparent and coherent support for creativity could be allied to the Ministry’s policy directions, the outcome would
be a more progressive policy with creativity at the heart of the personal, educational and career development of the individual. Education leaders and policy-makers have a crucial role in establishing a suitable organisational climate and framework for promoting creativity. Programmes for parental support in promoting creative learning for students should also be established with the aim of ensuring that the Malaysian government mission to produce a creative and progressive society by the year 2020 could be successfully accomplished.

In conclusion the results of this study imply that:

i. Different stakeholder groups have different definitions of creativity, but there is flexibility and overlap in that multiple definitions can co-exist. Consequently the issue is not one of incompatible or differing definitions.

ii. The problem is more that the combination of too many students, too few resources and time and a very rigid exam-focused system which pressurises teachers (and others) to teach in a way that tends to limit teaching to the simplistic transmission of facts and reduces learning to the acquisition of facts to be re-presented in order to pass exams, restricts creativity.

iii. This is made worse by the perception that, while the different stakeholder groups may share overlapping definitions of creativity, they do not really appreciate the difficulties of implementing that definition which are faced by the other groups.

iv. While the definition of creativity is not the problem, perhaps bringing people together to discuss and come to a consensually acceptable common definition might be a useful process, not because the definition is the problem, but because the process of discussion might make the implementation issues more explicit to all concerned.
While the lack of a common definition is not the problem, a discussion aimed at coming to a more consensual agreement about a definition or range of definitions might actually offer a constructive path to agreeing how implementation should work and lead to a more realistic and constructive awareness of the issues and barriers involved on the part of all concerned. The data from this study go some way to providing an enhanced understanding of the policy and practice of creativity in the ESL curriculum in Malaysia. As mentioned earlier in the findings chapter, the ‘bible’ for teachers in Malaysian schools is the Curriculum Document. However, as far as ‘creativity’ is concerned, this document offers a very limited definition of creativity and minimal information on creative teaching.

‘Critical and creative thinking skills are incorporated in the learning outcomes to enable learners to analyse information, make decisions, solve problems, and express themselves accurately and creatively in the target language.’

(Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 3)

This study suggests that key stakeholders have sufficiently flexible and overlapping definitions of creativity such that definition within the curriculum document is not the main problem. Despite this, better wording to describe creativity, particularly with regard to differentiating creative and critical thinking skills, would assist teachers in carrying out creative teaching. It would be helpful to the teachers if more information and explanation regarding the terms ‘critical and creative’ could be given in the curriculum specification. The government seems to have a more specific definition of creativity in mind, one aligned with internationalisation, entrepreneurial creativity and problem solving; perhaps this could be more explicitly explained and teachers helped to understand how this particular view of creativity is aligned with
creativity in the classroom. Providing examples of creativity promoting activities could aid teachers who do not have much time to think and create relevant activities for their lessons. Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from the UK’s Creative Partnerships scheme where external examples of a variety of different types of creativity were introduced into schools to benefit both students and teachers.

The Malaysian approach of introducing creativity via the standard national curriculum has advantages, such as the almost universal distribution and a high degree of standardisation. The lack of common definition of creativity does not seem to have posed a great problem as there appears to be enough common understanding and flexibility to work with the system. The main issue seems to be that by introducing creativity in this way it is associated with many of the common, largely procedural criticisms of introducing any new material, namely lack of time, space and resources. While increased definition and explanation might help, introducing external, focused examples to stimulate and motivate both teachers and students together with a more realistic allocation of time and resources would be much more likely to stimulate change than the addition of creativity into the curriculum alone.
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Appendix A

CREATIVITY IN THE MALAYSIAN ESL CURRICULUM: POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Malaysian Imperial Doctoral Programme (MIDP)
Year 2008-2013

TEACHER SURVEY FORM

Instruction:

1. Please read the questions carefully before answering.
2. You are required to answer the questions honestly and your answers would be kept private and confidential.
3. Please put a tick (✓) in the space provided.

Part A: Personal Data

Name of the Teacher:
Ethnic Group:
No. of years teaching:
Teaching hours/week:

Part B: Opinions on Creativity

1. What is creativity to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuable Ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divergent Thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing connections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking risks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being flexible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being different</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being practical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. A creative student ….

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perseveres in difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confronts challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suspends judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has flexible imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pushes boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeks new ways of seeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepts ambiguity of contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sees problems as interesting and acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tolerates disorder and unpredictability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sees hurdles as leading to improvements and solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. A creative teacher…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reflects everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criticizes positively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inspires their students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepts students ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attends to students’ opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asks open-ended questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourages students to be reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>builds on students’ questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takes students mistakes as a way of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourages students to participate by giving cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opens opportunities for students to do things their way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
Appendix B

Sample of Interview Protocol

CREATIVITY IN THE MALAYSIAN ESL CURRICULUM: POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION
Malaysian Imperial Doctoral Programme (MIDP)
Year 2008-2013

TEACHERS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Teacher</th>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time/ Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Interview Guidelines** | **Teacher's Responses** | **Summary of Teacher's Responses**

**Level A: Rapport**
- Knowing the participant’s background
- Explanation on the confidentiality of the data derived
- Explanation on the aims of the study

**Level B: Teaching experience in ESL classes and opinions on creativity**

Suggested Questions:
1. What does creativity mean to you?
2. There are few types of creativity. For example little c creativity (coping with everyday problems) and the
big C (inventing something that can change the world). Which one do you think the school should focus?

3. So, do you believe that everybody has the opportunity to be creative?

4. If they lack creativity, do you think it will affect their ability in solving problems?

5. Are you aware that in the English language curriculum there is a part mentioned that teacher should infuse CCTS in their teaching?

6. From your point of view is critical and creative thinking the same?

7. Do you think the curriculum specification helps the teachers in understanding what is creativity?

8. Do you think school plays a vital role in encouraging creativity?

9. What are the activities that you do to enhance their creativity?

10. When you prepare lesson plan do you allocate a part of your teaching for creativity?

11. Among the three main ethnic groups is there any difference in their attitude? Any ethnic group which is more motivated than the other in terms of creativity?
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Do you find any creative students in your class?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>How do they differ from the others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>What are the obstacles you think the students face in order to be creative?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>How do you define a creative teacher?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Can you recall a time when you are most creative?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Can you describe any occasion when you encourage other teachers to be creative?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Does teachers get support from the ministry in terms of courses to enhance their creativity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level C: Closure**

1. If you have the opportunity to make changes in order to promote creativity among your students, what would you do?

- Thanking the teacher for his/her cooperation in the interview.
Samples of Transcripts

SAMPLE 1

Teacher Interview Transcript (T7)

R: Hi, good morning. Firstly, I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. I’m looking at teachers’ conceptions and views on creativity and would like to get your opinions. Our conversation will be recorded for the purpose of analysing but no identity will be mentioned anywhere. So, can we start with the first question?

T7: Yes, sure.

R: What is creativity to you?

T7: It is hands on...for example arts and music to attract attention. In language, it’s how to use language to create something innovative. I always think how I can use this to create this.You can be creative in language and arts, not science. In science, it is just invention.

R: Is there a difference between critical and creative?

T7: Critical thinking is more on analyzing. Creative is to come out with something using your own ideas. For example if I give a situation to the students. How would you come out with solutions and present it to the class?

R: Does the syllabus confuse teacher by using the term CCTS?

T7: I think it has been long enough for the teachers to use the syllabus and they are ok with it. I think it will not confuse them.

R: There are few types of creativity. For example little c creativity and the big C. Which one do you think the school should focus?

T7: I think at school level we should focus on the small one like how to solve problems in teenage crisis for example...focus on smaller circle. As they grow you can focus on more global matters. I always believed that students who are too discipline are not creative.

R: Why is that?
T7: Because you are not allowing them to think out. Ok, in Maths and Science they are innovative you know, but they can’t create... you improve fro here to this. Whereas in language you create something out of nothing. Even technology is not creativity. It’s more than that to be creative. And I have done this in my classroom during literature. When I’m too strict with them they cannot come out with anything. But when I go in and I smile and let them be what they are and I tell them in 10 minutes I want to see this product. They are so creative. Let them loose, so they become creative. Again discipline is one way that curbs the child’s creativity. When you put rules around them, they can’t think out of the box.

R: So what are the activities that you do in your English class to promote creativity?

T7: I do alot of language games, drama, and I found that drama is a way to make them just let go.

R: Do you have time for that?

T7: Yes, double period. The best class I have is 3 Saphire. Within 5 minutes they can come out with some scenes. They are so creative.

R: So do you think there’s always opportunity to promote creativity to your students?

T7: I do. You can do it in language. English language you don’t have to go by the books. It’s up to you to be creative. Not like Maths, Science and Bio, they have to follow by the books. As long as you see the child is speaking, the child is writing...you have done your job. I don’t believe in finishing the syllabus.

R: When you give them challenging activities, do they enjoy?

T7: They love it. Because, one, they are allowed to make noise. No. 2, they are given the importance. They love the importance where they are putting in the lime light. They love presenting. For example I gave them 10 situations. One was you are Miss World and you are interviewed by reporters. So I said I don’t care whether you are a by or a girl. And so many boys chose that role. They just want to feel the diffrence. The whole class just enjoyed it. I was so surprised. So you see...the knowledge is there, but you just don’t give the chance to create.

R: Do you have students who are passive and like to copy notes?

T7: My two other classes are weak classes. But they like language games. I start of with the first student you know. I started I have a pen, started to teach then subject verb agreement. Then the second girl will continue with...I have a pen and a ruler. And when they go up to twenty something...they have to think of more verbs and have to show to their friends. And one student said I have a pair of underwear and tried to show his friends. They really enjoyed. You can still be creative even in the last class.

R: So to you what is a creative teacher?
T7: A creative teacher is a survivor. They can survive with whatever means to teach and attract students to learn.

R: Do you find any creative students in your class. How do they differ from others?

T7: Quite a handful of them? They always want to take part in language. I have a group of weak students that I teach them to express themselves by using drums. They perform using dustbin and things around them. From them they will start speaking.

R: Do you encourage others to be creative?

T7: No, we don’t have time.

R: Ok, Thank you for your time.

SAMPLE 2
Malay Students Transcript

R: What is creativity to you?

S1: Mempunyai kemahiran sendiri. Membuat sesuatu dengan cara tersendiri. (Creativity...doing thing your way, something different from others.)

S2: Membuat sesuatu lain dari yang lain. (Creative is...when you have different ideas, not the same with other people. Like when you draw, your drawing is different from others.)

S3: Explore lebih apa yang orang lain dah buat. Kreatif...macam artis lukis gambar cantik. Atau tulis sajak atau lagu..itu kreatif la...( Explore more than others do. Creative...like artists they draw nice picture. Or when you write poems or songs with your own ideas and words...that’s creative.)

R: Boleh bagi contoh? (Can you give an example?)

S1: Biasanya bila tgk org buat seni, macam ukiran ke.. (Normally, when we see people doing art work)

S2: When I tie my scarf. I can do different styles.

S3: Yes, drawing.

R: Ada bidang lain selain seni yang kita boleh jadi kreatif? (Besides arts, is there any other field that you think can make us a creative person?)

S2: Banyak. Kreatif dengan pelbagai jenis idea. ( A lot. Creative with lots of ideas.)
S1: Music. Play guitar.


R: Kalau dalam kelas English, ada contoh yang anda kreatif? (Is there any example that you are creative in your English class?)

S1: Boleh jugak. Macam dari segi bahasa, kalau orang tak guna perkataan tu tapi kita guna. (Using words that others don’t use)

S2: Discussion in groups.

S3: Group presentation.

R: Apa aktiviti yang kreatif yang kita dapat buat dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris? (Any other creative activities that you do?)

S1: Expand ideas. Macam bila cikgu bagi tajuk cara diaorang bentangkan maklumat pada kelas. (Expanding ideas when teacher gives a topic and asks us to present information to the class.)

S2: Drama, macam kita buat masa oral. (Drama...like we did during oral.)

S3: Roleplay.

R: Do you find it interesting?

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, I enjoy.

S3: Good, enjoyable.

R: Did the teacher say you are creative?

S1: Macam buat nota, cikgu kata kreatif la sikit. Buat pelbagai warna nanti senang nak ingat. (For example when we prepare notes, the teacher says that we need to be more creative. Use various colours so that it is easier for us to remember.)

S2: She said our group is most creative. We did power point presentation.

S3: Yes, she said good.

R: How about at home, do you do anything creative?

S1: My parents sent me for music class every weekend.

S2: I have to study at home. Just help my mum in the kitchen sometimes.

S3: Play computer games.
R: Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the topic we discuss today?

S1: No, that’s all.

S2: No.

S3: No.

R: Thank you very much for your participation.

SAMPLE 3

Indian Parents Transcript

R: Hi, we are meeting today as I would like to hear your view on creativity. This is just for my study, nothing more than that. Everything you say will be kept confidential.

F: yeah...i understand. Creativity is something you cannot force. It has to be of your interest. Like my children, I will support whatever they are interested in so that they have space to show their talent. Of course as long as it is something positive and it doesn’t affect their studies. They need to manage their time wisely la...

R: How about you, what do you think?

M: Like what he said...I always support what they do. So they can express themselves the way they like.

R: Anything your daughter do that you think was very creative?

F: She likes to dance. We send her for traditional Indian dance.

M: Yes, she can dance very beautifully. You just play the music, she will dance. She create her own steps.

F: The teacher also said she’s good.

R: So, do you think creativity is an important element in life?

F: Of course, it is important. So that you can stand out. If not you’re just the same like others and nobody notice you.

M: Yes, I agree with my husband. I always tell my daughter to do her best. Then she will be better than other people. But study is also very important. I always tell her.
F: Even if she wants to be a professional dancer, she has to study first. We are not in other parts of the world where people value your talent. This is Malaysia. You must be practical. Anything, study comes first.

R: Do you think creativity should be promoted in school?

F: Yes, they have co-curricular activities. I guess that’s when the kids’ talent are being explored. Of course the class is overpopulated. Well…what do you expect? Overpopulation is something normal in a public school. For those who can afford, just send your children to a private school. Everything will be taken care of...

M: Yeah true...

R: How about in the academic subjects, do you think creativity is important?

M: I think here the teacher should be creative. She should be able to attract the students to learn what she is teaching.

F: I agree, not only students must be creative. Teachers’ creativity is more important you know to handle all sorts of students.

R: In real life, do you think creativity is important?

F: Depends….if you just lead a normal life…everyday you do the same routine, then there is not much of being creative.

M: Yeah, unless you want something different from others.

R: So, do you encourage creativity at home? Can you give some examples of what you do with your children?

M: Like Leela, she dance a lot. The boys are not interested, but they do other things like playing chess.

F: Yes, the youngest likes puzzles. I think that’s creative too, you do a lot of thinking.

R: How about you and your wife, anything you do that you think is most creative?

F: Well….I guess maybe solving everyday issues in the family, financial…I’m not into arts or anything like that.

M: Me too. I only do sewing sometimes...

R: Ok, thank you very much for your time.
Administrator’s Transcript

R: What does creativity mean to you?

AP: To me creativity is the ability to innovate, to create and to develop something new and original.

R: From your point of view is there any difference between critical thinking and creative thinking?

AP: Critical T and creative T are two different things. The first one is the thinking that is able to evaluate or to criticise something but not necessarily can solve problems. On the other hand, the later is the ability to analyse and solve problems. We are now trying to promote CCTS to encourage the students to use both sides of their brains. It is not easy.

R: How do you think creativity can help our students in terms of their thinking and solving everyday problems?

AP: If students are creative they are able to solve any problem they face independently, without the assistance from others. People like this can survive in any situation because they have several options in mind. They look at different angles before making decisions.

R: Do you think the curriculum document outlines enough guidance for teachers to prepare ESL classes which promote creativity? How do you think it can be improved?

AP: The document is only the guideline. It is not enough to guide teachers to teach in a creative manner. We can still see most of the teachers prefer teacher centred compared to students centred methods when teaching. Teaching and learning should be more students oriented, then only students can be encouraged to think.

R: Do you see creativity as an important element to be emphasised in schools? Why?

AP: Yes, of course. Students nowadays are too independent. They cannot make good decision simply because they cannot think logically. That’s why so many of them are involved with negative activities.

R: How do you think creativity can be promoted in an exam-based culture?

AP: I don’t think it is possible. The system itself is more towards critical thinking, not creativity. If you look at the exam questions for instance, they are more to critical
thinking. Creativity is something gifted I thinks, not everybody is creative. If one is not creative, no matter what you do to motivate them, they are simply not creative. They just can’t perform.

R: Do you think the Principal/Ketua Bidang/PK experience plays a vital role in promoting creativity? How?

AP: Yes, I think the leader plays a role here in the sense that they have to know what the teachers are doing in class. From time to time, teachers should be observed, supervised...they also need encouragement and motivation. Maybe by giving them reward they will more involved in school activities especially co-curr.

R: Besides encouraging teachers and students to perform their best in the curriculum, how do you think you can nurture their creativity?

AP: Everything has to start at home. Parents should play a role in encouraging their children to express their talent and creativity. That’s how I think...teachers duty is to just polish what the children already brought from home.

R: When you make decision on the school yearly plan, do you have in mind programs/activities where you actually plan to promote creativity in the school curriculum?

AP: Yes...through the teaching and learning activities.

R: What kind of activities that you think can promote creativity in class?

AP: Through their folios and assignments...you can see from there. Those who are not creative will just copy notes from the information they get from the internet. But the creative ones will make the reading interesting. They know what to take, how to expand, at the same time adding their own ideas.

R: Do you think school plays a vital role in encouraging creativity? How?

AP: Yeah, of course. Usually from the activities held especially co-curr activities.

R: From your observation, among the three main ethnic groups is there any difference in their attitude? Any ethnic group which is more motivated than the other in terms of creativity?

AP: I think the Chinese. You can see that from their assignments. The way they present things is different. That’s how they express themselves. The Malays are quite passive, they just do things moderately and hand in their assignment just for the sake
of doing it. The Indians do express themselves, but more to vandalism. It’s true. If you are in this school you will see what I meant.

R: What are the obstacles you think students face in being creative?

AP: They don’t have the opportunity to express themselves, doing things they like you know. The system is as such. You come to school to get good grades, not to show your talent or creativity. There’s no space to let it out. Nobody cares whether you’re creative or not actually.

R: Does the school provide enough support in terms of adequate materials for teachers to promote creativity?

AP: Yes...more through Science and KH projects and competitions. But very limited. Those who are interested are also very few.

R: What kind of support do the school gets from the Ministry of Education in order to promote creativity among teachers and students?

AP: There are courses offered, but not specifically on creativity. I’m not sure but I guess it is embedded in the courses offered.

R: If there is any change that you can make in the present curriculum, what do you think can be improved so that creativity can be well promoted to our students?

AP: I think back to basic needs. What the students are learning now is too rigid, no soul. It’s too exam oriented, paper chase that’s it. When they go out to the real world, they don’t know what to do, they can’t survive. That’s what happening today. The guideline is in the curriculum, but I think the implementation fails.

R: Do you have anything else to share?

AP: I think that’s all. We can suggest lots of things here, but those up there who make decisions you know. They should realize that things down here need changes. We can’t do much if they don’t.

R: Thank you very much for your time.

AP: You’re welcome.
R: What does creativity mean to you?

PM: It involves the production of a product. It needs to have an aim, objective and has to be useful. Well either, a product or a process. Also a kind of problem solving.

R: Can you talk a bit about the present ESL curriculum?

PM: The curriculum document was prepared in the last 8 or 9 years. The preparation of the document involves many...teachers, lecturers, etc. So, we do listen to many actually. We don’t simply make decisions on our side. But of course we cannot invite everybody.

R: Do you see any problem for teachers to implement what prescribed in the syllabus?

PM: I think the problem in school now is that teachers skip steps of teaching.

R: Any other?

PM: I don’t know what is their problem, whenever I see them they will complain of not enough courses. This depends on our budget too.

R: Any other obstacles that you think defeat the purpose of promoting creativity in schools?

PM: Lack of supervision. Time allocation is also not considered in the syllabus. The analogy is like this...you can’t be putting everything in a cup without considering whether it can accommodate everything into it or not.

R: How about the JU (main trainer)? Do you think it is practical to have the JU to pass down all the information to the teachers?

PM: Of course there is a gap between what we give to JU and what the teachers get. The information has been watered down... But that’s the best we can do. We can’t invite everybody and give them training.

R: Do you think it is important to promote creativity in school?

PM: Yes. I think everybody has the potential to be creative. It can be tapped. But the degree of creativity of course depends on individual.

R: Is there any plan of revising the ESL curriculum?
PM: Now the division is in the process of changing content based curriculum to standard based. We will start with Standard 1 next year. Secondary schools will follow maybe in the next 2 years.

R: Is KBKK (CCTS- Critical and Creative Thinking Skills programme) still on?

PM: Yes of course. But we use new term. It is now creativiti inovasi (creative innovation).

R: What is the difference between KBKK and the new one?

PM: The new curriculum focus on creative teaching and also teaching for creativity. The lesson must be creative and the opportunities should be given to the students.

R: Are you saying that at the moment we are lack of creative teachers?

PM: Not many are creative. But there are teachers who are creative. They enter competitions here and there and win...that’s good.

R: Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the topic we discussed today?

PM: I think I have shared most of it.

R: Thank you very much for your participation.
### Sample of Teacher’s Lesson Plan

#### Minggu yang ke P

**Hari** Tuesday

**Tarikh** 23 - 02 - 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jam</th>
<th>Mengetahui</th>
<th>Tajuk / Objektif / Aktiviti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>Topic: Places of interest</td>
<td>L2-Bloom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>Enrich Lesson</td>
<td>a table with information related to places of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>Activities: Pre-Reading - 7 asks about places of interest</td>
<td>English Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>While Reading - SS complete a table about places of interest</td>
<td>Post-Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>SS complete questions related to the passage in pairs</td>
<td>Reflections: All 34 SS completed activity given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>Topic: Pronouns</td>
<td>Peridad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>Learning outcomes: SS should be able to</td>
<td>English Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>Complete Jeffy’s diary with suitable pronouns</td>
<td>17 explains about pronouns by giving examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>SS complete Jeffy’s diary by referring to notes given (Related to pronoun)</td>
<td>Reflection: All 34 SS completed Jeffy’s diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>Density: Revision (Pre-editing)</td>
<td>密度与适宜的词性与7’s guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>Diamond: Learning outcomes: SS should be able to</td>
<td>English Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>Identify correct tense used for the essay by exchanging essays among them</td>
<td>Reflection: 7 highlights correct tense that should be used for the writing task (completed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>SS exchange their essays and check their friends’ tenses</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>Topic: Idiomatic expressions</td>
<td>Reflection: All 34 SS participated in the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>Grammar: English lesson</td>
<td>choose best meanings for underlined idiomatic expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>SS should be able to</td>
<td>Activities: 17 explains about idiomatic expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>Ask one example</td>
<td>SS read out dialogues given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>In pairs SS match best meanings with underlined idiomatic expressions</td>
<td>Reflection: All 34 SS completed task given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>REVISION</td>
<td>Carine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 - 4.50 pm</td>
<td>SS should be able to</td>
<td>English Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50 - 2.50 pm</td>
<td>Complete a passage with correct answers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Sample of Students Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Art Gallery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The National Art Gallery is housed in a colonial-style building run by the National Heritage Trust. It was formerly known as the Majestic Hotel. The art gallery exhibits a wide range of paintings by local and foreign artists.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mini Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The traditional houses at Mini Malaysia represent the architectural styles of all the states of Malaysia. They display various works of art and craft from each state. Attractions include weekly cultural shows and traditional games.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kenyir Dam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia’s largest rock-filled hydro-electric dam has a water catchment area of 300,000 hectares. The area around the dam is ideal for jungle trekking and nature walks. The lake is a popular fishing spot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Batu Caves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A popular tourist attraction, particularly during the Hindu festival of Thaipusam which falls in late January each year. The Hindu shrine is located in the Main Cave, 272 steps up. At the foothills is a small temple with interesting artwork of Hindu legends on its walls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kuala Gula Sanctuary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bird lovers’ paradise! Over 100 species of birds come to this area, particularly between the months of August and December. We can also see beautiful butterflies and insects. This place is managed by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kek Lok Si</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The largest and one of the most beautiful Buddhist temples in South East Asia. The temple has a seven-tier pagoda; the Bee Po Thail which rises 30 metres high. Work on this temple began in 1890 and took more than two decades to complete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 1-6

For each of the descriptions below, name the place of interest that the following people should visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Place of interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kevin is an architect visiting Malaysia. He is interested in designs of buildings.</td>
<td>National Art Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>John is interested in observing a festival celebrated in Malaysia.</td>
<td>Batu Caves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lisa is planning to see some works of art by local and foreign artists.</td>
<td>Kenyir Dam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zak is taking some friends for a weekend fishing trip.</td>
<td>Kuala Gula Sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mohan is doing research on birds.</td>
<td>]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

370
Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT)

During the 1990's, a former student of Bloom's, Lorin Anderson, led a new assembly which met for the purpose of updating the taxonomy, hoping to add relevance for 21st century students and teachers. This time "representatives of three groups [were present]: cognitive psychologists, curriculum theorists and instructional researchers, and testing and assessment specialists" (Anderson, & Krathwohl, 2001, p. xxviii). Like the original group, they were also arduous and diligent in their pursuit of learning, spending six years to finalize their work. Published in 2001, the revision includes several seemingly minor yet actually quite significant changes. Several excellent sources are available which detail the revisions and reasons for the changes. A more concise summary appears here. The changes occur in three broad categories: terminology, structure, and emphasis.

Terminology Changes

Changes in terminology between the two versions are perhaps the most obvious differences and can also cause the most confusion. Basically, Bloom's six major categories were changed from noun to verb forms. Additionally, the lowest level of the original, knowledge was renamed and became remembering. Finally, comprehension and synthesis were retitled to understanding and creating. In an effort to minimize the confusion, comparison images appear below.
The graphic is a representation of the NEW verbage associated with the long familiar Bloom's Taxonomy. Note the change from Nouns to Verbs [e.g., Application to Applying] to describe the different levels of the taxonomy. Note that the top two levels are essentially exchanged from the Old to the New version. (Schultz, 2005) (Evaluation moved from the top to Evaluating in the second from the top, Synthesis moved from second on top to the top as Creating.)

Source:
http://www.odu.edu/educ/llschult/blooms_taxonomy.htm

The new terms are defined as:

- **Remembering**: Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory.
- **Understanding**: Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.
- **Applying**: Carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing.
- **Analyzing**: Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.
- **Evaluating**: Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.
- **Creating**: Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing.

(Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, pp. 67-68)
Appendix G

Curriculum Document
KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA

HURAIAN SUKATAN PELAJARAN
KURIKULUM BERSEPADU SEKOLAH MENENGAH
CURRICULUM SPECIFICATIONS

BAHASA INGGERIS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TINGKATAN 4
FORM 4

2003
RUKUN NEGARA

BAHAWASANYA negara kita Malaysia mendukung cita-cita hendak mencapai perpaduan yang lebih erat di kalangan seluruh masyarakatnya; memelihara satu cara hidup demokratik; mencipta masyarakat yang adil di mana kemakmuran negara akan dapat dinikmati bersama secara adil dan saksama; menjamin satu cara yang liberal terhadap tradisi-tradisi kebudayaan yang kaya dan berbagai-bagai corak; membina satu masyarakat progresif yang akan menggunakan sains dan teknologi moden;

MAKA KAMI, rakyat Malaysia, berikrar akan menumpukan seluruh tenaga dan usaha kami untuk mencapai cita-cita tersebut berdasarkan prinsip-prinsip berikut:

KEPERCAYAAN KEPADA TUHAN
KESETIAAN KEPADA RAJA DAN NEGARA
KELUHURAN PERLEMBAGAAN
KEDAULATAN UNDANG-UNDANG
KESOPanan DAN KESUSILAAHANs
FALSAFAH PENDIDIKAN KEBANGSAAN

Pendidikan di Malaysia adalah suatu usaha berterusan ke arah memperkembangkan lagi potensi individu secara menyeluruh dan bersepadu untuk mewujudkan insan yang seimbang dan harmonis dari segi intelek, rohani, emosi dan jasmani berdasarkan kepercayaan kepada Tuhan. Usaha ini adalah bagi melahirkan rakyat Malaysia yang berilmu pengetahuan, berketramilah, berakhlaq mulia, bertanggungjawab dan berkeupayaan mencapai kesejahteraan diri serta memberi sumbangan terhadap keharmonian dan kemakmuran masyarakat dan negara.
Kata Pengantar

Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran adalah dokumen yang memperincikan Sukatan Pelajaran yang bertujuan untuk memenuhi cita-cita murid dan semangat Falsafah Pendidikan Kebangsaan, dan menyediakan murid menghadapi arus globalisasi serta ekonomi berasaskan pengetahuan pada abad ke-21.


Dalam melakukan aktiviti pengajaran dan pembelajaran, guru diharapkan dapat memberikan penekanan pada unsur bernilai tambah, iaitu kemahiran bertik, kemahiran teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi, kemahiran belajar cara belajar, kajian masa depan, kecergasan pelbagai, pembelajaran kontekstual, dan pembelajaran konstruktivisme. Di samping itu, nilai murid dan semangat patriotik dan kewarganegaraan tetap diutamakan. Semua elemen ini diharapkan dapat memberikan keyakinan kepada murid dan boleh diaplikasikan dalam kehidupan harian dan dunia pekerjaan.

Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran ini menjelaskan hasil pembelajaran yang perlu dikuasai oleh murid berasaskan pendekatan masteri. Hasil pembelajaran tersebut dinyatakan secara eksplicit mengikut tahap kesukaran isi kanungan dan tahap keupayaan murid. Hasil pembelajaran diperlukan kepada tiga aras iaitu Aras 1 (aras asas), Aras 2 (aras sederhana), dan Aras 3 (aras cemerlang).

Kandungan Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Tahun Satu menggariskan hasil pembelajaran yang perlu dikuasai oleh murid. Pernyataan dalam Huraian Hasil Pembrajaran memberikan cabaran yang sesuai dengan murid pada tahap tertinggi dalam pendidikan sekolah rendah. Huraian ini seharusnya dapat membantu guru merancang dan melaksanakan pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang berkesan.

Dalam menyediakan Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran yang disemak semula ini banyak pihak yang terlibat terutama guru, pensyarah maktab dan universiti, pegawai Kementerian Pendidikan, dan individu yang mewakili badan-badan tertentu.

Kepada semua pihak yang telah memberikan sumbangan kepakanas, masa, dan tenaga sehingga terhasilnya Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran ini, Kementerian Pendidikan merakamkan setinggi-tinggi penghargaan dan ucapan terima kasih.

(Sdr. SHARIFAH MAIMUNAH BT. SYED ZIN)
Pengarah
Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools in line with its status as a second language.

Learners are taught the English language to enable them to use the language in everyday life, to further their studies and for work purposes. With globalization, all Malaysians will need to be proficient in English as a medium for communicating with people from other countries. The use of English in ICT has been included to enable learners to access knowledge on the Internet and to network with people both locally and overseas.

AIMS

The English language syllabus aims to extend learners’ English language proficiency in order to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace needs.

OBJECTIVES

The English language curriculum enables learners to:

i. form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence; take part in social interactions; and obtain goods and services;

ii. obtain, process and use information from various audio-visual and print sources; and present the information in spoken and written form;

iii. listen, view, read and respond to different texts, and express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written form; and

iv. show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation.

THE SYLLABUS

The English syllabus at the secondary level specifies the content to be taught from Form 1 through to Form 5.

The English language curriculum is organised in a manner that reflects the way English is used in society in everyday life. Three areas of language use have been delineated and these are the Interpersonal, the Informational, and the Aesthetic.

The Curriculum Content of the syllabus outlines three main sections, namely, the Learning Outcomes to be achieved by learners, the Language Content to be incorporated into the lessons, and the Educational Emphases to be woven into materials and activities.

The Learning Outcomes of the syllabus specify the skills to be achieved by learners in the three areas of language use: the Interpersonal, the Informational and the Aesthetic. These areas incorporate the integration of the four language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The Language Content outlines the grammar, the sound system and the word list to be taught, while the section on Educational Emphases incorporates worldwide developments in education.
such as thinking skills, ICT skills and the theory of Multiple Intelligences.

CURRICULUM SPECIFICATIONS

The English Language Syllabus is detailed out in the Curriculum Specifications. These have been prepared as separate documents for each year of the secondary school and are termed Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran. Each document serves as a guide to teachers with regard to the skills to be achieved, the topics or themes to be dealt with, and the vocabulary, grammar items, and the sound system to be learnt.

This document is the Curriculum Specifications for Form 4. There are two sections to this document. Section 1 outlines the Learning Outcomes and Specifications, and Section 11 outlines the Language Content.

Section 1: Learning Outcomes and Specifications

Section 1 forms the main focus of the document because it contains the Learning Outcomes to be achieved by the end of Form 1. The elaboration in the columns are as follows:

- the first column contains final Learning Outcomes related to skills to be achieved by learners by the end of Form 5;
- the second column sets out the skills to be achieved in Form 4. This second column attempts to break down these larger outcomes into more manageable skills and sub-skills for teaching and learning. These have been set out at three levels ranging from the more basic to the more advanced. Level 1 outlines the basic skills to be achieved by all learners. After having completed the specific tasks in Level 1 successfully, learners then progress to Level 2, and subsequently to Level 3.
- the third column is entitled Examples /Activities /Notes. These are directed at teachers and they include teaching points, examples of activities and explanations for the attainment of the Learning Outcomes. Teachers need to use their initiative, imagination and creativity to extend the experiences of their learners, to reinforce what has been learnt and to create challenging language tasks.

In preparing the specifications, care has been taken to ensure that this document is reader-friendly. As such, the use of terminology has been omitted as far as was possible and a simpler word substituted (e.g. unity in place of coherene).

Areas of Language Use

The curriculum is based on three areas of language use. They are the Interpersonal, the Informational and the Aesthetic.

Language for interpersonal purposes enables learners to establish and maintain friendships and to collaborate with people in undertaking certain things. Language for informational purposes enables learners to use the English language to obtain, process and give information. Language for aesthetic purposes enables learners to enjoy literary texts at a level suited to their language proficiency and develops in them the ability to express themselves creatively.

By the end of the year, learners should be able to use the English language for these purposes.
Language Skills
The four language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing do not appear in their pure form as Learning Outcomes but are integrated with the three areas of language use. Thus, when learners use the language, say for interpersonal purposes, they not only engage in conversation by talking and listening to each other, but also engage in written work when they write messages and letters. However, in the Specifications column, the more specific skills and sub-skills that appear in this column will build towards achieving the Learning Outcomes for the year.

The Learning Content
In teaching learners to use the language for various purposes, the content or topic of the lesson can be sourced from various areas. Knowledge from subject disciplines such as science and geography can be utilized, or alternatively, topics can be drawn from current issues. Learners begin with issues and concerns in their immediate surroundings, i.e. the school, town and country and later progress to issues and concerns at a more international level. Some themes and topics have been suggested as examples to help teachers decide upon their own themes and topics that are suitable for their class.

SECTION II: LANGUAGE CONTENT

Grammar
In this section, grammar items have been selected from the list in the syllabus and these are to be taught within the context of the three areas of language use. In addition, sentence patterns have been listed to enable learners to master the structures of the English language. Teachers are advised to limit the number of structures used and to ensure that learners master these structures well. Teaching too many complex structures may be counter-productive when it involves weaker learners.

Word List
The list of words selected for teaching at the upper secondary is based on a sample of the more common words and high frequency words. However, this suggested word list is only the minimum for the year. Teachers are encouraged to widen this list if their learners show the ability to cope with more advanced vocabulary.

Sound System
To help learners pronounce words correctly and speak with correct stress, intonation and rhythm, specific sounds (e.g. blends, diphthongs) have been identified for teaching. The objective of this exercise is to aim for clear speech and intelligibility.

EDUCATIONAL EMPHASES

Educational emphases given below outline current developments in education that will help learners prepare for the world of work and social life. In this respect, the incorporation of moral education, citizenship education, patriotism and thinking skills in the specifications will contribute towards the building of a modern and progressive Malaysian society.

Thinking Skills
Critical and creative thinking skills are incorporated in the learning outcomes to enable learners to analyse information, make decisions, solve problems, and express themselves accurately and creatively in the target language.
Learning How to Learn Skills
Learning How to Learn skills are also integrated with the learning outcomes and aim to enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning. These skills incorporate information skills, library skills and study skills to enable learners to access sources of information more efficiently and help them become independent life-long learners.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Skills
In line with globalization and the ICT Age, skills relating to ICT are incorporated in the learning outcomes. These skills have been added to cater for schools that have ICT facilities. These skills include the use of multimedia resources such as TV documentaries and Internet resources as well as the utilization of computer-related activities such as e-mail activities, networking and interacting with electronic courseware.

Values and Citizenship
The values contained in the secondary Moral Education syllabus have been incorporated in the learning outcomes and include patriotism and good citizenship.

Multiple Intelligences
The learning outcomes also reflect the incorporation of the theory of Multiple Intelligences. This is illustrated, for example, in the use of interpersonal skills in social interaction, the application of kinaesthetic intelligence in the dramatisation of texts, and the application of spatial intelligence in the interpretation of maps.

Knowledge Acquisition
Learning outcomes utilise subject-matter disciplines such as science and geography, and incorporate educational emphases such as environmental studies and consumerism to provide contexts for language use.

Preparation for the Real World
The learning outcomes prepare learners to meet the challenges of the real world by focusing on language use in society. To some extent this is achieved through structuring the curriculum in terms of the Interpersonal, Informational and Aesthetic uses of language. It is also achieved by making use of real-life issues for classroom activities and project work. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, learners are encouraged to meet with people outside of the classroom so that they learn to operate in real-life situations.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING
The following considerations should be taken into account in teaching the curriculum specifications.

Planning and Organisation of Lessons
The Learning Outcomes must be organised in a manageable form for teaching, taking into account the time allocated for English in the timetable. The three areas of language use, taken singly or in combination, are usually planned around a theme or topic.
Integration
The principle of integration can help teachers cover a cluster of skills in several lessons. Once a topic is selected, teachers can plan tasks and activities that seek to integrate the three areas of language use.

Thus, for the theme of Conservation for example, a topic for teaching may be Save Our Forests and Save Lives. Students can first be asked to read articles from different newspapers on how landslides in highland areas have destroyed homes and lives as a result of land clearing for development. Students then talk to each other recounting the different points of view, namely that of the victims or the developers who made the decision to clear the forest, etc. They then give their own opinions of the incident, drawing their own conclusions (interpersonal purpose). Students may then write letters offering help to the families concerned. The teacher then assigns groups of students to find more information from the Internet or other sources on how clearing of forests can have a disastrous impact on the environment resulting in soil erosion, landslides, etc. (informational purpose). Students then write group reports and present them to the class. Finally, students can be asked to read and then discuss poems on the environment, and then try their hand at composing haikus and simple poems (aesthetic).

In all of these lessons, moral values should be infused. This can be done through the appropriate selection of materials and activities. Besides this, elements of patriotism, environmental education, and health education are considered essential in building a disciplined society.

Repetition, Reinforcement, Consolidation and Mastery
Language skills, vocabulary, grammar items and the sound system must be repeated often to maximize learning and bring about retention. To this end, teachers should set a variety of tasks and activities that will enable learners to use the language items repeatedly so that items are reinforced. Repetition should be carried out using new material to avoid boredom.

Teachers are advised not to go on to a new level of work or new set of skills until learners master the skills being taught.

Teaching-Learning Activities
In order to bring about effective learning, learners must be given every opportunity to engage in real or simulated activities that require them to use the language i.e. lessons should be activity-based and learner-centred and revolve around real-life tasks to ensure relevance. Learners must be able to cope with the task that is set and care should be taken to ensure that they are not operating at a frustration level. Teachers may need to control structures and vocabulary to ensure successful completion of a task or activity.

Classroom Evaluation
Evaluation is part and parcel of the teaching-learning process. Continuous feedback is essential if learners are to keep track of their progress. After every lesson teachers are encouraged to assess their set of learners through simple questioning techniques or other tasks so that they can pace their lessons in accordance with learners’ progress. Ideally, teachers should ensure mastery before moving on to the next set of skills.
Centralised Assessment
The Syllabus Specifications is a document to guide teaching. Teachers should understand its potential to be stretched or reduced according to the ability level of learners in a particular class. Not all Learning Outcomes are suitable to be tested at the central level where levels of proficiency vary widely among learners. Use of the Syllabus Specifications for examination purposes therefore takes into account other considerations such as the national norm and the need to set realistic and realizable standards for the majority of test-takers.

Other Considerations
As far as possible, teachers should use the Malaysian setting as a base to teach the language skills and language contents. Teachers should also use materials that emphasise Malaysian values and the Malaysian way of life. Learners are to be nurtured to be proud to be Malaysians.

This document only lists a number of essential activities for the attainment of the English language. Teachers need to use their initiative, imagination and creativity to extend the experiences of their learners, to reinforce what has been learnt and to create challenging language tasks.
OBJECTIVES FOR FORM 4

By the end of Form 4, students should be able to:

- Make conversations and talk on various topics with friends and with people whom they meet for the first time;
- Interact with people and develop skills in forming and maintaining friendships by expressing care and concern and willingness to help, and creating a sense of togetherness;
- Give feedback on products and services and respond appropriately to feedback given;
- Obtain information from various sources including factual material and present the information clearly and accurately to others both orally and in writing;
- Read and respond to poems and stories;
- Have a positive outlook and act appropriately in social situations; and
- Show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation.
## CONTEXTS FOR TEACHING

The themes and topics stipulated for Form 4 are listed below. Some of these have been delineated into further areas to enable learners to talk, read, and write about them. Learners are not expected to have a comprehensive academic knowledge of these topics. Rather, these topics serve as the subject matter through which the three areas of language use are taught and meaningful tasks and activities are set. Since values are embedded in these themes and topics, teachers should take every opportunity to discuss socio-cultural and moral values related to them as well as in the functions and activities that are set. Words related to these themes and topics are found in the accompanying word list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Intercultural understanding at national and international levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. customs, lifestyles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship with parents and friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Conservation e.g. water</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pollution (e.g. air, water, sea, greenhouse effect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues</td>
<td>Care of the old folk and disabled children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumerism – misleading advertisements, defective products, complaints, rights of the consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drug Abuse – causes, damage, prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Patriotism and citizenship (understanding debatable national issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. building dams in areas that may endanger Orang Asli settlements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love for world peace and harmony, cooperation and respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Diseases and illnesses (e.g. AIDS, virus outbreaks)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact on society, preventive measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Malaysian industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g. the making of fertilizers, silicon chips)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SECTION 1: LEARNING OUTCOMES AND SPECIFICATIONS**

The Learning Outcomes in the first column have been extracted from the syllabus in its original form. They represent skills to be achieved by the end of Form 5. Teachers, however, should be guided by the second column when planning lessons. The second column spells out the skills specifications that are specific to the Form 4 programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
<th>SPECIFICATIONS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.0 LANGUAGE FOR INTERPERSONAL USE</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Make friends and keep friendships by</td>
<td>i. Talking about oneself to others, sharing information about each other that is of interest to both parties.</td>
<td>• E.g. Talking about oneself such as past experiences &amp; preferences in clothes, sports, music, movies, and idols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. taking part in conversations and discussions;</td>
<td>ii. Responding to questions politely by giving the required information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. introducing oneself;</td>
<td>iii. Relating personal experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. talking about self, family and friends, interests, part events, feelings, personal experiences and understanding when others talk about themselves;</td>
<td>iv. Keeping a journal of daily activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. exchanging ideas, information and opinions on topics of interest.</td>
<td>v. Listening to and discriminating between consonants, vowels, diphthongs, consonant clusters, homophones, homographs, contractions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>vi. Pronouncing words clearly and correctly and asking questions and making statements with the correct intonation, word stress and sentence rhythm.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
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</table>
## Curriculum Specifications for English

### Form 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
<th>SPECIFICATIONS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vii. Reading topics of current interest and exchange ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>viii. Reading articles and giving opinions in the following ways:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- agreeing with the writer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- disagreeing with the writer and giving reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Disagreeing politely in simple language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Offering advice in simple language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Expressing concern in simple language.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Persuading someone to do something in simple language.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v. Carrying on a conversation with people one meets for the first time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 **Take part in social interaction by**

   a. **carrying out a variety of language functions; and**

   b. **discussing plans and arrangements, solving problems, and making decisions;**

   **Level 1**

   i. Disagreeing politely in simple language.

   ii. Offering advice in simple language.

   iii. Expressing concern in simple language.

   iv. Persuading someone to do something in simple language.

   **Level 2**

   v. Carrying on a conversation with people one meets for the first time.

   **Example of suitable topics: “Promoting international understanding through sports” – e.g. Thomas Cup, Formula 1 Grand Prix.”**

   **E.g. Treatment of the old and the disabled by family and society.**

   **Where there are facilities, articles from the internet can be downloaded.**

   **This section lends itself well to emotional intelligence in relationships with people (e.g. disagreeing with people)**

   **E.g. Giving advice to a student about remaining calm in relation to another student who annoys him/her.**

   **E.g. With regard to health or a difficult time someone is going through.**

   **E.g. Getting one’s friend to undertake some social or community work such as helping at an old folks home.**

   **E.g. Talking to visitors in school; meeting a new friend at a gathering.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
<th>SPECIFICATIONS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vi. Making a decision regarding an action to be taken based on agreement of all members of a group.</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>E.g. Deciding on a camp-site, or entertainment for the weekend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Suggesting ways to solve a problem</td>
<td></td>
<td>E.g. Solving a problem – e.g. lack of safe drinking water, outbreak of an epidemic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii. Initiating and keeping a conversation going.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrate the skills of initiating, maintaining a conversation &amp; taking leave.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1.3 Obtain goods and services by**

a. making enquiries and ordering goods and services;

b. making complaints and responding to complaints.

**Level 1**

i. Making enquiries about a product in simple language.

**Level 2**

ii. Making enquiries about a product (orally and in writing) of different brand names, making comparisons, and choosing the one that gives value for money and giving reasons.

iii. Placing an order for a product orally and in writing.

iv. Giving feedback about a product or service as a consumer.

**Examples / Activities / Notes**

E.g. Encourage role-playing of buyers and sellers in various situations involving various products.

E.g. Placing an order by filling out a form or writing a short note stating clearly what is wanted.

Where there are facilities, simulate ordering of goods.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
<th>SPECIFICATIONS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. Making a complaint about services and products orally and in writing.</td>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>• Role-playing appropriate ways of expressing dissatisfaction e.g. informing the Head Waiter about poor service in a restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Respond to a complaint orally and in writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Role-playing a Head Waiter dealing with a customer’s complaint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING OUTCOMES</td>
<td>SPECIFICATIONS</td>
<td>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.0 LANGUAGE FOR INFORMATIONAL USE</strong></td>
<td>Obtaining information by:</td>
<td>• This area lends itself well to the area of knowledge acquisition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1 Obtain information for different purposes</strong></td>
<td>i. Listening to and understanding a variety of texts.</td>
<td>• Examples include messages, descriptions, reports, fact sheets, speeches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Reading silently and aloud with understanding a variety of texts.</td>
<td>• Examples include notices, passages, articles from newspapers and magazines, reports, speeches, brochures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note: authentic articles should be used as far as possible. Also include diagrams, pictures to cater to students' visual and spatial intelligences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• When reading aloud, learners need to observe: correct pronunciation, pauses, intonation patterns, stress, correct phrasing, emphases, fluency and rhythm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Where there are facilities, students can look for information on the Internet.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• This helps to develop learning-how-to-learn skills and good study habits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Get students to brainstorm on the types of questions they will ask. Also get students to interact with people outside school concerning real-life issues. e.g. visiting children with Down’s Syndrome in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING OUTCOMES</td>
<td>SPECIFICATIONS</td>
<td>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Process information by:</td>
<td>A. Processing texts listened to by:</td>
<td>• To hone students’ listening skills, teachers can set pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. skimming and scanning for specific information and ideas;</td>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Pre-listening</strong> tasks include guessing the answers to several questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. extracting main ideas and details;</td>
<td>ii. Noting important details (e.g. place, time, date).</td>
<td>- <strong>While-listening</strong> tasks include completing the information, detecting errors, sequencing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. discerning sequence of ideas;</td>
<td>iii. Asking and answering questions.</td>
<td>- <strong>Post-listening</strong> tasks include checking true/False statements, sequencing, filling in details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. getting the explicit and implicit meaning of the text;</td>
<td>iv. Identifying main ideas and jotting down key words and phrases.</td>
<td>• Guide weaker students by giving them an outline in which they underline key words and main ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. predicting outcomes;</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>• To teach higher-order skills, texts must be chosen at a level that is manageable. Teachers must strike a balance between the need for students to be stretched and the need that the task given is manageable. Use simple texts to teach higher-order listening skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. drawing conclusions;</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. identifying different points of view;</td>
<td>v. Taking notes of the text heard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. using print and electronic dictionaries;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. interpreting non-linear texts such as maps, charts, diagrams, tables, graphs; and</td>
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<td>j. making short notes and mapping out ideas</td>
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<td>LEARNING OUTCOMES</td>
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<td>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</td>
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<td><strong>B. Processing texts read by:</strong></td>
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<td>• A good strategy would be to get learners to bring to class a number of different text-types and to find out and discuss with the teacher the characteristics of each text-type.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>• E.g. Reports, speeches, announcements.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>i. Identifying simple texts.</td>
<td>• Time this activity to train learners/eye movements to rapidly look for the required information without getting the meaning of the text.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ii. Skimming for gist and stating what the text is about.</td>
<td>• One strategy for weak students is to get them to underline the key words in a sentence, and then a paragraph. Then teach them to set out the points in a mind map.</td>
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<td>iii. Scanning for details.</td>
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| **x.** Acquiring the meaning of words by  
  - Understanding word formation through the use of prefixes and suffixes;  
  - Understanding contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms and word equivalents.  |
| **xi.** Identifying and writing down in full abbreviations and vice versa.  |
| **xii.** Predicting outcomes that are obvious in a text, giving reasons.  |
| Level 3|
| **xiii.** Identifying simple cause and effect.  |
| **xiv.** Drawing conclusions that are obvious from the facts given.  |
| **xv.** Identifying points of view in simple texts.  |
|   | **Prefix:** ex- anti- un- super-  
  - **Suffix:** -ment -tion -sion  
  - *E.g.* The monster,... The beast....  
  The evil creature....  |
|   | Use texts containing abbreviated words such as in telegrams, advertisements, classifieds.  |
|   | Encourage students to give outcomes based on evidence in the text at a level suitable to students' ability.  |
|   | Futures Studies skills can also be employed. For example, getting students to forecast what may happen to the world in 20 years' time if forests continue to be cut down.  
  *E.g.* The hill slope was cleared for development. After a year, new houses were ready for occupancy. The owners moved in quickly. But it was difficult to rent out the houses.  
  (Q: Why was it difficult to rent out the houses?)  
  *E.g.* Getting to know different eye-witness accounts to an incident.  |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
<th>SPECIFICATIONS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Present information to different audiences by:</td>
<td>A. Presenting information by:</td>
<td>• Relate to topics under study. (e.g. water consumption, using available data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. writing recounts, descriptions, explanations, speeches, reports, and articles;</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>• Extension of 2.2 A (v) and 2.2 B (v).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. instructing, describing, narrating, explaining, and reporting orally;</td>
<td>ii. Converting information into tables, graphs, diagrams, etc.</td>
<td>• Extension of 2.2 B (v) and 2.2 B (v).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. responding to questions orally and in writing;</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>• In making oral presentations, students need to use appropriate non-verbal signal. This includes looking at the audience, making use of facial expressions and gestures, controlling tone of voice, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. presenting information in non-linear forms including tables, graphs, diagrams, charts, and vice-versa;</td>
<td>iii. Responding to questions and comments spontaneously (oral).</td>
<td>• Get students to structure the presentation: For example: - Beginning a presentation: e.g. Greeting the audience: &quot;Good morning friends...&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. expanding notes and outlines;</td>
<td>iv. Expanding notes and outlines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. composing, revising and editing drafts; and checking accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar;</td>
<td>v. Summarizing and paraphrasing the main ideas in a simple text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. summarising information;</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. reading aloud written materials such as reports clearly and fluently;</td>
<td>vi. Presenting reports with the aid of diagrams, graphs:</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. using appropriate format, conventions and grammar when presenting information.</td>
<td>• on specific topics researched</td>
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<td>• from interviews (field work) and responding appropriately to questions and comments from the floor.</td>
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<td>LEARNING OUTCOMES</td>
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<tr>
<td>vii. Writing brief reports, descriptions.</td>
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<td>viii. Applying process writing skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Introducing the topic: “Today I'm going to talk about......”</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Giving an overview: “First, I will talk out ..... Then..... And finally.....”</td>
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<td>- Ending it: “And finally..... Thank you.”</td>
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<td>• E.g. “How my family saved water during the dry season” or “Characteristics of children with Down’s Syndrome”.</td>
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<td>• Process writing skills include:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- making an outline</td>
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<td>- jotting down ideas on the topic.</td>
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<td>- writing out 1st draft</td>
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<td>- revising and editing the draft by</td>
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<td>- focusing on the topic</td>
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<td>- ensuring sufficient length</td>
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<td>- ensuring sentences are linked</td>
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<td>- ensuring paragraphs are linked</td>
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<tr>
<td>- rearranging sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>- combining ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>- removing/substituting ineffective words.</td>
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<td>- rewriting 2nd draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>- proof-reading draft and checking for grammar, punctuation, spelling</td>
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<td>- writing out the final draft.</td>
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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### 3.0 LANGUAGE FOR AESTHETIC USE

3.1 Listen to, read, view and respond to literary works by:

- a. understanding and telling in one's own words the story and poem heard and read, and giving one's own opinion of the text;
- b. recognizing elements in a story such as characters and setting;
- c. explaining the message the writer is trying to convey and discussing how this relates to one's life;
- d. understanding other people's cultures, traditions, customs and beliefs;
- e. reciting poems with feeling and expression.

### SPECIFICATIONS

#### Level 1

- i. Reciting poems with feeling and expressions and with correct pronunciation, intonation, stress, and rhythm.
- ii. Finding out the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues and the dictionary.
- iii. Retelling the story or poem in one's own words.

#### Level 2

- iv. Narrating sequence of events.
- v. Describing the place and time the story took place.
- vi. Describing characters and writing simple descriptions.
- vii. Making predictions as to what might happen next in the story.

### EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES

- Note: once students have understood the full meaning of the poem, the poem can be recited with meaning and expression.
- The use of sounds, music and movement in recitation will be especially beneficial to learners with a leaning towards musical and kinaesthetic intelligence.
- Story telling can be done in groups.
- Students can draw a time-line and mark the various events taking place along the line.
- E.g. describing the location, and the year or century the story took place.
- Activities include jotting down characteristics of the main characters as students read the text.
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texts prescribed for study in Form 4 are as follows:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SHORT STORIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• <em>The Necklace</em> by Guy de Maupassant</td>
<td>viii. Talking about values in the text and whether they are meaningful to one’s life and writing out a simple paragraph on this.</td>
<td>• Encourage learners to tell how a certain character or event in the story reminds them of a certain character or event in real life. Get them to note the similarities and differences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <em>The Lotus Eater</em> by Somerset Maugham</td>
<td>ix. Talking about how events, characters and in the texts remind one of people and events in real life.</td>
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<td>• <em>The Drover’s Wife</em> by Henry Lawson</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <em>The Sound Machine</em> by Roald Dahl</td>
<td>x. Talking about the theme in a story and writing a simple paragraph on it.</td>
<td>• Encourage learners to express their views on the theme or message, characters, events and values explored in the text.</td>
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<td>• <em>Looking for a Rain God</em> by Bessie Head</td>
<td>xi. Talking about the message the poet is trying to put across in his/her poem and writing a simple paragraph on it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>POEMS</strong></td>
<td>xii. Saying orally what one thinks about the text and writing a simple paragraph stating one’s opinion.</td>
<td>• Select the more significant similes, metaphors and turns of phrase. Detailed analysis of figurative language is not required, only the more important words and phrases are required for an adequate understanding of the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <em>If</em> by Rudyard Kipling</td>
<td>xiii. Understanding some of the figurative language of the text.</td>
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<td>• <em>Sonnet 18</em> by William Shakespeare</td>
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<td>• <em>si tenggang’s homecoming</em> by Muhd. Hj. Salleh</td>
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<td>• <em>Monsoon History</em> by Shirley Lim</td>
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<td>• <em>The Road Not Taken</em> by Robert Frost</td>
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<td>• <em>There’s been a death in the opposite house</em> by Emily Dickinson</td>
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<td>LEARNING OUTCOMES</td>
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<td>3.2 Express themselves creatively and imaginatively by</td>
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<td>a. Dramatizing texts and role-playing characters;</td>
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<td>• Different groups can act out different dialogues.</td>
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<td>b. Retelling a story form a different point of view, and presenting it in another genre;</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Get learners to look at events and characters from the perspective of another character’s point of view.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Composing simple poems, stories and dialogues.</td>
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<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>i. Writing short and simple dialogues and staging it in class.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ii. Role playing characters.</td>
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<td>iii. Writing a short paragraph to recount an event in the story.</td>
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<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>iv. Retelling the story from another character’s point of view.</td>
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<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>v. Writing the story in another genre.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>vi. Composing simple poems, stories and dialogues.</td>
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SECTION II: LANGUAGE CONTENT

(a) GRAMMATICAL ITEMS

Grammar forms part of the language contents in the Curriculum Specifications for Form 4. Grammar items are specified under the different grammar categories. To illustrate what is meant by each category and at the same time to specify the scope and depth of the items to be taught, examples are given. Teachers are encouraged to teach these grammatical items in the context of topics. Items to be focused on in Form 4 are marked with an asterisk. If extra practice is required for better understanding or retention, items can be taught in isolation.

1. Nouns
   i. Concrete nouns
      a. Common nouns — e.g. book, house, school
      b. Proper nouns — e.g. Ahmad, Malaysia
   ii. Abstract nouns
      • names of qualities, states, activities
        e.g. health, poverty; laughter, arrival
   iii. Countable nouns
        e.g. girls, beakers, air conditioners
   iv. Uncountable nouns
        e.g. sand, sugar
   v. Number - Formation of the plural
      a. Adding suffix -s, -es
         • For regular words
           e.g. birds, trees
         • Words ending in -s -sh -ch -x
           e.g. glass - glasses, brush - brushes, church - churches, box - boxes
      b. Irregular plurals
         Indicated by a change of vowel
         e.g. man - men; mouse - mice; tooth - teeth
   vi. Concord (subject-verb agreement)
      a. Singular subject takes singular verb
         * e.g. Of the 3 friends, Mary has ....
      b. Plural subject takes plural verb
         * e.g. Peter, John and Paul are ....
   vii. Gender — masculine, feminine
      a. -er -or : traditionally used to mark male
         e.g. waiter, actor
      b. -ess : traditionally used to mark female
         e.g. waitress, heiress

2. Articles
   i. With singular countable nouns — a an the
      e.g. a book an oven the house
      Note: 'an' is usually used before vowels but note 'a university', 'an hour'
ii. With plural countable nouns
e.g. test tubes

3. Adjectives
i. Adjectives in terms of colour, size and shape
   e.g. big boy, blue sky, round eraser

ii. Adjectives that show qualities
    e.g. an honest mechanic, a kind by-stander

iii. Formation of the negative of adjectives by adding prefixes: un-, dis-, im-
    e.g. an unkind person, a dishonest mechanic

iv. Possessive adjectives – my, your, his, her, our
   e.g. This is my/your/his/her/our book.

v. Comparison adjectives – regular forms
   e.g. big - bigger - biggest

*vi. Adjectives functioning as nouns
   e.g. The blind are taught special skills.
    The wounded from the crash were sent home after treatment.

*vii. Nouns functioning as adjectives
   e.g. a stone wall, a leather jacket, a gold card

4. Pronouns
i. Personal Pronouns:
   I - first person
   You - second person
   He/She/It - third person

ii. Possessive Pronouns:
    mine, yours, his, hers, ours, hers
    e.g. That book is mine / yours / his / hers.

iii. Demonstrative Pronouns:
    this, that, these, those

iv. Interrogative Pronouns:
    Who, Which, What, Whose

5. Verbs
i. Regular and Irregular Verbs
   e.g. walk – walked; sweep – swept

ii. Negative Verbs
   • adding the word not after the verb
     e.g. He is not here.
     They cannot go to the party.

   • using the contracted form especially in conversation
     e.g. He isn’t here.
     They can’t go to the party.
iii. **Tenses** – present, past, continuous, *perfect

   a. **Simple Present Tense**
      - For habitual actions
        * e.g. *Every day we play football.*
      - For instructions and directions
        * e.g. *First, mix the solutions.*
      - Describing feelings and senses
        * e.g. *“I feel upset over what has happened.”*

   b. **Simple Past Tense** – *was* *were*
      - Regular verbs, Irregular verbs
        * e.g. *walk-walked; sit-sat; go-went*
      - Using words that signal the past tense
        * e.g. *Yesterday, Last week*

c. **Present Continuous Tense**
   The action is happening at the time of speaking
   * e.g. *I am …… verb + -ing;*

   d. **Present Perfect Tense**
   has *have + past participle
   * e.g. *She has walked 5 miles.*

   e. **Past Perfect Tense**
   Had + past participle
   * e.g. *They had changed the wheel in 10 minutes.*

* iv. **Gerunds**

   a. Gerunds as complements of verb to be
      * e.g. *My favourite hobby is reading.*

   b. Gerunds as objects of preposition
      * e.g. *They are not interested in buying the house.*

v. **Special Finites or Modals** - *need to, should*

   a. **Need** – meaning ‘have to’
      * e.g. *We need to drink at least eight glasses of water a day.*
      Negative: *need not*
      * e.g. *They need not fix the lights. We’ll call the electrician.*

   b. **Should** – similar to ‘must’
      * e.g. *People should wash their hands after going to the toilet.*
      Negative: *should not*
      * e.g. *They should not allow the school building to run down.*

* vi. **Infinitives**

   a. As object of verbs
      * e.g. *We want to know the answer. He must learn to save money.*
b. As complements of verb “to be”
   e.g. This house is to let.
   Jack and Jill are to be married soon.

vii. Passive Construction – using * has, * had
    e.g. The tickets had been sold out by noon yesterday.
    The robber has been seen in town.

6. Adverbs
   Adverb of manner, time, frequency, * degree
   - To show how an action was done – using the suffix -ly.
     * thoroughly, * completely, * nearly

7. Prepositions
   i. Prepositions of place:
      in, on, near, under, behind, in front of, by
      e.g. The shop is next to the bank.
   ii. Prepositions of time – at, on, by, before, after
       * since, * during, * until, * within
   iii. Prepositions of direction - * across, * towards, out
   iv. Prepositions of purpose *for, * so that,
       *in order to
   v. Prepositions of association *among, * between

vi. Verb and preposition combination
    (Phrasal verbs)
    e.g. set out, put forward, put down, put through

vii. Adjective and preposition combination
    (Phrasal verbs)
    e.g. good at, made away with, make out, make up for

8. Connectors
   i. Conjunctions:
      * either .... or, * neither ...... nor, * although,
      * however
   ii. Logical connectors:
      * however
   iii. Sequence connectors:
      * later

9. Sentences
   i. Simple sentence
      e.g. They went to the exhibition early.
   ii. Compound sentence
      e.g. They woke up early and went jogging.
   iii. Complex sentence
      E.g. The volunteer, who is a retired engineer, comes to school once a week to tutor some boys who are weak in Mathematics.
iv. Positive statements  
   e.g. My name is ....  
        He/ She/it/They were ....

v. Negative statements  
   e.g. They are not ....  
        We were not .......

10 Punctuation  
   i. Capital letters – proper nouns, pronoun ‘I’, beginning 
      of sentences  
      e.g. Yesterday, we went to the Experimental Theatre.

   ii. Commas – to separate items in a list  
        e.g. Julia has a cat, a bird and a goldfish for pets.

   iii. Exclamation mark  
        e.g. For greetings - Hi! Hello!

   iv. Full Stop – for end of statement

   v. Question mark – to signal a question.

   vi. Apostrophe – for contractions  
        e.g. Don’t allow the bacteria culture to grow  
             for more than 4 days.

   vii. Semi-colon (;) – indicates a relationship between  
        two pieces of information in the same sentence.  
        e.g. The lawn needs mowing; I will do it this weekend.

   viii. Underlining – for emphasis  
        e.g. The closing date is on the 15th of May.

   ix. Brackets ( ) – used to separate extra information  
        e.g. The crash (between two goods trains) occurred  
             at 7 o clock in the evening yesterday.

   x. Hyphen (-)  
      • used to connect parts of a compound word  
        e.g. It’s not expensive because it’s a second-hand skate-board.

   xi. Colon (:)  
      • announces something (a fact or a list) that the  
        first part of the sentence has led us to believe.  
        e.g. There were so many flavours to choose from:  
             strawberry, chocolate, mint, vanilla, etc.

        • serves to introduce a quotation or a report.  
        e.g. The Minister began his speech as follows:  
              “Ladies and gentlemen, in the name of peace,  
              let’s reach a common understanding.”
b) Suggested Sentence Patterns

In this section some suggested sentence patterns have been listed for the language functions as stipulated in the Curriculum Specifications. It is important that teachers teach these patterns (including responses) in context and in a meaningful way. Words underlined may be substituted.

1. Offering advice
   i. Don’t you think that ....
   ii. It might be a god idea to ....

2. Expressing concern
   Are you all right? You look ..........

3. Persuading someone to do something
   i. Do come to the Planetarium, Anne. It’s very educational!
   ii. If you buy this card you will be donating to the Spastic Children’s Home.

4. Giving Feedback/Complaining
   Excuse me. This fan is not working well. I bought it two weeks ago. Will you please look at it?

5. Recommending
   i. I think we should go for .......because .......
   ii. We would like to recommend ........

6. Disagreeing politely
   i. I understand what you are trying to say but .......
   ii. That’s fine. But can I add another point of view .......

7. Initiating discussion
   There was this article in the newspapers

8. Taking leave
   Excuse me, I have to go now.
(c) The Sound System

The Sound System forms part of the language contents in the Form 4 Curriculum Specifications. The items listed below are to be taught in Form 4. In each item, examples of sounds to be taught are provided and teachers should provide further examples of these sounds. Armed with the knowledge of how letters and combination of letters are to be sounded, students should then make an attempt to apply the knowledge of these sounds in speech.

1.0 Consonants

1.1 w / w / - wall; forward
1.2 v / v / - veil; event
1.3 q / k / - Queen; frequent
1.4 x / ks / - x-ray; waxing
1.5 x / z / - xylophone; anxiety
1.6 r / r / - sorrow; terrible

2.0 Vowels

2.1 i / i / - it; fit; city
2.2 i / i : / - eat; meal; plea
2.3 e / e / - elders; bed
2.4 u / / - umbrella; fun

3.0 Diphthongs

3.1 / / - bay, beige, glade
3.2 / / - buy, die, style
3.3 / / - boy, foil, groin
3.4 / / - no, dough, told

4.0 Consonant Clusters

4.1 bl / bl / - blue; able
4.2 fl / fl / - flute; rifle
4.3 sl / sl / - slay; tussle
4.4 cl / kl / - clay; tentacle
4.5 cr / kr / - crayon; hovercraft
4.6 br / br / - bride; fabric
4.7 ps / s / - psychology
4.8 sm / zm / - prism; chasm
4.9 gn / n / - gnaw; alignment (silent ‘g’)
4.10 sp / sp / - spark; clasp
4.11 lm / lm / - film; helm
4.12 lm / m / - calm; balm (silent ‘l’)

5.0 Stress in four-syllable words

INvitation; deVElopment; CONfrontation
6.0 Sentence Stress and Intonation

6.1 Sentence stress in statements

- Initial: He won the first prize.
- Medial: He won the first prize.
- Final: He won the first prize.

6.2 Sentence stress in questions

- Initial: Did you watch the finals last night?
- Medial: Did you watch the finals last night?
- Final: Did you watch the finals last night?

7.0 Homonyms

7.1 Homophones

- e.g. rights, rites; tale, tail; ate, eight

7.2 Homographs

- e.g. refuse (rifju:z), refuse (rifju:s)
- I refuse to pay more for this.
- Please put the refuse in the rubbish bin outside the house.

8.0 Contractions

- 'd / aid / - I'd
- 'm / aim / - I'm

9.0 Words borrowed from other languages

French
- cafe
- chef
- delicatessen
- eau de cologne
- croissant
- restaurant

Italian
- pizza
- soprano
- spaghetti
- cappuccino
- gratis

Malaysian
- kampung
- sampan
- sarung
- amok
- halal
(d) WORD LIST

This suggested word list comprises general words in alphabetical order. These are base words and teachers are encouraged to use them when teaching the Learning outcomes.

Some of these words have several meanings and the meanings are best made clear if they are illustrated in different passages/contexts. For example, boil can be taught as a verb ("to boil water") or as a noun ("The boil on my shoulder is painful").

Nouns are listed in their singular form. Their plural forms need to be taught as well (e.g. kite - kites).

Teachers are also encouraged to add prefixes and suffixes to words if the context so requires. For example, to teach adverbs the learner is told that the suffix -ly is added to the word sweet to get the sentence, "The girls sang sweetly". Similarly the prefixes un- or dis- or im- can be added to words to mean not e.g. unkind, disappointed, impossible.

Verbs are also given in their base word forms. To these teachers are expected to teach the various parts of speech if the context so requires. For example, dig can be taught in its present tense form (digs), in its past tense form (dug), and in its -ing form (digging). As such, word endings such as -ed, -ied, -s, -ies, -ing can be added to verbs. However, derivatives from the base words should be used prudently. For example, (deliver) should be limited to delivered and delivers but the derivative deliverance should be omitted.

The word list for upper secondary is given so that teachers are aware of the range of words to be covered. The number of base words used for teaching in both Form 4 and Form 5 should not exceed 1,600 words for Form 4 and 1,800 words for Form 5. However, teachers can add other words to ensure that the topic at hand is dealt with meaningfully. Teachers should however, exercise prudence when adding new words to the basic list given. Students are however, free to extend their vocabulary to the highest level they are capable of through their own initiative.
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