Title: A case study into student perception of creativity within Junior Cycle English, with specific focus on the use of descriptors as a motivating factor in CBA1, the Oral Presentation.

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I certify that the material which I now submit is entirely my own work and has not been obtained from the work of others, except work which has been cited and acknowledged within the text.

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand student perception of creativity in the Junior Cycle English course. The thesis is particularly concerned with how students comprehend the concept of creativity and if they consider themselves as creative individuals. Notably, an examination of student motivation to be creative for Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) is explored, along with student attitude on formative assessment. The research approach is mixed method but predominantly qualitative in nature. Three methods of data collection were used a focus group, semi-structured interview, and online survey. A constructivist, interpretivist epistemological approach was adopted. This thesis is broken five main chapters with subsections in each. A detailed thematic data analysis was used, themes emerged and were defined. Findings from research suggest that students have varying definitions of creativity but there is a consensus it involves innovation, imagination and original thinking, participants also stated that time pressure in school was having a negative impact on their creativity, a further finding suggested students are failing to see the benefits of formative assessment, especially in relation to descriptors assigned for Classroom Based Assessments. The research carried out will have significance for educators, policy makers and all educational stakeholders. As curriculum reform in Junior Cycle is relatively new (2015), this research will contribute to a growing body of literature around curriculum reform and also fill a knowledge gap as research as this area is comparatively new.

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List of abbreviations

Classroom based assessments: CBA

Junior Cert Profile of Achievement: JCPA

Continual Professional Development: CPD

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment: NCCA

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'Creativity is imaginative processes with outcomes that are original and of value'

(Robinson, 2001, cited in Fisher & Williams, 2004)

1. Introduction

This study aims to explore the area of creativity at Junior Cycle English in a Post-Primary school in Co. Donegal. Creativity surrounds us daily in many forms, from stories, music, art, dance, innovation, and science, however, 'creativity is a puzzle, a paradox, some say a mystery' (Boden, 1994 p.519). Literature suggests, due to its complexity, no one definition of creativity exists. Eisner, (2005), identifies key features of creativity, suggesting it is boundary pushing, creating, boundary breaking and visual organizing (cited in Gibson, 2010). The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, (1999), define creativity as an, 'imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value, (p.209 cited in Kleiman, 2008). A further definition of this multi-faceted concept is offered by Koestler (1964), he proposed creativity involves the capability of constructing profound new forms, 'it uncovers, selects, re-shuffles, combines and synthesises already existing facts, ideas, faculties and skills' (p.120, cited in Gibson 2010).

The topic of creativity is undoubtedly broad. Since the reform of the Junior Certificate in 2014, much has changed regarding the English curriculum, the most substantial changes centre around assessment techniques, reporting procedures, the introduction of eight key skills and the 24 statements of learning, both which are to be featured in all programmes at Junior Cycle level (see Appendix A). When looking at both a definite emphasis is being placed on creativity. The key skill, 'Being Creative', poses contention itself. It is problematic to demand creativity in a forty-minute class without giving strict success criteria so it would seem we are restricting creativity from the off. From experience at Continual Professional Development Days (CPD), it is also abundantly clear that many teachers struggle to teach creatively themselves. Creativity needs to exist in the classroom, in the school and in the wider society but as creativity is subjective and dynamic, it can prove difficult.

The data analysis found participants from the focus group highlight that no one definition of creativity, students value creativity as an imperative life skill and more so, students prefer to work creatively at home. Findings in the interviews and questionnaire corroborate this, indicating that creativity does play a significant role in student life, participants could also

recognise the presence of creativity in all subject disciplines, validating the NCCA introduction of 'Being Creative' as a key skill in the new Junior Cycle.

1.1 Research Aims

This research aims to focus on student perception of creativity, identify how students perceive this concept and if this can be enhanced during one of the new assessment techniques known as, 'Classroom Based Assessment 1', (CBA1), the Oral Presentation. CBA1 occurs in the second year of school, the purpose of this task is to allow students' creative freedom to present to the class on a topic of their choice. The presentation is performed in front of the entire class and recorded for assessment and review purposes. This study aims to determine if students' are truly performing at their optimum creative level and where they are most creative, home or school. Finally, this research intends to assess the impact of the new reporting procedure of this assessment and if it is a motivating factor in how creative students are willing to be. Unlike the old grading systems, the NCCA have introduced 'descriptors', (see Appendix B), as such CBA1 is not worth any percentage toward a final Junior Cycle English grade, it is worth a comment, which will appear on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

1.2 Rationale

As an educator the rationale for choosing this topic stems from witnessing students struggle with the concept of creativity from Junior Cycle, through to Leaving Certificate. Students often display wonderful imaginations but as they pass through the school system, the curriculum seems to curtail and even try to control this. Einstein suggested. 'The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination', (cited in Soh 2017 p. 58). As such, creativity is a subject, not simply related to the arts but a discipline to be indoctrinated through all subjects, implying all teachers must teach creativity. Soh (2017), highlights that fostering student creativity has become an added responsibility of the classroom teacher. As practitioners the onus is being put more and more on teachers to change their methodologies, to allow for more creative approaches in their classroom. Soh's (2017) research proposes immersing students in the correct environment promotes creativity, thus, teachers need to change the social environment of the classroom to be creativity fostering.

Runco et al. (2016) explores the idea of a creativity gap, this study showed students to display more creativity outside the classroom than within the classroom, from observation this too

appears to have validity and can be traced back to the issue of restrictions and structures within the classrooms that are not actively trying to foster creativity. Creative potential in students clearly exists, however as the responsibility lies with the classroom teacher to provide a constructive environment for students to flourish in the classroom without judgement, it often feels like we are being given an impossible task.

The specific area of creativity is significant as each year CBA1 poses challenges in the classroom, students fear standing in front of their peers. The NCCA Review of Junior Cycle English, (2018), highlights how students at this juncture in school are at a difficult stage in their emotional and social development, fitting in is seen as a priority. With this in mind, it would seem CBA1 does not lend itself well to this age group. As Junior Cert reform is relatively new, no previous studies have been carried out on this topic, as such it can be argued that this study will prove beneficial to teachers, schools, and policy makers alike. It could also result in further research being carried out on the effectiveness of the new Junior Cycle.

1.3 Research Approach

To carry out the research an inductive, qualitative, mixed method, case study has been designed. A triangulation method of data is be used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data. This convergence of data tests the validity of results, (Cope, 2014). Firstly, a questionnaire is disseminated to a class of 20 second year students to gauge initial feelings on the concept of creativity and its relevance. It will contain 10 close ended questions using the 5-point Likert Scale. Individual interviews are being conducted in a semi-structured format, to gain further understanding of how students feel about creativity and the idea of CBA1. Finally, a small focus group of 5 students is conducted to further correlate data.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to answer the following questions:
1. What is student understanding of the term creativity?
2. How can student creativity be enhanced during CBA1 if greater understanding of student perception of creativity is gained?
3. Why are students more motivated to be creative at home rather than in school?
4. To what extent does the use of descriptors as a mark affect the extent of creative effort students put into CBA1?

1.5 Dissemination

It is important to recognise the limitations of this research; this is a relatively small-scale study centred on student perception of creativity from one group of second year students. However, it can be stated that the findings may have a positive impact on the educational community as a whole. As an educator I can clearly see how the English Department in my own school will benefit, practitioners may change how they have been approaching the concept of creativity in the classroom now that they have an insight into student feelings on the topic. Policy makers could also take interest in the findings of this study, especially should there be a revision of the Junior Cycle in the future.

1.6 Structure of Research Paper

Following the introduction, the next chapter of this paper provides an in-depth analysis of literature which exists on creativity. An exploration of the complexity of the definition of creativity has been explored, following an analysis of literature on the existence of a creativity gap. The literature review also examines research on motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Moving on, the research methodologies used will be explained and the appropriateness of their use justified. Finally, an analysis of the data will be provided, along with a discussion of findings and recommendations.

2. Literature Review & Critique

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to critically analyse existing literature associated with creativity in education and motivation. This chapter is divided into three key sections. Section one, 'Creativity in Education & Teacher Perceptions' seeks to analyse the phenomenon that is creativity, existing definitions and teacher insights into how this looks in their classroom. Section two is concerned with the 'Creativity Gap, seminal work by Runco (2016), carefully explores the idea of students displaying more creativity at home rather than in school, a field of study relevant to this research. Finally, section three investigates literature around student motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic and the benefits of formative assessment over grading systems.

2.2 Creativity in Education & Teacher Perceptions

Studies of creativity are well documented; it is also well acknowledged that no one definition of creativity exists. Kozbelt, Beghtetto and Runco (2010) have called the existence of multiple definitions, *pluralism* - 'the existence of multiple theoretical perspectives with different assumptions and methods that collectively provide a more robust but contestable understanding of human creativity (p 20). In literature on creativity, the resulting definitions have emerged: 'a creative individual solves problems, fashions products, or poses new questions, within a domain in a way that is initially considered to be unusual but is eventually accepted within at least one cultural group, (Gardner, 1994 p145 cited in Glaveanu, 2010). Liep, (2001 p.2), states, 'I define creativity as activity that produces something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices or forms' (cited in Glaveanu, 2010). There is universal agreement that creativity is better conceptualized as a 'holistic and multi-dimensional concept' (Sarsani, 2005, p.8)

Recent studies on creativity in education recognise its increasing importance in schools, (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014, cited in Cropley et al. 2019). For instance, Guilford (1950) argued 'a creative act is an instance for learning' (p.46) Ferrari et al (2009) argued that innovation in education is a necessity. Some authors suggest the relationship between education and creativity has been disjointed and intermittent (Feldman & Benjamin, 2006). Theorists such as Vygotsky (1967) argued if the primary aim of school is to prepare students for the outside

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world, then fostering students creativity and creative potential, should be one of the main forces enlisted for attainment of this goal (p.88). However, although it is favoured and the benefits are far reaching, creativity has been criticised and linked to negative deviance, achievable only in the extracurricular realm and only those considered 'gifted', are afforded the opportunity to develop this potential in the academic setting (Beghetto, 2010).

How can creativity be successfully fostered in the school environment? Soh (2016), recognises the need for creativity, arguing that when society has a need, they often turn to schools to help fulfil it. Furthermore, he identifies three methods of fostering creativity in the classroom: social modelling, reinforcement, and classroom ecology. Research concluded classroom ecology to be favoured as the optimum way in fostering creativity in the classroom. Similarly, the NCCA (2015), document on Being Creative, concludes that the teacher is the single biggest influence on the creative atmosphere in the classroom. It is clear creativity in education has a growing influence both inside and outside the classroom. Classroom ecology is imperative if school is to be conducive to creativity, however, teachers may need training in how best deliver this type of atmosphere. To teach creativity and creatively certainly demands much more than what we learn in college. Ewing and Gibson (2007), stated it required spontaneity, openness to experience, an open mind and flexibility (cited in Gibson 2010). However, as educators we must keep curriculum in mind, Sawyer (2004) elaborated on this by acknowledging it is 'disciplined improvisation' (cited in Gibson 2010, p.609), as it occurs in broad structures and existing frameworks, a balance must be struck between a structured classroom and a flexible one.

It can be stated that creativity is by no means a modern phenomenon, for example, Burner (1965), proposes that in order to foster creativity, pupils should approach tasks as opportunities to invent answers, rather than find pre-existing ones in a textbook (cited in Susnea et al, 2014). Burner's research links to the critical thinking skills encouraged by the NCCA, highlighting this skill as beneficial for teachers and students alike. However, Scott (2014) argues that teachers and institutions are responsible for suppressing creativity (cited in Susnea et al, 2014). This has also been explored in prior studies, the Robinson Report (2000, cited in Gibson, 2010) found that by the age of 5 a child's potential for creativity is 98%, by 10 this drops to 30%, at age 15, 12% and plummets to 2% by adulthood, it could be argued that this is due to constraints of curriculum as the ages correlate with maturing and transitioning through school. Aljughaiman (2005), concluded teachers feel unskilled in the delivery of creative lessons,

largely due to the varying perception of what creativity is. In addition, Robinson (2009) proposed reformation of the education system, rather than transformation, could aid in the delivery of creativity. It can be therefore argued that transformation of Junior Cycle English is beneficial to students, teachers, and the wider society. Despite decades of research, the definition of creativity and teacher perception of creativity continues to be debated.

2.3 The Creativity Gap and Creative Potential

As has been previously reported in literature, there is currently a clear discrepancy between the creativity students display at home and at school, thus a creativity gap emerges. Literature pertaining to creativity suggests the spread of technology brings a new understanding of communication, information retrieval and understanding, thus the gap between home and school digital environment affects student learning (Pedro, 2006, cited in Ferrari at al.2009). Several studies suggest schools are failing to realize the creative potential within students.

Previous studies have identified various definitions of creative potential. Early studies of creative potential define it as a, 'feeling of division in the personality, through the disunity of will and counter-will, which means a struggle against the compulsion of the outer world as well an inner conflict between the two wills' (Rank, 1945 p.264). In addition, Barbot et al (2015) states creative potential is not a fixed entity but something that develops through targeted interventions. Runco et.al, (2016), define creative potential as, 'the hypothetical level at which an individual could demonstrate maximal creative productivity' (pg. 242), thus the work they do produce compared to what they could produce, results in a gap. Runco et al, (2016) further develops this notion, stating the creativity gap is the disparity between unadorned creative potential and creativity that is actually achieved. Furthermore, he suggests this gap exists due to parental background, personality, values, and classroom ecology. Moreover, Holland (1961), also identified associations between creative achievement and socio-economic background. Prior research also sparks a debate about the presence of others, Mahon and Yarcheski, (1996), indicates a negative relationship between creativity and loneliness, solitary activity among adolescents may be favoured as it is judgement free.

Runco et al (2016), research was designed to investigate this disconcerting gap. This study involved 254 participants from varying socio-economic backgrounds. A number of methods were utilised such as Holland's (1961) *Creativity Activity and Accomplishment Checklist*

(CAAC), The *Self Report of Creative Traits*, which is indicative of creative personality (Barron & Harrington, 1981) along with various methods developed by the researchers such as *Where are you creative?* (WAYC) *With Whom Are You Creative?* (WWAYC) *Evaluation of Setting and Climate* (ESC) and *Creative Attitudes and Values* (A & V). As two of the methodologies, WAYC and WWAYC were newly developed for this study, their reliability could be questioned.

Results concluded that more creativity was displayed outside of school, with less being displayed when students were in school. Participants who came from a more educated socio-economic background and who held more creative values had creative potential which was not being expressed in school. Social preferences also illustrate students admit to being involved in more creative exercises when alone. These results positively correlate with previous research, reporting creativity to be autonomous, individualistic, and intrinsically motivated (Amabile, 1988).

Research clearly suggests, although not always obvious, creative potential lies within every child. Berikkhanova et al. (2015) argue responsibility lies with the teacher to harness and develop this creative potential in order to bridge the creativity gap, their literature states that due to the inevitable tendency in student motivation to decline, innovative methodologies must be taught to educators. A critical question arises here, even with the correct tools, can all educators teach creativity and what is the creative potential of the teacher?

Barbot (2015) highlights the difference in how to teach creatively and how to teach creativity. The creative potential of a teacher, attitudes and mannerisms may have a direct bearing on the creative potential of the student. Davies et al. (2013) documents the intricacy of this relationship, 'high expectations, mutual respect, modelling of creative attitudes, flexibility and dialogue are among the most important features of the teacher learning relationship for creativity' (cited in Barbot, 2016 p. 7) Cremin (2006), further expands on this, highlighting the need for teachers to possess an encouraging, emotional capacity, accept uncertainty and risk. The question naturally arises, if teachers are unsure or unwilling to tap into their own creative potential, how can we expect students to do it? Barbot et al. (2015) conclude by questioning the trainability of creative potential in educators.

2.4 Student motivation: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

In terms of motivation, two types exist which have been widely recognised and researched. The distinction between these, has cast a light on both educational and developmental practices. Seminal contributions have been made by Deci and Ryan (1985) in the field of motivation, stating that motivation has an integral role in learner attitudes and performance. Deci and Ryan (2000), suggest motivation is not a 'unitary phenomenon' (p. 54), meaning people do not only vary in their amount of motivation but also their types of motivation. The type, or orientation of motivation is primarily concerned with the underlying goals that give rise to action.

In Self-Determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (1985) distinguish between the two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined as, 'natural inclination toward assimilation, mastery spontaneous interest and exploration, (Deci & Ryan 2000 p.70). It entails people behaving for contentment inherent in the behavior itself (Deci & Ryan, 2000) Contentment or satisfying behavior may include the reaffirming feeling of being effective, (White, 1959) Ryan and Stiller (1991), identified the significance of intrinsic motivation in education, they noted it is a natural fountain of knowledge and achievement that can be both undermined or catalysed by educators or parents. However, they state that extrinsic motivation curtails intrinsic motivation as it involves participation in an activity for separable outcomes. Extrinsic motivation has been categorised as a 'pale and impoverished form of motivation that contrasts with intrinsic motivation' (deCharms, 1968, cited in Deci & Ryan 2000 p. 55).

The phenomenon of intrinsic motivation can be traced back to 1921, Woodworth recognised how both the human and animal species were motivated by something else, Woodworth notes that they were, 'less concerned with the struggle for existence than with the joy of living, (1921, p. 139, cited in Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). Other researchers in this field such as White (1959), supported this theory, he too recognised the exploratory and playful behaviours of animals, without reinforcement. In humans, Deci and Ryan (2000) note the pervasiveness of intrinsic motivation, highlighting from birth onwards our inquisitive, curious state and readiness to learn without rewards. This natural, inherent motivation is an essential element in social, cognitive and physical development as it is by acting on these natural interests, we grow in knowledge (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Research into the area on what helps to sustain intrinsic motivation was aided by Deci and Ryan's *Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET),* their theory argues social events and structures, such as rewards and communication, that advance levels of competence can enhance intrinsic motivation for that action, but only if autonomy is felt as well. Furthermore, several early studies showed that positive performance feedback heightened intrinsic feedback, whereas, negative feedback diminished it (Deci, 1971; Harackiewicz, 1979; Deci & Cascio, 1972). Further research was carried out on what undermines intrinsic motivation, a meta-analysis by Deci, Koestner and Ryan (1998) establishes that essentially every type of reward, contingent on task performance, does in fact undermine intrinsic motivation. Research goes on to state, not only tangible rewards undermine intrinsic motivation, but also the threat of deadlines, (Amabile, DeJong & Lepper, 1976) and performing under competitive circumstances, (Reeve & Deci, 1996), according to Devi and Ryan's *CET*, the aforementioned as seen as 'controllers' of peoples' behaviours. Students who are overly controlled by teachers, parents or the system do not only lose initiative, but also learn less effectively and struggle to also think creatively (Benware & Deci, 1984). Corresponding to this, studies show children with parents who champion autonomy to be more willing to extend themselves than parents of children who are governing their children's work or play (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997).

Research shows that from early childhood and into school, intrinsic motivation dwindles due to increasing social demands and the necessary participation in tasks that are not intrinsically motivating for every individual (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Ryan and Stiller (1991), also observe the negative effects of rewards on intrinsic motivation in the school setting, identifying the decline as a problem. School systems, curriculums and assessments are complex when it comes to motivation and motivating factors. Students can perform extrinsically motivated tasks with acrimony and defiance or with an attitude of enthusiasm and eagerness, displaying their acceptance of the possible values of the task. Due to the fact many of the tasks educators ask students to perform are unenjoyable, it is necessary to promote forms of active extrinsic motivation, as a successful pedagogy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Notable also, is the fact teachers are often controlled by performance contingencies, the use of reward systems, gold star and approval techniques to enhance student performance are entrenched in this practice (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman and Ryan (1981), compared teachers whom they labelled as 'controllers', that used reward and punishment systems, to teachers who avoided the above behaviour, working with the child's internal perspective, yielded interesting results.

Within weeks they noticed those under a 'controlled' influence were already less curious, or self-initiating, had lower self-worth and lower perceived competence.

The use of grading systems and evaluations are widely used and accepted in the teaching world; however, numerous studies would show this system to be detrimental to student motivation. Grolnick and Ryan's (1987) experiment, where they told children their learning would be graded as a motivating factor, resulted in less effective learning than a non-graded approach. Similarly, Butler and Niseen (1986) carried out a comparable study with sixth graders, they found that normative grades resulted in a curtailment of interest in learning. Benware and Deci (1984) also found when they told college students they would be graded; their intrinsic motivation and interest was undermined. The use of grading systems often results in the wrong type of motivation, students become motivated to get the grade, rather than truly understand and master the material (Kellaghan, Madaus & Raczek, 1996). Nicholl's motivation theory (1984) surmises that grading systems motivate students to withdraw effort rather than fall victim to the pain that they have failed a task in which they tried to succeed. Studies have also been carried out on the effects of rewards on motivation, the conclusion derived from studies on reinforcement and rewards to increase extrinsic motivation, concluded a system of rewards has substantial negative effects, especially in the case of intrinsic motivation (Kohn, 1993, cited in Jovanovic & Matejevic, 2014). However, this can be contested. The proposed research seeks to determine if comment only feedback, rather than receiving a percentage towards their final English grade is having a negative impact on students as there is no real motivating factor to achieve in CBA1, this is due to the traditional grading system students are accustomed to.

However, Palmer, (2005) talks about a different form of motivation, approval motivation, a personal goal of students may be fitting in with their peers. The NCCA 2018 Review of Junior Cycle English also corroborates this as they state students doing CBA1 are at a tender age in their emotional development as they seek peer approval and hence do not want to stand out during their presentation. Approval motivation leads students to seek feedback from their peers, self-esteem is linked to this, consequently, if the feedback is negative, students will rapidly cease all actions (Deci & Ryan, cited in Kennedy & Lowenthal, 2011)

'Creative achievement requires high motivation of its creator', (Jovanovis & Matejevic, 2014, pg. 458) Students do not seem to see a 'descriptor', as outlined by the NCCA, as a motivating factor, worthy of creative achievement. Research would indicate that schools do not provide

favourable conditions to develop task-orientated motivation, which encourages student creativity, students face external motivators such as grades (Jovanovis & Matejevic, 2014) However, Sternberg and Lubart contested this theory, stating extrinsic rewards can be desirable at certain stages of a task (cited in Jovanovis & Matejevic, 2014). Similarly, Eisenberger & Cameron (1996), concluded rewards can have a positive effect on student creativity, if properly utilised. This poses the question, are the NCCA positively rewarding the creativity students are putting into their presentation and performance during CBA1 by only offering a comment? As there is not research on student motivation on CBA1 there is a knowledge gap to be filled.

2.5 Summary

A broad range of literature exists in relation to creativity, its historical origins, and the existence of multiple definitions. It is abundantly clear that creativity is having growing importance in education and society as a whole, the responsibility to cater and nurture this creativity is being placed upon teachers. Literature states that classroom ecology and the teacher have the biggest influence in producing an environment conducive to creativity.

It is clear a creativity gap exists, studies by Runco (2016), highlight that more creativity is being displayed outside school. Studies by Barbot (2015) also suggest the importance in the creative potential of the teacher. A large body of literature exists on motivation, with seminal contributions made by Deci & Ryan (1985) who recognized two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, a phenomenon which can be traced back to 1921. Literature indicates that intrinsic motivation dwindles from childhood into adolescents, social and curriculum demands are seen to curtail intrinsic motivation.

The above literature all helped to shape and guide this research as it supported findings from research and in some cases contradicted findings. Literature will be further referred to in the data analysis of this paper.

3.Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research is necessary to contribute to existing knowledge about issues or to fill gaps, should information on a topic be missing. Creswell (2012) states that research is a process, data is collected, information is scrutinised, results and conclusions are drawn. In the section, the research questions guiding this investigation will be outlined. The limitations of the research aim and objectives of the research question and subsequent questions will also be identified. The methodology will then be described, with a justification for the approaches used. It should be acknowledged that this is an original piece of research which has the potential to fill a knowledge gap in this area.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The below table documents the primary research questions this research seeks to answer, it also highlights subsequent research questions which will emerge, the research objective and aims are aligned with the questions below.

Table 1: Aims and Objective of Research

Primary Research Question:	Research Objective & Aims:
What is student perception of creativity at Junior Cycle English level?	To explore student perception of creativity, identifying what being creative means to students at this age.
Subsequent Research Questions: Why are students more motivated to be creative at home than they are at school?	To understand how the creativity gap between home and school could be closed, so those with creative potential are exercising it in school.
How can student creativity be enhanced during the Oral Presentation, (CBA1), if a greater understanding of student perception of creativity is gained?	To identify if teacher understanding of creativity from a student perspective can aid in professional practice, further fostering this skill.

To what extent is the use of descriptors as a mark an unmotivating factor for student effort in a task?	To analyse if students are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated in this task.
What activities do students class as being creative activities in English?	To understand the specific tasks students associate with being creative in the English domain.

3.3 Research Philosophy

The term research philosophy indicates a system of beliefs and assumptions about the growth and development of knowledge (Saunders et al. 2015). Burrell and Morgan (1979), state that at each stage of research, we subconsciously make various types of assumptions. The researcher's philosophy and epistemological assumptions will shape both the research questions and methods used to gather and interpret data (Crotty 1998).

The topic of creativity can be analysed by a constructivist viewpoint. Constructionism is an ontological position, implying social phenomena are not only formed through social interactions but are also in perpetual state of review (Bryman, 2008). What is creativity? This is an ontological question which must be answered with a constructivist approach as the definition of creativity is open to interpretation, each participant may have varying definitions of creativity and each place different value on it as a skill. As the researcher, these definitions must be interpreted. For this reason, I am an interpretivist researcher. The philosophy of interpretivism is concerned with social sciences and how humans form the meaning of phenomenon. Bryman (2012), explains how this philosophy is for the application of the scientific model to study the social world. Equivalently, Saunders et al. (2015) highlight that humans form meanings on different experiences, thus interpretivists attempt to study these meanings.

3.4 Researcher's Positionality

It is important to acknowledge the positionality of the researcher in relation to the research and the participants. As well as taking on the role of researcher in this study I am also the English

teacher of the participants, as such it can be said I am in a position of authority. However, as the interviews took place online due to Covid-19 and took place when the school closed for summer, it can be argued that the position of authority is no longer being held and thus answers were not influenced by my previous position of power.

3.5 Approach to research:

Two types of research concerned with the social world are deductive and inductive research. According to Byrman (2008), deductive reasoning is when a hypothesis is based on existing evidence, should the theory and hypothesis be correct, then the findings from data collection should be as expected. In contrast, inductive research is based on observation, collecting data, observing patterns in data which can be fed back into theory, it is a building theory whereas deductive is testing theory. This research will be inductive in approach, as it seeks to gain a deeper understanding of student understanding of creativity by analysing their opinions, this qualitative research is inductive, it generates theory from findings. An inductive approach involves carrying out initial research before evaluating the existing theory.

For this study, the researcher considered the topic of creativity, set out to discover themes, analysed data to construct more focused themes, asked appropriate open questions and gathered as much information possible before conducting a thorough literature review. This research seeks to gain an understanding of what students understand creativity in the classroom means and if the use of descriptors as an assessment technique is effective. A specific set of steps was followed in carrying out this inductive, qualitative piece of research.

*Table 2: Sequence of steps taken by researcher***.**

1.	**Design**: Select methods of qualitative research - semi-structured interview, focus group and questionnaire chosen.
2.	**Ethical Approval:** seek ethical approval from LYIT
3.	**Select participants:** choose which group to carry out research with, use random sampling.
4.	**Qualitative data collection:** online questionnaire for students
5.	**Analyse data from questionnaire**: analyse and identify themes
6.	**Further qualitative data collection:** individual semi-structured interview

7.	**Transcribe data from interview:** transcribe data and highlight emerging themes.
8.	**Further qualitative data collection:** focus group
9.	**Transcribe data from focus group:** transcribe data and highlight emerging themes.
10.	**Findings:** answer the research questions, refer to literature and conclude.

3.6 Methodological Choice: Research as a case study

This research was carried out in a Secondary school in Co. Donegal. It is a predominantly qualitative, context-based case study. This case study was bound by time constraints and research dictated by the academic calendar.

According to Yin (2009), a case study is most relevant as a research methodology, where a comprehensive understanding of a topic is sought, although, case study research is often criticized for a lack of rigor and the potential influences bias has on findings. A case study, 'explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information…and reports a case description and case theme' (Creswell, 2013 p.97, cited in Gustafsson, 2017). Zainal, (2007), shares a similar view, highlighting that case studies are prominent in the exploration of topics relating to education and they allow the researcher, 'closely examine data within a specific context ...investigating real-life phenomena through detailed contextual analysis' (p. 1). Case studies can help draw relationships and understanding between new policy initiatives and developments (Creswell, 2011). As Junior Cycle English has only recently been reformed, this case study could prove useful and provide meaningful information in how aspects of this reform are being perceived by students.

Case study can be categorised into single case studies or multiple case studies. The research carried out was a single case study. Single subjects may provide a richer analysis and an opportunity to produce a deeper theory (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991, cited in Baron & McNeal 1991). Yin (2009) contests this, suggesting the use of multiple case studies provide greater credibility and validity. However, due to time constraints, multiple case studies were not feasible in this case.

A case study must be structured in design in order to be successful. The main stages will be defining the case, gathering, and analysing data, interpreting the findings, reporting the findings, and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2011). Multiple sources of data analysis and data triangulation were used, this aided in developing an in-depth understanding of the case in hand. Data triangulation is a favourable method as it increases internal validity of a case study (Creswell, 2011). Bryman, (2003 p. 1143), suggests there are limits to this approach, stating, 'such a view fails to take account of the different social circumstances associated with the administration of different research methods'.

As aforementioned, this case study has constraints, largely due to timing and the academic calendar. Potential pitfalls of these constraints could negatively impact the depth of analysis. There are limited studies in relation to this proposed case study, this is largely due to the fact the Junior Cycle reform is a recent phenomenon, as such, it is hoped new and evolving data will be gathered in relation to the proposed study.

3.7 Mixed Method Approach

A mixed method approach to research combines both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative data focuses on description in analysis, rather than the quantification. Quantitative data highlights quantification in the gathering and interpreting of data. (Bryman, 2012). This approach can be viewed as drawing on the strengths of both research approaches, recognising the existence and significance of the physical world, as well as the importance of human experience, (Johnson & Onquegbuzie, 2004, cited in Ostlund et al. 2011). The combining of methods allows for a forging of results, not possible by using one method of research (Bryman, 2007)

A triangulation approach in the collection of data will be employed. Denzin, (1970 p. 310) states this method allows for, 'multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data and methodologies'. This approach allows for increased confidence in findings (Bryman, 2011). Denzin, (1970) also suggested four types of triangulation exist: Data triangulation, Theoretical triangulation, Investigator and Methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation, the use of one or more means of gathering data, is the method which will be implemented in this research.

The research question will guide the methods of data collection. The primary research question aims to underpin student perception of creativity. Firstly, using random selection to eliminate bias, 5 students will be interviewed in a semi-structured format, this will assist in obtaining an overview of student experience and perception of creativity, this will require a descriptive, qualitative approach. A focus group of 5 students will also be formed. The intention is that participants will interact with each other, sharing and listening to each other's views to reach a shared consensus about the proposed topic (Bell & Waters, 2014). Finally, a questionnaire will be disseminated to all those agreeing to participate, this method will result in quantitative data being processed. Each method of gathering data is explained in more detail in the next section.

3.8 Data Collection Methods: Quantitative Questionnaire

A self- completion, web-based questionnaire (Appendix C) will be disseminated to a class group of approximately 24 second year English students. This is a secondary form of data collection in relation to the interview and focus groups. The class will be allocated fifteen minutes of class time to complete this, ensuring a high response rate. The questionnaire will be completely anonymised, the cover letter, attached to the consent form given to parents and students, will instruct that students do not have to answer all of the questions. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gauge how students perceive creativity as a concept and if they identify it as an important skill. The questions, except one, will be close ended, using a 5-point Likert scale. Close ended questions are advantageous as they can be pre-coded, simplifying data processing (Bryman, 2012).

The advantages of using this form of data collection is that it is both cheap and quick to administer, it is also more convenient for the participant. However, there can be drawbacks with this approach. As the researcher will not be present to help respondents answering a question, it is vital questions asked are clear and unambiguous. There is also a risk of missing data, if questions are viewed as boring, they could be skipped, resulting in issues for data collection (Bryman, 2012).

3.9 Semi- Structured Interview

Kvale (1996) states how the purpose of a semi-structured qualitative interview is to obtain descriptions of the world and interpret their meaning. This open approach is well expressed by Spradley (1979), 'I want to understand the world from your point of view...I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (cited in Kvale, 1996 p.125). Longhurst, (2003), examines this method, identifying the manner in which this type of interview unfolds, offers participants an opportunity to explore their feelings about the topic in question. Bryman (2012) states this research method allows the researcher to keep an open mind, permitting concepts to emerge from the data.

As this is a semi-structured interview, the guide will contain a general outline of the topics and any suggested questions which could be used to follow up (Appendix D) Questions will be both thematic and dynamic. Thematic questions relate to the topic of the research, in this case creativity, and should generate knowledge, dynamic questions then will depend on the interactions between interviewer and interviewee. The quality of the questions is also vital, Kvale (1996) states opening questions such as, 'Can you tell me about your experience of being creative', can yield rich descriptions where the interviewee provides in depth experiences of the phenomena being investigated, creativity in this case. During follow up questions, the key issue is to ensure the research question is always at the forefront, probing questions and silent pauses can also allow for more reflection and from the interviewee.

10 participants will be chosen using random selection to eliminate any chance of bias. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. An indicative list of guiding questions will be used, Creswell, (2007, cited in Turner, 2010), suggests flexibility in questioning as participants may require follow-up questions or prompts to achieve optimal feedback. Open ended questions will allow students to delve into the issue of creativity in a meaningful way. They will be afforded the opportunity to have their thoughts heard in a non-judgemental setting. The benefits of this technique allow for detailed, in-depth data to be gathered, there is also more control and observation by the interviewer. On the other hand, it can be time consuming and only a small sample size can be interviewed due to time constraints.

3.10 Focus Groups

Focus groups are defined as, 'a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment', (Krugger, 1994, p.6, cited in Litosseliti, 2007).The focus group affords the researcher the prospect of studying how individuals collectively perceive creativity as a phenomenon and construct meaning around it (Bryman, 2012). It is through conversation that data emerges due to a 'range of experiences and perspectives' (Morgan, 1964 p.134 cited in Cyr 2015). They are an inherently 'social event' (Smithson, 2000 p.105, cited in Cyr 2015) due to the nature of conversation and debate which surrounds them.

The focus group will consist of 5 students and is intended to corroborate information gained from the questionnaire and interviews. Random sampling will be used again, minus those who have participated in the interview. Discussion will be recorded on an audio device and later transcribed. The research intends for the focus group to last between 20 and 30 minutes. To ensure all voices are heard, Laws (2013), suggests a periodic check could be useful, using statements like, 'does everyone agree?'.

Focus groups are advantageous as they provide a more natural environment than the individual interview, they obtain multiple viewpoints and ongoing interaction amongst participants. (Litosseliti, 2007) As the moderator of the group, the researcher will guide it, but not dominate it, ensuring participants maintain focus, answering key questions with minimal intervention. This could also be a potential drawback of the focus group, as a moderator, the researcher has less control over proceedings. The data itself will be challenging to analyse due to the sheer volume which may be produced in a short period of time. Bloor et al (2001, cited in Bryman 2012), noted that a one-hour focus group could take up to eight hours to transcribe.

3.11 Data Analysis

'Data analysis is central to credible qualitative research', (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3351) Data collected from the aforementioned methods will be analysed sequentially. Firstly, data collected from the qualitative methods will be evaluated, subsequently, data from the

quantitative method will be analysed. Braun and Clarke, (2006), suggest a thematic approach, which will be followed during the data analysis stage. (See Table 4).

Table 3: Braun & Clarke 6-step Framework adapted by Researcher.

| Step 1: Familiarisation of data |
| Step 2: Initial Coding |
| Step 3: Gathering themes |
| Step 4: Validity and Reliability of themes |
| Step 5: Defining and naming themes |
| Step 6: Interpretation and reporting |

The aim of thematic analysis is to identify emerging themes, both interpreting and forming meaningful understanding of the data. These themes are categorised into semantic or latent. Semantic themes explore surface meanings of data, in contrast, the latent level explores, 'underlying ideas, assumption and conceptualisations' (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p.84). The use of thematic analysis is advantageous as it allows for a flexible approach which can be altered for the study, providing in-depth and rich data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, cited in Nowell et al. 2017). King (2004, cited in Nowell et al. 2017) further highlights advantages, stating it is favourable when examining the perspectives of different participants. One disadvantage highlighted by Holloway and Todres (2003) is that the flexibility of thematic analysis approach can lead to inconsistencies when developing themes derived from the data. However, consistency and coherence can be encouraged by making the researcher's epistemological position explicit and ensuring this is what underpins the study.

3.12 Trustworthiness, Validity and Reliability

Without rigor, research is ineffective and loses function (Morse et al 2002). Kvale suggests, 'Validity concerns how we justify our claims to knowledge' (1986 p.6 cited in Green 2014). Reliability relates to whether the results of a study are repeatable, validity is concerned with the integrity of the results generated from study (Bryman, 2012).

Seminal works by Guba and Lincoln in the 1980s saw reliability and validity replaced by the concept of 'trustworthiness', this term covers four facets: credibility, transferability,

dependability and confirmability. Within this study, credibility was ensured by adopting appropriate research methods and examining existing literature on the topic of creativity. Transferability was achieved by providing a context of the research site. Dependability was achieved by thorough analysis of findings, accurate transcription of materials from the participants and by seeking peer reviews of the research. To establish confirmability the researcher was transparent, logical, and consistent in approach. This was achieved by choosing suitable participants using random sampling, with research carried out in an appropriate setting and it has also been formally acknowledged that the intent of the triangulation method is to enhance the validity and reliability of results while also reducing bias.

The findings of this study could be of use to other secondary schools in Ireland. As the Junior Cycle is a recent curriculum reform, little research has gone into student perception of the Key Skill of Creativity outlined by the NCCA, this research could provide a basis for further study, thus increasing the dependability of this study.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns were not overlooked in the planning or implementation stage of this research, they relate directly to the integrity and disciplines implicated in this study (Bryman, 2015). Diener and Crandall, (1978), have broken ethical principles into four categories: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. As the participants of this study as under eighteen, they are considered vulnerable, ethical guidelines as set out by the British Educational Research Association, (BERA, 2018) will be adhered to.

The proposed research will not cause any harm, emotional or physical to those involved. As participants are considered vulnerable, consent forms were issued to both parents and students, no research began until informed consent had been given. (Appendix E). It should be acknowledged that the original consent form had to be amended and re-issued. Ethical approval was given to carry out interviews and focus groups in the school, however, due to Covid-19 the mode of data collection had to change and thus new consent forms were issued to reflect this. Consent was also given from the Principal of the school to carry out this research (Appendix F). Participants were assured that the researcher will do her best to assure confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher will ensure transparency with both participants

and parents, a cover letter attached to the consent form will provide detailed information on what the research will entail.

All data collected will be stored on a password protect device, accessible only to the researcher and the research supervisor. All analysis of data will take place in the researcher's private home, no data will be left public, the room will be locked after the researcher is finished each time. Participants will have access to their own data if requested, but only until the date specified on the information sheet. Those who choose to partake will not be rewarded or incentivised in any way for their taking part, equally, those who choose not to participate, will not be penalised in any manner. The collection, storage and retention of data will be in accordance with LYIT Ethical Policy. As per LYIT Data Protection Policy, data gathered will be stored for no longer than five years, at this point it will be destroyed. Before research can commence, ethical approval has been sought. In November 2019, an ethical application was submitted to the LYIT Ethical Committee.

4. Research Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction to Research Findings and Data Analysis

In this chapter the findings and conclusions are described and analysed within the theoretical framework. The analysis of the data suggests that no hold all definition of creativity exists, students acknowledge the relevance of creativity as a skill and prefer to exercise this skill at home. The interviews and questionnaire corroborate this, validating the NCCA introduction of 'Being Creative' as a key skill in the new Junior Cycle.

The data was analysed using the six phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013). Subsequently, the designated categories, concepts and themes that emerged from the data were viewed as essential in determining the understanding of all the participants (Fielden et al, 2011). The first six phases of thematic analysis were carried out manually.

The themes that emerged were defined in order to classify and label the categories (see table 5, below)

Table 4: Research Categories and Themes

Research Question	Category	Theme
Research Question 1: What is student perception of creativity at Junior Cycle English?	Category 1: Student understanding of the term creativity	Theme 1: 1. Students' varying definitions of creativity. 2. Importance of creativity as a skill. 3. Consideration of oneself as creative.
Research Question 2: Why are students more motivated to be creative at home than they are at school?	Category 2: The Creativity Gap	Theme 2: 1. Creativity at home vs creativity at school. 2. School environment as a creative space.

Research Question 3:	Category 3:	Theme 3:
How can student creativity be enhanced during the Oral Presentation, (CBA1), if a greater understanding of student perception of creativity is gained? Research Question 4: To what extent is the use of descriptors as a mark an unmotivating factor for student effort in a task?	Student Motivation	1. Motivation and Assessment. 2. Comment Only Marking

The analysis of the participants' responses included in each category were used to answer the equivalent research questions. In reviewing the data participants from the focus group, interviews and questionnaires addressed each research question, with information from the questionnaire used to provide triangulation in order to corroborate the findings form participant responses.

The following number of participants in the questionnaire addressed each research question:

· Research question 1: x 18 participants.

· Research question 2: x 20 participants.

· Research question 3: x 20 participants.

· Research question 4: x 20 participants.

The following number of participants in the individual interviews addressed each research question:

· Research question 1: x 10 participants.

· Research question 2: x 10 participants.

· Research question 3: x 10participants.

· Research question 4: x 10participants.

The following number of participants in the focus addressed each research question:

· Research question 1: x 5 participants.

· Research question 2: x 5 participants.

· Research question 3: x 5 participants.

· Research question 4: x 5 participants.

4.1 Category One: Student understanding of the term creativity

This category was identified once the following themes were reviewed and defined:

1. Students' varying definitions of creativity
2. Importance of creativity as a skill
3. Consideration of oneself as a creative person

This category was determined by the ability of students to articulate their understanding of the term creativity. According to Kleiman (2008), no single 'hold all' definition of creativity exists however there is a general consensus that it involves notions of originality, novelty and value. Creativity as a skill is integral to future generations and their ability to 'survive as well as thrive in the twenty-first century' (Parkhurst, 2006 cited in Shaheen, 2010 p. 166). The analysis of participants' responses corroborates both of the above points. Thus, the analysis of individual interview transcripts, the focus group and the questionnaire were used to validate the findings in order to answer the first research question.

What do students understand by the term creativity?

4.1.1 Theme One: Student definition of creativity

Existing literature suggests that no one definition of creativity exists, as discussed in the literature review the existence of more than one definition is called *pluralism* (Kozbelt, Beghtetto and Runco, 2010). However, as aforementioned, there is general acknowledgment it involves uniqueness, creation and innovation. The analysis of responses from the individual

students, focus group and questionnaire (see Graph 1) suggest that although their definitions vary, there is a consensus it involves the above. Question 1 of the focus group, interview and questionnaire: What does the term creativity mean to you?

'Like expressing imagination and looking at things differently to others, like original thoughts' *(Participant 1 - Interview)*

'Using your imagination and doing your own thing and thinking about what to do in a situation' *(Participant 2 - Interview)*

'Eh like art, creating things and using your imagination' *(Participant 3 - Interview)*

Graph 1: Description of what being creative means to you from questionnaire. Responses taken directly from questionnaire and inserted into table below.

1. Creating a world full of whatever you want.
2. Your own world.
3. When you come up with your own individual idea in your head.
4. Thinking outside of the box
5. What ideas you can come up with
6. Original Ideas
7. I think creative means your imagination and how broad your imagination is.
8. Saying what comes to mind and writing it down
9. Expressing individuality and being unique in what you do.
10. To be inspirational and motivated. You don't have to be original or funny, to be creative is to let your mind loose.
11. Using good language.
12. Telling your feelings.
13. It means thinking in your own way and any way you want.
14. To use your imagination to come up with ideas.
15. How far your imagination can go.

16. Imagining.
17. Using your imagination and thinking deeply.
18. Having your own twist to a certain thing or object.

When asked to elaborate on why pupils think no singular definition of creativity exists, the students explained how individuals view the world and circumstances differently, suggesting how you are raised can also impact how you view creativity.

'People see things in different ways so everyone will have a different aspect on everything so people can perceive things differently' (Participant 1- focus group).

'People get inspiration from different things so we can't always understand each others creativity' (Participant 2- focus group).

' Like I grew up in a creative house, my mum is a Montessori teacher so we were brought up with it and have a different understanding of it to maybe someone who didn't have that upbringing' (Participant 3- focus group).

To gain a further understanding of pupil understanding of creativity, the focus group and individual interviewees were asked what activities in English they class as creative activities.

'Maybe writing stories and essays, or if you had to come up with a book cover' (Participant 4 - Interview).

'Essay writing, any of that because you can be creative and put your own slant on it, even poetry because everyone interprets it differently' (Participant of focus group).

''Sometimes we have to write short stories or if we have to predict the end of a novel'
(Participant 5 - Interview).

The NCCA (2015) document on 'Being Creative' highlights elements under this umbrella term: imagining, exploring options and alternatives, implementing ideas, learning creatively, and

stimulating creativity using technology. The analysis of qualitative data suggests some of these elements are being implemented, participants highlight essay writing as the primary form of creativity in the English classroom, however not one participant noted the use of technology as a creative activity used in class. This finding suggests that technology is not being implemented effectively in the classroom as a means to stimulate creativity and should be further investigated.

4.1.2 Theme Two: Importance of creativity as a skill

Parkhurst (1999) recognises the importance of creativity as a skill which must be nurtured in school so future generations can deal with ambiguous issues and cope with a fast-changing world. During the focus group, interview and questionnaire participants were asked if they place importance on creativity as a skill, in the case of the interviews and focus group they were prompted to explain their answer. 20 participants responded to this question on the questionnaire, 35% strongly agreed of its importance, 40% agreed while 25% were neutral (see Graph 2), 100% of those interviewed agreed it was important and 4 out of 5 focus group participants saw this as a vital life skill. Therefore, it can be argued that the participants place an importance on creativity as skill.

'I think it is because whenever you get older you're doing interviews and getting asked questions, examiners will see you're thinking outside the box and being creative when answering questions' (Participant 4 - focus group).

''I think it is because it is a way of expressing difference and it is important beyond school, if you couldn't think of different things it would be boring, it is important for jobs to be a more interesting person' (Participant 8 - interview).

'I think it is because it makes life challenges easier to do and it helps your through school' (Participant 10 - interview).

''It is because you have to be creative to get on well in the world and you have to have an idea of what you want to do in life, you have to be creative to actually do well'. (Participant 5 - focus group).

Graph 2 : Creativity is an important skill

Being creative is an important skill to have

20 responses
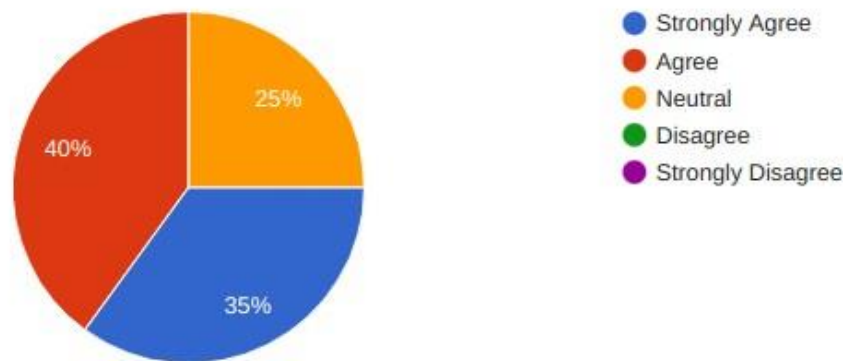
Accordingly, it can be stated that the NCCA prioritise creativity as a key skill, hence including it in their framework, student appreciation of this skill is also significant, literature suggests creativity is an essential life skill (Craft, 1999) as it has the power to solve problems from the social, political and economic spectrum (Burnard & White, 2008). Analysis of the data strongly suggests participants have the ability to recognise the value of creativity, showing their awareness of its growing importance in an ever-changing society.

4.1.3 A Creative Individual

The NCCA (2015) document on Being Creative stated that most individuals do not consider themselves as very creative. Participants clearly valued creativity as a skill but when asked if they considered themselves as creative, their answers varied greatly. The question, do you consider yourself a creative person? was asked to those in the focus group, interviews and questionnaire, participants of the interview and focus group were prompted to elaborate on their answer.

Graph 3. I consider myself to be a creative person

I consider myself to be a creative person

20 responses
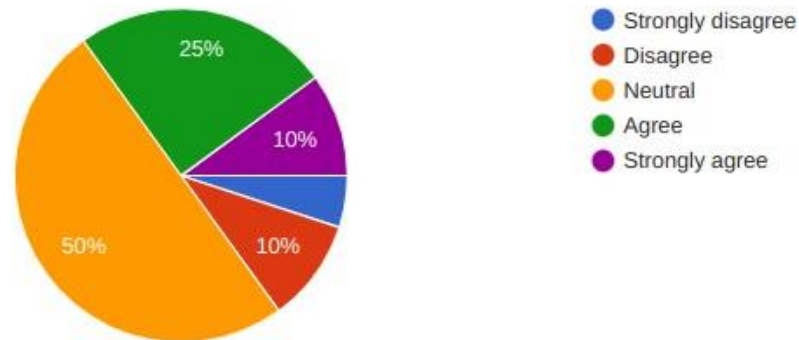
50% of participants remained neutral, this significant finding suggests students do not know if they consider themselves as creative and possibly struggle with this concept, 25% agreeing they are creative, 10% strongly viewed themselves as creative individuals and 5% do not view themselves as creative. The focus group and interviews provided a deeper insight into this question as participants could explain the meaning behind their answer,

''I think I am a creative person because when I was younger I read a lot, I still do and I have a lot of ideas in my head because of that' (Participant 6 - Interview).

''I would say I am not as creative as others but I can be creative, I would be good enough at coming up with fictional stories if I was doing an essay' (Participant 5 - Interview).

''I think I would be because I find it pretty easy to come up with story lines and stuff'' (Participant 5 - focus group).

'I don't know, like I don't really consider myself creative, I find it hard to come up with ideas, sometimes I ask teacher for help' (Participant 10 - interview).

'Eh like I am not the best at making things, or at art but I can write stories pretty well' (Participant 2 - focus group).

'I can be creative when I get the hang of it' (Participant 8 - Interview).

Out of the 10 interviews, 80% of students considered themselves creative, 20% stated they do not view themselves this way as they struggle to come up with ideas. An analysis of responses above suggest the majority of participants identify creativity in English with the ability to create stories, as their English teacher, answers may have been influenced by this, thus students didn't consider their creative ability beyond the English room when asked this question. Participants were further prompted when asked, 'Would you say you were more creative when you were younger, and if so, why?' The responses are a possible reflection of the restricted structure of the curriculum.

'Yes because my mum is a Montessori teacher and from being with her they're able to do things more freely, children can express themselves in their own way, when I transitioned into primary and secondary it is more structured so I kinda lost those opportunities to be more creative' (Participant 1 - focus group).

'I think like when I was younger I thought about more things and didn't care as much what people thought of my ideas but now in school I feel like I've to be mature or something with my ideas' (Participant 9 - Interview).

'I think I am just as creative, ehm now I have more time to write stories and kinda structure my ideas so I think maybe I am more creative now' (Participant 2 – focus group).

'I probably am more focused on like what I need to know now for exams, I don't really think I always needs to be creative in school, unless it is in art or one of those subjects' (Participant 7 - interview).

Participants' responses corroborate existing literature which suggests formal education suppresses creativity, secondary schools have been blamed for 'killing' creativity and producing 'conformists' rather than 'freely creative and original thinkers' (Kaila, 2005). Deci and Ryan, (2002) also stated that student motivation dwindles from early childhood into primary and secondary school, largely due to demands of curriculum, assessment and mandatory participation in tasks students do not view as desirable. The topic of motivation is

explored in more depth further into the findings of this paper. The US researcher Sternberg (cited in NCCA, 2015) also argues as students move through school they learn how the system works and quickly begin to suppress their spontaneous creativity, furthermore he states students do not suppress creativity at home, on digital platforms or when out with friends, placing the responsibility of nurturing this skill on teachers. Data analysis validates this argument as findings state participants do not tend to suppress creativity at home.

4.1.4 Research Question One: Justification

The qualitative and quantitative data suggests there is no single definition of creativity. However, it can be stated that there is general consensus that it involves one using their imagination, inventiveness and original thinking, thus justifying existing literature while also giving the researcher, who is a teacher, an insight into student understanding of the term creativity. Participants clearly perceive creativity as an important life skill, from the questionnaire, 75% of participants agreed that creativity is an important life skill, the qualitative data also supported this, with all participants of the interview and 4 out of 5 participants in the focus group seeing its value in society. However, when asked if participants considered themselves as creative individuals, answers varied, analysis of their responses suggested 70% of those from the interview considered themselves as more creative when they were younger but due to a demanding curriculum, they no longer have many creative opportunities in school. It can be proposed that student creativity is indeed being curtailed in school, students are aware of this but feel curriculum trumps creativity.

4.2 Category two, The Creativity Gap

This category was identified once the following themes were reviewed and defined:
1. Creativity at home vs Creativity at school
2. School environment as a creative space

This category was determined by where students felt they could produce their most creative work, the school and home environment play an important role here. Literature suggests student creative potential is not being met at school. Runco (2016) writes extensively about the creativity gap, unadorned creative potential and creativity that is actually achieved, further stating the gap exists due to school ecology, family background, personality, and values.

Mahon and Yarcheski, (1996), suggest solitary activity among adolescents may be favoured as it is judgement free. The analysis of participants' responses corroborates both of the above points. Thus, the analysis of individual interview transcripts, the focus group and the questionnaire were used to validate the findings in order to answer the second research question.

Why are students more motivated to be creative at home rather than in school?

4.2.1 Theme One: Creativity at home vs Creativity at school

Runco (2016), states that students displayed more creativity outside of school. The analysis of student responses from the questionnaire (see Graph 4 & 5), interviews and focus group further validated this research. In the questionnaire participants were given two statements 'I find it easy to be creative in the classroom when the teacher tells me to' and 'I find it easier to be creative at home rather than in school'. Graph 4 identifies student feelings on having to express creativity in school.

Graph 4: Student creativity at school

I find it easy to be creative in the classroom when teacher tells me to.

20 responses
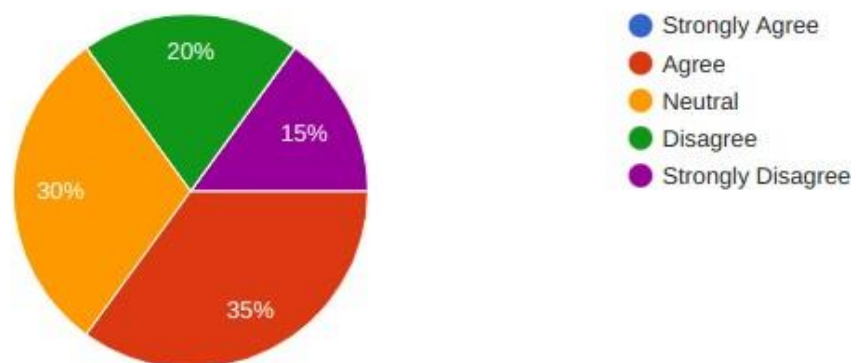
In relation to statement one, 'I find it easy to be creative in the classroom when the teacher tells me to', 20% of participants disagreed, with 15% strongly disagreeing, 30% remained neutral, meaning they have neither a positive or negative view of their ability to be creative in the classroom, only 15% strongly agreed that they find being creative in the classroom to be no problem.

Graph 5: Student creativity at home

I find it easier to be creative at home rather than in school.

20 responses

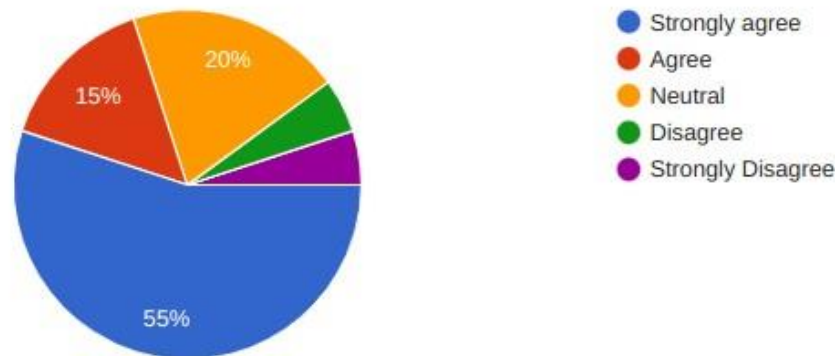According to Graph 5 the majority of participants find it easier to be creative at home rather than school, 55% strongly agreed to this statement with 15% agreeing, only 10% of participants disagreed with or strongly disagreed with this statement. The qualitative data further corroborated the findings from the questionnaire. The interview and focus group allowed the researcher to further investigate as to why students felt being creative at home was favoured over school. Participants were asked, 'Do you find it easier to be creative at home or school? and please explain you answer'

'I think definitely at home because you have more time to do it and think, during Covid I feel all my answers for subjects have been more creative than they were at school because I have had more time' (Participant 4, Interview)

'Home. I just am more relaxed at home and have more time to come up with good ideas' (Participant 1, Interview)

'At home. Because I feel I have more time and I am not rushing to get it done in the 40 mins, school is more of a professional environment so it is harder to be creative at school' (Participant 2, Interview)

'I think it would be easier to do at home because you can have more time to think and think of something creative whereas in class in class you're just sitting there trying to think but under a bit more pressure' (Participant 3 - focus group)

A recurring issue for participants is timing, home is favoured over school as it allows students more time to think, plan and implement their ideas, White (2019) stated that the biggest enemy of creativity is time, demanding students to be creative in a 40 minute class could therefore be counterproductive to nurturing creativity in our students. When participants were asked, 'do you think it is fair or unfair for teachers to ask students to be creative in a 40 min class and why?' some of the following responses followed:

'Unfair, it isn't being really creative if you're putting a time limit on it'. (Participant 1 - interview).

'It isn't unfair but it is easier at your own pace at home' (Participant 3 - interview.)

''It is unfair because it can be hard to think of things in 20 minutes, at least at home you've less distractions and time to do it the way you want' (Participant 5 - focus group).

These responses provide an interesting insight into student feelings on when creativity is demanded within the classroom by the teacher, feelings of pressure and inability to produce quality work in a limited time could be damaging student creativity. Data analysis thus suggests that timing is having a negative impact on creativity in school.

4.2.2 Category Two, Theme Two: The School Environment as a Creative Space

Students were asked to express their opinion on how they feel school serves as a creative space. The new Junior Cycle has now been fully phased into all schools and by its very nature should be more creative as this is encompassed in its framework. Creativity is being made the focal point of 'curriculum and pedagogy' (Wilson, 2005). The literature states that society turns to schools in times of need, this is no different. Schools are viewed as places for the stimulation of creativity because they can do so in an efficient way that can not only develop creativity in those labelled gifted but in masses of students (Walberg, 1988). Participants of the questionnaire, interview and focus group were each asked various questions on creative

opportunities and freedom in school. In the questionnaire participants were given the statement, 'I am given a lot of creative freedom in class', see Graph 6 for results.

Graph 6: I am given a lot of creative freedom in class

We are given alot of creative freedom in class

20 responses
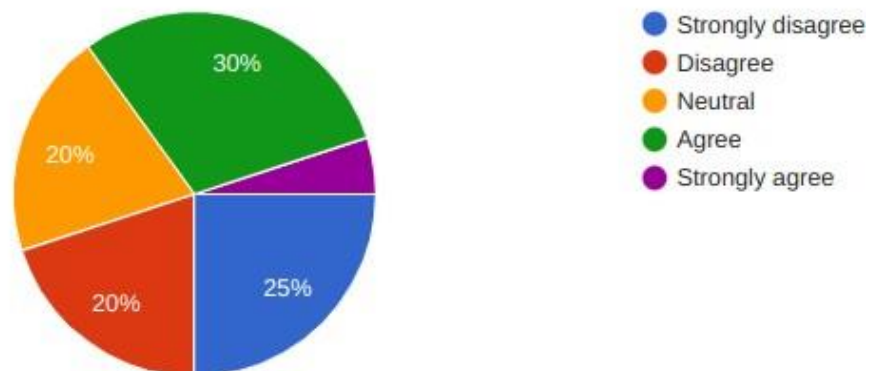
The results show some uncertainty on this topic, 25% strongly disagreed and 20% disagreed that they are given creative freedom in class. 30% agree they are given enough creative freedom. Participants of the interview and focus group were asked, 'Would you like more opportunities to be more creative in class?

''I would but with the curriculum it is hard to do a lot of stuff' (Participant 4 - interview)

''Yeah probably, it would be enjoyable to come up do more things like that' (Participant 6 - interview)

'Eh yeah, I would, I would like to maybe do a proper project, write a proper book or short novel for a CBA' (Participant 5 - interview)

''Not really, I think we have enough creative chances' (Participant 1 - interview)

'Not really, I think we do enough right now with essays and stuff, it is a good balance' (Participant 2 - focus group)

'Yeah because sometimes ya have to write on a topic you've been told about so kinda don't have the freedom to write about what we want always' (Participant 4 - focus group)

10 interview participants answered this question, 70% of those stated they would like more creative freedom in class, while 30% are satisfied with the level of creative freedom given. In the focus group 3 out of 5 participants were satisfied with the level of creative freedom while 2 members crave more. Participants focused on English class when asked this question which is reflected in their responses. A follow up question was asked, 'What could teachers do to help students be more creative or are they doing enough?'

'I think some teachers do more than others, it would help if teachers encourage students and praised their work for what it was, some teachers are creative in how they teach and that makes it interesting' (Participant 4 - interview).

'Teachers actually do a good bit but they could have more creative activities in the class' (Participant 2 - interview).

'Teachers do a lot because they do try do a lot of creative stuff in school and help when they can' (Participant 6 - interview).

'Teachers do need to give us some basic guidelines yano, how long a piece of writing should be but after that need to let us come up with our own ideas, I think some teachers nearly want everyone writing the same thing which isn't creative at all' (Participant 2 - focus group).

Participant response varied here which suggests while some teachers are encompassing the key skill of 'Being Creative' in their class, others focus heavily on curriculum and assessment. The analysis of data suggests that students are aware of the importance of creativity as a skill and crave more creative freedom, educators and schools need to be aware of this. The NCCA (2015) concludes the teacher is the biggest influence on the creative atmosphere in the classroom, thus their classroom must be conducive to creativity. Participants were further prompted on their feelings of creativity in school when asked, 'Does creativity exist in every subject, if so which subjects and in what form?'

'I think it is yeah because for English you can express yourself in essays and stuff but then Art you can think outside the box and Maths if you're doing questions there are so many ways to do it and think differently' '(Participant 10 - interview).

'Eh yeah, especially like Art and Woodwork and stuff like that but even Maths even PE you can be creative' (Participant 5 - focus group).

'Eh I think mostly just English and Art with essays and drawing' (Participant 1 - interview).

'It can be found in all subjects, most subjects now have projects and they let ya be a bit more creative' (Participant 2 - interview).

4.2.3 Research Question Two: Justification

The qualitative and quantitative data corroborates existing findings which state a creativity gap exists because students perform at different levels at home and school, with home being the space where optimum performance occurs, the findings in Graph 4 and 5 prove this. It can be stated that time and pressure prove to be a main issue of concern and the main reason students are more comfortable working at home, in their own creative space. Students do not associate creativity only with Art but also see it exists in every subject such as Maths and PE, this shows the curriculum is succeeding in implementing creativity in various disciplines in school. It can be thus argued that schools are providing a creative space and participants largely believe teachers do what they can to foster creativity, but more could certainly be done.

4.3 Category Three: Student Motivation

This category was identified once the following themes were reviewed and defined:

1. Motivation and Assessment
2. Comment Only Marking

This category was determined by student attitude towards new assessment techniques introduced in the new Junior Cycle and how motivated they are to perform for a comment only assessment system. As stated in the literature review, seminal work from Deci & Ryan (1985) distinguished the two forms of motivation; extrinsic and intrinsic. In later work, Deci & Ryan

(2000) highlighted how student intrinsic motivation dwindes from childhood into secondary school due to increasing demands to perform tasks students may find unenjoyable, this links with students creativity also dwindling due to the demands of curriculum and assessment in school. The new grading system for CBAs in Junior Cycle English is based on a descriptor (see Appendix B). The research sought to identify how this affects student motivation to perform in this task, if at all, and how students feel on receiving a comment rather than a grade in this instance. An analysis of student responses was carried out from the interview, focus group and the questionnaire.

To what extent is the use of descriptors as a mark an unmotivating factor for student effort in a CBA task?

4.3.1 Theme One: Motivation and Assessment

Participants were asked to express their opinion on how motivated they are to perform a task for their Junior Cycle English which is not worth a percentage of their final grade. CBA1, the Oral Presentation is allocated three weeks preparation time as outlined by the NCCA., students prepare and deliver their presentation which is recorded in front of their peers. As an educator, I have witnessed students become demoralised by the fact their hard work is not worth anything significant towards their final grade, students also become complacent and disinterested in the task as they do not feel the need to exert effort into an exercise worth a comment only. Literature shows that although the use of grading systems is widely accepted, studies carried out by Grolnick and Ryab (1987) show when children were told their work would be graded, it resulted in less effective learning and their intrinsic motivation was undermined. However, the findings below would contradict this, stating participants tend to be more motivated to work towards a grade rather than a descriptor. Participants were asked if CBA1 was worth a percentage would they be more motivated to be more creative in this task?

Graph 7: If CBA1 was worth a % would student motivation increase

If CBA1 was worth a % of my final JC English grade, I would be more motivated to be creative for it

20 responses

- ● Strongly agree
- ● Agree
- ● Neutral
- ● Disagree
- ● Strongly Disagree
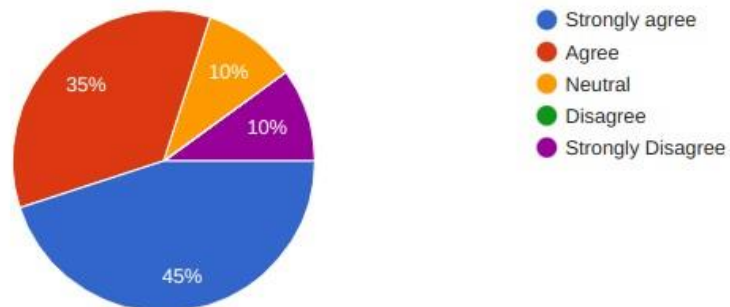
100% of participants responded to this statement in the questionnaire, Graph 7 clearly displays that the majority would work harder for CBA1 if it was worth a percentage. 45% strongly agreed and 35% agreed that motivation would increase for the task if it were worth a percentage, only 10% strongly disagreed. This is a significant finding and a larger study could gain further insight into student feeling on CBA1 and the desire for a percentage over a descriptor. Participants of the interview and focus group were asked the same question, the following responses ensued*:*

'I would yeah because ya don't feel like you're really being rewarded for your work with a comment, it is our Junior Cert like so should be worth something proper' (Participant 1 - interview).

'Yeah because it is only a comment and doesn't mean as much' (Participant 7 - interview).

''I think so because there is a big gap between a comment and a percentage, a percentage is a precise answer on what you deserve for your work, you are rewarded properly for your effort' (Participant 2 - focus group).

70% of those interviewed stated they would prefer a grade, 20% said it would not affect their motivation for the task either way and 10% were neutral in their answer. From data analysis it can be stated that student motivation for CBA1 would increase if it were worth a percentage of

a grade. However, research also stated that the use of grading systems often results in the wrong type of motivation, students become motivated to get the grade, rather than truly understand and master the material, therefore it is difficult to conclude if student motivation will be intrinsic or extrinsic if the grading system was to change (Kellaghan, Madaus & Raczek, 1996).

4.3.2 Theme Two: Comment Only Marking

Following on from student desire for a percentage to increase their motivation, participants were asked in general if they prefer grades to comment only marking, this is a form of formative assessment in which feedback is an integral component, the results spoke volumes (see Graph 8). 45% of students strongly agreed and 25% agreed, confirming they prefer grades to comment only marks.

Graph 8: Grades vs Comment Only Marking

I prefer grades to comment only marking

20 responses

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree
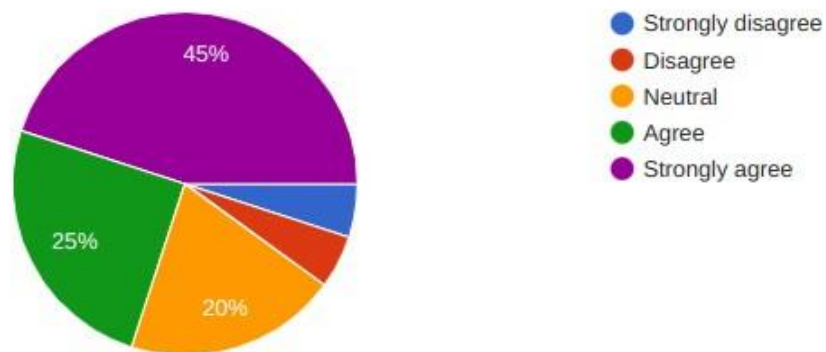
Those from the interview and focus group were asked the same question but prompted as to why they prefer grades to comments.

'Getting a grade is more motivating or something and easier to compare to the others' (Participant 9 - interview).

'You know where you stand more with a grade, most teachers give a grade and some sort of comment anyway, but I always look for the grade first' (Participant 4 - interview).

'Just used to always getting grades I suppose, I am doing the Junior Cert so it is he grade I am interested in' (Participant 1 - focus group).

These findings are significant in showing student mindset and perhaps is a reflection of the need to change and clearly show students the benefits of comments, the NCCA champions the use of formative feedback as a tool to show students strengths and weakness but if the students continue to look only for the grade, the provision of comments could be viewed as a waste of teachers time. Studies carried out by the NCCA in 2005 showed teachers found comment only marking to be a motivational factor and a method of encouraging students to self-assess, result analysis suggests formative assessment may not be implemented on a large scale across this particular school setting.

4.3.3 Research Question 3: Justification

The qualitative and quantitative data in this case contradicts existing data. Existing literature clearly indicates that formative assessment is by far the most beneficial, Butler's (1988) study showed students who received formative feedback increased their performance scores in contrast to those who received grade only marking, however, participants of this particular case study have voiced their preference for grades over formative marking. It can therefore be argued that students are unaware of the overarching benefits of formative assessment and if they were taught the benefits, could apply the formative marking more effectively thus improving their performance.

4.3.4 Research Question 4: Justification

The findings for research question 3 link to question 4 also. This directly correlates to student motivation to work more effectively towards a percentage than a descriptor. Findings suggest that students need to be more aware and more accustomed to formative feedback and be able to identify the value of it.

4.5 Summary of Findings

Following the detailed thematic analysis of data from the questionnaire, focus group and interviews, the following key findings have emerged:

1. The participants have varying definitions of the term creativity, but a general consensus exists that it involves unique thinking, imagination and innovation.

2. 75% of participants (strongly agreed & agreed) identify creativity as a significant life skill and note the value of it beyond school.

3. The primary form of creative activity identified in the English domain was essay writing, no student identified the use of technology as a creative medium used in school.

4. Participants viewed themselves as more creative when they were younger, determining the curriculum as having a negative impact on their creative freedom.

5. A significant quantity of participants 70%, (strongly agreed & agreed) identify home as their optimum work environment, noting the pressure of time in school curtailing their creativity.

6. Students associate creativity with all subject disciplines.

7. The majority of participants, 70%, (strongly agreed & agreed) prefer grades to comment only marking and would be more motivated to work for CBAs if they were worth a percentage rather than a descriptor

4.5 Discussion

Students need creative freedom in school and the ability to express themselves without explicit time pressures. The researcher believes that the curriculum does continue to dictate the amount of time we can allow for creative freedom, despite Junior Cycle reform.

The researcher has learned that students acknowledge the significance of creativity as a skill which is important in itself as literature continues to highlight its growing importance in society (Walberg, 1988, Davies, 2002). Students also accept that perception of creativity varies due to

the complex nature and individualistic views of this topic. No one definition of creativity exists as it is an unwieldy and hard to grasp topic (Sternberg, 2006). The participants find it difficult to recognise themselves as creative thinkers but believe their creative abilities and motivation dwindle from childhood into secondary school due to curriculum demands. Teaching has historically focused on 'knowledge acquisition' (Davies,2002) however this will no longer suffice as the knowledge needed in the future will be broader and more complex than we can realise now but students need the creative capacity to deal with this (Scoffham, 2003; Guilford, 1957).

Students are highly motivated to work at an optimal level of creativity at home rather than in school. The time constraints of demanding creativity in school is having a negative impact on students' creative freedom and desire to be creative. Allowing class time to plan but home time to implement ideas could prove beneficial to student work and motivation to complete these tasks.

Comment only marking as a formative assessment technique is favoured by the NCCA (2015) but findings suggest that students would be more motivated to work for a grade and feel their word is being rewarded fairly. The researcher concludes that students would benefit from a greater understanding of the overarching benefits of formative assessment and how this could improve performance levels in the future (Black & Willian, 1998).

5. Recommendations

According to Einstein (1992), 'Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world' (cited in Gibson, 2010). An ever-changing world and demanding society require creative individuals and responsibility lies with schools to produce a population of creative thinkers (Walberg, 1988). As literature and the findings of this research identifies students' ability to be more creative at home, students need to be afforded the opportunity to pursue this more or else curriculum needs to change yet again to afford teachers time in the classroom to cater for more creative exercises. Furthermore, participants highlighted the negative impact restricted class time in school is having on their creativity, there must be an awareness that creativity cannot be switched on and off at predetermined times (Gibson, 2010).

The Robinson Report (2000) found that students' creative abilities diminish due to the years devoted to formal education. Amabile's (1983) work on creativity states the significance of giving students as much creative freedom as possible. It can be recommended that school policy, educational framework, pedagogy and curriculum need to cater for more creative development or as educators we are doing our students a disservice and hindering their future development and ability to perform in a society which demands creative individuals. Additionally, findings suggest participants would prefer a grade rather than a descriptor/comment for their CBA. Following on from this finding, a recommendation is to teach students the benefits of formative assessment and what the features of quality outlined by the NCCA truly mean, only then could students appreciate how this will assist future performance.

The informative data analysis from both qualitative and quantitative methods have resulted in rich findings that will be relevant to other secondary schools, policy makers and educators in Ireland. Although a limited case study due to time constraints predetermined from the academic calendar, a similar case study of a larger scale would provide a greater insight into student experience of creativity. A study into Leaving Certificate students experiences of creativity could highlight the gap between Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle, allowing students to document their experience of creativity through secondary school. A holistic approach would also extend the research into primary and Montessori schools, this could generate an overview of the

disparity between creativity in children and adolescents and why policy makers are allowing creativity to be curtailed due to curriculum demands.

The findings in this study provide a unique perspective on creativity and perception of creativity in Junior Cycle English. It also identifies the benefits and challenges students associate with creativity in school, what motivates them and their feelings on formative assessment.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Key Skills of Junior Cycle Reform

Appendix B: 24 Statements of Learning

A FRAMEWORK FOR JUNIOR CYCLE

Innovation & Identity
Schools developing Junior Cycle

NCCA
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Statements of Learning

	The student
1	communicates effectively using a variety of means in a range of contexts in L1*
2	listens, speaks, reads and writes in L2* and one other language at a level of proficiency that is appropriate to her or his ability
3	creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts
4	creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved
5	has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making
6	appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives
7	values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts
8	values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change
9	understands the origins and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him
10	has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably
11	takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others
12	is a confident and competent participant in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active
13	understands the importance of food and diet in making healthy lifestyle choices
14	makes informed financial decisions and develops good consumer skills
15	recognises the potential uses of mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning
16	describes, illustrates, interprets, predicts and explains patterns and relationships
17	devises and evaluates strategies for investigating and solving problems using mathematical knowledge, reasoning and skills
18	observes and evaluates empirical events and processes and draws valid deductions and conclusions
19	values the role and contribution of science and technology to society, and their personal, social and global importance
20	uses appropriate technologies in meeting a design challenge
21	applies practical skills as she/he develop models and products using a variety of materials and technologies
22	takes initiative, is innovative and develops entrepreneurial skills
23	brings an idea from conception to realisation
24	uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner

*L1 is the language medium of the school (Irish in Irish-medium schools) L2 is the second language (English in Irish-medium schools)

Appendix C: Descriptors set by NCCA

Features of Quality for Oral Communication
Exceptional The student's communication is remarkable for its fluency and its control of material used. The communication is imaginatively shaped to a very clear purpose. The student's engagement with the audience/listener is compelling and sustained.
Above expectations The student's communication is clear and convincing, and material has been very well chosen. Communication is fully shaped to its intended purpose. Engagement with the audience/listener is highly effective.
In line with expectations Communication is clear and convincing for the most part, showing knowledge of the subject of the communication. Communication is shaped to a purpose. Engagement with the audience/listener is reasonably well sustained.
Yet to meet expectations Communication is unconvincing although some knowledge of the subject of the communication is shown. The purpose of the communication is often unclear. Engagement with the audience/listener is haphazard or poorly sustained.

Students will complete Oral Communication towards the end of year two and expectations of the standard they achieve will be at a level appropriate to their age and experience at that stage of junior cycle.

Appendix D: Questionnaire on Creativity

1. Please tick you gender

Male〔 〕

Female〔 〕

2. If the teacher tells you to, 'be creative', please write a brief sentence/words, on what this means to you.

_____

_____

3. Being creative is an important skill to have.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

4. I find it easy to be creative in the classroom when teacher tells me to.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

5. I find it easier to be creative at home when I am doing homework, than in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

6. I think I am a creative person.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

7. We are given a lot of creative freedom in class.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

8. The Oral Presentation, CBA1, is a good assessment technique to allow us to be creative.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

9. I prefer grades to comment only marking.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

10. If the Oral Presentation was worth a certain percentage of my final Junior Cycle English result, I would be more motivated to be more creative for it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Appendix E: Indicative list of questions for semi-structured interview

1. What do you think of when I say the word, creative?

2. What do you think it means to be a creative person?

3. Do you think you are a creative person? Explain why you think this.

4. Do you think everyone can be creative or is it easier for some people? Why do you think this?

5. Do you find it easier to complete creative exercises at home or in school and why?

6. How do you feel about standing up and doing a presentation in front of your class?

7. Would you like more opportunities to be creative in the classroom?

8. How does the fact CBA1 is only worth a comment, affect the effort you may or may not put into the task?

9. Do you feel being creative is an important skill? Why?

10. What do you think teachers could do to help students be more creative?

11. What activities in English class do you consider as creative activities?

12. Can creativity be found in all subjects in school? Which subjects?

13. How do you feel about sharing your creative ideas in the classroom? Why do you feel that way?

Appendix F: Parent/Guardian & Participant Consent Forms

Dear students, I am doing a project on creativity as part of my Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching at Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

I would like you to take part in this project; however, before you decide, I would like to explain why I am doing it and what will be involved if you decide to take part.

I would like to find out what you think it means to be creative. I want to know if you think it is easy or difficult to be creative in school, in front of your class. I would like you to express if you find it easier to be creative at home instead of in the classroom and if you do, then why. I also hope to gather information on what you think of the Oral Presentation that you will do towards the end of second year and what you think of how it is graded.

You will be asked to sign a consent form of your own, letting the teacher know if you wish to take part in the research. Your parent/guardian will also be asked for their permission in order for you to take part.

If you do wish to participate, you will be asked to take part in a survey by filling out a questionnaire on creativity. It will take approximately 15 minutes. You may also be asked to be interviewed, individually or as part of a focus group with some of your classmates. This will take approximately 30 minutes for the group and 10minutes for individual interviews.
On the consent form, you can choose which parts you want to take part in.

The indicative title for my research is:
A case study into student perception of creativity within Junior Cycle English with specific focus on creativity with CBA1, the Oral Presentation.

1. Your participation is voluntary; only take part if you want to.
2. Your identity will be kept anonymous throughout the project.
3. Everything you write on the questionnaire or say during the individual interview will be completely confidential.

4. If you choose not to take part it will not affect your relationship with your teacher or the school.

5. You will not be rewarded if you do take part.

6. You will not be penalised if you decide not to take part.

7. On the questionnaire, you do not have to answer all the questions if you do not wish to. There is no right or wrong answer.

8. All information will be kept safe and only the teacher and her supervisor will read it.

9. If you decide not to take part, you will be given an activity to do while those participating complete the questionnaire.

10. You can access the information for the survey or interviews to make changes to it **until March 31st, 2020.**

11. You can also decide to withdraw from the project at any time **until March 31st, 2020.** After this date the teacher will begin to analyse the information she has gathered.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please ask me.

If you are happy to take part in this research, please sign the participant consent form.

Thanking you,

Your sincerely,
Katie Martin

(Please tick each of the following boxes)

I have read and understand the information sheet. ( )

I understand that I am being asked to participate in this research. ( )

I understand that I will be asked to complete a questionnaire on creativity. ( )

I understand that I may be asked to do an interview on my own or as part of a focus group. ( )

I understand my participation is voluntary; I only take part if I want to. ⸤　⸥

I understand that my name will not be on my questionnaire and I will not be identified in any way in this research. ⸤　⸥

I understand that everything I write on the questionnaire, or answer during the interviews will be confidential, only teacher and her supervisor will read it. ⸤　⸥

I understand that if I am part of the focus group, what I say and what others say will be kept private in the group with teacher. ⸤　⸥

I understand that all the information teacher gathers will be locked away in a drawer or password locked laptop, to which only she has the key and password. ⸤　⸥

I understand that I can access or change my data at any time until **March 31st, 2020.** ⸤　⸥

I understand I can withdraw from the research at any time until **March 31st, 2020.** ⸤　⸥

Do you agree to give your own consent to participate in this research project on creativity?

Please tick one of the following boxes:
   ● Yes, I **AGREE** to give my consent to participate in this research.
   ● No, I **Do Not Agree** to give my consent to participate in this research.

 If you **agree** to give your own consent to take part in this research, please tick all of the boxes below.
   ⸤　⸥ I AGREE to take part in the focus group **only**.
   ⸤　⸥ I AGREE that my child can take part in the questionnaire **only.**
   ⸤　⸥ I AGREE that my child can take part in the interview **only.**
   ⸤　⸥ I AGREE that my child can take part in **ALL PARTS** of the research.

Researcher's signature:＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　　　　　**Date**: ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Participant signature:_____   **Date:** _____

Supervisor details:

Name: Dr. Manuel Catena Fontalba

Position: Lecturer

Department: Law and Humanities, Letterkenny IT, Port Road, F92 FC93

Contact: XXXXX

Email: XXXXXX

Dear parent/guardian, as your child's English teacher, I am undertaking a research study on creativity as part of my thesis for my Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching in Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT).

My intention is to gain a deeper insight into student perception of creativity. The aim of my research is to identify why students struggle to be creative in the classroom. I wish to establish if the Oral Presentation (CBA1) and how it is graded is a motivating factor in student creativity. I also hope to gather feedback on whether students find it easier to be creative at home, rather than school.

I intend to carry out an in-class survey, using an online questionnaire consisting of predominantly close ended questions. I expect this to take your child no more than 15-20 minutes to complete. I also intend to do 10 individual interviews lasting no more than 10 minutes, consisting of approximately 10 open ended questions. I also intend to do a small focus group of 5 students, lasting no more than 30 minutes in total.

Your child will also receive an information sheet, presenting the information more simply in order to heighten their understanding of this research. They will also be given a consent form of their own to sign. In your for your child to participate, both consent forms (parent and child) must be signed.

The indicative title for my research is:

A case study into student perception of creativity within Junior Cycle English with specific focus on creativity with CBA1, the Oral Presentation.

1. Your child's participation is voluntary, and their identity will be anonymous throughout the research.

2. Everything your child answers on the questionnaire will be strictly confidential, only my supervisor and I will have access to it.

3. Participants involved in the focus group will be asked to keep all information shared confidential. I will an audio device to record this information and transcribe it myself.

4. If you choose not to give your child permission to take part, it will not affect their relationship, or your relationship with the school or myself.

5. Your child will not be rewarded or remunerated in they do take part, not will be they penalised if they do not take part.

6. Your child will be informed to answer the questions they want to answer and reassured there are no right or wrong answers.

7. If your child is not taking part, they will be assigned a separate exercise while the class completes the questionnaire.

8. All information collected will be stored on as password-protected computer, ensuring that only I can gain access to it. Paper documents will be kept in a locked drawer, to which only I will have access to.

9. Your child will have access to their own date, to make any amendments. They are free to make changes to their data or withdraw from the research at any time until **March 31st, 2020**. After this date, data analysis will have commenced.

10. I guarantee total anonymity in my thesis.

11. The data collected may be used for the purpose of an academic journal, article or other publication in the future.

12. All data collected will be retained for a maximum of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed in accordance with LYIT Retention Guidelines.

I would ask you to consider the above information and sign the parental consent form if you wish you child to participate. If you wish to ask any questions on the information given, in advance of signing the consent form, please do not hesitate to contact me through the school. Thanking you in advance,

Yours sincerely,
Katie Martin

Appendix 4: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

(*Please tick each of the following boxes*)

I have read and understand the contents of the parent information sheet.　[　]

I understand that I am being asked to give consent for my child to participate in this research.　[　]

I understand my child's participation is voluntary; he/she will not be rewarded or penalised for participation in this research. [　]

I understand both my consent and the consent of my child is required before participation is granted. [　]

I understand that once consent is given, my child will be completing a questionnaire and may be asked to take part in a focus group and/or individual interviews. [　]

I understand that the information gathered will be strictly confidential and both my child and the school name will be anonymised in any reports. [　]

I understand that the research will be published in the form of a Masters dissertation, and that there may be future uses of this research (e.g academic journal). [　]

I understand that the data will be stored in LYIT for a maximum of 5 years and then destroyed in accordance with LYIT Retention Guidelines. [　]

I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the research at any time until **March 31st, 2020**, as data analysis will commence hereafter. [　]

Do you agree to give your child permission to participate in the research outlines?

Please tick one of the following boxes:

- Yes, I **AGREE** to give my child consent to participate in this research.
- No, I **Do Not Agree** to give my child consent to participate in this research.

If you **agree** to give consent for your child to take part in this research, please tick <u>all</u> of the boxes below.

- I AGREE that my child can take part in the focus group only.
- I AGREE that my child can take part in the questionnaire only.
- I AGREE that my child can take part in the interview only.
- I AGREE that my child can take part in **ALL PARTS** of the research.

Researcher's signature: _____   **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____   **Date:** _____

Supervisor details:

Name: Dr. Manuel Catena Fontalba

Position: Lecturer

Department: Law and Humanities, Letterkenny IT, Port Road, F92 FC93

Contact: XXXXXX

Email: XXXXXX

Amended Consent Forms

Dear students, as you know, I am doing a project on creativity as part of my Master of Arts in

Learning and Teaching at Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

You have all signed a consent form to take part in this research,

You have already started to help me in my research by filling out the online questionnaire

which we did in class on creativity.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 it has been hard for me to gather all my information, as you know some of you signed consent forms to take part in the focus group or individual interviews. Now that we cannot do these face to face, the only way to do them is online using Google Meets. I will send your parent/guardian guidelines on how to use Google Meets. If you choose to consent to the online interviews or focus group it is important you have a parent/ guardian with you. It is also important you have your **camera off** and **use no recording devices**. The online interview will take approximately 15 minutes. On the consent form, you can choose which parts you want to take part in.

The indicative title for my research is:

A case study into student perception of creativity within Junior Cycle English with specific focus on creativity with CBA1, the Oral Presentation.

1. Your participation is voluntary; only take part if you want to.

2. Your identity will be kept anonymous throughout the project.

3. If you choose not to take part it will not affect your relationship with your teacher or the school in any way, it is totally up to you.

4. You will not be rewarded if you do take part.

5. You will not be penalised if you do not take part.

6. You must have a guardian/parent present if you choose to be part of interviews or focus groups.

7. You cannot use any other devices, such as recording devices during the interview or focus group.

8. You will only use the audio during the interview or focus group, your camera, or my camera will not be on so there is no invasion of privacy.

9. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to and can leave the interview/focus group at any time.

10. All information will be kept safe and only teacher and her supervisor will read it.

11. If you decide not to take part, you will be given an activity to do while those participating complete the questionnaire.

12. You can access the information for the survey or interviews to make changes to it **until June 28th, 2020.**

13. You can also decide to withdraw from the project at any time **until June 28th, 2020.** After this date the teacher will begin to analyse the information she has gathered.

14. The data will be destroyed in accordance with LYIT guidelines.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please ask me.

If you are happy to take part in this research, please sign the participant consent form.

Thanking you,

Your sincerely,

Katie Martin

(Please tick each of the following boxes)

I have read and understand the information sheet.   (   )

I understand that I am being asked to participate in this research.   (   )

I understand that I may be asked to do an interview on my own or as part of a focus group online ( )

I understand that the interview or focus group will be done online using Google Meets ( )

I understand teacher and I will have our camera off and use audio only (   )

I understand I have to have a parent/guardian with me when the Google Meet is happening ( )

I understand I do not have to answer all the questions ( )

I understand I cannot have my phone or any other device with me to record the interview or focus group as this is an invasion of privacy (   )n

I understand my participation is voluntary; I only take part if I want to and I can leave the interview or focus group at any time.   ( )

I understand that I will not be identified in any way in this research.   ( )

I understand that everything I answer during the interviews will be confidential, only teacher and her supervisor will read it. ( )

I understand that if I am part of the focus group, what I say and what others say will be kept private in the group with the teacher.   ( )

I understand that all the information the teacher gathers will be locked away in a drawer or password locked laptop, to which only she has the key and password. ( )

I understand that I can access or change my data at any time until **June 28th, 2020.**   ( )

I understand the data will be destroyed in accordance with LYIT guidelines (   )

I understand I can withdraw from the research at any time until **June 28th, 2020.**   (   )

<u>Do you agree to give your own consent to participate in this research project on creativity?</u>

Please tick one of the following boxes:
- Yes, I **AGREE** to give my consent to participate in this research.
- No, I **Do Not Agree** to give my consent to participate in this research.

 If you **agree** to give your own consent to take part in this research, please tick all of the boxes below.

〔 〕 I AGREE to take part in the focus group **online only**.

〔 〕 I AGREE to take part in the interview **online only.**

〔 〕 I AGREE to take part in **ALL PARTS** of the research **online.**

Researcher's signature:_____   **Date**: _____

Participant signature:_____   **Date:** _____

Supervisor details:

Name: Dr. Manuel Catena Fontalba

Position: Lecturer

Department: Law and Humanities, Letterkenny IT, Port Road, F92 FC93

Contact: XXXXXX

Email:

Proposed Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Dear parent/guardian, as you are aware, I am undertaking a research study on creativity as part of my thesis for my Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching in Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT). I thank you sincerely for the consent forms which you have already signed and sent back to me, however, due to Covid-19 I have had to change aspects of my data

collection, thus I will explain the proposed changes and amend the consent form to correlate with this.

Originally, I had planned to complete interviews, face to face with students in school and carry out a small focus group in the same manner. However, as this is no longer possible, I am suggesting we do the above online, using Google Meets, this is an online forum the school and students have been using during the closure for engagement. I will provide guidelines on how to use this software, how to turn off the camera, ensure audio only is on, everything to ensure absolute privacy and confidentiality. Only once you are familiar with the software and decide to proceed, will we begin data collection.

As the interview/focus group will now be online, certain measures will be taken to ensure there is no invasion of privacy and everyone involved is protected. The interview will last approximately 15 minutes, those chosen at random selection for this will be given a time and date which suits to carry out the interview, students will also be given questions in advance, which parent/guardian and student can look over together prior to the interview. Students do not have to answer any questions they do not want to. They will need a parent/guardian present for the duration of this to ensure audio is only being used, the camera will be off. Focus groups will be carried out in a similar manner. Questions will be sent to those involved beforehand, this allows you and the student to look at the questions, the student does not have to answer them all and can leave the interview/focus group at any time.

If you are happy for your child to continue with the research in this manner, please sign and return the below consent form.

I appreciate your cooperation during these difficult times,
Thanking you,
Katie Martin

The indicative title for my research is:

A case study into student perception of creativity within Junior Cycle English with specific focus on creativity with CBA1, the Oral Presentation.

1. Your child's participation is voluntary, and their identity will be anonymous throughout the research.

2. Participants involved in the focus group will be asked to keep all information shared confidential. I will transcribe it myself.

3. If you choose not to give your child permission to take part, it will not affect their relationship, or your relationship with the school or myself.

4. Your child will not be rewarded or remunerated if they do take part, nor will they be penalised if they do not take part.

5. Your child will be informed to answer the questions they want to answer and reassured there are no right or wrong answers.

6. You will be present during the interview/focus group process.

7. Audio only will be used to ensure no invasion of privacy.

8. You will ensure your child does not use any recording devices of the process to ensure privacy.

9. Your child can leave the interview or focus group at any time.

10. All information collected will be stored on a password-protected computer in my locked office ensuring that only I can gain access to it. Paper documents will be kept in a locked drawer in my office to which only I will have access to.

11. Your child will have access to their own date, to make any amendments. They are free to make changes to their data or withdraw from the research at any time until **June28th,, 2020**. After this date, data analysis will have commenced.

12. I guarantee total anonymity in my thesis.

13 The data collected may be used for the purpose of an academic journal, article or other publication in the future.

13.   All data collected will be retained for a maximum of 5 years, after which it will be destroyedin accordance with LYIT Retention Guidelines.

I would ask you to consider the above information and sign the parental consent form if you wish your child to participate. If you wish to ask any questions on the information given, in advance of signing the consent form, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance,

Yours sincerely,

Katie Martin

(*Please tick each of the following boxes*)

I have read and understand the contents of the parent information sheet.　〔　〕

I understand that I am being asked to give consent for my child to participate in this research.　〔　〕

I understand my child's participation is voluntary; he/she will not be rewarded or penalised for participation in this research.〔　〕

I understand both my consent and the consent of my child is required before participation is granted.〔　〕

I understand that once consent is given my child may be asked to take part in a focus group and/or individual interviews.〔　〕

I understand the interview/focus group will now take place through the online forum Google Meets ( )

I understand I only will proceed with this once I am happy I know how to use this software ( )

I understand I must be present when the interview/focus groups are taking place. ( )

I understand my child does not have to answer all of the questions (　)

I understand my child can leave the interview/focus group at any time (   )

I understand the audio only feature will be used and the camera will be off at all times, (   )

I understand I must ensure my child is not using a phone or any other recording device during the process (   )

I understand that the information gathered will be strictly confidential and both my child and the school name will be anonymised in any reports. 〔   〕

I understand that the research will be published in the form of a Masters dissertation, and that there may be future uses of this research (e.g academic journal). 〔   〕

I understand that the data will be stored in LYIT for a maximum of 5 years and then destroyed in accordance with LYIT Retention Guidelines. 〔   〕

I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the research at any time until **June 28th, 2020**, as data analysis will commence hereafter. 〔   〕

Do you agree to give your child permission to participate in the research outlines?

Please tick one of the following boxes:
- Yes, I **AGREE** to give my child consent to participate in this research.
- No, I **Do Not Agree** to give my child consent to participate in this research.

If you **agree** to give consent for your child to take part in this research, please tick all of the boxes below.
- I AGREE that my child can take part in the focus group only online.
- I AGREE that my child can take part in the interview only online.
- I AGREE that my child can take part in **ALL PARTS** of the research online.

Researcher's signature:_____   **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian signature:_____   **Date:**_____

<u>Supervisor details:</u>

Name: Dr. Manuel Catena Fontalba

Position: Lecturer

Department: Law and Humanities, Letterkenny IT, Port Road, F92 FC93

Contact: XXXXXX

Email: XXXXXX

Appendix G: Consent from School Principal

Appendix H: Sample Interview Transcript – Interview 4