Learning to learn? The incorporation of big-picture learning ideas into systems of education in Australia.

A learning portfolio by Olivia Williams

What is creativity? It is a concept perhaps most commonly associated with the arts- one would not hesitate to label Picasso or Walt Disney creative. It is a term also often thrown around with the likes of "entrepreneurialism" and "innovation", which one might associate with individuals like Steve Jobs, for example. However creativity is not an inherent quality to be attributed to individuals within particular professions or fields, but a skill which can and should be nurtured. It is all about making connections and creating the new. This portfolio investigates my gap in knowledge surrounding creativity- what it is, why it is important and how it can be developed, as a foundation to examine whether formal educational structures foster creative development and how they could do so more effectively. It also asks the question of what implications various systemic approaches to creativity have for the future creation of knowledge and the way it is disseminated. In it I apply what I have learned from the Creating Knowledge course to critically evaluate the Australian National Curriculum, with reference to differing opinions in the public sphere regarding this curriculum. I also analyse the ways in which predominant educational systems and frameworks limit the proliferation of creative approaches to education and look at alternative philosophies and systems of schooling to see how they could improve the educational landscape in Australia.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines creativity as "the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness". This indicates that creativity is a skill or process which can be applied to situations to create something. Creativity involves a range of skill sets. Convergent thinking, in which the details of one particular thing are focused on and looked at from multiple perspectives, as well as divergent thinking, which is the process of looking for broader connections or ideas are both integral to the creative process. Creativity involves combining these approaches in unique ways to achieve what can be termed as "effective surprise", that is, something new. This is most often facilitated by a stimulus, either a problem or a task, to which a solution or

output is required. We can analyse creative outputs and break them down into being either subjectively creative, in which the product is novel to the thinker but not to the world, or objectively creative in which an approach is entirely new. We can evaluate creativity, by looking at the utility of creative outputs or judging their value by various metrics. But why is creativity important? We live in a world which is constantly changing and in which we are faced with unpredictable, diverse situations and challenges. The ability to work out ways to negotiate these is therefore imperative for successful operation in the world, including the personal sphere, the corporate and the academic.

But is creativity something that can be learned? The short answer is, yes! Since the 1970's and even earlier, experts have recognised this need for creativity, as characterised as general problem solving ability, and studied ways in which the learning of creative skills can be facilitated. A big step in this area came from a shift in the mainstream conceptualisation and understanding of the way people learn. This has evolved from the idea that learning can be described as a process of knowledge transfer from teacher to learner, into a more dynamic and nuanced understanding. The constructivist theory of learning, which is broadly acknowledged today, describes learning as a process in which people combine new experiences or information with what they already know in order to build new knowledge inside their head). Under this definition, creativity is an essential part of the learning process itself. Therefore, learning how to be creative means learning how to learn more broadly or effectively. CK's focus on thinking about thinking and learning about learning was for me its key strength, and the aspect of it which I believed was most unique. My personal reflections which developed throughout the course about the value of this critical, broad awareness about learning and knowledge led me to wonder why these were not further systematised, as I thought all students could benefit from experiencing this approach. Thus I chose to investigate as my portfolio topic whether this approach to learning was incorporated into education in Australia systematically, and more broadly to look at how creativity was approached. The first place I looked to further substantiate my knowledge of formal education beyond simply my own experience and that of peers was the Australian National Curriculum.

The Australian National Curriculum (K-10) is a document which prescribes what Australian students should be learning about at any given time. The content it contains is organised into learning areas which are broken down into subjects. In addition to these learning areas, however, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities are included, which are overarching themes which are intended to be incorporated throughout the whole schooling experience. Creativity (combined with critical thinking) is explicitly listed within this document as a priority, as one of the general capabilities. The curriculum states that "critical and creative thinking are integral to activities that require students to think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school." Furthermore, the statement made about the cross-curriculum priorities "the Australian Curriculum must be both relevant to the lives of students and address the contemporary issues they face" is well aligned with the constructivist understanding of learning, as it expresses the need for ideas to be linked to a purpose or application. The curriculum therefore does, at least theoretically have ideas about creativity which align with my own, and proves to be very well-researched as well. Whilst this seems to have positive implications for the Australian educational landscape, it is notably only small part of the whole curriculum, and needs to be considered as such.

The development of a national curriculum has been topical for some time now and opinions about the curriculum's content and structure are varying. The current document is Australia's first incarnation of a national curriculum. It has been called for as a way of standardising what is taught in schools around the country, and improving efficiency by sharing resources across state and territory borders. Advantages cited of a national curriculum are that it makes clearer to both students and teachers what is expected of them and sets a high bar in this regard, which it is argued will facilitate better educational outcomes. It is something which is clearly in the public domain and as such can be debated openly and suggestions made for its improvement, which can be achieved more effectually than if the same is done under individual state/territory curricula. To this end, the government this year commissioned a review of the curriculum to be conducted by experts in consultation with stakeholder groups. One key recommendation made by this review was that the curriculum

needs to be "de-cluttered". The reviewers were critical of the cross-curriculum priorities and the general capabilities and recommended that the curriculum be streamlined by abolishing these aspects and instead including parts of them into the content areas. Particularly in early year groups (K-2) the reviewers recommended that the curriculum focus only on literacy and numeracy, to the exclusion of other material. These recommendations are troubling when considering the ways in which the curriculum facilitates the development of creativity. Firstly, essentially deprioritising creativity by removing its status as a valuable skill is unlikely to improve teaching and learning outcomes in this area. Secondly, trying to reduce the amount of content which students are presented with through the curriculum, in the form suggested by the reviewers is deeply problematic. Although on its face is an efficient move, it removes systematic opportunities for students to tether learning to concrete concepts, which is the cornerstone of effective and creative learning.

So why has the curriculum been developed in this way and who is responsible for it? Those developing the curriculum, ACARA (the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority), are a body made up of state and territory education ministers who I would optimistically say, probably do have the best interests of Australian students at heart. However, this does not necessarily make them best placed to be making decisions which affect students so profoundly. As politicians, these people have different priorities. They must represent the interests of their state/territory as well as pursuing the best interests of the nation and of Australian students. However the issue at hand here is not only about potential conflicts of interest, but rather to the question of what qualifies a person to prescribe learning content to the whole nation. A background in politics does not equate to having concrete experience with the learning process and with the realities of the systems in which policy is enacted. A person's experiences of knowledge, the way in which they approach it and what types of knowledge and knowledge outputs they are accustomed to working with affects how they perceive and create new knowledge. Therefore, politicians, who are used to operating in systems of bureaucracy and policy, which have a very top-down approach are unlikely to see other ways to deal with problems. To do so would require some very creative thinking and the drive to get out of the system, which is quite unusual and indeed difficult within established systems. This means that the ways that they are actually likely to contribute meaningfully to

positive, innovative educational reform is quite limited. The scope of ACARA to improve education is further constricted by the fact that they can only work to define the curriculum, not the structures in which the curriculum material must be delivered.

With respect to creativity particularly, the broader issue at hand runs much deeper than whether the government acknowledges it as a learning priority or not. Rather, the characteristics of the systems within which this theoretical prioritisation can be made into a reality are of utmost significance. This explains why the experiences my peers and I had with the educational system are so different to the learning outcomes so extensively researched and outlined within the curriculum. There are several ways in which the systems in place are fundamentally incompatible with the development of creativity. First and foremost is the fact that these priorities are only able to be incorporated into classrooms through the lenses of subjects. Structuring schools in terms of subjects means that there is no formal place in which students are openly and explicitly encouraged to think about how they learn or to critically analyse the way in which they are taught. Whilst learning in the format of subjects gives the opportunity for students to gain expertise in different areas, the practice of allocating types of knowledge into boxes removes links of meaning between types of knowledge. It is then easy for students to become disengaged with the content as they can easily begin to think that a certain type of knowledge (eg Maths or English) is simply not for them. A lack of acknowledgement that systems of knowledge build and rely on each other and interact constantly leaves students unable to make these links between areas of knowledge, which is limiting to their ability to be innovative and create new solutions or approaches. Practically, this means students are underprepared for the challenges which face them as soon as they depart these artificially constructed environments- in the workplace, which is where it is being said time and time again that people lack the skills they need to survive and thrive.

In addition to the issues with dividing knowledge into subjects, the mode of delivery also has many implications for the way creative and critical approaches are (or are not) fostered. Teaching within a classic classroom situation, where all students are delivered the same information in the same format reduces the

chance of students learning the content in a meaningful way, due to the individual nature of learning and differences in learning preferences and background knowledge. The nature of most assessment tasks at schools also stifle creativity in that they tend to be very formulaic, and the fact in itself that learning is geared towards assessment is also a hindrance to the development of creative skills. The approach which is also most prominent in classrooms, that of the teacher presenting material for students to then learn, is also not directly conducive to developing skills of critical thinking. Students are not systematically taught to question sources of information, rather often the best strategy for surviving school is to learn things off by heart, often with no context of their applications or meaning. I certainly do not argue that good learning outcomes cannot be achieved in schools or that there is no space within the predominant framework for critical and creative thinking to be cultivated- I had some very good experiences in my schooling career which taught me to be critical and encouraged me to think about issues from different perspectives. The frameworks and systems in which formal education occurs do, however, limit the extent to which these qualities can be nurtured.

Something I found fascinating in looking at the government's published response to the review of the curriculum was this sentence: "we want the people who know our students best – their parents, teachers, principals and community – to be able to make informed decisions about their education". This response to me completely failed to address the single most important stakeholder in this situation, that is, the students themselves. In stark contrast is this quote from Professor Yong Zhao, a prominent academic who has studied education extensively and stated "[or] the future of education... number one is personalised education experience. It is not the imposition of a national curriculum [or] a state curriculum but to develop a personal curriculum for every child". Zhao's comments were made in the context of looking at the way education occurs at Templestowe College, a public school in Melbourne's east. Templestowe's vision is "to be a dynamic and caring learning community, recognised for future focused personalised learning". What this means in practice is that students are in mixed-age classrooms, have a wide range (over 100) subjects to choose from and can develop their own subjects based on their interest. This approach has been developed in recent years and came in response to flagging enrolments at the school and a concern that the model of education in place was not working for enough

students. The new approach is empowering and engaging for students, and is consistent with the ideas of constructivist learning, as students can learn through lenses of what interests them. Since redeveloping their approach to learning, Templestowe's enrolments have risen and student satisfaction has skyrocketed, which is one metric for measuring educational success which is perhaps not often given enough weight when compared to other metrics like standardised testing.

As well as cases like Templestowe which are working towards individualised, innovative learning, there are other educational frameworks and organisations which embody similar concepts, in response to the same observations about the nature of learning or the issues with the existing frameworks. The Montessori philosophy of education was developed over a century ago and is based on the concept that learning should be linked to practical applications and led by inquisitiveness of the student. It conceptualises teachers as directors and facilitators of learning rather than repositories of knowledge and incorporates many types of learning and knowledge readily into the classroom. In the early years this begins with a high emphasis on concrete materials being used to communicate concepts, which later on can be abstracted. This showcases how knowledge builds on itself in the mind of the individual learner and facilitates a more complete understanding of concepts than Western traditional forms like rote learning. While there are some Montessori schools in Australia their numbers are limited and many of those available are private schools, meaning barrier to entry is high. Some public schools incorporate Montessori systems, however this requires a level of compromise with relation to resources available and rules which must be followed, for example with systems of standardised testing and reporting. Thus it is difficult to reconcile these ideals with the dominant frameworks for education in Australia.

There are further organisations and philosophies which have alternate visions of education to status quo, and centric to them is generally that the student is placed in focus. Interestingly, the national curriculum too has a "Students First" policy, however when inspected this appears to be largely a matter of rhetoric and ideas existing which are not or cannot translated into practice. The curriculum is constrained by the status quo of educational frameworks, which are maintained due to their efficiency from a managerial perspective. After

all, for those who are trying to achieve educational improvement across all of Australia, it is much easier to use the results of a standardised test based on rote-learned knowledge as a metric for success than to try to assess abilities like creativity, critical thinking or problem solving in a meaningful way. What those with the power to change things should then perhaps consider more actively is for whom education is- that is, for the learner, not for the assessors. Benefits to learners will then flow on into greater society if educational frameworks are able to assist more students in developing skills which prepare them for the world at large. If this 'big picture' goal were to be recognised and adopted, those in control of policy could use their power to empower students and work towards it by making space in the predominant systems for students to take charge of their own learning.

Acknowledging the importance of creativity as a skill through a curriculum is perhaps a good start, but falls far short of what is required to pursue the greater nurturing of it. Doing so requires a nuanced understanding of the learning process and the ways in which existing frameworks constrict the ways in which students are taught to become builders of knowledge. Only when students are given a genuine space to connect ideas themselves will the creative abilities of Australian children and young people be able to flourish, as creativity requires a unique combination of what is without and what is within. This goal should be actively pursued by those in power if we wish to develop students to their fullest potential as learners, thinkers and people.

Appendix 1: Resources/references

Australian National Curriculum website:
http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/

About constructivist theories of education:
Martinez, Sylvia Libow and Stager, Gary. "Invent to Learn: Making, Tinkering and Engineering in the Classroom" Chapter 2- Learning. (from VC resources). http://vc-courses.anu.edu.au/resources/ck/resources/wk3_Martinez_Ch2.pdf

Review of the Australian Curriculum- Initial Government Response:
http://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/initial_australian_government_response_final_0.pdf

Commentary on the National Curriculum:

http://theconversation.com/what-if-we-had-asked-teachers-to-do-the-curriculum-review-33027
http://theconversation.com/national-curriculum-review-experts-respond-26913

Templestowe College:
http://www.smh.com.au/victoria/templestowe-school-in-a-class-of-its-own-20140906-10c6tp.html
http://www.templestowec.vic.edu.au/default.aspx

Montessori:
http://www.montessori.org.au/

For theory of creativity:
Lytton, Hugh. "Creativity and Education". 1971. Northumberland Press, Gateshead.

Appendix 2: Tutorial tickets

Week 0: Application for course

What should I put in my statement? There is no formula for a good statement. However, a good statement may be inspired by: how will participating in the course benefit you and your areas of influence? what will you be able to bring to the course? have you dealt with issues in the course before? what are you hoping to learn?

As a first year PhB Arts student, my first semester at university has been very eye-opening in terms of learning about the ways we conceive of and approach knowledge. The Thinking Research subject I took in first semester dealt with the history of universities as institutions as well as how approaches to research and knowledge have developed over time, including looking at the issues which face modern research and universities. Learning about these topics drove home for me the fact that different ways of approaching knowledge bring with them different strengths and weaknesses. This led me to the conclusion that as with the blind men and the elephant, the best way to approach knowledge is to encapsulate as many different approaches as possible. In order to develop myself as a scholar and as a citizen I would therefore relish the opportunity to work with like-minded students from other disciplines. I believe this would allow me to reach new levels of analysis and understanding, whilst sharing my own perspective to benefit others. These skills will be valuable to me in my future academic career within the arts and social sciences particularly when I am doing ASCs in the years to come as well as into a prospective career in research.

Week 3: Building Knowledge

What preconceptions did you bring to the scenarios that we explored during the building exercise? Were your preconceptions different to your collaborators'? Were your preconceptions challenged?

I entered the task of reconceptualising Union Court with a few strong preconceptions which affected the way in which I approached the activity. Most significant I believe was my familiarity with the current Union Court. My approach towards the whole creative process of designing an environment to be a social hub was coloured by the fact that I walk through the current Union Court every day, which means I had difficulty reimagining it in a dramatic way. The other thing which affected my approach to the exercise was my pragmatism, which especially when coupled with the first preconception also stifled my creativity in approaching the task. I felt my preconceptions and limitations were for the most part shared by the group, as we all reached a fairly strong consensus about how we would like Union Court to be which was not challenged particularly by any member of the group. I noticed that most wild and wacky parts of our design (like the Eye of Sauron) resulted not from this measured group discussion process but from a more whimsical place, which I believe was facilitated by the presence of the Lego for us to play with. I found this significant as it shows that as students, we have been taught to approach tasks within a formal educational framework seriously and with a view to practicality, which we all did. Though being logical and pragmatic is a very useful skill set, this approach leaves stores of creativity and innovation untapped and ignored, which limits what we can achieve.

Week 4: The Nature of Knowledge

Consider the disciplinary knowledge that you identified for the first tutorial. Your Learning Portfolio will be based around finding a Gap in this (or other) knowledge. Do you think that this knowledge a belief or a truth? What value set do you bring to this knowledge?

It seems to me that knowing and believing are essentially the same thing, albeit with different connotations and levels of self-consciousness. As humans we are inextricably embedded in our own experience and interpretation of the world, which therefore situates anything we may think we know within this very personal, limited sphere. Yet when one speaks of knowing something it carries with it a sense of certainty and absolutism, whereas to believe implies a certain level of doubt. I would then say that the term 'believe' is more honest and accurate. It is also more conscious of the fact that it is a personal experience, which will be coloured by a particular ideology. As Amanda explored in her presentation, it is impossible to detach knowledge from prescriptivism, and any expression of a kind of knowledge can be interpreted by consumers of it in a way which may be vastly different to what was intended by its creator or compiler. I think an awareness of the limits of our understanding is useful and necessary in order to understand and create knowledge in the most useful way. Yet pragmatically speaking, in order to explore new areas and learn and extend our horizons, we must label some things as 'known' or 'true', in order that we can identify these 'gaps'. But what does this gap really mean? Researchers try to find gaps in knowledge so that they can extend the collective knowledge of all humans by entering uncharted territories. But from a personal perspective, I know about almost nothing given the incredible amount of human intellect and investigation which does exist and has existed, so the gaps in my knowledge are very extensive. What does this mean for my group work? For my life? I don't know- perhaps this itself is an interesting gap in my knowledge.

Week 5: Knowledge as Power

Take a critical look at the knowledge in your portfolio. Consider a potential power structure within that knowledge (ie. who owns it, or controls it), and look at how it has been been used to open up (share) or close down (silo) that knowledge.

The theme of the panel in week 5 was that knowledge can carry with it power on two different levels. Firstly, knowledge can have inherent power in enabling its holders to achieve or control something. For example, knowing how to produce a good gives one power over others who are unable to produce that good, assuming others desire the good. We also saw that knowledge can be a source of power through the cultural capital it holds. This is very subjective as it can be argued that types of knowledge which hold this kind of value do not in fact have any inherent value. In our discussion about the role of dictionaries we saw that although what ends up in a dictionary is somewhat arbitrary, it still holds an enormous amount of cultural capital in our society.

These ideas, which showcase the importance of knowledge to our society, led me to inspect the primary systematic way in which we disseminate knowledge- our education system. The public education system is controlled by the state on behalf of the people, and aims to open up vast stores of human knowledge for the benefit of all members of society. Whilst systematising the way in which knowledge is spread has brought many great benefits to the world, the way in which contemporary society approaches knowledge is limited, due in large part to the embedded power structures within the system. This affects both the content deemed to be pertinent and necessary to students, which is somewhat arbitrarily decided in a way which may not actually achieve optimal outcomes for many students. Furthermore, the systematic way in which teaching is approached limits the avenues through which knowledge is communicated. As we have seen in this course there are many different types of knowledge, each of which can be understood differently by different individuals and which combine to give a more balanced and practical big picture. The fact that our system privileges types of learning and knowledge limits the extent to which it can be shared with a diverse range of people and is one mechanism whereby the existing power structures in our society remain embedded.

Week 6: Traditional Knowledge

Consider your Portfolio knowledge. How is that knowledge handed down or passed on to the next generation (ie, conversations, publications, instruction manuals)? What limitations and/or opportunities does this format have on the knowledge?

For this week (and potentially for my whole portfolio) I've decided to look at the way our society approaches creativity. The question of creative knowledge, techniques and practices are passed down is an interesting one, particularly with regard to how we define creativity. If creativity is about making new things and breaking out of existing structures, then how can it be systematically passed on from generation to generation or person to person?

Yet in what are typically considered to be the creative arts, like music, visual arts, creative writing, drama and so forth there exists a body of knowledge which is somewhat foundational to the practice of these disciplines. In music, for example, notation, technique and history are taught systematically to aspiring musicians. This certainly provides them with expertise and opportunities to extend what they can create, however limits them somewhat to the existing domain.

Formats which are utilised are formal, lecture style teaching, modelling of examples of creativity through both teachers and exhibitions of creative work (for example in galleries, performances, recordings etc). These are significant as they establish the place creativity and art have in society. Informally, creative skills are also passed on more traditionally through things like cookery, bakery, gardening and other crafts. This is often from person to person and has the benefit that nuance can be better communicated this way.

The issue I see with both of these ways of passing on knowledge of creativity is that it limits creativity to being a thing which is only applied within these certain domains rather than being a general, widely applicable skill. How this could be better achieved is I guess what I am considering exploring as my portfolio topic.

Week 7: Cultural Knowledge

This week there is an opportunity to reframe your knowledge. Briefly restate what you are going to explore, and list what sorts of protocols are required before this knowledge can be accessed (for example, what are the protocols/norms involved in accessing knowledge on the internet in Australia)

The gap in my knowledge that I want to investigate is how creativity is and can be incorporated into formalised systems of learning and knowledge. My base knowledge in this area is my experience of formal learning. To extend this knowledge I will need to look at theories of creativity and theories of learning, and explore why these are not always incorporated into education. I anticipate that this is largely because of logistical difficulties relating to the standardisation of education, which causes knowledge and educational progress to be measured against benchmarks like standardised tests. I will need to look at alternatives which have been proposed to the status quo, what benefits that could offer and critically analyse why they are not more widely used.

I would also like to do some research into existing knowledge about what the critical period is for stimulating creative development, in order to ascertain where efforts to incorporate creativity would be best focused (at pre-school, primary school, high school or university?) and look at the advantages that creative approaches can bring individuals and society as a whole.

Week 8: Colour as Knowledge

I forgot to do this week's ticket as I was busy planning for my tute facilitation (and am sometimes a little absent-minded). Sorry!

Week 9: Truth, Knowledge and Discovery

How is a scientific truth constructed differently to other knowledge? Could you 'prove' your Portfolio topic in a scientific frame? What evidence would you need to prove it? What knowledge would you build upon?

Scientific truth is constructed out of a body of observations made of the natural world, which cumulatively are seen to prove the pattern as a truth. That is, a scientific truth is the best explanation at any given point for a phenomenon, based on the available observations and technology. Scientific knowledge very much builds on itself, as theories and truths, once considered to be proven, will serve as the basis for further, more complex truths. However, this inductive reasoning can never lead to the ascertaining of an absolute truth, which means that scientific 'truths' are always open to refinement or revolution.

I could and probably will investigate my portfolio in a somewhat scientific way, in that I will rely primarily on observations made by both myself and others to draw conclusions. However due to the subjective nature of my portfolio topic, especially the fact that learning is different for each individual, 'proving' anything will not really be the goal. Rather, I will be looking at creative ways to approach a problem. I will use evidence in the form of observations to evaluate the likely effectiveness of various approaches. This exploration will be based on the body of knowledge amassed by researchers before me, so I will rely on their integrity and accuracy. However I will have to be careful to assess their information critically as I believe my topic can be interpreted differently by different people, which is generally considered to be more of an issue in the humanities than sciences, as the sciences have more rigid structures for assessing bodies of knowledge like the scientific method. What is worth thinking about though is that we should be evaluating these structures rather than believing in their integrity without criticism.

<u>Appendix 3: Reflection on peer review process</u>

The peer review process was very valuable for me. I know that I solidify my own ideas best through clarifying them to others, which I had not extensively done with my own at the time of the peer review drafts. Receiving feedback from others was great as it gave me the clarity about my own work which I was lacking and would have needed much more space and time to reach alone.

What I submitted as my draft to be reviewed was very skeletal- it contained my main ideas and the main thrust of my point but lacked in content. This was the first area in which the peer review were really helpful. Both of my reviewers included links to articles about the national curriculum, which although I did not include them directly in my piece were my impetus to be more critical of both the curriculum and the existing educational framework as well as exploring alternatives. Overall the comments about how I needed to have a better structure in my portfolio and define my topic more explicitly caused me to completely rewrite, moving from a very reflective and stream-of-consciousness style piece into more of a formal essay structure. I think this has hugely benefited the way in which my portfolio conveys the knowledge which I have looked at.

In addition to my benefit from the feedback I received from my reviewers, I do think it was helpful for me to undertake the process of reviewing others' work. Reading the ideas of others and seeing how they approached the task was very interesting and a refreshing change to the insular task of writing an essay, where I find it is very easy to get bogged down in your own ideas. Furthermore, being critical of the work of others solidified my knowledge of what I thought was necessary to produce a portfolio of high quality. I was then able to apply this awareness to my own work. The main manifestation of that for me was that both of the drafts I reviewed included sections explicitly designed to link each week of the course to their topic. I found this to be a very clunky and awkward format which did not showcase a high-level understanding and integration of what we covered in the course. As well as communicating this to the people I reviewed, I incorporated this reflection into my own work, deciding to avoid explicit references to the coursework in favour of weaving themes from our lessons into my analysis of the education system. I hope this comes through in my portfolio!