

# Policy Impact on Valuation of Arts

## Consequences of the English Baccalaureate

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### INTRODUCTION

The arts have been around longer than the sciences; cultures are judged on the basis of their arts; and most cultures and most historical eras have not doubted the importance of studying the arts. (2001, 5)

As affirmed above by Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner in ‘The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows’, the role of arts has maintained a significant presence in the progression and diversification of culture and civilization. A persistent dispute that follows this narrative is the discourse on the role, and therein the value, of arts within social infrastructure and as depicted above - education. This was highlighted in ‘Research, Policy, and Practice in Arts Education’ where Liora Bresler illustrates how a timeline of friction has attempted “to ground the arts in a pragmatic, instrumentalist framework [...] since its introduction to formal schooling in the nineteenth” century, moving periodically from a socializing paradigm towards self-expression before integrating with the discipline-orientated movement of the past thirty years (1998, 13). This complicated framework of the role of arts in education is a topic that incites a variety of disputes: the appraisal of different arts subjects, when children should be taught arts, the type of arts practice taught and/or examination taken, the influence of arts on other subjects, career prospects of arts subjects, amongst many more. Legislative systems across the world regularly examine the intricacies of arts subjects searching for quantifiable reasons to support their role or implications in education policy. Thus, the examination of arts subjects and the manipulation of their breadth and depth within school curriculums, against the backdrop of grappling with funding and political fragility, is a common picture. Consequently, the relevance of arts in school curriculums has become a heavily manipulated subject in contemporary political and public discourse. Yet the focal catalyst of this particular paper is the extent at which, and the way in which, arts should be implemented and integrated within school curriculums as depicted in the timeline of impact of one particular policy decision.

Ellen Winner, Thalia R. Goldstein and Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin stress in *Art for Art’s Sake? The Impact of Arts Education* that “most people, including policy makers, believe that arts education fosters creativity and possibly other skills conducive to innovation. In knowledge-based societies, innovation

is a key engine of economic growth, and arts education is increasingly considered as a means to foster the skills and attitudes that innovation requires” (2013, 21). The overwhelming narrative of the parties involved in this discourse is supportive of a general balance within a curriculum. Yet this must now be tied somehow to an instrumental impact such as innovation or economic gain. The crux of the issue is how this narrative is manipulated within the actual implementation of policy and mainstream curricula, and the ensuing tensions this causes for social structures as demonstrated in a particular case.

The paper will consider this argument as depicted within a particular location and cultural/economic domain – the United Kingdom. The UK's creative industries continue to be recognized as a distinctive economic force in global markets by policy makers and government who stress their influence on innovative thinking in our increasingly automated world, the “fostering of creativity, communication, thinking skills and problem solving is one of the things that British schools have become renowned for across the globe” (McCabe, 2016). Yet, in the last eight years the data surrounding arts in education suggests a different attitude. Nicholas Hynter emphasized that “between 2010 and 2015, the number of drama teachers in English state schools fell by 14%. The number of design and technology teachers fell by 15%. Entries for GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in arts and creative subjects fell by 8% in 2016 alone” (Hynter, 2017). This depicts a disparity between the narratives presented and those practiced, producing a paradox in the modern cultural landscape of the United Kingdom. On closer assessment it is clear that those who have had a broad education that valued arts are the backbone for many admired aspects of the industry. For example, Charlotte Higgins suggested that internationally recognized events such as the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony, a stunning visual presentation involving performing arts, dance, literature and music, may have been possible because the forces behind it namely “Danny Boyle, Stephen Daldry and Akram Khan [were] all recipients of a broad curriculum that helped them develop their unique vision and identity” (Higgins, 2012). Where do the fractions lie between the image painted and the actual practice, and what has caused this change in the valuation of arts subjects in academic and social structures?

On retracing the timeline of events, it appears that, arguably, a key catalyst of the period was the introduction of the EBacc (English Baccalaureate), initially in 2010, then more prominently in 2012 (The Telegraph, 2013). The rhetoric regularly presented since in British media discussion is that this particular policy decision provoked the derision of arts subjects in policy discourse and school practice. Media discourse predominantly supports notions like Liz Hill's statement that “the EBacc will cement the advantage of the most privileged over the least. Feeding the disadvantaged a restricted diet of traditional academic subjects that emphasise knowledge over skills” (Hill, 2018). As with the wider discourse there are many intricacies to this debate, but a focal concern is the possibility of a future generation of artists educated and raised in a society where arts are belittled by policy opinion and implications, and the ensuing division that could generate within education systems, institutions and government. This highlights a poignant point for further research into the long-term impact of a policy

decision like this - how long can a reputation of creative excellence survive whilst the structures and actors of society don't support it? Though this paper discusses the instant impact, the suggestion is made throughout that this policy decision will have detrimental effect in the future.

The research process began with examining policy publications using critical discourse analysis in order to consider the ideologies of those writing. Then several semi-structured interviews were carried out with professionals at various stages of the timeline of policy impact, from those creating policies, those representing institutions having to implicate policy changes and those dealing with the repercussions. By taking a representative approach I allowed the interviews to be purposeful yet flexible, striving to build a picture of the consequences of policy for individuals currently in the field during this period of change. This methodological process will focus on highlighting the discrepancies and/or similarities between policy publications, public discourse and professional reflection to build a detailed representation of this particular discursive landscape. The focal intention for the study was to learn about this topic from those who have first-hand experience, regardless of the outcomes that may be best for arts in education.

The case surrounding the EBacc is a mere drop in the ocean of discourse on arts in education. This study will identify how it finds its relevance in reflecting and accentuating aspects of the wider context. Bresler highlighted a key crux of this discourse by enquiring "what knowledge is of most worth? [...] What kind of value system do we want to promote? and what kinds of human beings do we want to shape" (1998, 13). How do policymakers estimate the most 'worthwhile' knowledge within the curricula they endorse, and in what way do broader social structures feel the repercussions of those judgements? Through the reconstruction of this particular timeline of policy impact this study aimed to highlight the realities of those societal structures in order to interpret the intricacies of individual narratives, uncovering how they interlink in the analysis of this particular timeline of impact.

## **POLICY AND THE ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE**

The challenge of course, is how to ensure that the arts in education remain in schools and not at the whim of policy. (Garrad, 2018)

The study begins with this statement taken from Andrew Garrad, who works for the national creative learning program Creative Partnerships, where he delineates the key struggle of this initial phase between the needs of schools and the needs of policy in answer to my questionnaire.

Our timeline begins in the United Kingdom in 2012 under the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition government of the time lead by David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The secretary of state for education at the time was Michael Gove, the facilitator behind this movement, an Oxford educated journalist and conservative member of parliament who held the position from 2010 to 2014. Gove's

department stated from his induction that the education system had become worn out and outdated during the previous Labour leadership. The Minister of State for Schools Standards and Conservative MP Nick Gibb stated in his 2015 speech 'The Social Justice Case for an Academic Curriculum', that the previous system had created a "culture of low expectations which needed an overhaul":

By 2010, just 43% of the cohort took a GCSE in a foreign language. In history, the figure had fallen to 31%, and in geography to 26%. Instead, schools had been tempted to teach qualifications which attracted the most points in the performance tables - not the qualification that would support young people to progress. (GOV.UK, 2015)

Henceforth, in September 2012 Gove proposed the introduction of a new English Baccalaureate (EBacc) certificate that would eventually surpass the GCSE qualifications then in the mainstream curriculum. The EBacc would be offered to students receiving high grades in the core academic subjects English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, history and geography from summer 2017. There was a significant backlash to this proposal from teaching unions, creative institutions and public opinion who argued vehemently that this initiative would impact the breadth of the learning of each child by sidelining sports, arts and tech subjects. It was maintained that there was not enough evidence for the abolishment of GCSEs and in early February it was announced that the plans had been scrapped as part of the compromise within the coalition agreement (The Telegraph, 2013).

There have been three new conservative successors to Gove as minister for education, and substantial adaptations to the socio-political landscape such as the European Union referendum which has caused significant social, economic and political impact. However, when considering the wealth of literature published in the past six years that discusses education in the UK, one of the focal topics is still the role of the EBacc. Following a 2015 Conservative victory the EBacc was relaunched with proposals, backed in parliamentary discussions, for 90% of students to be studying it by 2025 ('Bacc for the Future Campaign #BaccfortheFuture' 2020). How did this happen after such an initial backlash? Through the specific depiction of the way in which policy discourse strategically disseminates rhetoric, this study will suggest how this policy could have an influence far greater than perhaps intended.

The underlying framework of this particular strand is the role of policy in the narrative; thus, it is necessary to delve deeper into the foundations of policy itself.

Let's say you had a thought about sport [...] "Hockey is fun. I enjoyed hockey at school. All schools should do hockey. I'm going to find £300m to give to schools to pay for hockey sticks, goal posts and hockey coaching." Hey presto, hockey would be policy. Whether this was the best way to spend money [...], would be set to one side. Policy is whatever you decide. (Rosen, 2016)

At its most simple Michael Rosen here describes the essence of policy; it is a protocol for action adopted by a position or institution as founded in the particular research by and/or ideologies of that policy actor. This demonstrates that policy is not a necessity but an instrument for improvement, thus not the force behind this study but the structure that ignited our timeline. As Rosen states, policy is what you decide, which can understandably become a point of contention for those dealing with the practicalities and repercussions, as is evident in the backlash to our particular case.

A perspective that enhances our particular examination of British policy is the sociologist Mark Elchardus' interpretation of how modern cultural policy strives to find a balance between a rationality geared towards means, or a rationality geared towards values in 'Thinking about Cultural Policy: Short and Long Term Challenges':

Modern policy in general is characterized by a strong preference for means-rationality, and is quite reticent with regard to the formulation of the values or the goals to be attained, except of course for the goal of producing a lot of means and of being efficient in that production. (2008, 2)

This notion is replicated by the movement towards evidence-based policy, sparked by a new era of rigorous pragmatism in policymaking as supported by numerous publications. In *Politics of Evidence* Justin Parkhurst stated that it is now essential for a government to generate an instrumental value for the arts in modern society when creating policy, which was initiated by Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett's rhetoric in *The Social Impact of Arts* (2016; 2008). Meanwhile the impact of arts remains typically unquantifiable. The results are normally in values rather than means and when compared with the role of science, math or literature its incomparable - to a society that is focused on means and evidence-based policy. It is not enough for modern policy makers to justify the arts for their intrinsic or aesthetic value. In Elchardus' assessment, unless the arts can justify a particular means focused and instrumental output, how can they compete alongside economics, construction or science? The arts become inescapably related to their value for the means of society in the perception of an evidence-based policy, so then how can they be valued in the first point of socialisation for every individual - schooling?

The timeline of British policy publications since 2012 depicts how the role of language and the positionality of arts as an instrument is used for furthering the manipulation of political ideologies in the production of evidence-based policy, as depicted in 'Cultural Education in England', 'Implementing the English Baccalaureate' and most fervently 'The Culture White Paper' (Department for Education 2013; 2017; Department for Media, Culture and Sport 2016). There are two key words used most regularly in this discussion of the way in which policy considers arts. The first is culture, the second is creativity. Both are umbrella terms that involve arts but are distinct enough to distance themselves with the

practicalities and connotations of traditional art. This enforces a key aspect of this timeline, the crucial role of language in this discourse - distinguishable even down to particular words.

The Culture White Paper is perceived to be a policy instrument that reinforces specific ideological concepts deriving from the further correlations between the ways culture is regarded by the government and the prevailing political attitudes in society. (2016, 4)

Maria Kourtesi references directly how the arts under the umbrella of culture are used as an instrument in 'The Culture White Paper' to enforce ideology in her article: 'Deconstructing the 2016 Culture White Paper'. Though the role of culture is assessed and supported, 'overall the role of the arts and culture appears closely connected and aligned with the economy's needs, whereas the role of education is rather devalued (Ibid). Kourtesi here supports the perception already proposed by Elchardus of how policy is subtly moving society towards systems that values means, through the manipulation of language and control. Here we see directly how the arts under the umbrella of culture is used as an instrument in this policy publication to enforce the perspectives of the government ideologies of the time. These assessments of power through linguistics suggest how we can begin to identify the way in which Gove's initiatives could have such an effect.

A utilitarian approach to education is promoted by the voices of businesses and community members that associate education primarily with jobs, the economy, and the production of good citizens. Given that education is initiation of the young into the knowledge, skills, values and commitments common to the adult members of the society, [...] it is essential to reflect on whose values we advocate. (1998, 13)

As Bresler depicts here, the valuation a society has of its arts in education essentially reflects its valuation of arts in wider opinion. The majority of modern policy publications tie education to a future workforce of able individuals, predominantly tying arts to innovation and commodification to contend with the demand for evidence-based policy. Yet Winner, Goldstein and Vincent-Lancrin argue that "as education policy makers reconsider the mission of our education systems, the objective of equipping every individual with "skills for innovation" appears as a conservative approach" (2013, 250). Policy discussion supports the arts and suggests that they are a worthwhile economic investment, and so do the politicians behind the publications, the Department for Education stated that "The English Baccalaureate does not prevent any school from offering GCSEs in art and design, dance, drama and music. [...] pupils should take the GCSEs that are right for them" (Higgins, 2012). Yet the crux of this study is the disparity between publication and practice. The language of publication paints a picture that is not replicated in

practical measures, nor the numbers of students taking the subjects, as previously evidenced by Nicholas Hynter's Guardian article. This evident commodification of arts inside and outside of education reinforces the means focus that Elchardus proposes, but how is it reflected in the perspectives of those making decisions?

As depicted, there is not a particular end to the discourse of public policy which leaves it open to dispute, as exacerbated by the movement towards evidence-based policy depicted in British procedures. The importance that this represents in our timeline is the impact that this non-binary process has on the valuation of arts in policy rhetoric. As examined in the six years of publication there is a clear use of arts as an instrument alongside linguistic manipulation which integrates itself into the wider cultural debate. This manipulation depicts the power of political actors in this policy debate, moving the valuation of arts away from their intrinsic properties to their economic/innovative means, as a product of the evidence-based culture. However, the polarization of political parties presented by the media does not reflect the complexity of the debate, as presented by the individual feedback. Moving away from policy a more fundamental query is raised – is arts education a necessary part of a school curriculum?

## **Measuring Attainment**

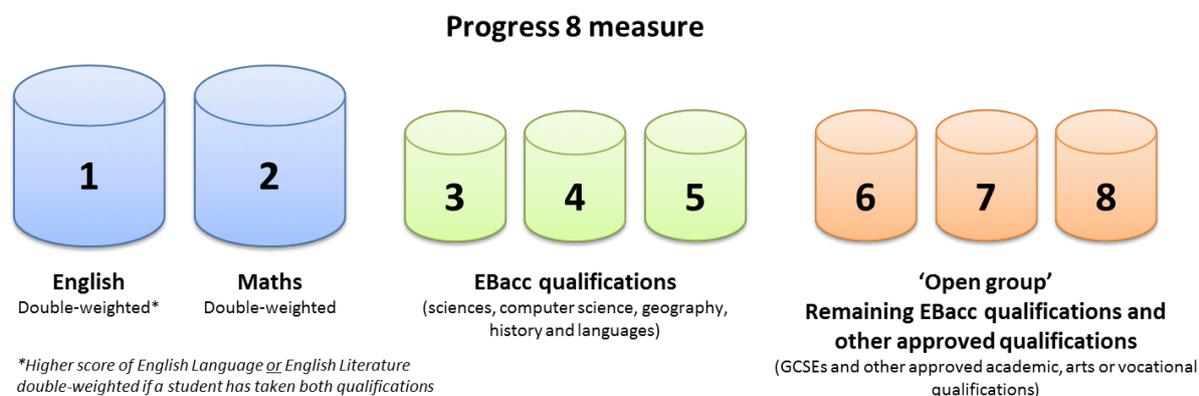
Reflecting on the earlier discussion, and building upon the framework of policy already examined, our question moves to what knowledge is of most value and what sort of individuals do we want to raise? When dealing with the topic of arts in education, this should arguably be the focal principle for educational policymakers.

Educators hold the view that children are naturally creative, open to experience, and tend to be attracted by novel things, and this natural quality will diminish unless it is nurtured by favorable environments created by adults. (2011, 151)

As depicted in this statement from the academic Yu-Sien Lin in her paper 'Fostering Creativity through Education', there is generally a supportive understanding of the connection between creative learning and children, as defined by the presence of arts subjects in a curriculum. Yet it is how this support can be translated to curriculums that, as already stated, remains a heavily contested topic. If a broad education is supported by most legislative systems, policy discussions and social beliefs then how did policy end up essentially encouraging the devaluation of arts subjects in the current British curriculum?

Gove brought about a new focus on attainment for schools by challenging them to compete towards Key Performance Indicators in order to attract future students and financial support. Attainment in GCSEs is now measured through the lens of Ebacc which supports success in six core subjects, or Progress 8

which considers attainment in eight subjects scoring each subject with regard to its importance, as illustrated below.



*Figure 1*

Progress 8 was implemented in 2016 aiming to document the progress of each pupil between the end of primary school (age 11) and the end of secondary school (age 16) as compared to students with similar aptitude nationally. Most children will never see these numbers as they are designed primarily for schools. Every increase in grade in this period attracts additional points in national league tables and Progress 8 scores – which is where the schools will be judged by potential parents. These are the specifications put forward by government publications, but how do these measures affect the day to day running of schools, and the progression of the pupils? This was where the opportunity to carry out interviews could provide key insight, such as speaking to Peter Ward, a teacher at a school in Liverpool with a wealth of arts education behind him who provided key insight into his experience since the changes. Two aspects from this interview resounded with the study: Ward's disappointment and frustration with the decisions of the current government and his concern for the future of his pupils. Ward had been teaching during the period of booming support for arts that preceded the dramatic cuts and changes to curricula, so for him the difference is clear.

The kids who are really bright are, let's say, encouraged but in some schools are forced to take trilogy science so it's limiting the amount of options that they've got that they can take. (Ward, 2017)

Ward repeatedly reinforced the difference in support for particular subjects, sustaining the notion that these policies have initiated the derision of arts subjects in comparison to those that hold more weight on leagues tables. He was stoic in his support of arts in schools and evidenced the impact of the transfer perspective, which will be considered later. Furthermore, he was concerned at the prospect of students being encouraged to take subjects that would help schools to compete, rather than support their actual interests.

## Teachers vs Research

Gove is changing this – but by letting go. Or, more accurately, by allowing the schools to break free from bureaucratic control, compete with each other for pupils and dance to the tune of the parents. (Nelson, 2013)

This statement depicts another of Gove's lasting legacies – academization. During his term as education minister, Gove vehemently supported the academization of schools, encouraging them to take control of their own funds as academies, but how has this notion of autonomy affected educational structure and values? Has enabling schools to take autonomy of how they spend their money changed the power structures within education systems? As proposed above by Fraser Nelson the process has enabled schools to move away from a struggle against bureaucracy but given them a new challenge – competition. As stated, schools must now push subjects and pupils in order to gain the scores and be able to compete locally and nationally for funding. By placing the power in autonomous competition, how has this policy changed the environment for arts subjects? One particular example is Feversham academy in Leeds and their decision to arguably go against the current policy initiatives.

Seven years ago Feversham was in special measures and making headlines for all the wrong reasons. Today it is rated “good” by Ofsted and is in the top 10% nationally for pupil progress. (Halliday, 2017)

The headteacher at Feversham decided to go against competing on league tables towards target numbers by introducing more arts to the timetable instead, and by including up to six hours a week of arts - they had remarkable results. By focusing on arts and supporting creativity in teaching the school has turned their prospects around, especially important considering 99% of the children at the school speak English as a second language and the area is one of the most impoverished in the UK (Ibid). How does this case at Feversham compare to the opposite end of the school spectrum? The private sector educates around 6.5% of children in the UK ('Research - ISC' 2020). Three of the four secretaries of state for education since Michael Gove attended Oxford University, and two spent time in private education. How does this exemplify the suggestion that the arts could become, in light of the EBacc policy and its repercussions, only an option for those children able to afford it? At private schools arts subjects often receive more support, as Simon Tait suggested “most of the formative experience of ministers has been got at fee paying institutions rather than state schools, yet art is invariably an intrinsic part of school life at public schools” (Tait, 2012). In this article for the Stage, Tait visited St. Edwards school in Oxford to examine the way in which private schools can implement arts within their education. There is an instant difference, the school teaches the International Baccalaureate – which includes arts options, unlike its English alternative. The school has built its own theatre and is opening its own theatre

company. Whilst the school will support the running of the theatre, the company must support itself and its productions through ticket sales. The school also references plans for a ten-million-pound music hall enabling the school and the town to hear professional music, as stoically supported by warden Stephen Jones:

Jones is a believer in the 'Mozart effect', the beneficial influence on other subject work immersal in art can have, and when asked what importance art – music, theatre and visual art – has on the school community he looks slightly surprised at the question. He answers it with one word: 'Essential'. (Ibid)

These cases are not wholly representative for their respective systems, but these two examples stress the importance of arts to their schools regardless of the class of the students attending, with the latter even connoting arts education as essential. Both schools are led by individuals who have stood strong against the pressures of league tables and support the idea of a transfer paradigm. However, as the structures of power move around the seemingly autonomous position of academies the pressure of these policy decisions is clear, as depicted by Andrew Garrad in his questionnaire answers - "I do think that schools are interested in providing arts-based subjects and a broad curriculum – it's just that they feel pressured to concentrate on those subjects that are 'core'" (2018). Garrad highlighted how the notions of control and autonomy given to schools and teachers by policymakers has only encouraged the reduction of learning to a numerical framework competing for reputation and support. This manipulation of power structures gives schools the impression that they have the independent control over where they use their funds, yet they continue to be encouraged by the government and its systematic bureaucracy to implement particular subjects, as in the EBacc, in order to meet target levels.

There is an evidently problematic gap in the narrative between policy formulation and implementation, this is where the miscommunication between the relevant actors occurs and the struggles lie for all phases of this study in creating clear, coherent and effective policy. In our discussion, if policy is going to impact on education and curricula, then should the primary actors practicing every day in their classrooms be involved in this discussion?

The efforts to construct a knowledge base for teaching have relied primarily on university-based research and have ignored the contributions that teachers can make to both the academic research community and the community of school-based teachers. (1998, 11)

Bresler here evidences the interlinking of the first two strands considered thus far, this juxtaposition with regards to the representation of teachers in comparison to academics as reciprocated by the lack of teachers enriching their knowledge with research is an evident issue of this timeline. Often

school practice is uninformed by research and vice versa meaning that policy remains similarly at a distance. The lack of communication between these pillars means that even if the teachers are frustrated by policy choices, they are not necessarily proactive in communicating pragmatic methods to improve their time in the classroom, so the pillars remain distant and misunderstood. In my previously mentioned discussion with Peter Ward, there was a clear frustration for the lack of understanding and communication between the politicians producing policy and the teachers teaching it. In this sense politicians become figureheads for everything that has changed negatively within classrooms, when in reality policy should integrate research into their decisions in cases such as the EBacc. How will these frustrations be absolved whilst research remains “perceived as [an] isolated, ivory-tower activity, alienated from teacher’s realities, to be regarded with suspicion” as Bresler suggests (Ibid, 10)? If these distinct spheres worked towards a process of communication, and research strived to involve schools as well as further education, issues could be targeted more thoroughly.

### **Domino effect**

Art exists because we live in tension between what we desire and what we lack, between what we would like to name and what is contradicted or disagreed upon by society. (2014, 127)

In Nestor Garcia Canclini’s *Art Beyond Itself* it is stressed that art worlds cannot be considered if not in light of the social processes around them, and he highlights the importance of viewing art worlds as interdependent especially as they ‘[acquire] more economic, social, and political functions than ever before in modern times’ (Ibid, 399). Canclini’s rhetoric here is a necessary foundation when considering the EBacc policy and the value of arts subjects in a curriculum because the topic cannot be examined without considering the function and valuation of arts in that wider society.

This consideration is replicated most fervently in the media discourse throughout our timeline. The media involvement in this debate is continuous, it is a key topic of conversation for figureheads such as celebrities or politicians to get involved. This works on the basis of image, the appeal of a popular figure for arts in education or society generally receives support, as it is an easy subject to support with minimal repercussions. An example is Matthew Hemley’s article in *The Stage*, ‘Lenny Henry: The industry needs to be more bullish about its value,’ a piece promoting the new initiatives taken by the National Theatre as supported by the well-known actor and comedian Lenny Henry.

The government needs to work together with the artistic community to come to some agreement. This scheme is £350 per school. (Hemley, 2018)

Another example examined is *The Guardian*’s ‘Arts leaders voice deep concerns over lack of cultural subjects in the Ebacc’ by Charlotte Higgins who depicted the, then novel, argument between

the two main narratives as supported by a wealth of cultural figureheads. She lists theatre directors, architects, playwrights amongst others stating that the situation could be “suicidal, if we want to have any arts at all in Britain in 30 years” (Higgins, 2012). Articles such as these are easy promotion for institutions to push in order to promote themselves and the individual respectfully. The rhetoric pushes the importance of communication and yet the depiction of this artistic community is fairly general, who is to take responsibility as the ‘artistic community’ if policy makers do not?

This use of figureheads is also common outside of the creative industries, the media tends to use political figureheads to uphold a particular rhetoric in contrast to the other side. An example of this debate is the Guardian article ‘Harriet Harman takes a frontbencher role in the world of song and dance’ by Vanessa Thorpe in contrast to the Telegraph article ‘Nicky Morgan: Pupils held back by overemphasis on arts’ by Graeme Paton<sup>1</sup>. Harriet Harman is a Labour party representative, while Nicky Morgan is a Conservative representative and also Michael Gove’s successor as Secretary of State for Education. These articles push the narrative that the politicians of the left support arts whilst those of the right diminish their importance.

Some parents, particularly if they are used to uncertainty about money, try to encourage their children to train for business, or for professions like medicine, or work in finance. But actually the training you get in the arts is going to be the most useful thing in the future. It gives you the confidence to be outward-facing and is an increasingly good way to avoid financial insecurity. (Thorpe, 2017)

This type of rhetoric is positive and yet broadly useless, it is evident that Harman’s suggestion that arts would be the most useful training for the future is an exaggeration, but by voicing her support for arts Harman can enforce her role as positive against Morgan’s perspective – “schoolchildren who focus exclusively on arts and humanities-style subjects risk restricting their future career path, the Education Secretary has warned” (Paton, 2012). The depiction of media publications here supports the role of arts as a policy instrument as stated initially in phase one, but also replicated here in the politically polarized argument on the topic of arts in education. These figureheads are using arts in education to further their agenda, regardless of their initial intention. Yet by repeatedly putting this debate into media rhetoric, they are enforcing the question within the minds of the population – are arts valuable within a society, and if not, are they valuable in education? This brings the question to the minds of each individual absorbing the media rhetoric, especially when choosing where and what their children should study.

Considering the role of arts education on wider social context an important perspective is that of non-traditional institutions that have found a role in offering arts subjects left unsupported by schools.

Creative subjects are especially important at school, arts leaders argue, when there is pressure on the arts across the board. Arts Council England's budget was cut by 30% at the last spending review and many local authorities are cutting grants to cultural organizations. (Higgins, 2012)

A key possibility to be considered in this process is the possibility of arts being cut from schools completely. If, in a few years, the arts diminish in the esteem of policy makers and education providers then it could be the case that arts subjects will simply not be studied, or only available to those who can afford them outside of school. If this were to happen in the UK then how would this impact external institutions, who would have to take on the weight?

Chickenshed is an example of such an institution. It is a theatre company based in the North East London that has provided arts enrichment for the past 45 years through education courses, outreach programs and membership. They have foundation and higher education courses taught out of several different locations across London and the United Kingdom teaching over 800 students ('Our Mission and Vision' 2020). The opportunity to talk with senior creative producer Jonny Morton shed light on the realities for external organizations dealing with the repercussions of the EBacc policy. The main location of Chickenshed is situated in Enfield, bordering several estates that are more socio-economically deprived. Morton emphasized the role they play in supporting members of society who would not have been allowed to stay in mainstream education and depicted how difficult it was for particular members to separate their external social roles from their time in Chickenshed. The severity of their situation was evidenced through the loss of two young members to knife crime. It is clear that Chickenshed holds a prominence within the local community. The company supported Morton himself from a young age through his difficulties in education into drama school, and on to an esteemed west end career, and it has continued to do so for many others. When asked what could happen if arts subjects were removed from education Morton responded that inevitably the domino effect on wider society and their own courses would mean that Chickenshed would probably have to close (Morton, 2018).

People need to feel the same way about closing hospitals as they do about closing theatres, and you can only do that if there is true ownership of it and real value to the arts. (Charalambous, 2018)

As evidenced here within my interview with the MP Bambos Charalambous, who recommended I spoke to Chickenshed, each separate individual interviewed emphasized how the English Baccalaureate policy has had a domino effect moving far beyond the curriculum. The recurring opinion was how the impact of this policy has been reflected in the changing public and political valuation of arts systems in British social structures.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to consider the role of policy and its impact on wider social structures through the exemplification of a specific case study. By illustrating the domino effect of repercussions from a 2012 policy decision on wider society through the collation of several distinct realities the intricacies of the valuation of arts have been analyzed and assessed.

Beginning with policy the analysis identified how the prominence of evidence-based policy and the need for pragmatic decision making has changed the role of policy in society. Through the manipulation of language and terminology the government has encouraged the role of arts to be linked to a need for instrumental value. The reality is that this policy decision has undeniably changed the role of arts in society, whether it was intended or not. By questioning the value of arts to British schooling and then manipulating the curricula the opinion has been implicated that the arts are important, but not integral to an education, and instead something optional for those who choose to or can take arts subjects.

As the study moved into the second phase, the initial impact was depicted in the reality for teachers practicing the new measures. This is underscored by the academization of schooling, and how this has changed the narrative of power between the spheres of government and schooling. Through this movement the current government has propagated the commodification of education. Linking back to the production of policy this commodification has supported the need for arts to have an exchange value if they are to be valued in society, which is problematic as arts education then loses its intrinsic value or use-value.

Moving into the final phase of the timeline the study examined the repercussions for external places supporting arts outside of education. The UK has a wealth of institutions outside of mainstream schooling that promote and support the role of arts, as underscored by a strong sense of advocacy for the value of arts in the British society. This was evidenced by the ample media discourse and ongoing backlash to the EBacc measure.

The study has evidenced that this policy measure has had significant impact on the valuation of arts in education and wider British society, albeit unintentionally. Whether the decision makers were intending to undermine the value of arts is not a topic of concern, but the legacy that has been left behind by this decision is the question of not only the value of arts, but the valuation of values. Should policy be considering the longevity and unforeseen impact of its decisions in future initiatives?

There are several areas of research that could be furthered as catalyzed in this consideration such as; the impact that the EBacc could have on the division of education, dwindling the accessibility of arts

for those in deprived and outlying areas of the UK; the repercussions of weakening funding for external institutions and the issues for society if they were to disappear; the importance of arts for children in schooling as evidenced by the transfer paradigm and similar notions, and the impacts for children being encouraged to take particular subjects; the reality of Progress 8 and such measures being bolstered by arts subjects in order to maintain levels on league tables; the changing role of policy as influenced by evidence-based demands, and its contingency to social and cultural developments; and ultimately, the clear spaces between the pillars discussed here causing gaps in communication between key social actors involved at each level of impact.

The study will conclude by repeating an extract of the one of the first quotes of the paper, taken from Nick Gibb's speech, where the current party is defining the issues of the education system supported by the previous party:

Schools had been tempted to teach qualifications which attracted the most points in the performance tables - not the qualification that would support young people to progress.  
(GOV.UK, 2015)

On reading this quote one has to question if the situation has not come full circle. A crucial issue of the current and previous education system strain from the adherence to numbers rather than individuals, a matter that rises beyond the struggle between political ideologies and media advocacy. As Kate Robinson, artist and daughter of the infamous Ken wrote for *The Educator*, "it is time we started including children in the conversation" (Robinson, 2016). By considering education from the bottom up, rather than a 'one size fits all' perspective, could irrevocably revolutionize the educational environment. Some children may not enjoy arts, some children may not enjoy science, but a key topic raised repeatedly in the literature, advocacy and policy examined is the importance of a broad education. A clear common thread of those spoken to was that it is not whether one subject is more important, it is how to ensure each child has the opportunity to know which they prefer. This mutual understanding could promote further interaction between the three pillars presented here, towards a better consideration of each other's perspectives and the valuation of arts as a whole.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

## TERMINOLOGY

In order to understand the context of the timeline being considered and the relevance of the individuals interviewed it is necessary to outline several elements of the lexicon used:

The political system in the United Kingdom is a multi-party system led predominantly by the Conservative and Labour party since the 1920s. The UK is a unitary state governed within the framework of a parliamentary democracy.

The **Conservative** party is a political party at the centre-right of British politics, stemming from an ideological conservatism. It has been the governing party since 2010.

The **Labour** party is a centre-left political party in the United Kingdom. It was the previous governing party from 1997-2010. It is the official opposition party.

The **Liberal Democrats** are a liberal political party in the United Kingdom formed in 1981 from an electoral alliance between the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party. The party was in a coalition government with the Conservative party from 2010-2015.

The **International Baccalaureate** is a platform of learning founded in 1968 in Switzerland. It features various programs utilized now on a global scale. It began as a framework for education for students aged 16-19, with aspirations for educating each child to the particular profile of an ‘internationally-minded’ individual.<sup>1</sup> The International Baccalaureate comprises four programs for different phases of education, each programme works from a foundation of six subject areas – language and literature, the arts, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences and mathematics.

The **English Baccalaureate** is a performance indicator for governments and parents indicating how schools perform on league tables with regard to how many pupils per school are getting a C or above in certain academically-focused subjects - English, maths, sciences, history or geography and languages. The government introduced the Ebacc in 2010 originally and in 2015 announced that all pupils in Year 7 in September 2015 would be entered for Ebacc subjects at GCSE in 2020.

**Progress 8 and Attainment 8** are value added measures for progress from 11-18, which were introduced in the curriculum of the United Kingdom in 2016. The aim is to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum through the focus on an academic core at KS4. The measures reward schools for pupil’s overall performance or improvement in eight subjects. Each increase in grade attracts additional points in performance tables for a set list of subjects: Maths and English (which are double weighted), three other subjects including in the Ebacc, and then three other GCSE or DofE approved subjects. Each grade is assigned a point score, which then calculates an attainment score. A\* - 8.5, A – 8 and so on. The aim is that parents or Ofsted can use the scores in order to judge the quality of schools in regard to the student’s improvement between 11 and 18.

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<sup>1</sup> (International Baccalaureate 2013)

**Ofsted** is the government assessment body for schools. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills regulates and regularly inspects institutions that provide education in England. They give each institution a rating from 1 (outstanding) to 5 (inadequate).

The **Curious Minds** organisation works as the bridge organisation for Arts Council England in the North-West of England since 2012. They strive to promote accessibility, innovation and collaboration in the culture and education sectors. The organisation enabled me to contact the teacher Peter Ward located in Liverpool for an interview.

The **Secretary of State for Education** is the chief minister of the Department for Education in the UK government, currently Damian Hinds. The Department of Education is responsible for children's services and education primarily, but also education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

An **MP** is a member of parliament is the representative of voters to the Parliament of the United Kingdom. They are elected in elections to represent constituencies.

The **Minister of State for School Standards** has a wealth of responsibilities including maintaining teacher retention, school accountability, national funding formula for schools and curricula/qualifications and assessments. The current minister is Nick Gibb as of 2014.

**Chickenshed** is an inclusive theatre company based in Southgate, North London. It is a registered charity that began in 1974.

**Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE)** is an UK based international foundation working with schools, agencies, governments and NGO at local and national levels across the world to promote creative learning with the aim of narrowing the attainment gap.

## FIGURES

### Figure 1

Progress 8 Image

'Progress 8 Factsheet'. 2014. GOV.UK. Department for Education, UK.

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<sup>i</sup> I will depict the varieties of political leanings of the outlets that are considered. First is the Guardian which is typically left-leaning for an audience of Labour/Liberal Democratic voters. The Independent has a centre-left stance but does not as the name depicts typically associate with any one party though it has been considered to lean more to the left in recent years. The Telegraph on the other hand tends to have a centre-right stance. The Times has a generally mixed perspective. These papers are seen to be more intellectually composed, with an aim at a more serious reader. Other newspapers such as the Mirror, Express or the Sun have not been considered mainly because they have not published opinion on the topic significantly, if at all.