"Blood, Sweat and Tears": Disciplining the Creative in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract
A generation of reforms to New Zealand's education system and economy appear to have changed the way school leavers regard tertiary education and career prospects. There is a marked increase in the numbers of students enrolling in degree-level 'creative' courses, even though employment in a creative field is uncertain. This paper employs a quasi-foucauldian 'governmentality' framework to explore shifts in the power of creativity, and the new 'technologies of self' that are required in order to become creative.

Tertiary education in New Zealand is experiencing a "creativity explosion" (Osborne, 2003). Enrolments in degree courses in design and creative arts have been increasing dramatically over the last decade. Disproportionate numbers of school-leavers are choosing a tertiary course that will apparently lead to an expressive, intrinsically rewarding dream career. This aspiration is a global phenomenon, with tertiary institutions in many countries reporting percentage increases for these courses well above the average rise in education participation rates[1]. Typically, this 'creativity' effect seems intensified in New Zealand, where two decades of educational reform have resulted in one of the most market-oriented regimes of higher education in the OECD (Boston, 2003). During the neo-liberalising period of the early 1990s the state attempted to make individual choice the overriding operative principle in the tertiary education market (Larner & Le Heron, 2002; Peters, 2001). The aim was to increase diversity and consumer choice in tertiary institutions by doing away with differences between universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and waananga (Maori tertiary institutions) by giving them all the opportunity to achieve university status and award degrees. Efficiency in the sector would be achieved through a 'devolved contractual model of accountability' through mission statements and performance objectives, and student user-charges and loans (Olssen, 2002, 63). Education consumers would become responsible for managing their own burden of risk in the labour market.

For students in this deregulated and highly individualized environment, choosing a course of tertiary study has literally become shopping for a lifestyle. With no centrally coordinated guidance process for directing choice, seventeen and eighteen year-old school-leavers search for a meaningful and enjoyable career via multi-media advertising campaigns from universities and industry training organizations; or they collect shopping bags full of glossy course programmes at Coca Cola Career Expos; or they surf career

and education networks, accessed through www.worksite.govt.nz , a portal described by the Associate Minister of Education as "..a shopping mall offering you everything you want to know about the NZ labour market ". Recent research into meeting secondary student's curriculum needs has found that their choice of subject is primarily motivated by expectations of enjoyment (although the idea "that personal enjoyment might also be positively correlated with the subject being perceived as easy was not borne out by the data" (Hipkins & Vaughan, 2002a, 5). School surveys have shown beyond doubt that the creative arts are among the most enjoyable subjects in the secondary curriculum and that students would like more arts options to be made available, particularly in areas like drama and photography (Hipkins & Vaughan, 2002b).

In this cultural environment, realising an urge to "become a creative" through tertiary study seems an interesting and complex choice, particularly because, as Thomas Osborne has recently said,

> …creativity is a value which, though we may believe we choose it ourselves, may in fact make us complicit with what today might be seen as the most conservative of norms; compulsory individualism, compulsory innovation, compulsory performativity and productiveness, the compulsory validation of the putatively new (Osborne, 2003, 507).

As the more competitive tertiary institutions busily re-brand their art, design and media faculties as 'creative', it seems salient to consider the ways in which 'becoming creative' relates to a neo-liberal tertiary education regime, and state programmes and technologies for economic development, such as New Zealand's Growth and Innovation Framework, and the Creative Industry sector. Is the creativity explosion simply a response to the structural needs of the economy? If so, why do we not have a science-engineering-technology explosion? After all, encouraging more young people to study in these fields is seen as a matter of urgency. Or is the unprecedented interest in 'becoming creative' as much a matter of governmentality, as of ideology?

Creativity as Governmentality

Governmentality was Foucault's term for the "encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self" (Foucault, 2000, 225). In tracking the eighteenth century beginning of liberalism through to neo-liberal ways of re-thinking government, he endeavored to show "how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence" (Lemke, 2001, 191). In this sense, 'government' is :

> ..any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes
> (Dean, 1999,11).

Since the early 1990s, a growing body of literature has focused on governmentality in this broad cultural sense (Bennet, 2003; Burchell, Gordon, & Millar, 1991; Rose, 1999). Rather than looking for the sources of state power, or how it is ideologically legitimated, analyses have examined the cultural mechanisms through which governmental forms of power work – work that happens "at the intersection of policy and ethos" (Bennet, 2003, 47). As a field of enquiry then, governmentality describes how liberal rationalities attempt

to instrumentalise certain versions of autonomy in the service of government objectives (Dean & Hindess, 1998,15), so that populations and citizens are the means of power, as well as the object to which power is directed (Bratich, Packer, & McCarthy, 2003,18). Governmentality studies are empirical, not realist (Rose, 1999, 19) so my project is not concerned with how creativity can be made to work, or whether 'creatives' are actually creative. Rather, I'm looking for the lines of force that initiated the present creativity eruption in secondary school leavers. How were particular strata of 'knowing and acting' creatively laid down? And how do they relate to this increasing flow of students wanting to express their individuality by choosing to do something creative with their lives? This paper will attempt to sketch the main lines of enquiry into the governmentality of creativity.

Disciplining Creativity

Of course, creativity is a thoroughly modern concept. The actual word 'creativity' is first recorded in 1875 (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2004). 'To create' was originally divine and not connected with the works of man until the sixteenth century (Williams, 1988). By the eighteenth-century 'creation' had become associated with human art and thought, and from this relationship, the word 'creative' emerged, in order to describe the excess of art over the merely "critical, academic, journalistic, professional, or mechanical" in literary or artistic production (*OED*). Then, as psychologists began to explore the notion of personality, the 'creative' emerged as type of person. First appearing in the 1930s, by the mid twentieth century, 'creatives' were well established as advertising types, and thus creativity as "the process of generating (socially) unpopular ideas…. and convincing others of their relative value" (Runco & Pritzker, 1999) was put into commercial play. During the 1960s, creativity became part of a pychometric toolkit that measured an individual's ability to problem-solve their way through modern life; creativity became essential for everyone "…the scientist, writer, artist, musician, advertising man, teacher, salesman, and parent: in fact everyone who lives in any but the most hidebound and unchanging way" (Shallcrass, 1967). Thus creativity began to become part of the 'regulatory grammar' of a liberal society; one of the everyday "minute disciplines" that seem so basic we can't imagine a viable society without them (Foucault, 1995, 223). During the 1980's, creativity began to spread out from the individual to the group and organization (Durling, 2003; Rickards, 1999). In response to the productivity slowdown in most industrialized countries, management and business practitioners became interested in creativity, so that during the 1990s over 600 books about creativity were published, (Runco & Pritzker, 1999). In Foucauldian terms then, creativity became a totalizing concept, a collection of 'sciences of the individual' specifically designed around the problem of managing manpower. It began to function as one of the micro-political practices of governmentality specifically suited to flexible, post-fordist conditions.

Foucault first showed how the regulatory practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries began to individualize and normalize populations, in order to maximise their docility and utility for economic processes. This he termed 'bio-power', "a form of anatomo-politics of the human body" (Foucault, 1990, 139). The techniques and technologies for the exercise of bio-power work in two different ways. Firstly, through the techniques of domination which developed in the prison, the hospital, and the school in order to classify and objectify individuals. For a long time it had only been the important and powerful people who had their lives chronicled, whereas "…ordinary individuality—the everyday individuality of everybody—remained below the threshold of description" (Foucault, 1995, 191). But as the governmentality of liberal regimes developed through techniques of notation, registration, filing and tabling (Deacon, 2002,

449) human objects became describable and analyzable – they were laid out for *individualization.* The construction of these comparable systems also made *totalization* possible. The measurement of overall phenomena allowed the constitution of groups and the collective facts and distributions within a given population to become visible. The dominant effect of disciplinary power is this ability to individualize.

> *The power of the Norm ….individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within the homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences* (Foucault, 1995, 184).

The societies which developed in relation to the new organization and management of spaces of enclosure, such as the school and the factory, and the way individuals were brought under surveillance within them, are 'disciplinary societies', said to reach their apex in the early 20th century.

However, as well as the regulatory techniques of domination, Foucault wanted to account for the way bio-power must also work through the 'technologies of the self'. These are the

> *"…understanding(s) which the subject creates about himself... that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, …'* (Foucault, 2000, 177).

Thus, in so far as the objective classifications produced through 'techniques of domination' are accepted and taken up by individuals, so their selves are also constituted. Or, we could say that the way that creativity is objectively classified, enables people to constitute themselves as creative. One establishes a particular type of relationship to oneself, based on how one makes sense of creativity, and this depends on how creativity is modeled, proposed, suggested, imposed, by one's culture, society, or social group (Foucault, 2000, 291).

"I'm Not Really a Maths Kind of Person."

Liberal education systems in the mid-twentieth century relied on management techniques based on fordist production-line metaphors (Gilbert, 2003, 27). They processed pupils in standardized batches of year-groups and classes, based on a set of behavioural norms about how people learned and when they were ready to progress through the system. The primary individual difference this system measured was each pupil's relative progress through curriculum subjects. Particular curriculum areas functioned as a kind of quality control system for sorting the abilities of each individual pupil, with the differences between the subject areas acting as proxies for different human qualities; for example *intelligence* which was measured by success in mathematics and science, or *creativity*, which was measured through success in art and design. This process not only helped sort out who got access to which forms of higher education (that is, it operated as a technique of domination), but it also supplied individuals with sets of performable dispositions by which to acquire certain attitudes, and through which to discipline themselves (Prichard, 2001). In the process of acquiring these attitudes, people are able to constitute themselves as "creative", or "bright" (or <u>not</u> creative, <u>not</u> bright),   distinctions that are constantly drawn upon by students in

identifying themselves, and by their teachers in defining them. The fashion students in my research, for instance are spoken of as "the more intelligent students" by their lecturers if they've taken science subjects at school, and the students themselves seem unsure of their creative status if they haven't "taken art".

The point of the fordist mode of liberal education was to foster *self-regulation* (Fraser, 2003). The new organizational forms and management practices of education aimed to create more rational, cooperative and productive students than those who had been subordinated to authoritative 'drill and grill' regimes. Thus, behavioural and therapeutic psychological knowledges underpinned both the rational 'systems' (or 'planning') mode and the progressive 'play' mode of modern art and design education (Dalton, 2001, 62ff). These knowledges validated a specific, culturally dominant, 'evolutionary' model of creativity that involved linear, developmental and sequential thinking. This was the model that became embedded in modern curricula as 'design process' providing an 'examinable' (Hoskin, 1990) narrative of creativity that involved the student in following a sequence of tasks. These tasks included observation and drawing; accurate notation of the way observed elements were structured; playing with ideas or colours; making prototypes; modifying these in relation to external factors and so on (Dalton, 2001,73). But it is important to understand that these new techniques for rationalizing learning could only be effected through a particular 'technology of the self'. Throughout the design process, students were encouraged to think of and for themselves as creative individuals; they were 'subjectified' by "linguistification of their internal processes as a means of holding them responsible for those processes, thereby augmenting their capacities for self-policing " (Fraser, 2003,164).

This "hermeneutic of the subject" (Foucault, 2000, 93) with its foundation in the Platonic search for truth, was the main technology of self required by creative pedagogy throughout the twentieth century. Whether learned through 'planning' or 'play' modes, becoming creative required an intense hermeneutical processing of the self, through a variety of techniques all designed to encourage representations of the student's own thought about anything and everything. These techniques included the 'sitting-by-Nellie' studio mode of design teaching (Swann 2002 in Drew, 2003) and one-to-one tutorials under the pastoral ear of the teacher. Work-in-progress was required to be discussed, oral presentations were required to be made, workbooks with original drawings were required to be presented for critique. Creativity was thus performed by attending to oneself, by analysing and diagnosing one's stories of inspiration, all of which gave impetus to the individualising procedures necessary to become a creative. And, through attending to oneself in this way, performing creativity became not just a "momentary preparation for living; it (became) a form of living" (Foucault, 2000, 96).

Flexibilized Creativity?

A recent re-reading of Foucault argues that he was conceptualising a disciplinary society just as the ground was being cut out from under it and a new mode of governmentality in a post-fordist era of neo-liberal globalization was coming to light (Fraser, 2003). Foucault recognized, however, that discipline worked out in different ways in different socio-historical conditions, and that the form discipline was taking by the end of the 1970s was starting to appear 'uneconomic' and 'archaic' (Lemke, 2004). Similarly, in tertiary education, during the 1980s and 1990s, art and design education began to appear uneconomic and archaic. The design disciplines, cobbled together in the mid-twentieth century as a rationalization of handicraft subjects, no longer fitted post-fordist divisions of labour. The pastoral and confessional pedagogies that had generated the creative individual through the middle of the century, began to come under pressure (Swann &

Young, 2000). In New Zealand, the pressure came on first through the implosion of the neat academic/vocational divide (via the 1990 Education Amendment Act), and then as the universities marketized, which allowed more and more students to choose creativity as a career. At the same time, governmental rationalities were beginning to objectify creativity in a qualitatively different way. No longer simply a universal quality in the makeup of everyman, creativity became accountable as one of the skills needed to enhance global competitiveness, and build a flexible workforce for the new, knowledge economy.

There is space here for only the most schematic account of the way that the knowledge economy is implicated in the disciplining of creativity in New Zealand at present. Nigel Thrift has described the way this new rhetorical form arose in the 1980s as a "kind of a brand" that was "made durable in the media, in academia and most importantly of all, in people's own houses through the advent of the personal computer and subsequently the internet and the world-wide web" (Thrift, 2001, 415). The key stakeholders were business schools and management consultants and gurus. Economists were also stakeholders, and academics (such as me, when I used the Information Technology Advisory Group report *How Information Technology will change New Zealand* in undergraduate design lectures). Managers used the new economy as "a rhetorical frame for producing business effects and as a source of ideas about how business (and the management self) should be conducted" (Thrift, 2001, 417-418). Governments also became stakeholders, with the New Zealand National Government belatedly heeding the call in 1999 through the Foresight Project, which looked with a sense of desperation towards high technology, innovative economies such as Ireland or Finland, in order to push New Zealand up the OECD rankings. In 2000, the new Labour-led coalition government announced the end to 'hands off' economic management, kicked off a Knowledge Wave Conference and in 2002 introduced a Growth and Innovation Framework (GIF), underpinned by strategies for economic transformation through innovation, building a talented nation, global connectedness, and the re-visioning of tertiary education. Under the aegis of the knowledge economy, creativity began to join the longer-standing notion of 'innovation', as the extra magical ingredient for enhancing productivity.

The idea of creative nations (Creative New Zealand, Australia's Creative Nation, Creative Ireland etc) had already been well established as a cultural policy tool, contrived out of legitimising processes for the cultural industries. This work had generated national reports "bristling with numbers" (Volkerling, 2001) which the new British Labour government then used in order to 'Map and Taskforce' the Creative Industries into existence during the late 1990s. The Creative Industries programme has since been adopted in New Zealand through the GIF, as a typically 'Third Way' mechanism through which to partner private enterprise in the "development of all sectors where knowledge, content and design lead to competitive advantage in the global marketplace" (NZTE, 2004).

While evidence of the contribution of a creative sector to the New Zealand economy is still less than robust (Walton & Duncan, 2002, iii), the Creative Industries programme at least presents policy makers with a more tangible entity than 'knowledge'. As Alan Freeman, economist for the Greater London Authority, notes, "there is no such thing as a 'knowledge sector', but there *may* be a 'creative sector', with common market, common processes of production, common supply factors (Freeman, 2003, 4). Economist's caveats notwithstanding, the Creative Industries programme has already done a large part of its work through representing an 'other' to the old economy of "heavy industry, bureaucratic ways, a deficit of entrepreneurial spirit and general lack of economic sparkle…. a mirror world of all the things that cannot and must not be" (Thrift, 2001, 418). The very recent materialization of a New Zealand Designer Fashion Industry out

of the old Apparel and Textile Industry is a good example of the way certain privileged sectors are being measured, calculated and systematically re-imagined for the purposes of management in a new, knowledge-based economy (Lewis, Larner, & Le Heron, 2003). Although still a "very small, specialized niche", during the late 1990s designer fashion came into view as an industry, receiving unprecedented attention from media, government and industrialists who assigned to it the dual tasks of economic development and re-branding New Zealand as a creative, talented nation (Larner, Molloy, & Goodrum, n.d., 12-13). As I have discovered from interviews, these tasks resonate strongly in students' rationales for investing in a degree in Fashion Design.

So, the Creative Industries programme has authorized a heightened interest in 'being creative', at both the policy and the public level. Creativity has become part of the progressively enlarging economic territory, and "crucial to success in the economy of the future" (Tony Blair, in *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years* - DCMS, 2001). Creativity has become a touchstone for educational reform around the globe, and the way it is framed by different administrations signifies the national position on a global neo-liberalising trajectory. For instance in Chinese and Russian education, "(r)ote learning is on the way out and problem-solving and creative thinking are on the way in" (Baker, 2004,1), whereas in Britain and the United States these long-established child-centred liberal models are under the pressure of demands to put greater emphasis on 'basic skills'. This pressure has instigated a reconceptualisation of creativity, so that rather than being an essential quality existing *inside* people but *outside* the curriculum, creativity has now become a core curricular value (Buckingham & Jones, 2001; Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001).

In 1967, Jack Shallcrass, the Vice-Principal of Wellington Teacher's College, wrote about creativity in New Zealand schools. Expressing progressive, modernist ideologies, he said that creativity means freedom of thought and independent thinking, that it can be fostered through the arts, but equally well through science. He also thought that the "creative mind is independent and unwilling to accept authority" and that "schools are not really organised for this." In fact "..the school system is still more noted for the stifling of the creative than for its encouragement" (Shallcrass, 1967, 48). Education reforms in New Zealand under Clarence Beeby and Gordon Tovey from the 1950s had begun to encourage the arts in schools as a route to creative self-expression (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1999). But, as Foucault suggests, changes that seem a reform at the time actually only normalize society's ability to do whatever the thing is that its trying to reform (Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988, 14). So, art as a kind of therapy for repressed creativity at school, tended to normalise creativity as art – instead of all the other ways creativity could potentially have been expressed. And further, the embedding of art as the site of freedom for the individual at school, helped to normalise creativity as artistic individual expression.

By contrast, the present reforms to creativity in neo-liberal educational regimes concentrate on generating a type of knowledge that is "socially distributed" (Garrick & Usher, 2000); this means creative knowledge is seen as knowledge that is produced in the context of markets rather than being artificially concentrated within the unprofitable confines of the university. (This is the reason 'creative research' finds itself increasingly uneasy in a traditional academic context.) Creativity also implies a set of values and attitudes which stress adaptability, continual modification and an acceptance of fluidity and uncertainty as a permanent condition of subjectivity (Thrift, 2002). Thus, as an explicit kind of bio-power, "Creativity must be fostered and allowed to flourish...." (*Education Priorities for New Zealand* - Ministry of Education, 2003).

To review my attempt at understanding creativity as governmentality so far; first I have tried to understand the history of the present 'creativity explosion', by taking account of

the contingencies that have brought together new ways of thinking about creativity, and what authorities wish would happen in relation to it. I have also considered the "programmatic schemata" through which creativity is translated into practical government (Gordon, 1991; O'Malley, Weir, & Shearing, 1997, 502). Finally, in order to counter criticisms of governmentality studies that claim it is too abstract, I will draw on examples from my own experience as a design lecturer to suggest why these programmes could possibly prove problematic.

As part of a flexiblised 21st century workforce, creatives now need to be (oxymoronically) innovative, rule-breaking, meta-thinking, team players (Gilbert, 2003, 25). The type of education needed to achieve this new register of creativity has become a topic of significant concern and much research (Craft, 2001; Sharp & Le Métais, 2000). However, implications for education and economic policy become clearer when we take into consideration what this shift to a new creativity means for technologies of the self. An obvious example is the conflict which arises between an artistic mode of self-expressive creativity which has historically defined itself in opposition to commerce, and the new collaborative mode of 'creativity for the economy'. I was recently witness to an example of this at a New Zealand economic and trade development agency (NZTE) seminar intended to up-skill young designers for the fashion industry. The series presented a range of speakers on 'The Importance of Developing a Brand'. Only two of the presentations were made by actual designers, and it was fascinating to watch as these designers' presentations of self disclosed various (and highly gendered) techniques for getting round the problem of doing business by not being seen to do business. Citing artistic and playful norms of creativity, their performances subtly subverted NZTE's goal of representing designers as a business-people. For instance, there was no possibility that the two (male) creators of street clothing brand 'Huffer' were going to submit to being subjects of business. They clowned about on stage, throwing promotional products into the audience and stressing what a great time they had designing clothes, an occupation that apparently allowed them to have plenty of time to go surfing and snowboarding. To their chagrin (and possible damage to their brand) the NZTE representative let slip to the audience that when 'the boys' had said they were incommunicado because they were away surfing, they had actually been working frantically to fill an order. The other presenter, British female designer 'celebrity' Cosmo Jenks, said in response to questions about her brand "I'm not business, I'm creative…My brother looks after all that."

These examples illustrate Foucault's point that the subject is a 'form' that "is not primarily or always identical to itself" (Foucault, 2000, 290). The designers in question obviously do not always have the same type of relationship to themselves – at one point they constitute themselves as 'creatives', by being playful or having no head for 'man's business'[2], at others times their subjectivities need to accommodate the need for hard graft and commercial acumen. It is the historical constitution of these various forms of the subject in relation to creativity that I am interested in here. In the situation described above, culturally specific ways of 'being creative' were deployed as practices of power in order to resist subjection to business. However, the fact that these designers were chosen by NZTE precisely because of their successful business brands, indicates the new set of power relations that are emerging with this new register of creativity, which both offer and restrict opportunities for 'being creative' in ways that are different to those we have seen in the past. The power of creativity is beginning to flow in a different channel.

Another observation regarding this shift in creativity is to do with the way that technologies of the self are acquired in New Zealand tertiary institutions. For the large numbers of school leavers enrolling in creative degrees, learning to become a creative must happen within the educational structures generated by neo-liberal reforms. Tertiary

institutions are now highly managerialized, marketized and subject to performative discipline (see Considine & Marginson, 2000, for an overview), but students and staff are still working within the cultural expectations of a fordist discipline of creativity. Thus, for students, the 'hermeneutic of the self' is still required, but tends to be constricted through modularised programmes, and lack of institutional resources - time, space, equipment and personnel. Students still have to dredge up something 'individual' from somewhere, however, 'Just-In-Time' for each new deadline. This is not psychologically or physically easy and takes its toll; student counsellors at one large New Zealand university see many more design students than students from other faculties, to the point where they have written to management with "….grave concerns over the "blood, sweat and tears" that are sending students in alarming numbers to visit the counsellors…at the Health Clinic…" . The "blood sweat and tears" comment came from a student newspaper headline that reported a fashion student's experience of her final degree show. Counsellors think the high number of visits from design students is a positive thing, because it means they are learning coping strategies. I think it could be argued that through these visits students are learning to outsource the individualising inputs they need in order to 'become creative'. As the "…labour intensive individualising focus…" (Fraser, 2003, 166) drops out of creative pedagogy, we begin to see how creatives might acquire a form of 'flexibilized' discipline that represents creativity in a neo-liberal regime. The people who learn the technologies of self that enable them to survive in these institutions are the competitive, actively responsible, self-regulating "entrepreneurs of themselves"(Gordon, 1991, 44) exemplified by the 'Huffer' designers described above.

A third observation I have to make about attempts to translate creativity into practical government, relates to curriculum development, and the imperative established through the Creative Industries to 'connect up' education with the skill requirements of a new economy labour-force. Post-fordist education systems are being designed to connect up 'new knowledges and new ways of knowing' as and when needed (Gilbert, 2003). This means they no longer separate industrial from professional workforces. In the absence of these historical certainties, employers will tend to push skills development or 'employability' projects to the top of industry and education policy agenda. A gathering tide of these initiatives has been documented from the 1980s onward in Britain (Blythe, c.2000). The New Zealand Ministry of Education's Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities (STEP) 2003/4

> *"… emphasises the new leadership role for Industry Training Organisations under the Industry Training Amendment Act 2002, aimed at supporting industries in identifying and meeting their skills needs. More widely, the STEP now stresses the priority that the government attaches to Strategy Four - Develop the Skills New Zealanders need for our Knowledge Society - which will become increasingly important to New Zealand's future."* (Ministry of Education, 2003)*.*

The supply-side emphasis of neo-liberal education policy inevitably generates complaints from employers' organizations, who report to the media that there are too many university graduates educated in the wrong things. Obviously, when there are five times as many students leaving design schools every year as there are positions available (Spilsbury, 2002, 77), employers need to find ways to explain why most of them won't get a job in their chosen field. These exclusionary tactics are usually given a positive spin and expressed as concern about the 'quality' of graduates (Brown, 2000). Thus, the latest Creative Industry reports about Screen Production and Designer Fashion in New Zealand call for measures to enhance technical skills for graduates of degree programmes. Fashion industry employers grumble that "…a steady stream of designers with flair and creativity launching forth from training institutes..(but)..few of them know how to sew, cut or make patterns" (Cumming, 2002). The presumption is

that:

> *"(s)tudents nowadays are captivated by the desire to be a designer. They have a fixed idea of what this means, and how it could work for them. For many it is a vision of a person somewhere between Rock Star and Artist, designing mainly with a sketchbook and directing a group of able production people"* (Blomfield, 2002,26).

In my interviews, however, fashion students strongly resisted being viewed as artists or rock stars, and in fact would not graduate if they couldn't physically design and put together their collection themselves. The reality is fashion design degrees in New Zealand <u>do</u> emphasise production skills. What is meant by employers' criticisms, of course, is that they think they are getting the wrong sorts of people. These graduates aspire to their own fashion label; they want to run the show, to be entrepreneurs of their selves, rather than contentedly work for ever in the engine room of industry.

In its present governmental moment, New Zealand tertiary education policy is attempting to repackage neo-liberalising processes and discourses (Larner & Le Heron, 2002) with social democratic and meritocratic rhetorics superficially similar to those of the past. Social democratic ideals aspired to a society in which an individual's success and social status would be determined by their own ability and effort, rather than their parents' socio-economic status; a system of "bread for everyone, and jam for the deserving" (Renwick in Gilbert, 2003, 27). The illusion that a meritocratic system actually delivered this outcome was sustained by the fordist educational techniques that produced academic and vocational 'streaming'. Once this system began to be dismantled through efforts to expand and broaden education in order to create a 'knowledge society', the inherent contradictions of the meritocratic ideology began to surface. Recent analyses have concluded that it is not the most able who have benefited from the expansion of education systems along neo-liberal lines, but rather the most privileged (Galindo-Rueda & Vignoles, 2003; Hatcher, 1998). As Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2002) point out in relation to their work on the British *Skills-Plus* project which aims to develop core skills for a knowledge –based economy, 'employ - ability' is an ideologically loaded construct that ignores the evidence that the ability to get a job depends as much on labour market conditions and social and cultural capital, as it does on individual skills and talent. Thus, one's employability as a creative will have as much to do with being the right ethnicity or gender, or having been taught by distinguished persons (Soar, 2002); and it will certainly have a lot to do with one's habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; McRobbie, 1998; Negus, 2002; Nixon & du Gay, 2002). Accordingly, market conditions will privilege particular ways of 'being creative' that are not necessarily reducible to either the creative skills or the talent of the graduate. Angela McRobbie (2002, 104) has recently asked "What is it to 'be' creative? How is talent perceived and mobilized as a strategy for individual success?"

It remains to be seen exactly what 'being creative' will come to mean, as it is worked out at the intersection of policy and ethos in Aotearoa New Zealand

Notes

[1] The British Design Council reported in 2000 that the total number of students in design was up 24% over the last 4 years (see alsoUC Irvine School of Design Committee, 2002, 22). In New Zealand, fashion design degree courses, which have been the focus of my study, increased their intake by a rate of 30 – 100% between 2002 –2003 (Whittle, 2003). This compared to the overall increase in tertiary participation rates in new Zealand of 11% between 2001–2002 (Boston, 2003)

[2] This is a common strategy for female creatives, eg "Award winning designer Cooper's attention turned offshore when she realised NZ wasn't big enough to make her business economically viable...Her export earnings last year were around $4m, half of her annual turnover.....Cooper said she was surprised and excited by her export success. But don't ask her what the company's potential is. "I call myself a seat of the pants operator. I never do forward projections - that's a man's way of doing it. I do things in a creative way. The money doesn't motivate me, I do it because I love it" (Alexander, 2002).

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