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Introduction: Creativity and Education

Gayle Brewer

Understanding creativity

Traditionally, creativity has been considered an inappropriate subject for scientific study. It is therefore often neglected within the academic literature (Treffinger, 2003). For those addressing this issue, definitions vary, although the concept of creativity typically focuses on uniqueness and utility (Cropley, 1999). In particular, creativity refers to an idea or product which is novel, socially appropriate and valuable (Sawyer, 2003; Sternberg, 2003). According to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999), creativity can be defined as ‘imaginative activity, fashioned so as to produce outcomes which are original and of value’ (p. 29). A number of individual, social and environmental factors influence the development of creativity (Florida, 2002; Hunter, Bedell & Mumford, 2007; Moran & John-Steiner, 2004). Important individual factors include personality (Eysenck, 1997), knowledge (Weisberg, 1999) and motivation (Collins & Amabile, 1999). For example, positive emotions and dispositions may enhance creativity (Fredrickson, 2004; Hirt, Deveers & McCrea, 2008; Kaufman, 2003) by lowering concerns related to judgement or evaluation, which often hinder creativity. Influential environmental factors include micro-management and a focus on fast solutions, both of which may inhibit creativity (Adler & Obstfeld, 2007). The value placed on creativity also varies cross-culturally (Al-Karasneh & Saleh, 2010). However, whilst creative expression differs cross-culturally, it is similar in magnitude (Lubart, 1999). Therefore, whilst all individuals have the potential to be creative, for a range of reasons this may not be well developed (Boden, 2004). Previous research indicates that creativity can be taught (Cropley & Cropley, 2008) or developed (Gomez, 2007), and a range of training sessions intended to promote creativity have been identified.

Education therefore has the potential to enhance an individual’s creativity, which may have long-term positive effects for both the individual and society (Baer, 1988). Indeed according to Jean Piaget ‘The principle goal of
education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done – men who are creative, inventive and discoverers’. Creativity is regarded as a core competency (Simonton, 2003), and it is often associated with curiosity, resilience and experimentation (Claxton, Edwards & Scale-Constantinou, 2006). Of particular relevance to educators, creative thinking is associated with academic success (Onda, 1994), critical thinking and decision-making (Mumford et al. 2010; Weston & Stoyles, 2007), productivity (Runco, 2004), argumentation and the ability to identify weaknesses in an argument (Kadayifci, Atasoy & Akkus, 2012). On a societal level, creative thinking has an important role in economic innovation (Sawyer, 2006). Specifically, it is believed that the development of creativity confers an economic advantage in knowledge-based economies (Burnard, 2006), and the economic importance of creativity has hence been acknowledged (Sharp & Le Metais, 2000). Hence Albert Einstein recognised that ‘It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge’.

**The development of creative students**

The development of creative and innovative individuals is an important aspect of education, and teachers are encouraged to develop student creativity (DfES, 2003; Milne, 2007). Creativity is therefore an important competency (Simonton, 2003) and typically involves the development of work that is both original and beneficial (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Aspects of learning directly related to creativity include problem solving, divergent thinking and the synthesis of information (Lubart, 2000). Thus creativity is important for all academic disciplines and all student levels. Previous research demonstrates that training programmes can improve creative ability (Karwowski & Soszynski, 2008; Scott, Leritz & Mumford, 2004). The multifaceted nature of creativity suggests that interventions may increase creativity in a range of ways (Smith, 1998; Bull, Montgomery & Baloch, 1995). Although these programmes typically focus on the value of creativity for educational success, the development of creativity may also have long-term positive effects (Baer, 1988) such as the promotion of psychological well-being (Flor, Bita, Monir & Zohreh, 2013), and additional research in this area is required.

The focus on creative teaching and learning has increased in recent years (Brice-Heath & Wolf, 2004) and, according to Ken Robinson, ‘Creativity now is as important in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status’ (TED talk, 2006). The value placed on creativity is reflected in education policy. For example, the *All Our Futures* report (NACCCE, 1999) argued that creative education promotes social inclusion and supports the development of an innovative and productive workforce. An additional relevant initiative includes Creativity: Find It Promote It (QCA,
The inclusion of creativity within policy documents or recommendations is not sufficient, however, as whilst this highlights the importance of creativity within education, few guidelines for the application of creative methods are available to teachers (Windschitl, 2002). Therefore case studies of creative teaching may be used to identify and promote creative teaching (Reilly, Lilly, Bramwell & Kronish, 2011) and sharing practice should be encouraged.

Creative teaching practice

Educators may enhance the creativity of their own practice, and previous research has identified the importance and advantages of creative education (Beetlestone, 1998). In particular, the use of creative techniques may increase student motivation, cooperation and self-confidence (Muneyoshi, 2004). Students’ ability to think creatively has been associated with the creativity of the teacher (Runco, 2014), participation and activation (Beghetto, 2007; Vass, 2007; Wegeriff, 2005). Furthermore, creative educators typically encourage learner inclusivity (Craft, 2011), which supports the requirements of a diverse student population.

Traditional teaching methods that are typically inflexible and focus on the transmission of knowledge rather than the co-discovery of knowledge do not encourage or motivate students (Hosseini, 2011). Even Winston Churchill recognised the inadequacy of this approach stating ‘Where my reason, imagination or interest were not engaged, I would not or I could not learn’. In contrast, creative teachers are independent, innovative, have a concern for equity, a strong emotional investment in teaching and exercise control over their teaching (Jeffrey & Craft, 2006; Woods, 1995).

Creative teaching involves the delivery of material in a manner which encourages the student to transfer his or her knowledge and apply the knowledge to solve problems (Mayer, 1989), and may involve a number of features including inclusivity, multimodality, equality of status and the co-construction of knowledge (Chappell & Craft, 2009). In addition, creative teachers seek collaboration with similarly creative peers (Reilly et al., 2011).

Creative schools can be characterised by a new insight into training, a flexible administrative structure, adequate physical space, critical leadership and an emphasis on thinking rather than memory (Ebneroumi & Rishehri, 2011). Consequently, creativity influences curriculum development, teaching methods, assessment, interactions with students and reflection. Creative techniques adopted by educators often include media, games, art and storytelling (Baid & Lambert, 2010; Chang & Hsu, 2010; Logan, 2012; Moscaritolo, 2009), but do not require specialist resources or knowledge. Whilst creativity is often associated with subjects such as music and English, creative teaching can also enhance scientific subjects. For example, creative
drama has been employed to increase student mathematical achievement (Sengun & Iskenderoglu, 2010) and to enhance understanding of computer concepts (Malekian & Mokhles, 2012). Thus creative teaching is of direct relevance to all educators, regardless of their subject specialism.

**Barriers to creative education**

Whilst there are clear benefits to the use of creative teaching techniques, there are a number of barriers to this form of innovation. Recent education policy has encouraged the use of creative education, and there is an increased pressure for educators to engage in creative and innovative teaching (Albers-Miller, Straughan & Prenshaw, 2001). However, traditional educational systems or cultures that place a higher value on other abilities and rely on didactic, memory-based teaching discourage the implementation of creative teaching techniques (Averill, Chon & Hahn, 2001). Hence, pressure to teach in a manner which is measurable and efficient may negatively impact on the development of creative teaching methods, and thus education often adopts a stance which allows rather than encourages creativity (Claxton, et al. 2006). Furthermore, the use of novel or innovative teaching may subside over time, leading to the reintroduction of traditional methods.

Practical barriers also hinder the development of creative education. Teachers are often unsure about their knowledge and experience of techniques that enhance creativity (Hosgorur & Bilasa, 2009), and it may be difficult for teachers to identify opportunities for creative teaching or implement these creative techniques (Newton, 2012). Whilst teachers require additional support to implement creative educational techniques, there are few guidelines for the inclusion of creativity within the classroom (Windschitl, 2002). The manner in which creativity is encouraged within the institution is also important. Unsupportive teachers or administrators (Reilly, Lilly, Bramwell & Kronish, 2011), fear of reprisals or negative evaluation (Bamford et al. 1999), the emotional atmosphere and power relations (Etelapelto & Lahti, 2008) each hinder the development of creative teaching. Additional factors which influence teachers’ willingness or ability to adopt creative teaching techniques include a lack of time and confidence in their own creative abilities (Aljughaiman & Mowrer-Reynolds, 2005).

We recognise both the value of creative education and the issues faced by practitioners wishing to introduce or expand their use of innovative teaching techniques. This book is intended to highlight a range of creative teaching methods that educators from a range of subject disciplines have successfully used to promote engagement, understanding and inclusion. These can be adapted and incorporated as appropriate to enhance teaching practice.
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