# Teaching Creatively and Teaching for Creativity

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**Abstract** In order to prepare today's students to engage with tomorrow's world, governments, schools and universities need to prioritise creativity in education – both creative teaching (teacher centred) and teaching for creativity (learner centred). Creativity is a life skill; it can help students learn to live with uncertainty and use their personal creativity to thrive. This chapter examines students' and lecturers' conceptions of creativity, their creative engagement in teaching and learning, and the nature of creative pedagogical practice. In so doing, it argues for a fuller consideration of the possibilities and potential of teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. It highlights in particular the significance of motivation, passion, and recognizing one's own creativity, and argues that increased attention urgently needs to be paid to creative teaching and learning in the academy.

**Keywords** Creative teaching • Teaching for creativity • Conceptions of creativity • Passion • Motivation

## 1 Introduction

In the context of the European University Association's (2007) initiative on creativity in higher education, which sought to "promote a culture which is tolerant of failure and thus encourage the members of the university community to question established ideas, to go beyond conventional knowledge and to strive towards originality" (EUA 2007, p. 7), this chapter considers research evidence on the nature of creative teaching and teaching for creativity. Though closely interrelated, the former is arguably teacher centred whilst the latter focuses more on increasing creativity in general and fostering students' creativity. In England, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education suggests creative teaching encompasses teachers making learning both more interesting and more effective through

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using imaginative approaches in the classroom. They suggest teaching for creativity means teachers identifying the creative strengths of the learners in order to build on these and foster their creativity (NACCCE 1999, p. 90). In exploring the relationships between these foci, Jeffrey and Craft (2004) observe that teachers in all sectors may teach for creativity and also teach creatively in response to need, and sometimes do both simultaneously. Furthermore, teaching for creativity often arises spontaneously and is more likely to arise in contexts where teachers are teaching creatively. Thus it is feasible to argue that creative teaching includes attention to teaching for creativity. But to what extent does this describe teaching in Higher Education?

In responding to this issue, Barnett and Coat (2005) question whether the emphasis on skills in Higher Education prepares today's students to engage with tomorrow's world, and contend that in order to achieve this goal governments need to prioritise creativity and creative teaching in education. Others also perceive that schools and universities need to nurture creativity as a life skill in the twenty-first century (e.g. Craft 2011; Sawyer 2006; Livingston 2010), ensuring that students are enabled to learn to live with uncertainty and to use their personal creativity to thrive. Boden's (2001) concept of personal creativity is aligned with little-c creativity, the democratic life-wide creativity of the everyday (Craft 2001), in contrast to Boden's (2001) historical (or Big-C creativity) evidenced for example by innovators such Einstein and Picasso. Nonetheless, both involve working imaginatively and encompass the processes of exploration, combination and transformation (Boden 2004), though unlike personal creativity, historical creativity is seen to be domain changing (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) additionally distinguish between mini-c creativity (personal meaning-making) and what they see as little-c creativity (everyday creativity shared with others). They also conceptualize professional creativity (pro-c creativity), and suggest this reflects the construction of professional knowledge and understanding. In exploring creative teaching in Higher Education, this chapter focuses on personal, little-c creativity, whilst also acknowledging that creativity is social and collaborative (John-Steiner 2000), involving emotion as well as cognition (Sawyer 2006).

Despite the desire to nurture and inspire creativity in students, research suggests that multiple constraints inhibit the development of creative teaching and teaching for creativity in Higher Education (Gibson 2010; McWilliam et al. 2008; Tosey 2006; Cheung et al. 2003). Creativity, the natural capacity to work imaginatively and purposefully in all subjects, to make new responses to problems, and judge the value of contributions (one's own and those of others), can be seen in tension with the need for university systems and structures, and the pressure towards efficiency and effectiveness, as well as increased personal accountability. It may also be in tension with the sector's central role of knowledge production, with its rigour and respectability, which is often framed as an objective activity independent of creativity, although as Boden (2001) has argued "knowledge and creativity are two sides of the same coin, not opposing forces" (p. 99).

Assessment systems and prescribed learning outcomes can serve to inhibit creativity (Crème 2003; Simmons and Thompson 2008), as can lecturers' and students'

misconceptions about the nature of creativity and its application in diverse disciplines. Additionally, the incessant pressures upon staff to ensure high student achievement can mean that lecturers perceive creative teaching as an unnecessary extra, requiring more time, effort and resources than are readily available (Chao 2009). Furthermore, as Jackson (2006) notes, historically the creativity of university lecturers as educators has not been systematically rewarded or celebrated, nor has it been subject to extensive study. It is also argued that lecturers tend to be reticent with regard to teaching creatively, using their creativity to "converge and control" (Tosey 2006, p. 35) rather than to improvise and imagine alongside their students. This may be due to the fact that Higher Education lecturers have succeeded in an education system that commends conformity (Gibson 2010) where the value of teaching creatively is not recognized (Clouder et al. 2008; Dawson et al. 2011). In order to nurture student creativity and respond to the needs of those who may have suppressed their creativity through schooling (Sternberg 1997), it is argued, university educators need to re-consider their pedagogy and practice and the application of creativity in different disciplines (Robinson 2006; Jackson et al. 2006).

In examining students' and lecturers' conceptions of creativity, their creative engagement in teaching and learning, and the nature of creative pedagogical practice, this chapter argues for a fuller consideration of the possibilities and potential of teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. It highlights in particular the significance of motivation, passion, and recognizing one's own creativity and suggests that increased attention needs to be afforded creative teaching and learning in the academy.

## 2 Students' Views of Creativity

Regardless of the creativity of their lecturers, students' creative engagement in their studies may be held back by their understanding of the concept, their experience of it in schooling/life and their resulting sense of identity as creative individuals. Some studies have focused upon students' conceptualizations of creativity. For example, in a cross-disciplinary case study of 25 university students, Oliver et al. (2006) found that both 18–21 year olds and mature students were confused by the notion; drawing on multiple discourses, they often presented contrasting and even internally inconsistent views about creativity during their interviews. In a not dissimilar manner, the 1,500 student teachers drawn from several universities within the Teacher Education Achievement Network (TEAN) also revealed that they found the concept confusing and unclear (Walsh et al. 2012). Whilst students in both studies often connected creativity with the imagination, with a sense of freedom, independence and agency, they found it hard to define or capture, and additionally some saw it as personal and innate, others perceived it could be nurtured, and yet others suggested that although they believed it could be nurtured, they also saw an upper limit to an individual's capacity for creativity. Such conceptualizations have significant

consequences for pedagogy. If students see creativity as the special gift of some people – as innate – there is little point in seeking to foster it. Such studies serve to reveal some of the myths and misconceptions about creativity which students may hold, including, for example, it being related only to the arts or to named geniuses in particular fields. In contrast, Dineen's (2006) research with 113 students and 20 lecturers at two art and design institutions, studying/teaching fine arts, ceramics, graphic and industrial design, revealed that they all viewed creativity as unproblematic, collaborative, contextual and a key aspect of their identity as learners. Their definitions, which align with Robinson's (2001) perspective that creativity is at the heart of what it is to be human, tended towards a view of creativity as ubiquitous, linked to notions of self-actualization.

In all three studies, whilst questionnaires and follow up interviews were commonly used to elicit students' understandings of creativity, diverse foci were employed. For example in Oliver et al.'s (2006) research, students were invited to identify individuals whom they deemed to be creative and to offer examples of their creativity outside the context of their studies (which intriguingly they found easier to identify than examples within the curriculum). In Dineen's (2006) research, students were asked to select a project they had undertaken and assess their creative development within this. In both these studies, the myriad of examples given of the students' own creativity beyond the academy highlighted the significance and value they afforded it in different contexts, and its relationship with extrinsic as well as intrinsic motivation. Amabile (1998) argues intrinsic motivation is a prerequisite for creativity, and that rewards and extrinsic motivation tend to constrain creativity, especially if students view their learning in instrumental terms – as something to be "completed". The importance of adopting a positive stance and mood as well as the perceived significance of the problem to be solved are also seen to be influential in fostering creativity (Amabile et al. 2005; Hennessey and Amabile 2010). In the TEAN study, following the initial survey, different, arguably more creative, strategies were used to reveal the students' perceptions: one group developed a Bayeux tapestry reflecting their individual understandings (adding to this over time), and another created visual metaphors (from their own photographs and magazines) to reflect their collaboratively achieved understandings (Smears et al. 2011; Walsh et al. 2012).

In relation to creative teaching, research suggests that students tend to conceive of creative teaching as different from more conventional forms (such as rote learning, independent study, exams), as a set of techniques which foster interaction, or as creative qualities embodied by particular lecturers (Walsh et al. 2012; Newton and Beverton 2012). Such qualities, noted by students in HE, include: self-confidence and the ability to inspire; the use of metaphor and analogy to make connections (Grainger et al. 2004); valuing students and fostering their risk-taking through engaging them emotionally and affectively (as well as cognitively); and a sense of conviction and deep passion for their subject, (Grainger et al. 2004; Craft et al. 2014; Dineen 2006). In yet another study, students' perceptions of creative teachers were characterized as either "innovative-types" – interested in igniting a passion for their subject, or "facilitator-types" – interested in students' ideas and attending to their multiple views and voices (Sousa 2007).

Whilst students in higher education may be unused to discussing creativity, many voice frustration at the lack of creative opportunities afforded them and perceive limitations in relation to assessment and disciplinary hierarchies, so it is nonetheless valuable to create opportunities for them to share their perceptions of creativity and creative teaching across and within disciplines and in their own lives. Their views represent a useful starting point for exploration and development, particularly in contexts where lecturers too seek to consider their own creativity, personally and as pedagogues.

## 3 Lecturers' Views of Creativity

To avoid education becoming a routine endeavour, delivered through over-regularized courses of study, lecturers too need to engage in self-reflection regarding their understandings of creativity, and to recognize and nurture their own creativity. The complexity inherent in students' conceptions of creativity is mirrored in research documenting the views of academics (Oliver 2002; McGoldrick and Edwards 2002; Edwards et al. 2006). These studies highlight the multi-layered, often contested, understanding held by lecturers working in different disciplines. Although many academics personally believe creativity is central to their discipline, they do not perceive it is fully recognized in their own disciplines (Jackson and Burgess 2005; Jackson and Shaw 2006). Thus whilst creativity may be seen to be ubiquitous in higher education (Dawson et al. 2011; Livingston 2010), its presence may not be as embedded as it is assumed, since it cannot be condensed into a few easily operational ideas. Common academic perceptions of creativity tend to foreground: 'newness' (judged consensually by academics within the discipline), purposeful exploration, synthesis, making sense of complexity and communicating new meanings, ideas or insights in diverse disciplinary ways (Jackson 2006). However, none of these characteristics affords a simple pragmatic way forward in terms of course design or delivery. Additionally, some studies highlight the perceived significance of the tutor-student relationship in fostering each individual's creative pathway (Dineen 2006; Craft et al. 2014; Sousa 2007).

Recognizing and exercising one's personal creativity appears to be an important part of creative teachers' professional and personal meaning-making (Prentice 2000; Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Dineen 2006; Craft et al. 2008). Those who play with new ideas and ways of teaching, who are curious and reflective, are, it seems, most likely to foster student creativity (Tanggaard 2011). In the context of formal schooling, creative teachers have been documented as seeing the development of creativity and originality as the distinguishing mark of their teaching (Cremin et al. 2009). In this research, which involved observation of highly creative UK professionals working with pupils from the early primary phase through to the end of secondary teaching, the creative teacher was seen as "one who is aware of, and values, the human attribute of creativity in themselves and seeks to promote it in others" (Cremin 2014, p. 44). Such creative teachers, it is argued, have a creative state of mind which

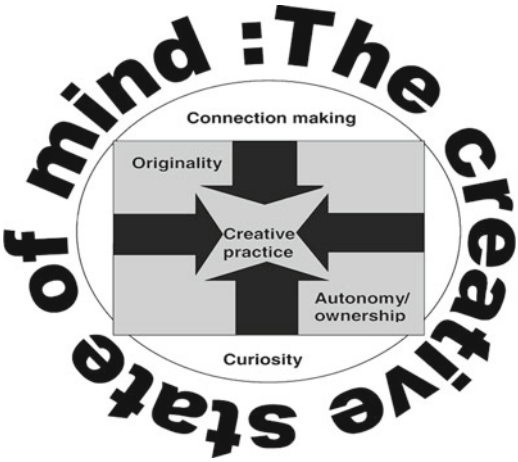


**Fig. 1** A model of creative practice and a creative state of mind (Cremin et al. 2009)

is actively exercised and developed in practice through the core features of creative practice (see Fig. 1). They model, demonstrate and foster a questioning stance, the making of connections, show a marked degree of autonomy and ownership, and in the process value and nurture originality and the generation/evaluation of ideas (Cremin et al. 2009). Through such practice, creative teachers seek to develop the creative dispositions of their students. In Higher Education also, lecturers can choose to teach creatively and for creativity, capitalizing upon their own passion and curiosity about their subject and searching for an appropriate pedagogy.

## 4 Creative Pedagogic Practice

There has been considerable research into creative teaching. Some of this focuses on people's perceptions of creative educators, and tends to result in extended lists of particular character traits and propensities which such teachers possess, including, for example: flexibility, curiosity, independence in thinking and judgement and the tendency to be focused, preoccupied and persistent (Fryer 1996; Beetlestone 1988). In reviewing key personality characteristics noted in research studies, Stein (1974) additionally includes characteristics such as: the capacity to be constructively critical, openness to emotions, achievement within domains and a tendency to be less formal/conventional. Other research, mostly, but not exclusively in the context of schooling, makes use of close observation and analysis of creative teachers, resulting in case study accounts of individuals' classroom practice (Jeffrey and Woods 2003; Cremin et al. 2006; Craft et al. 2013; Perone 2011; Peters 2014). Studies of "possibility thinking", deemed to be at the heart of creativity, suggest that the core pedagogical strategies employed by creative primary and early years teachers include: affording time and space for imagining and playing with possibilities, profiling the agency of young learners and "standing back" to observe

closely and reflect deeply about learners' ideas in a way that highlights the importance of "what ifs" or possibilities in the creative learning process. Standing back in this way also appeared to allow the teachers to notice unexpected actions, suggestions and behaviours on the part of the children and to build sensitively on these (Cremin et al. 2006; Craft et al. 2012). There are lessons to be learnt from these studies and intriguing parallels in research documented in Higher Education. Oliver (2002) for example also found that space and sustained time in a course is needed for creative endeavour, and Dineen (2006) and Jackson (2004) found that students' agency and ownership of their learning was central to nurturing creativity. Additionally, Peters (2014) found that open attitudes and questioning were key, and Jackson and Shaw (2006) that problem-finding/solving is central to teaching for creativity. As Jackson notes:

> While the nature of problems and the way they are visualised and addressed varies from discipline to discipline, finding, formulating, exploring, interpreting and finding solutions to complex concrete or abstract problems is the key focus for creative thinking and action in all disciplinary contexts. (Jackson 2006, p. 211)

Although disciplines and institutions vary in the extent to which they embrace creativity and allow creative practice to develop and permeate, recent examples which exemplify creative pedagogy in higher music education (Burnard 2014) and in interdisciplinary contexts (Craft et al. 2014) afford rich evidence of its potential. The former draws together the work of multiple international scholars, and indicates the value of practices which nurture collaborative creativity, performance creativity and creative assessment practices, whilst also arguing that "the reshaping of the working environment of Higher Education teachers and learners is a necessary precondition for a more creative professional learning context" (Burnard 2014, p. xxviii). The latter draws upon data from Higher Education institutions in England, Malaysia and Thailand, and focuses upon the lived experience of creative teaching from the perspectives of lecturers and students. It reveals that in this research, passion for the subject was the "over-arching driver" of creative pedagogic practice (p. 96). This was documented in a range of discipline areas, which spanned the arts, humanities and STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The project employed a wider than usual range of data collection methods to ascertain the features of creative teaching, including: a questionnaire, interviews, conceptual drawings, digital images, creative learning conversations (Chappell and Craft 2011) and significantly, observations. Subject passion was seen to encompass personal enthusiasm and commitment and a deep-seated desire to make the subject so interesting, engaging and vital that students too developed their own subject fervour. The lecturers' subject passion appeared to drive four sensitively-tuned pedagogical strategies which aimed to: respond to the students' perceived perspectives about creativity and relationships; foster independent thinking; develop equality through conversation and collaboration; and orchestrate the construction of new knowledge (Craft et al. 2014).

An earlier study, based on data drawn from 240 Higher Education students (which made use of observations and did not rely upon debatable staff or student

self-reports), also recognized the complexity involved (Grainger et al. 2004). These researchers posit that creative teaching in Higher Education is a multifaceted art form, a kind of "cocktail party", encompassing: (a) the session content (the cocktail ingredients), (b) the teaching style (mixing the ingredients in a cocktail shaker) and (c) the learning experience (the party itself) (Grainger et al. 2004). Whilst these categories overlap and interface with each other, it is argued that the "session content" involves placing current trends in a wider context and using metaphor and analogies to make connections. Creativity has commonly been seen as making connections between two previously unconnected frames of reference (Koestler 1964), and studies in neuroscience have also shown that mental models and analogies aid understanding (Smith 1996; Adey 2001). The "teaching style" comprises not only style and pace, but the tutor's confidence and ability to inspire through sharing passion for their subject. Examples are given of lecturers reflecting their passion with enthusiasm and also sharing a desire to learn, questioning their own understandings and voicing ambiguities. The vignettes from this study, exemplify what Claxton (1998) refers to as the "confident uncertainty" of creative teachers who combine secure subject and pedagogical knowledge, but leave space for uncertainty, risk taking and the unknown. The third element of the "cocktail party", the "learning experience", includes engaging students affectively and physically, as well as challenging them to reflect. One of the significant features of creativity as noted earlier is that it is not a purely intellectual activity; feelings, intuitions and a playful imagination are an equally important part of the process. As Craft observes:

> The sources of creativity are not always conscious or rational. The intuitive, spiritual and emotional also feed creativity – fed themselves by the bedrock of impulse. (Craft 2000, p. 31)

Through humorous asides, personal anecdotes, the use of emotive narratives, provocative music and video footage, the lecturers in this study involved their students aesthetically, emotionally and physically in their sessions (Grainger et al. 2004). Taken together, these various elements combined to support new thinking and offered examples of lecturers engaging creatively and modelling passion for their subject. As Prentice (2000, p. 151) argues, creative teachers "continue to be self-motivated learners – they value the creative dimensions of their own lives and they understand how creative connections can be made between their personal responses to experience and their teaching".

However, the pressures associated with the current performative educational culture in the West (Ball 1998), and the marketized context of higher education, can drive out such passion, and constrain the creation of alternative possibilities and playfulness in teaching and learning. It is thus important that lecturers consider ways to share their subject passions and support one another in the process. This can render visible their creativity and the creative potential inherent within their subject, as well as foster student creativity and make an impact upon learning (Donnelly 2004). In seeking to become creative teachers, lecturers will benefit from reflecting upon their own creativity, exploring imaginative approaches and widening their repertoires of engaging activities that can be employed to develop the students'

capacity for original ideas and action. They will also benefit from exerting their professional autonomy, acting as creative role models and learning to be more responsive to different learners with diverse conceptions of creativity and creative identities.

Myriad sites and guide books afford suggestions for developing the art of creative teaching (see for example Oliver 2002; Jackson and Burgess 2005; Jackson 2004), though whilst such strategies can be helpful, they do not preclude the need for academics to take risks, flexibly trial alternative approaches and foreground reflection upon their own and the learners' creative states of mind, simultaneously paying attention to personal characteristics, pedagogy and the ethos created in their classrooms. As designers and facilitators of creative learning, educators in Higher Education need to build open trusting environments where students are protected from ridicule, enjoy strong relationships of trust and respect, and a high degree of emotional security, in order that they too are enabled to take risks as they problem-solve their way forwards.

## 5 Conclusion

In this era of rapid technological growth and innovation, creativity is recognised as a vital quality for the future, and its development deserves to be paid increased attention in schooling and higher education. McWilliam (2008) argues that creative educators, are neither the "sage on the stage", nor the "guide on the side", but are more appropriately described as "meddlers in the middle"; educators positioned in the midst of the learners, sharing their subject passion through full engagement in the learning context. A meddler, she suggests, affords less time to transmission and more to problem solving activities in which he/she too is involved, and seeks to design, edit and assemble knowledge, prioritizing experimentation, improvization, risk-taking, co-learning and critical collaboration. Whilst this remains a challenge in different disciplinary contexts and institutions, it is surely imperative that the sector reconsiders its responsibilities and enables its staff to teach creatively and teach for creativity.

**Questions for Reflection on Future Teaching Practice**

1. What are your students' views of creativity? Do they believe it is possible to develop their creativity?
2. What is your own understanding of creativity, and in what ways do you seek to nurture your own creativity?
3. In what ways might you share your passion, personal commitment and desire to make your subject interesting in order to foster students' own passion and curiosity?
4. How might you more overtly act as a creative role model and be more responsive to different learners with diverse conceptions of creativity and creative identities?

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