

# Chapter 22

## Coda



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**Abstract** Many creativity researchers and arts scholars in education from around the world have joined forces to offer an intriguing, provocative, research-based creative endeavor. Creativity stems from curiosity and involves problem solving, brainstorming, collaborating, and analyzing to achieve innovation. We have described theories, practices, and strategies related to such creative acts and processes, extending to programs, applications, and recommendations.

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Many creativity researchers and arts scholars in education from around the world have joined forces to offer an intriguing, provocative, research-based creative endeavor. Creativity stems from curiosity and involves problem solving, brainstorming, collaborating, and analyzing to achieve innovation. We have described theories, practices, and strategies related to such creative acts and processes, extending to programs, applications, and recommendations.

We have also articulated pedagogies for taking creativity and the arts to the next level in global education. Specifically, we address crisis and resistance dynamics that affect 21st-century learning environments and creative processes. Our classroom-centric lens extends to schools, universities, organizations, and the public domain. Regarding the creative reflective process and expression of creativity, some of us have been explicit about issues of social justice, communal empowerment, and political action in propelling creative agency. Creativity is *not* an apolitical experience, so we convey a political sense of urgency about dynamics that affect creativity and its welcoming potential for realizing human agency. Because the creative process engages power and politics, even if tacitly, we have ventured counter-scripts for empowering creative experiences within educational places. We are part of this liberation; in fact, some of us create political artwork and curriculum, generate political prose, and belong to social movements.

To orient our chapter writing, we all puzzled over a twofold question that served to organize the dialogue—is creativity under duress in education, and what are some resistive theories, practices, and actions? Examining our responses, you'll discover quite the range. Some of us direct attention to the severe limitations being placed on creativity within micro contexts by macro values and pressures (e.g., to compete internationally and domestically with high test scores). Other contributors argue that our paradigms of creative research and artful inquiry are narrow, so we need to reinvent for the sustainability of our disciplines. Still others ponder turning organizations into creative ecologies of collaboration and multi- and transdisciplinarity committed to human survival, growth, and transcendence.

Keeping in mind such profound and wide-ranging dynamics, the contributors reach beyond creative processes, strategies, and programs to address today's deep educational dilemmas. In fact, the dilemmas that all too commonly emerge from institutional constraints, high-stakes testing, attitudinal resistance, and more are part of the tempo of creative work and engagement. For this reason, we have brought to the fore limitations and possibilities, threats and solutions, entangled in creative research and practice. As such, our writing is at times unsettling.

## 22.1 Creativity Frameworks: Part I

Theory-building around creativity frameworks of theory and action in education is a theme. In this book section, Mullen creatively synthesizes highly influential models of creativity, whereas Beghetto attests that creativity can and does thrive in conditions of constraint and uncertainty. Doyle discusses creativity frameworks,

models, and meanings with respect to their evolution. Glăveanu's research team offers a sociocultural approach to creativity, learning, and technology.

Two chapters look to the future: McDermott pursues neoliberalism in an age where exploitation calls for greater social agency and creative practice. To Harris and de Bruin, educational gaps signal the need for more interdisciplinary whole-school creative ecologies.

## **22.2 Research Investigations: Part II**

Research investigations into creativity and education are also important to this volume. Baer expresses concerns with domain generality in creativity research and what this tendency toward abstraction neglects at the level of practice. Gabora and Unrau offer constructive dialogue about creative engagement and mindfulness in creativity research. Baruaq and Paulus illustrate collaborative creativity and optimal performances involving novel ideas within the professions.

The Five-Point Star model is Burnett and Smith's pathway for integrating creativity into curriculum. Snowber approaches creativity artistically as a source of embodied knowing and the body as a guiding principle for releasing the creative. Advancing a research-based model of creativity uniting climates, attitudes, and thinking, Kim and Chae support creative pedagogies and students' creativity development. Eason's research team describes an empirically tested collaborative–dialogic model of insight for use in practice.

## **22.3 Real-Life Applications: Part III**

Tested applications of creativity theory in real-world practice characterize a third contribution to this book. Ahmadi and coauthors tackle the problem that creativity has yet to be well implemented in classrooms even though creativity is a 21st-century competency expected of graduates. Cropley and Patston explain that in order for creativity to become a systematic part of education, creativity models need to be differentiated and dynamic. Horton's team features an urban program for K–12 educators who learn to innovate through experiential curriculum.

Teacher education programs, Narey contends, are not producing change agents with demonstrable creative capacities, so she offers a social justice framework and tools for working with teacher candidates and advancing educational quality. Kauper and Jacobs make a case for slow curriculum and introduce creative pedagogic approaches (e.g., creative subversion). Drawing upon teacher candidates' responses, Cancienne narrates how drama-based pedagogy can propel collaborative and creative activity in the classroom.

Finally, while Fasko and Rizza advocate for systemic efforts to develop learning environments that support student creativity, despite accountability burdens, while Runco examines the dark side of creativity. He deconstructs macro/micro political contexts that affect students' creative learning in classrooms, and directs readers' attention to the future. "Forcing" attention on unsettling issues that are associated more dramatically with creativity raises the question, in my mind at least, what more can we all do to alleviate undue stresses on the creative process in schools and support creative education in its robust forms?

## 22.4 Invoking Questioning

Having read our chapters, questions probably spring to mind. Which ideas about creativity in education have value for you and your life? How might these spark inquiries of your own? Which concepts, practices, and applications of creativity and the arts do you think add to the existing literature in education or even propose new areas of inquiry? What would you add or even change about our studies of creativity and the arts?

You've encountered a number of models, programs, and strategies for benefitting creative thought and practice, strengthened by investigations and, in some cases, applications. Which might you implement, and why and how? Considering the larger contexts of sociocultural, political, and environmental dynamics that impact creative education, which chapters best guide your decision-making or problem-solving? Why might that be? What global trends involving creativity and the arts are influencing where you study, work, or create? What predictions might you have for creativity within your domain and field? And what might you contribute to the dynamism of creativity or the arts in helping to make education more alive, human life more meaningful, and the world more socially just?

I now ask, what's in a question mark? *Creativity Under Duress in Education?* is about resisting crisis through creative education. *Duress* is articulated with a question mark. My call for chapter proposals (circulated in 2017) invited prospective authors to think and write on their own terms. Possibly, the chapters would have turned out less exploratory, engaging, personal, and nuanced if the book's title had been phrased as a declarative, punctuated with a period. For the lens of resistance, my aim was to invoke questioning vis-à-vis theories, practices, and actions. Opening up channels for resistance, debate, and interrogation, as well as beliefs, values, and stances, was the hoped-for effect of the subtitle's phrasing. As suggested with this subtitle, resistance was expected to go beyond ideology to advance theories, practices, and actions.

I sought chapters that would treat creativity under duress in education as a subject of inquiry, even debate. At the heart of punctuating the main title with a question mark was my thinking, why predispose authors and readers, worldwide, to an unequivocal position on creativity? For one thing, education on the global front is complex and shifting. Much remains unknown from one country to the next, and even our own localities. As Beghetto (2017) observes,

Educational settings provide a particularly promising, yet challenging context for exploring creative phenomena. Creativity, viewed from an educational perspective, represents a mercurial construct. It is difficult to pin down, constantly changing, and highly unpredictable. (p. 350)

In addition, the notion of *crisis* is itself debatable. From where does it originate, and what are its sources? As we know, the public believes that education is a societal tragedy—a perennial sore spot upon many nations. Associating public education with a crisis has justified the reform schemes of multi-conglomerates and their sponsors to “fix” school systems. Before you know it, these fix-its have infiltrated classrooms with expensive prepackaged curriculum, materials, and assessments over which teachers have very little say (Mullen, 2016). From this angle, critics Berliner and Glass (2014) expose (as their book title signals) “50 myths and lies that threaten America’s public schools”:

The mythical failure of public education has been ... perpetuated in large part by political and economic interests that stand to gain from the destruction of the traditional system. There is an intentional misrepresentation of facts through a rapidly expanding variety of organizations and media that reach deep into the psyche of the nation’s citizenry. (p. 4).

This widespread myth is taken up in our chapters: “Schools are wasting their time trying to teach problem solving, creativity, and general thinking skills; they would be better off teaching the facts students need to succeed in school and ... life” (Berliner & Glass, 2014, p. 238). A myth we debunk is that creativity and creative problem-solving cannot be taught. Going beyond argumentation to investigation and demonstration of creative models and processes, we show creativity in action through authentic inquiry, engagement, and collaboration. Culturally relevant pedagogy and team-based synergy are examples of creative fuel we describe.

As contributors, we also question ways of seeing that miseducate about ideas and processes of creativity. A longstanding, ongoing debate in education involves fundamentally misguided theoretical assumptions that influence creativity research, teaching, curriculum, and programs. Of note, some of the authors identify these myths and misconceptions and deconstruct them, such as the belief that one must “think outside the box” in order to be creative. In reality, learning environments are chock-full of constraints that creators absorb in the creative process.

## 22.5 Naming Challenges to Creativity

As the world changes, it is vital to account for forces of authority, control, and restraint that influence the development and implementation of creativity. These inform the very articulation of creativity, as well as its development, implementation, and assessment. Testing regimes and market economies are among those entities sponsoring creativity and innovation in multiple forms within public education (Mullen, 2016). From the East to the West, moneymaking testing regimes yield profits for business and industry. Global economies subject the public education

sector to the transactions of a market and its economic controls and competitive values. A trend forecasted for creativity research is “business innovation and entrepreneurship,” Sawyer (2017) notes, predicting “creativity studies will increasingly focus on business innovation” (p. 354).

Much of the struggle for schools these days resides in the pressures of workforce demands and high-stakes testing. Just as students are expected to attain high ratings on competitive standardized tests, so are teachers expected to ensure this outcome. With control of curriculum to varying degrees coming from states/provinces as well, less attention is being given to creativity and innovation, let alone assessments of these higher-order thinking skills.

Alternative assessments, typically diagnostic and formative, take teachers’ time. Multiple measures of students’ work performed in authentic circumstances include multi-staged projects, product development, and skills demonstration. Valuing problems that students find meaningful promotes their creative and critical thinking. Contemporary creative classrooms—at all grade levels and across institutional types—are collaborative and dialogic, building upon the real, imaginary, simulated, or theoretical.

A related challenge is that we are seeing less and less of inquiry-based learning in classrooms (Berliner & Glass, 2014). Yet, children are creative, problem-solving beings who conduct imaginative play and naturally express curiosity about the world (e.g., Craft, Cremin, Burnard, Dragovic, & Chappell, 2012). Hallmarks of creative collaborative classrooms are, we share, students’ risk-taking and learning from mistakes in highly supportive environments. In these, learning tends to be initiated as structured inquiry moving to controlled inquiry, guided inquiry, and finally free inquiry. Teachers provide the scaffolds for agency over learning through which their students gain the necessary knowledge and skills; responsibility is gradually released to learners as they feel more confident and capable (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2012).

Another challenge centers on mistaken beliefs about creativity and the arts—part of the mythical narrative of public education. “Calling out” this cultural problem, we have metaphorically swept away cobwebs, making room for fresh outlooks. Cobweb clearing, a metaphor for being on the path of conscious awareness, is a commitment we share.

## 22.6 Parting Words

Such intriguing ideas and dynamics were explored within these pages. Our theories revolve around contextual findings and outcomes, as well as proven methods of research and practice. Readers will make their own connections and derive value for their creative and artistic pursuits.

Finally, an entrenched challenge to creativity and the arts is our own institutional silos, disciplines, and traditions, as well as mindsets. As someone living in the middle of the creativity and arts communities to which I belong as a contributor, I was

keen to produce an academic interface to enrich perspectives and insights. A new movement in support of a pedagogy of solidarity and possibility can evolve from this initial effort should the talented creativity and arts-based communities intentionally collaborate, mentor and sponsor one another, and in other ways pursue their shared interests. Such purposeful interactivity could enable a renewal of the paradigms and benefit the (re)crossings of new generations of scholars and practitioners.

While the arts-based and creativity paradigms do have distinguishing histories and features, observe the resonances as you read. Note the shared value of originality and richness in educational research, curriculum, and pedagogy, as well as investment in creativity theory, investigation, and application that naturally convey overlap. This volume's synthesis of distinct paradigms creates something new, an unprecedented intersection of possibilities for educational study of creativity and art. My desire is for this legacy-building to not only enhance the robustness, inclusivity, and sustainability of our disciplines but also to benefit the world.

On a parting note, we are united in a common cause—to present a bridge between draconian contexts of assessment and explosive creativity in diverse places. Apostles of art and creativity, the authors are all champions of hope, inspiration, and freedom. A key contribution of this volume is our validation and promotion of creativity and art for anyone seeking innovative ways to profoundly improve learning and transform education. In tackling the seemingly irreconcilable issues of creativity and accountability in K–12 institutions, higher education, and policy circles, we offer a message that is both cautionary and inspiring.

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