Teaching for Creativity: Teachers' Views

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What creative capacities, behaviours, attitudes are teachers trying to promote when they encourage students to be creative?

- Ø **Certain ways / habits of thinking** – imaginative, non-linear, generative lots of ideas / new ideas, ideas that are not normally encountered in own environment, synthesized, flexible solutions that would allow changing circumstances.
- Ø **Approaches to learning** that are discovery or enquiry led and involve exploration, play and fun. Journeys that cannot be predicted in advance.
- Ø **Approaches to learning that are reflective and self-critical.** Students have to know themselves and to be able to recognise their own creativity – requires development of metacognitive skill**s.**
- Ø **Involvement of students in shaping the learning process and assessment through discussion and negotiation.**
- Ø **Able to invent and produce new ideas, theories, practice, products**
- Ø **Willingness to take risks** and to cope with not succeeding. To be comfortable with the unknown and with anxiety.
- Ø **Experience feelings of discomfort and panic (freedom to panic).**
- Ø **Resilience, persistence and resourcefulness –** to stick at it and overcome obstacles and setbacks
- Ø **Freedom and playfulness (free spirit)**

Can creativity be taught?

The concept of teaching is critical to any consideration of the promotion of students' creativity. Negative views of the idea that creativity can be taught are based on transmission models of teaching where teachers' attempt to transfer their own knowledge and sense making to students through lecture dominated teaching, where students' engagements in learning are predominantly based on information transfer, and are heavily prescribed and controlled by the teacher, and where summative assessment drives the learning process. Such conditions are less likely to foster students' creativity than models of the teacher as a stimulator, facilitator, resource provider, guide or coach, and where students are given the space and freedom to make decisions about their own learning process and outcomes.

Discussion revealed that teachers believe that through their actions and behaviours as teachers they can empower students' in ways that help them recognise and develop their own creativity. Although it is recognised that some students will not respond positively to these forms of teaching. The passion, enthusiasm and role modelling of the teacher provides the energy to enthuse students with a desire to learn in creative ways.

Discussion revealed a paradox between the desire for teachers and the teaching process to secure compliance and conformity to encourage students to learn the sorts of things that they believe are essential and where creativity is concerned – the encouragement to behave in a non-compliant / original way. Promoting creativity could be seen as a threat to the status quo as teachers needed to encourage students to unlearn their compliant habits. One participant argued that one sure way of forcing creativity was to totally suppress students so that the rebelled – creativity through suppression!

What forms of teaching / approaches to learning encourage/enable students to be creative?

- Ø Open, peer-based learning.
- Ø Independent learning
- Ø In this order: fun, trust, and emotionally safe spaces to innovate and experiment   and engage with ideas.
- Ø I can't answer this about HE as I am not a faculty lecturer. However, I used to teach A level Literature, among others. For all my A level teaching I would get students to develop interactive group work for each other. (how I experienced seminars in my B.Ed.) The best responses came from a Literature group, whilst we were studying Chaucer's Prologue. I told them that as a lot of them wanted to be teachers, I didn't want them to just stand up at the front of the room holding a poster. These are the activities they devised (all videoed):
    - § contemporary sock puppet performance of a scene by the religious characters >
    - § 'What's my line' - using the characters - some rather strange west-country accents emerged here!
    - § a quiz, with questions in rhyme - prizes awarded
- Ø   All of these students got an A or a B for the Chaucer question in the final exam. This was not an assessed piece due to the nature of the course, but could have been a formative assignment. Now I am getting more into using new IT where this is appropriate for my current post. My latest adventure is learning how to programme and use handsets for interactivity in lectures. This was inspired by a cosmology lecture I went to at the City museum.

- Ø I think this is a very difficult question. A 'teacher' has always got to be open to what students have to say. 'Teachers' have to be interested in what students think and write and do. 'Teachers' have to be ready to be surprised and delighted and challenged with what a student might produce... It is a state of mind and an approach to new insights... And maybe 'teachers' have to somehow encourage students to 'think outside the box', but still stay on board as far as the system requirements of the course are concerned.
- Ø Give them opportunities to explore new ideas.
- Ø Ditto! Encourage the students to bring their own experiences to the melting pot and then build on them in conjunction with new 'taught' material
- Ø Freedom to think without censure from peers or teachers. Set up a situation in which they are free to think creatively. Walt Disney's brainstorming model comes in handy too:
  Dreamer
  Critic
  Realist
  When preparing for this workshop I had a quick trawl on the Internet and found:
  http://www.becker-associates.com/creativi.htm
  Just wanted to check that I had correctly remembered the Walt Disney technique!
  Is it being creative if I reinvent it every time I use it?
- Ø Creativity in students is stimulated by giving them more flexibility for their assignments.
- Ø One-to-One or small group teaching covering study skills, mind mapping, note taking in a way that boosts confidence and provide strategies to work and succeed on their own.
- Ø I personally would like lots of things:
  1) To involve students more actively in the material preparation of the very subjects (grammar structures, etc) that we teach. For instance, I have been organising (very slowly) a WebCT page for my year one, post A Level Spanish students. I would very much like to include in this site works that have been wholly written and prepared by them, crediting the students who have produced it. This would enable a lot of things:
    - § They would select the subject of interest (freedom of choice)
    - § They would learn the relevant vocabulary related to it, probably in a better and deeper way than through other activities.
    - § They could prepare the grammar associated with it, and with our help and guidance they could both produce materials for others to use and, through it, learn the very structures they are working with.
    - § They could produce written, video/visual and audio works for all to see and enjoy.
  2) To organize multi-disciplinary collaboration between students of different courses/faculties, so that each one will benefit from each other's experiences and learning. For instance, I would like to organize an activity where a group of language students write a short play in a foreign language,

which is then dramatized by the students of drama of our sister School of Creative Arts, Film and Media. This would be the perfect ground for knowledge transfer: the language students must teach/coach the actors on how to deliver the lines in the foreign language, and the acting students will teach the language students how important, effective and relevant acting styles can be to deliver the very message they want to put across to the viewer. Both groups will gain an extraordinary view on language, acting, etc, and very importantly, will never forget the experience.

- Ø Games
- Ø Talk about things they are good at and finding novel ways of doing things.
- Ø Pushing students into areas where they are uncomfortable/out of their comfort zone.
- Ø Use real life projects to encourage focus to meet the expectations and to develop the ability to withstand the brutality of the real world – standing up in front of real people and network/communicate.
- Ø Instill the ability to play.
- Ø Giving confidence to explore – strength of character to be flexible to respond to change.
- Ø We facilitate creativity through encouragement, nurturing and motivation. We provide the environment to achieve confidence in 'individual' potential

Contexts/conditions for learning that encourage/enable students to be creative

- Ø When students take full command/control of how they want to learn. By offering them exciting opportunities to demonstrate what they have learnt, other than via an examination. By establishing/ setting certain parameters, but leave these open enough for them to complete the task as they see fit. By then recognizing the value of the task they have completed, why it makes sense, how it can be applied to a real-life situation context, and very importantly, by making the whole activity relevant to their learning.
- Ø Tutors being creative from the lecture hall to field trips creativity should not just come from the student.
- Ø Clinical legal education – we have started pro bono work and also mooting.
- Ø Students need more time to be creative or some extra motivation such as a competition or increased chance of employability
- Ø Don't know but would like to explore (I suspect conditions that promote independence and motivation would foster creativity)
- Ø Part of the tutor's role is to help the students acknowledge and recognise the talents and skills they already employ and then help refine them and perhaps help them become more strategic or planned in their use. Practitioners often work instinctively in the above ways and need to see that they are employing a range of approaches to their jobs. We use case study, discussion, and work-based activities to help promote these sorts of activities.
- Ø Students in this field are by (nature of the course/ area of work) arriving with low self-esteem. The learning environment must be positive and affirming a. trust has to be built between the group and the tutors as a pre- requisite to getting high quality / creative contributions.
- Ø Give context, then set tasks/courseworks requiring students to produce artefacts. Provide reading/fact finding materials and encourage discussion, hold plenary sessions. Encourage team work alongside individual work.
- Ø Teachers must try to bring out the 'inner child' in their students, so that they can lose their inhibitions when learning a new language.
- Ø I believe that, aside from constraints like lack of time – some of our courses are very intensive – language teachers should encourage students to engage in pretend games and role plays. I like to give my students Italian names, so that they acquire a different Italian persona when they are in class. It is often underestimate how much people like to perform, they are just waiting for the teachers to give them an excuse. For example, last year two male students gave a presentation where one was playing Berlusconi and the other his wife. The latter put on a female voice and moved like a woman. In this case the learning experience became a thoroughly enjoyable one for the whole class.
- Ø Creating confusion without being unfair. On settling them – tricky questions, no right and wrong answers.
- Ø Using what if questions – to help students think out of the box.
- Ø Changing conditions – putting students in new situations enables them to change and take risks.
- Ø Helping students to inhabit a different location (examples given in different disciplines)

- Ø Encouraging students to take risks and not punishing them for not being successful.
- Ø Giving students choices.
- Ø Finding out what motivates students.
- Ø Stimulating students.
- Ø Borrowing from other disciplines. 'Inter and multidisciplinary thinking is essential for creative thinking.'
- Ø Engaging in dialogue with students so that they can negotiate with me.
- Ø Letting students do things that I don't think are right – letting them make and learn from mistakes.
- Ø Teaching Law through a mooting competition.
- Ø We contrast and we reflect
- Ø Scenario setting.
- Ø Be flexible enough that you enthuse students in the way you assess and evaluate them. Understand the multiple perspectives.
- Ø Every person is an individual. Focus on individuality, individual strengths and extend towards the strength of the group.
- Ø Allow the student to take the lead.
- Ø Behaviour must follow the need (Force the behaviour)
- Ø Create questions in people's minds.
- Ø Focus on individual creative abilities.
- Ø 'Celebrating' their results.
- Ø Students should 'own' the outcomes/

Things that inhibit students' creativity

- Ø Timetables. Lack of space (the right sorts of spaces) or time in the curriculum
- Ø Constraining curriculum structures (modules/unit sizes)
- Ø Lack of preparation and willingness to prepare (examples of using discussion boards to encourage students to prepare).
- Ø Students not wanting to engage (need to develop strategies that keep students engaged).
- Ø Mismatches between what students want to learn and what is educationally are desirable – increasingly the world is driven by students' interests.
- Ø Difficulty of persuading students of the benefits of developing their own creativity (examples of using people from industry to explain the value).
- Ø Not doing well with students who do not fit the mode