

BACKGROUND NOTES & CONCEPTUAL AIDS

Creative Academic Magazine #22

Creativity at Work: From Novice to Expert - Personal Narratives

Introduction

Creative Academic holds the view that creativity is a fundamental characteristic of human beings with the possibility of manifesting in all the environments and situations we inhabit day to day. Convinced that our creativity has the potential to be part of our practice at any level of expertise, we want to explore journeys of creativity at work from novice to expert.

In this issue of the magazine we are going to explore what creativity means in the contexts of work. In addition to providing insights into our own understandings of creativity it provides us with an opportunity to revisit theories of creativity and to develop new theories grown from our individual and collective experiences. This background note highlights a number of theories that we might draw on, test and perhaps develop in our inquiry.

Focus on work

Creative Academic Magazine #22 will explore creativity at work. The title, suggested by Paul Kleiman, can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it implies that our creativity is integrated into purposeful and effortful activity to achieve the things we value: secondly, it shines a light on the particular context of work. From a sociological perspective, work is anything that a person undertakes in order to be productive in a way that meets their needs – which may well be serving the needs of others. Work includes mental and/or physical effort usually but not always performed in the context of a paid job. But people also create work for themselves (paid or unpaid) or work for others on a voluntary basis. Work can be categorised into *Routine* – manual or cognitive, or *Non-routine* – manual or cognitive, and hybrids of these categories. Higher Education teachers, along with other professions, inhabit the non-routine cognitive domain. There is scope for creativity in all these categories of work but the creativity that emerges at and through work will be different. It's not a simple matter to define what work means so we will leave it up to you to define what it means to you.

Focus on creativity

The standard psychological definition of creativity contains two ideas – originality and value which often takes the form of usefulness (Runco and Jaeger 2012). The notion of originality/novelty has come to dominate western thinking about creativity which focuses attention on products. The idea of *originality* is dominant in artistic and scientific contexts and the idea of *innovation* dominates contexts such as business, industry, technology, engineering and education.

But there is another way of thinking about creativity – as a situated, emergent, transformational phenomenon - a process that involves a person using and weaving aspects of themselves – their thinking, actions and relationships into situations to transform materials, ideas, people, activities and more into new forms that have utility or other forms of value in the particular situation.

Carl Rogers' concept of a creative *process*, “the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, or circumstances of their life” (Rogers 1961:350) is a good fit with the transformational idea. I would however stress that product should not only be viewed as material objects, rather they should be viewed as products of effort which could take many forms for example – a conversation, a dance or other performances.




Greg Bennick expresses similar ideas in a slightly different way but adds to Rogers' concept by showing how we weave ourselves into the environment and our creation and in the process we are changed. *"Creativity is the process through which we take elements of ourselves and the world around us and transform them into something new....In the process we transform the world and ourselves"* (adapted from Bennick, 2009 1min 20s). The power in the transformational concept of creativity is that it embraces products, processes and the uniqueness of human beings to the everyday lives of people as they interact with their environments. Through the narratives of creativity at work we can explore the relevance of these and other conceptions of creativity.

Categories of creativity

Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) proposed a 4c model for creativity which includes two mega contexts in which people, situations and physical and social-cultural environments are located.

4 C model of creativity

The **Little-c** meta context is the personal everyday life situations for creativity present in any and every aspect of a person's life. It contains many different domains of activity and experience that hold potential for imagination and creative action alongside and integrated with thoughts, actions and experiences that would not be considered creative. Creative actions and outcomes are judged by the creators and other people who are close to them. For example, a new dinner recipe could be deemed creative by family members.



4C Model of creativity
James Kaufman and Ron Beghetto

MEGA CONTEXTS FOR CREATIVITY
little-c creativity - everyday creativity found in most people,
Pro-c expertise in any domain

OTHER CATEGORIES
Big-c eminent creativity which is reserved for the great.
mini-c creativity inherent in the learning process

Kaufman, J.C. and Beghetto, R.A. (2009) Beyond Big and Little: The Four C Model of Creativity. Review of General Psychology 13, 1, 1-12.

The **Pro-c** meta-context contains a multitude of domains in which people with significant experience and expertise, practise and create. The word 'Pro' equates with professional but it is misleading. More accurately this is a domain in which people have invested significant time and effort in developing themselves through, education, training, experience and a commitment to ongoing development, to the point where peers would consider them to be expert in their knowledge, skill and performance.

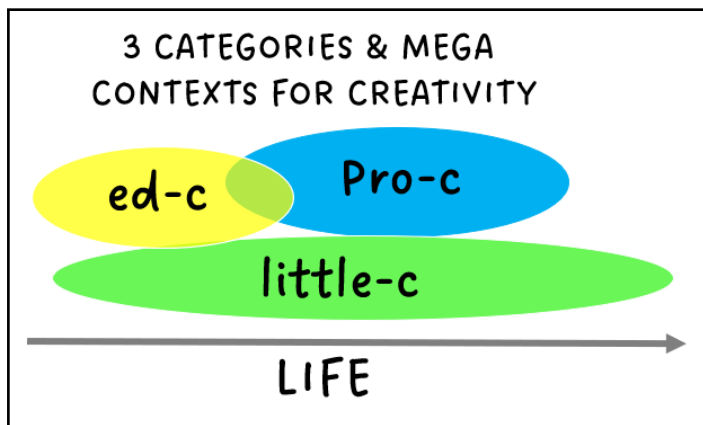
The explanation of Pro-c is a little confusing. In a sequel to the original setting out the 4c model, Helfand, Kaufman and Beghetto (2017) provided these additional explanations.

"Not all working professionals have attained Pro-c status, as many people can do a fine job but not necessarily innovate....However, most individuals working with a professional level of knowledge of their field can be classified as Pro-c."

"Pro-c creativity takes time to develop. The creator must become competent in his field in order to make a groundbreaking contribution and even then what appears creative at that time may turn out to be merely average in the context of history. It takes approximately ten years to excel in a given field."

There appears to be a contradiction in these statements with the first suggesting that "most individuals working with a professional level of knowledge in their field can be classified as Pro-c," while the second statement leans towards a Big-c notion of creativity in the idea of a 'groundbreaking contribution' and a 10 year commitment to developing expertise to make this contribution! Their explanation however fails to recognise the journey from novice to expert that all people working in professional fields have to make (see below).

More recently Jackson and Lassig (2020) proposed a third mega context for the development and use of creativity, namely education (**ed-c**) to draw attention to the important role played by higher education in the ontological development of people in order to practise in a specific field in which creativity is an integral element of their competency.



Three mega contexts for creativity
(Jackson and Lassig 2020)

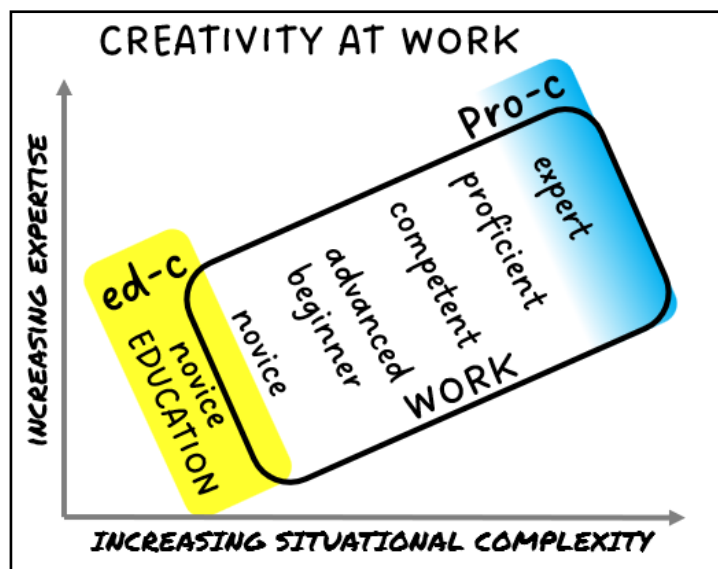
The three megacontexts are shown in the Figure. This exploration is concerned with the relationships and interdependencies of these mega contexts. The interesting feature of the creativity of teachers is that their Pro-c is enacted in the educational environment and directly or indirectly it's concerned with developing the creativity of learners. This makes higher education teachers important agents for the development of creative potential for the

future.

Levels of expertise

As mentioned in the previous section the concept of Pro-c does not take into consideration the journey people make to reach the level of expertise that the concept is intended to accommodate. The fact that we are on a journey to build our knowledge, competence and expertise raises interesting questions about our development and the impacts of such development on our creativity. Our exploration provides an opportunity to share stories and gain new insights.

Conceptual aid to explore the Pro-c mega context for creativity showing how education may in some cases, provide the foundations for expertise and what seems like a gap in the continuum of creative practice.



Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) provide a useful conceptual aid to explain the journey from novice to expert (Figure). Their model contains five levels, novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert and the characteristics associated with each level are summarised in Table 1. We can use this map to locate ourselves on our ontological journeys. Clearly, people can be creative at all levels of the framework but the manifestations (activities, actions and outcomes) of creativity will be different even in the same work context.

The Pro-c concept of creativity focuses on creativity associated with expertise i.e. the highest level of the novice to expert framework. A key question for inquiry is *how do we explain creativity at work if creativity is only recognised at the highest levels of expertise?*

Table 1 Characteristics of different levels of expertise in work contexts based on (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1980)

Novice-to-Expert scale					
	Knowledge	Standard of work	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of context
1 Novice	Minimal, or 'textbook' knowledge without connecting it to practice	Unlikely to be satisfactory unless closely supervised	Needs close supervision or instruction	Little or no conception of dealing with complexity	Tends to see actions in isolation
2 Beginner	Working knowledge of key aspects of practice	Straightforward tasks likely to be completed to an acceptable standard	Able to achieve some steps using own judgement, but supervision needed for overall task	Appreciates complex situations but only able to achieve partial resolution	Sees actions as a series of steps
3 Competent	Good working and background knowledge of area of practice	Fit for purpose, though may lack refinement	Able to achieve most tasks using own judgement	Copes with complex situations through deliberate analysis and planning	Sees actions at least partly in terms of longer goals
4 Proficient	Depth of understanding of discipline and area of practice	Fully acceptable standard achieved routinely	Able to take full responsibility for own work (and that of others where applicable)	Deals with complex situations holistically, decision making more confident	Sees overall 'picture' and how individual actions fit within it
5 Expert	Authoritative knowledge of discipline and deep tacit understanding across area of practice	Excellence achieved with relative ease	Able to take responsibility for going beyond existing standards and creating own interpretations	Holistic grasp of complex situations, moves between intuitive and analytical approaches with ease	Sees overall 'picture' and alternative approaches; vision of what may be possible

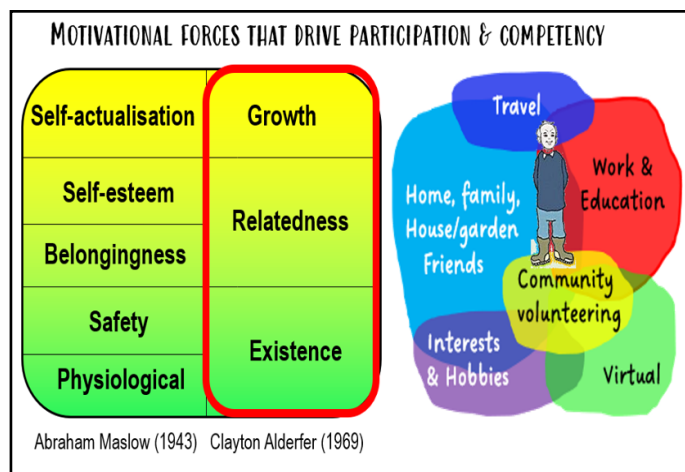
Motivational forces that drive our participation in life

The mega contexts of work, education and the rest of life, provide the physical, social/cultural and psychological environments in which we enact our creativity. Everyday we participate in many different environments more or less simultaneously. It is in the multiplicity of environments we inhabit where our potential as a human being is being realised and what happens in one part of our life may connect with and influence another. We have the potential in our exploration to consider this aspect of our creative life.

Through our participation in the whole of our life we try to satisfy our psychological and physical needs (Maslow 1943, Alderfer 1969). Clayton Alderfer developed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs into a three factor model of motivation known as the ERG model. In this model the letter E, R, & G each stand for a different human need: existence, relatedness and growth.

Motivational forces that drive our needs

Alderfer's model says that all humans are motivated by these three needs and they are the most important forces that drive our participation in every part of our life. The most concrete and motivating of Alderfer's three needs is existence, which really relates to physical and psychological survival. The next level is the need for relatedness, a sense of community and a good relationship with yourself. The least concrete, but the most important, from the perspective of unlocking our potential in the ERG model, is growth, which relates to self-development, fulfilment and the sense of achieving our potential. How does 'work' fit into our every day profile of needs and how does creativity relate to our motivations to meet these needs?



Socio-cultural Environment

Work provides a context and a set of situations and circumstances within which things relating to work are learned and new capability to perform the job is developed. Learning is predominantly through the experience

of doing and creativity is an integral part of practice to the point where it is often difficult to distinguish creative from non-creative. Learning and achievements like creativity are normally *situated* in the work activities and the environment in which the activities occur. However, we are all conscious of carrying our work in our minds wherever we go and sometimes new ideas and insights emerge that are relevant to work in other contexts of our life.

Learning occurs as individuals interact with their work, their colleagues and clients, and their own organisation as they try to work out what they need to do in order to perform and how what they do fits in and connects to existing ways of doing things. If it doesn't fit into existing practices, they need to work out what needs to be changed and how it needs to be changed. It is the organisational context with its people, culture and structures that introduces complexity and challenge into the work process and demands attention to the situational knowledge required in order to perform. Culture is conveyed in the conversations, actions and stories of every member of the organisation. Culture affects the way people think and behave, the way people interact with each other and the way people want to belong to and be involved in the work of the organisation. The culture of an organisation helps or inhibits people as they perform their roles: it affects the extent to which people feel empowered to use their creativity and their willingness to take risks.

An emotionally nourishing environment helps people deal with the challenges, stresses, anxieties and frustrations of trying to fulfil their role and helps them to remain positive in the face of setbacks. Such an environment recognises the efforts and celebrates the achievements of those who are involved in change (Amabile and Kramer 2012). Stress, anxiety and frustration are often associated with work and are especially associated with times of instability and change - a frequent occurrence in organisations. They are particularly apparent when people take on new roles or engage in challenging and demanding projects that take people into unfamiliar territory. Amabile and Kramer's (2012) study of the socio-cultural work environment identified two types of event or condition which they termed catalysts and nourishers, that support what they term a person's 'inner work life' - the constant stream of emotions, perceptions and motivations that people experience as they go through their work days (Amabile and Kramer 2011: 29-39).

Throughout the day, people react to events that happen in their work environment and try to make sense of them. These emotional reactions and perceptions affect their motivation for the work – all of which have a powerful influence on their performance, including their creativity. When people have a positive inner work life, they are more creative, productive, committed to the work, and co-operative toward the people they work with. When they have poor inner work lives, the opposite is true – they are less creative, productive, committed and co-operative. The catalyst factor includes events that directly enable a person to make progress in their work. Catalysts include such things as: having clear goals (self-determined goals are more motivating), having autonomy to determine how to work, having access to sufficient resources when you need them, having enough time to accomplish the tasks, being able to find help when you need it, knowing how to succeed, being encouraged to let your ideas flow. The opposite of catalysts are inhibitors; these make progress difficult or impossible. They are the mirror image of the catalysts, and include giving unclear goals, micro-managing, and providing insufficient resources etc..

Amabile and Kramer (2012:131-33) identified four factors that nourish a work culture in which people felt supported and positively influenced their motivation, productivity and creativity namely:

- 1 Respect - managerial actions determine whether people feel respected or disrespected and recognition is the most important of these actions.
- 2 Encouragement - when managers or colleagues are enthusiastic about an individual's work and when managers express confidence in the capabilities of people doing the work it increases their sense of self-efficacy. Simply by sharing a belief that someone can do something challenging and trusting them to get on with it without interference, greatly increases the self-belief of those involved in the challenge.
- 3 Emotional support - people feel more connected to others at work when their emotions are validated. This goes for events at work, like frustrations when things are not going smoothly and little progress is being

made, and for significant events in someone's personal life. Recognition of emotion and empathy can do much to alleviate negative and amplify positive feelings with beneficial results for all concerned.

4 Affiliation - people want to feel connected to their colleagues so actions that develop bonds of mutual trust, appreciation and affection are essential in nourishing the spirit of participation.

Amabile and Kramer focused on the creativity of people working in organisations but people also create their own work and their own work environments. During covid times we witnessed a significant movement to home working. *What impact did this have on the creativity of those who worked at home?* It will be interesting to see how personal narratives of creativity reflect these and other, environmental factors.

Some questions to explore through personal narratives

There are many questions that might be explored but here are a few that come to mind.

- How have I come to be able to practise creatively in my work settings?
- How does my work encourage me to try to be creative? What are the deep motivations that drive me?
- What does being creative mean to me in my work? (both general and specific situations)
- How has my creativity evolved as I have journeyed from novice to expert in any area of work practice?
- How, when and where did I begin to develop my creative self?
- How do past experiences of me being creative in any environment contribute to being creative in my work environment where expertise is required?"
- How have my experiences of being creative in one work domain contributed to my being creative in another work domain?
- What aspects of the environment in which I work encourage and facilitate my creativity?
- What beliefs/concepts of creativity do I draw upon when I interpret my creative acts?
- Should the term Pro-c be reserved for the highest level of expertise in the work environment? If so, how do we recognise creativity at all other levels of expertise?

If you have a developmental role e.g. staff, educational and curriculum developers and learning technologists, you have a particular contribution to make to this inquiry because of the way that you are able to appreciate creative practices at all levels of expertise from novices who are just beginning their professional journey to experienced and expert practitioners. Your insights will be particularly valuable.

Invitation

We welcome contributions in the form of personal stories, conceptual analyses, scholarly research or opinion pieces that explore and cast light on these and related questions. The format we are looking for is scholarly but informal. Please refer to published issues of the magazine <https://www.creativeacademic.uk/magazine.html>

Articles are typically around 1500 words but longer and shorter pieces will be considered. They will need to be submitted to the Editor no later than January 7th 2023. If you would like to contribute an article for this issue of the magazine to be published in January 2023, please provide me with a working title and a short description of what it will be about - lifewider@gmail.com

Norman Jackson (Editor)

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