

SPREAD THE CREATIVITY VIRUS IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract. *A creative classroom is a pleasant and motivating place where students feel endowed to learn, where all ideas are welcome, and where learning is deep and significant. Students who are encouraged to be creative are better learners, and they are more alert of their own learning styles. Creativity is a lifelong skill that our students will take with them into their adult lives to solve problems and help build a better world. Unfortunately, traditional classrooms do not always value creativity, and sometimes even hold it back. Our role as teachers is to cultivate creativity at every opportunity because it is not an optional extra. Rather, creativity should be our best companion.*

Key words: *creativity, pillars, spread*

1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity is a way of living. Everyone has the potential to be creative and everyone should be creative because this is simply good for us and for the people around us. Creativity is enjoying yourself, trying things out, taking risks without fear, breaking rules, making mistakes and learning lessons. Creativity is a great motivator because it makes people interested in what they are doing. Creativity gives hope that there can be a worthwhile idea. Creativity gives the opportunity of achievement to everyone and makes life more fun and more interesting. One the most interesting definitions of creativity is that it is “intelligence having fun”. Sir Ken Robinson defined creativity as “*the process of having original ideas that have value*”.

In fact, there are many definitions of creativity but everybody agrees on the importance of creativity everywhere and for everyone. Likewise, understanding, identifying, and nurturing the creative potential is relevant in education if we want students able to solve academic and personal problems and challenges, to find innovative solutions and alternatives, and to have better tools and resources for success in a fast-changing world. Creative thinking not only enhances our ability to adapt to our environment and circumstances but also allows us to transform those environment and circumstances. Creativity is a key component for existence and resilience. If our goal line is to teach and foster future researchers, professors, engineers, then you need to understand and develop the creative potential because creativity has provided the foundation for education, philosophy, and technology. If we want to teach children to become dynamic human beings, and more contented with what they do with their lives we need to support them in the process of discerning and appreciating their creative prospective.

2. BENEFITS OF CREATIVITY

Nowadays, we live in world in which innovation and creativity are keywords. Nobody can deny the impact of traditional classrooms and the memory based learning in progress. However, effective learning to take place will mostly prompt the cultivation of use of analytics, suitable evaluation of skills and above all, the presence of creativity, the impulse to create something original that would bring about progress!

Creativity is necessary in teaching because of what it hypothetically brings to the lesson and how it can move students to higher levels of knowledge and learning. Some off the proven benefits of creativity in the classroom include:

Challenge: Creative teaching often makes students transcend themselves. Students have opportunity to move beyond the status-quo and experiment new things without fear.

Vigour: Teachers invest a lot to make their lessons creative and the effort they make makes them regularly full of enthusiasm and energy.

Excellence: Creative teachers look constantly forward to self-evaluation and this makes their lessons a constant and regular improvement process.

Attention: Students will be more attentive if you arise their curiosity. As far as content and strategy are unpredictable, then the carefulness level will increase.

Relevance: introducing creativity into a lesson pushes the teacher to analyse and think about things what will affect students in constructive ways.

Enlightenment: When the same content is accessible in an innovative or diverse way, it is perceived from a different perspective and students often come to grasp it better.

Thirst: When students are interested and engaged in the lesson, they actually enjoy learning and they will be always looking forward to the following session.

Participation: One of the targets of a creative teacher is to raise students' participation. Therefore, students will be disposed to reflect more, feel more, do more, and thus acquire more.

3. FOUR PILLARS OF CREATIVITY

There are various methods to enhance one's creativity and to reach innovative ideas or efficient solutions. However, not all of them can be practical all the time and not all of them are equally successful. Some of these are based on teamwork and group effort. Others rely on tools, like specific software or flash cards.

However, everyone has some kind of creativity in himself. In fact, being creative is actually very simple, and we just need to have the will to use it productively. Every teacher can have his own action plan for nurturing originality in the classroom by working on and consolidating the pillars he perceives as pertinent.

3.1. Building Self-positivity

Every teacher knows that when students feel comfortable and well, they are most likely to be more motivated and consequently better learners and achievers. Enhancing positive attitude and confidence in students whatever their level or age, are key tools that every teacher should be aware of. The better the students are in the classroom, the more optimistic and confident they feel and the better acquisition and performance they will have. Cultivating self-positivity in the classroom is not only and impeller to academic

achievements, but also to supporting social skills such as how to cope with mistakes, difficulties and failure. It is up to us, teachers, to build or damage students' self-esteem. There are various ways we can enhance the feeling of confidence and esteem in our students. This ranges from simple words of encouragement and praise, to avoiding excessive criticism and blame, to activities particularly tailored to raise good self-image.

Activities in the classroom might include the self-esteem accordion in which students are asked to write positive adjectives starting with their names' letters. Another activity is the think pair share activity which is a strategy designed to provide students with 'food for thought' on a given topic enabling them to formulate individual ideas and share these ideas with another student. Using think-pair-share inherently, increases wait time after students are posed with a question or task (McTighe & Lyman, 1988). This allows more time for students to think, and has been shown to get more students involved in discussion and improve the quality of student responses (Rowe, 1972). A third activity likely to boost cooperation, collaboration and participation in the classroom is Circle time and of the games that can be tried is 'Chinese whisper' which is at the same time, inclusive, fun and entertaining.

3.2. Offering Choice

As Benjamin Franklin stated, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." Letting students be involved in their learning gives them the tools to be much more effective. As students are involved in making choices in their education, they gain more responsibility, realistic skills, and independence.

Choices in which students have a say result in a positive effect on classroom motivation. It is useful then to use what is referred to as the 4WH framework to decide what kinds of choices to offer students. This approach encourages teachers to ask who, what, where, and how questions.

- Whom will students work with? Some classroom activities need students to work in pairs or groups. Giving them some choice about whom to work with may increase motivation. Teachers may be anxious of disruptions that might occur when students sit with specific partners. But some flexibility and originality in pairing/grouping might have huge repercussions on students' performance.
- What content will students work with? Students like being given some choice on the topics or content that they can work with. For instance, if a teacher wants students to practice comprehension skills, may allow them to choose from a list of stories or texts in order to find something that will attract and motivate them.
- Where will students work? Students do not always have to work at their desks. They might sit at the front, others at the back. Simple as they might seem, choices like this can make a difference.
- How will students complete a given task? The tasks to complete by students do not have to be necessarily completed in the same manner. If a student prefers to build a web page to designing a poster, that student has logically learned as much as those who created posters. Some students choose to express themselves in a way that is different from their peers and their teacher's expectations. When teachers tolerate this, students become better problems solvers, more creative, and more engaged.

3.3. Modelling Creativity

Creative teachers should demonstrate considerable flexibility and model creativity by being innovative, acting spontaneously, and shifting the focus of sessions in response to children's interests and questions, thus tempering the planned with the lived. In fact, we have to admit that the most powerful way to develop creativity in your students is to be a role model. Children develop creativity not when you tell them to, but when you show them. Students follow what you do, not what you say. You cannot simply talk the talk and expect results; you have to walk the talk. Therefore, if we want to help our students to be more creative, then we have to show them how they can do it! Be a model of creativity and they are sure to follow. There are hundreds of ways the teacher can be a role model of creativity to students. All you need is to think outside the box. Below are some ideas any willing teacher can think of, tailor and adapt.

3.3.1. *Flipping the classroom*

The Flipped Classroom model encourages students to prepare for the lesson before class. Therefore, the class becomes a vibrant environment in which students elaborate on what they have already studied. Students prepare a topic at home and the next day class can be devoted more to answering questions they have about the topic. This allows students to go beyond their normal limitations and explore their natural curiosity.

3.3.2. *Gamification:*

Learning using games allows students to learn without even realizing. Therefore, learning through play or '*Gamification*' is a learning technique that can be very effective at any age. It is also a very useful technique to keep students motivated.

The teacher designs stuff that is appropriate for their learners, taking into consideration their age and knowledge, while making them attractive to raise motivation. One idea may be to encourage students to create quizzes online on a certain topic. Websites including "super teacher tools" can be used. Hence, learners will challenge their peers and see who gets a higher score. In this way, students enjoy the competition with peers while also having fun and learning.

3.3.3. *Keeping the classroom layout flexible*

During the school term, students will be working between group projects, completing solo assessments, listening to presentations, as well as doing many other activities. In order to keep the creativity flowing between these learning set ups, the key is to keep your classroom layout adaptable.

3.3.4. *Introducing unconventional learning materials*

Textbooks and timeless lesson plans are a great staple in your teacher tool kit, but introducing more unconventional learning materials can help your students think outside the box and engage more deeply with the lesson. These might include using videos, inviting famous personalities, exploring websites or even attending live events such as plays or movies.

3.3.5. *Challenging advanced students with extension projects:*

Allowing advanced students to participate in more creative extension projects helps them to learn at faster rates, as well as find, solve and act on problems more readily.

3.3.6. *Marking*

Face-to-face marking: The most effective feedback you can provide to a learner is likely to come from face-to-face interaction, with students' freshly completed work in front of them.

Peer marking: Using peer marking can be a great way to promote student understanding of mark schemes. Students will learn a lot from reading and critiquing each other's work and are likely to gain as much from the marking process as they did from the primary learning task.

Peer feedback: This is an interesting way of helping students develop their skills to provide easy-to-read and comment to their peers. A popular method is to provide students with post-it-notes to use to interpret each other's work with kind, specific comments. Getting a range of kind, specific comments from peers can provide a real enhancement to students, and the process will expose them to the wide range of work produced by other learners.

3.4. **Making connections**

We have all heard our students ask the question, "When will we ever use this in the real world?" and it is a question every teacher should think about and take into account.

Research shows that relevant learning means effective learning, and that alone should be enough to get us rethinking our lesson plans. Relevant, meaningful activities that both involve students emotionally and link with what they already know are what helps build neural connections and long-term memory storage.

"Long lists of vocabulary words that don't have personal relevance or don't resonate with a topic about which the student has been engaged are likely to be blocked by the brain's affective (or emotional) filters," writes neurologist and former educator Judy Willis.

If a student gains new information that is not related to anything already stored in his brain, it is hard for the new information to get into those networks. To make sense and be meaningful, students need a personal connection to the material they get, whether that is through engaging them emotionally or connecting the new information with previously acquired knowledge. Without that, students may not only disengage and quickly forget, but they may also lose the motivation to try. The solution is then to make it meaningful as mentioned previously. In aiming for full engagement, it is essential that students perceive activities as being evocative. To ensure that activities are personally meaningful, we can, for example, connect them with students' previous knowledge and experiences.

Pedagogically speaking, creative teachers seek to avoid the limiting nature of subject boundaries, and make frequent references to other subjects and to the world beyond the school gate. They provide time to revisit prior knowledge, make links and offer multiple opportunities for learners to work collaboratively in order to widen their perspectives. Such teachers encourage students to link their learning between subjects and within subjects and often prompt connections with the children's lives outside school. This appears to increase the relevance of the curriculum to the learners. As one teacher observed 'If they can't

connect to what we're learning – can't make it personal – or relate it to what they know already, then they'll never retain it'.

Keene and Zimmerman (1997) stated that students understand better when they make different kinds of connections:

- Text-to-self
- Text-to-text
- Text-to-world

Text-to-self connections are highly personal connections that a reader makes between a piece of reading material and the reader's own experiences or life. An example of a text-to-self connection might be, 'This story reminds me of a holiday I spent in France a few years ago'.

Sometimes when reading, readers are reminded of other things that they have read. These types of connections are text-to-text connections. An example of text-to-text connection includes 'The hero has the same problem that I read about in a story last week'.

Text-to-world connections are the larger connections that a reader brings to a reading situation. An example of a text-to-world connection would be when a reader says "I saw a program on television that talked about things described in this text".

Below are some examples of questions that can be used to facilitate student connections:

Text-to-self:

- What does this remind me of in my life?
- What is this similar to in my life?
- Has something like this ever happened to me?
- How does this relate to my life?
- What were my feelings when I read this?

Text-to-text:

- What does this remind me of in another book I've read?
- How is this text similar to other things I have read?
- Have I read about something like this before?

Text-to-world:

- What does this remind me of in the real world?
- How is this text similar to things that happen in the real world?
- How did that part relate to the world around me?

4. CONCLUSION

The paper outlines the importance of spreading creativity in the classroom for our sake and for our students' sake. There is always a way to do things differently and nurture creativity. Creativity is not an optional extra for us English language teachers. It should rather be our best friend. The best reason why creativity is a necessity in our classrooms is how much students value and appreciate creativity and creative teachers and the impact this has on their performance. When asked about the characteristics of great teachers, 65 per cent of my students opted for "original and creative" while 20 per cent chose "caring and understanding" and the other 15 per cent selected "fair and flexible". I believe this should be enough for us to do our best to spread the creativity virus and do as the French writer André Breton said "Teacher, enjoy yourself or you will bore us".

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