

Creativity in Teaching: between Theory and Practice



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Abstract

Creativity is one of the most valuable factors that influence the teaching process. Through the global development, the concept creativity imposes itself in different fields including teaching. In addition, creativity brings change, and it raises teaching achievements. It becomes crucial for teachers to be creative enough in their classroom. Nevertheless, the connection between theory and practice is mostly lost when teachers use creativity in teaching. The main aim of this paper is to identify the importance of creativity to achieve a successful teaching process. It attempts as well to bridge the gap between theory and practice in relation to creativity. As far as creativity is one of the most innovative trends in teaching, the current paper will shed the light on the ways that need to be followed in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice for teachers when it comes to the issue of creativity.

Keywords: classroom, creativity, creative teacher, practice

الملخص:

الإبداع هو أحد أهم العوامل التي تؤثر على عملية التدريس. من خلال التنمية العالمية ، يفرض الإبداع الفكرة في مجالات مختلفة بما في ذلك التدريس. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، الإبداع يجلب التغيير ، ويثير إنجازات التدريس. يصبح من الأهمية بمكان أن يكون المعلمون مبدعين بدرجة كافية في الفصل الدراسي. ومع ذلك ، فإن العلاقة بين النظرية والتطبيق تضيع في الغالب عندما يستخدم

المعلمون الإبداع في التدريس. الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الورقة هو تحديد أهمية الإبداع لتحقيق عملية تعليمية ناجحة. تحاول أيضًا سد الفجوة بين النظرية والتطبيق فيما يتعلق بالإبداع. بقدر ما يمثل الإبداع أحد أكثر الاتجاهات ابتكاراً في التدريس ، ستسلط الورقة الحالية الضوء على الطرق التي يجب اتباعها من أجل سد الفجوة بين النظرية والتطبيق للمعلمين عندما يتعلق الأمر بمسألة الإبداع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفصول الدراسية ، الإبداع ، المعلم ، الممارسة.

Introduction

Fostering creativity in education becomes one of the most important topics for many scholars in the world. Creativity has been considered as a crucial component for achieving successful classes; consequently, its development becomes a priority for both teachers and students. Nonetheless, students can not develop their creative thinking without the help of their teachers. For this reason, the latter are encouraged to teach creatively and to find ways that promote creativity among their students. Moreover, they need to possess strong background knowledge about the meaning of creativity in education; as well, they must learn how to foster its use in their classrooms. Although creativity in teaching is a necessity in today's schools, bridging the gap between what is theoretically known and what practically must be achieved is not an easy task for several teachers. Hence, this paper attempts mainly

to provide some core points about how to implement creativity in the classroom situation.

1. Meaning of Creativity

The term creativity has different meanings. It is considered a puzzle word for many scholars because it is treated from different angles. For Afida, Aini & Rosadah (2013), "the concept of creativity is very difficult to determine". Many people understand creativity as imagination, yet it goes beyond this meaning to hold several meanings. Kohler (2015, p. 117) says that it: "refers to a psychological process, related to play, imagination, fantasy, feelings and emotions, meaning-making and the use of symbols". Here, creativity is viewed from the psychological lens, and it contains abstract components such as feelings. Nevertheless, this meaning is quite difficult to be measured; especially, in the educational setting. In their turns, cognitive scholars see creativity from a different side in which they link it with the brain and its abilities. Wolf (n.d, p. 2) declares that: "Lastly, creativity has been identified as an important component of problem- solving and other cognitive abilities". From this brief description, it can be deduced that creativity has various meanings depending on the approach where it has been treated.

2. Characteristics of Creative Teacher

In current education, teachers in different fields of teaching need to be creative. They must have deep insight into the meaning of creativity in education, and the way how to integrate it in the classroom. In fact, the difficulty of finding the meaning of creative teacher has emerged, and then, many practitioners consider it as a hard task. According to Cremin, Barnes & Scoffham (2006, p. 13), "it is evident that the definitions in this area are harder to find". This is because the term creativity itself covers a large area and it has been seen from different angles. Nonetheless, Cremin et al (2006) highlighted the importance of finding one major single meaning and they (2006, p. 10) state that: "most writers imply that creative teacher is the teacher who promotes the creativity of pupils". In its meaning,

whenever teachers can enhance the use of creativity in the classroom, they will handle the name of a creative teacher.

In addition to what is mentioned in the above definition, creative teachers need to possess several characteristics. One of these major characteristics is having strong background knowledge about the content they are teaching because the more teachers are aware of what they are teaching, the best they reach creativity. Richhart (2002) declares that: "effective and creative teachers look for the longer picture behind the skills and knowledge to impart" (cited in Cremin et al, 2006). Teachers, whose knowledge about the subject is limited, are trying to gather information about the content they are teaching rather than thinking on how to deliver it in a very creative way. Also they do not think about how to make their learners think creatively as well. Moreover, creative teachers must know how to teach creativity since the subject knowledge alone is not enough for them to be creative (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014). Many of them possess a wide subject knowledge, yet, they do not show their interest to know more about creativity and about how to locate it in teaching.

Another core feature of the creative teacher is the ability to make connections. Notably, there is a clear relationship between the content of the subjects in the school setting and the real-life context; consequently, it is necessary for teachers to make a bridge between them. Cremin (2015, p. 42) argues: "such teachers encourage children to link their learning between subjects and within subjects and often prompt connections with the children's lives outside school" (cited in Copping, 2016, p. 199). In other words, the real-life situation can be considered as the world which gives the opportunity for powerful application of what has been learned in the classroom. This feature plays a great role to promote even learners' creativity. Furthermore, in this step, teachers need to be aware of their student's social background in order to help them to link their lessons with their life. For (Davies, 2013, p. 6) "that gives rise to different values that in turn impact upon the ways we choose to facilitate learner participation and creativity". Hence, a deep

understanding of the students' cultural background is necessary for connection making.

Creative teachers have the sense of curiosity. As individuals, teachers at all levels in the schools must be curious and have the desire to learn more about the content they are teaching, the students' needs, and the teaching techniques and strategies. This kind of interest assists them to ask much more questions and searching for the right answers. Cremin et al (2006, p. 13) mention: "creativity also involves asking and attempting to answer real questions and the creative teacher/leader is seen by many writers as one who uses open questions frequently". However, this ability is not enough for teachers to be creative because many teachers have the sense of curiosity, but they fail to promote it among their students. Consequently, stimulating the students to ask questions is a crucial step for creative teachers since these questions and problems will assist them in building a better understanding of the knowledge (Fryer, 1996). Once students possess the sense of curiosity, they will find different answers which facilitate the way of connection making.

3. Applying Creativity in the Classroom

The process of creativity and innovation is highly important in our classrooms. Both teachers and students are encouraged to think creatively and to use their creative acts in the classroom situation. For this reason, they are required to widen their knowledge about creativity and how to be a creative person. It has been viewed that several teachers possess knowledge about creativity, but they lack the ability to implement it in their classes. According to Zevin (2013, p. 49), "what we are calling creative teaching is usually perceived as far more difficult to implement than traditional methods". Consequently, teachers need to possess different skills and to follow various strategies on how they put creativity into practice. Richard (2017) proposes various ways for teachers to implement creativity in the classrooms including:

- 1) Eclectic use of methods
- 2) Activities with creative dimensions
- 3) Flexibility in teaching
- 4) The use of technology
- 5) The sense of motivation

The eclectic approach is one core element to enhance the implementation of creativity in teaching. It is necessary for teachers who are looking for creative classes to select methods, strategies, and techniques depending on their students' needs. Mwanza (2017, p. 56) declares that: "eclecticism provides the solution because the approach allows the teacher to select what works within their own dynamic contexts". This selection is not an easy task for every teacher; instead, it can be done only by those who are curious and creative. Many teachers are unable to diversify the activities, techniques, and methods in their teaching which go in parallel with the students' needs. This idea is supported by Richards (2017) when he says that: "creativity is promoted by a mixture and combination of styles". All in all, the eclectic approach is a useful way to put creativity into practice.

In the creative classroom, creative and innovative activities are highly encouraged by teachers. Integrating tasks which have creative dimensions will assist teachers to implement creativity in the classroom. These tasks give the opportunity for students to think creatively and to use creativity on their own (Seechaliao, 2017). In its meaning, when teachers promote the use of creative activities in their classes, they stimulate their students' creative abilities, and they familiarize them with creativity in the classroom setting. Through time, teachers will value the importance of being a creative individual; as well, they will be able to use it by themselves. Moreover, Richards (2017) mentions some activities which have creative dimensions such as problem- solving activities, activities with interesting content, risk-taking activities- individual choice activities, activities with original thought and others. So, creative teachers need to integrate a variety of creative tasks in their teaching process.

Flexible teaching goes closely with creativity. Creative teachers are encouraged to demonstrate flexibility in the teaching-learning process because it allows them to respond differently depending on different circumstances. Jones & Richards (2015, p. 104) define flexibility in teaching as: “being able to switch between different styles and modes of teaching during the lesson, for example, if necessary changing the pace of the lesson and, giving more space and time to learners”. Teachers can not reach this point unless they are curious in their teaching process. Many of them do not care about their students' needs and their classroom circumstances; instead, they only present the lesson with a number of activities. Butt (2006, p. 104) supports this idea and he states that: "planning for flexibility is difficult for teachers". Hence, it will be difficult for them even to implement creativity in a good way.

In the current classrooms, technology is one major factor for creativity. It is preferred by a great number of teachers and students at different levels. As a matter of fact, technology is an umbrella term for different elements including internet, and information communication technology (ICT) tools such as laptops, computer, projector, and others. All of these elements of technology have a great role in putting creativity into practice. Wheeler, Waite & Bromfield (2002, p. 369) demonstrate that: “creative abilities can be enhanced through practical application, and the use of ICT can enable children to have an immediate ‘hands-on’ facility where they can feel in control of their own learning”. Thus, it is a powerful tool even to establish students' independence in the classroom, and then their readiness to be creative individuals will be welcomed and increased. As far as technology is considered to be a favorable way for many students, teachers must exploit the chance and use it to promote students' creative thinking.

All the above-mentioned points are powerless for putting creativity into practice unless they are linked to motivation. In other words, teachers must show their motivation towards implementing creativity in their classes. They are responsible for encouraging students to be motivated as well for achieving successful results. For Richards (2017, p. 16), “creative teachers express a desire to

motivate students, to challenge them, to engage their curiosity, to encourage deep learning rather than surface learning". They try to develop a classroom atmosphere that encourages and motivates students in their learning". In addition, motivated teachers always view the classroom circumstances through a different lens so that they will be able to involve their students in creative works. They attempt to integrate tasks, materials, strategies, and methods which create an innovative and creative environment. Moreover, being a motivator teacher means putting students in a positive atmosphere where they feel relax and take risks to enrich the creative level. Summing up, creativity is strongly linked to motivation.

Conclusion

To conclude, creativity cannot be neglected in current education. Due to its importance, it must be developed in the perspective of teachers for promoting a successful teaching-learning process. As it was highlighted, different works have supported the integration of creativity in the classroom and they also determine the major qualities of creative teachers. But, it was grasped that being a successful creative teacher is a matter of practice rather than theory. Creative teachers are responsible for implementing creativity in their classes, and they must bridge the gap between theory and practice. For this purpose, this paper highlighted some important ways that will help every teacher to implement creativity in their teaching process.

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