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Creative teaching and learning in Europe: promoting a new paradigm

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The tides of globalization and the unsteady surges and distortions in the evolution of the European Union are causing identities and cultures to be in a state of flux. Education is used by politicians as a major lever for political and social change through micro-management, but it is a crude tool. There can, however, be opportunities within educational experience for individual learners to gain strong, reflexive, multiple identities and multiple citizenship through the engagement of their creative energies. It has been argued that the twenty-first century needs a new kind of creativity characterized by unselfishness, caring and compassion—still involving monetary wealth, but resulting in a healthy planet and healthy people. Creativity and its economically derived relation, innovation, have become ‘buzz words’ of our times. They are often misconstrued, misunderstood and plainly misused within educational conversations. The small-scale pan-European research study upon which this article is founded discovered that more emphasis needs to be placed on creative leadership, empowering teachers and learners, reducing pupils’ fear of school, balancing teaching approaches, and ensuring that the curriculum and assessment are responsive to the needs of individual learners. These factors are key to building strong educational provision that harnesses the creative potential of learners, teachers and other stakeholders, values what it is to be human and creates a foundation upon which to build strong, morally based, consistent, participative democracies.

Keywords: Creative cultures; Creativity in teaching and learning; European education project

Globalization and its impact on education

For the first time in history, knowledge is becoming the primary outcome of economic production. It is a core resource for commercial and non-commercial organizations and an emblem of employability and/or democratic citizenship. The DEMOS report (Seltzer & Bentley, 1999) identifies four clear trends that are driven
by the impact of information and communication technologies and economic globalization:

- that the ‘weightless economy’ based on human resources, information and networks has become a very influential source of productivity and competitiveness;
- that workers need to continue to develop the skills to manage themselves in increasingly unstable organizational environments;
- that more ‘horizontal’ organizational structures within and between organizations are taking the place of ‘vertical’ structures;
- that new patterns of exclusion are emerging among those who are not willing or able to develop marketable knowledge.

They impact directly upon the openness and fluidity of markets and production across international boundaries, which in turn impact directly upon the personal, social and cultural values that we absorb and construct. Through education there is a need to promote creativity, autonomy and the ability to take moral action.

Lord Puttnam, in his editorial overview of a recently published collection of papers by the Royal Society of Arts, states that:

> Faced with a deluge of undifferentiated information, people will need creative and analytical skills to assess that information and to discover the most effective ways of using it in a challenging world. (RSA, 2000, p. 6)

In order to achieve this, Baroness Blatch notes that:

> Encouraging risks to be taken at the front line is seen as the cutting edge of successful practice in the private and voluntary sector. (RSA, 2000, p. 10)

The global nature of our knowledge, therefore, is causing immense changes to what we know and how we know it. The changes are seen as causing waves of social transformation across virtually the whole of the Earth’s surface in parallel with a disembedding of the social system (Giddens, 1990).

A consequence of this is that some members of society feel an increasing sense of belonging to an international community—not just their local communities, whilst others feel the need to protect their national identity in ways that reflect growing insecurity and disempowerment, upgrading a concept of identity based on ethnic or nationalistic considerations. Global systems of production and exchange have led to a reordering and compression of time and space. Work is carried out in a local area yet decisions are made far from the particular context. At the same time, some companies are making their organizations more responsive to local needs: thinking globally but acting locally. More reflective organizations take this further by trying to engage employees in a more participative way.
This ‘decentring’ could potentially be seen as leading to a dislocation of the self. If part of our identity is formed by a culture in flux then it could cause dissonance. On the other hand, it could open up greater possibilities for a rearticulation of ourselves and a possible gaining of multiple identity or multiple citizenship.

**The political context for education in Europe**

Ambitious EU plans for education and training are linked to the 2000 Lisbon agreement, which stated that:

> The Union must become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. (Reported in Buster, 2004)

To achieve this heady goal, heads of states and governments asked not only for a radical transformation of the European economy, but also a challenging programme for the modernization of social welfare and education systems. Implicit in this is the need for creativity and innovation. In 2002 they went on to state that, by 2010, Europe should be the world leader in terms of the quality of its education and training systems.

Searching the World Wide Web for evidence of creative work in education taking place in Europe (October 2004) was sobering:

*Google search: ‘Creativity, Europe’*

475 hits achieved of which the top three were:

1. Times Forum: How to Build Cultural Communication—*Korea Times*, South Korea;
2. Taiwan to help train Mongolian business elites;
3. SolidWorks Software Opens New Doors to Design Creativity, Faster... in Mongolian business elites

*Google search: ‘Creativity, Europe, Education’*

59 hits achieved of which the top three were:

1. Infinity intends to make timeless music—*Jamaica Observer*, Jamaica;
2. Full text: Gordon Brown at the CBI—*Guardian*, UK;
3. Speech by PM Sharon at the opening of the Telecom 2004 Exhibition—Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel

In each case, these were a very small number of hits by comparison with what is normally achieved for many topics. The UK government has responded to a perceived lack of initiative by setting out a *Science and innovation investment framework* for 2004–2014 (HM Treasury, 2004) to try engaging more deeply with businesses
and their associated science base, universities, and promoting innovation directly in companies. Producing a strong supply of engineers, scientists, technologists and more educated decision-makers in policy formation requires higher quality teaching and learning in every school, college and university. It means embedding change within our educational thinking that is responsive not only to narrowly defined needs at the national or local level, but to those perceived on a European and international scale.

The challenges of change

To change pervading culture and practice means promoting creativity and innovation through enterprise and regeneration to institutionalize ‘new values’ that are futuristically orientated. The ‘Google’ searches can be taken as an indicator of the lack of real focus on European creativity in educational spheres necessary to make the Lisbon agenda happen. A country that has already changed remarkably is South Africa, which has a record of societal and cultural change within a modern context. In September 2002, the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, called on South African educational institutions to take the lead in instilling values in society (Dalai Lama, 2002). He emphasized that, over and above the development of human intellectual property, educational institutions should also take a proactive role in nurturing the positive human elements of compassion and ethics.

In a keynote address at this conference, Kobus Neethling argued that the twenty-first century needed a new kind of creativity for the sake of the peoples of the world and for our environment (Neethling, 2002). He made an interesting distinction between twentieth-century and twenty-first-century creativity, arguing that the former had a self-centred focus, creating wealth on the one hand, and poverty, starvation and environmental damage on the other. Twenty-first-century creativity needs to be ‘strategic creativity’ characterized by unselfishness, caring and compassion. This would still involve monetary wealth, but result in a healthy planet and healthy people. Education must lead this new revolution.

Creativity and its economic derived relation, innovation, have become ‘buzz words’ of our times, and are often misconstrued, misunderstood and plainly misused. The research upon which this article is based explores how creative potential and creative capacity within a moral context can be promoted through building relationships in schools, managing risk, and consequently building learning cultures through developing appropriate values. For example, in accordance with the De Lors et al. report (1996), ‘Four pillars of knowledge’ proposed a future blueprint for European education upon which to build European identity. Key elements included:

- learning to know, by having a broad overview of things and the skills to work in depth on selected fields; learning to learn and thereby benefit from the opportunities to learn throughout life;
- learning to do, by acquiring vocational skills and the competencies to work in different situations and to work in teams;
• learning to live together, and appreciating other cultures and people, respecting pluralism, peace and managing conflict;
• learning to be, so as to better develop one’s own personality, acting with autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility.

Creativity: its personal, social, cultural and ethical ramifications

There is agreement among seminal writers (Koestler, 1964; Feldman et al., 1994; Gardner, 1995), about definitions of terms associated with creativity. They perceive that high levels of creativity exist when an individual moves the boundaries of a domain of knowledge and convinces the field (authorities) who know the rules of their domains and act as gatekeepers to them. A form of ‘ethical leadership’ is exercised by those individuals who make special contributions to their field. The individual becomes respected by the members of the field who are themselves stakeholders in it. Such authority is gained through perceived excellence and/or novelty in the creative acts of the individual who is also able to communicate and promote their value and worth. Sometimes creative acts can result in the definition of new fields. The circumstances under which creativity is recognized vary according to the domain and the field; for example, in fine art, personal statements and interpretations are valued. In industrial design, creativity can be identified through the perceived relationship between the form and function of an invention or a product.

Gardner (1993) proposes at least seven forms of cognition or intelligence encompassing language, logic and mathematics, spatial thinking, musical intelligence, bodily–kinaesthetic problem-solving, and inter-personal and intra-personal intelligence. He proposes that each form of intelligence harbours, within itself, its own form of creativity. Each individual develops (or does not, as the case may be), their creative potential depending upon their personality factors, and the options and constraints operating within their society (Gardner, 1993). Within the social context of the development of knowledge, Dewey argues that we only learn new things when the need arises and all knowledge development involves feeling (Ratner, 1963, p. 21). In a changing world, the need for new knowledge at both individual and societal levels is continuous, and hence the drive for creativity is remorseless.

The nature of creativity and the conditions required for its nurture continue to be viewed as problematic. Feldman et al. (1995) recognize that, to be creative, individuals have to believe that they can change the world and add to its knowledge themselves. Similarly, McKellar (1957) believes that the essence of creativity consists of an individual striving to do better than his/her predecessors did. However, this individual element must be set within supportive social frameworks if there is at least to be an opportunity for people to realize their creative potential. For Csikzentmihayli:

Socialization not only shapes behaviour, it also moulds consciousness to the expectations and aspirations of the culture, so that we feel shame when others observe our failings, and guilt when we feel that we have let others down. (1997, p. 77)
It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that Csikzentmihayli (in Feldman et al., 1995) believes that:

focusing on the individual alone when studying creativity is like studying how an apple tree produces its fruit by only looking at the tree and ignoring the sun and the soil. (p. 147)

It is through examining culture that we judge the qualities associated with creativity. Evidence for creative qualities in individuals can be sought by:

- identifying their distinctive characteristics (abilities, patterns of conduct, declared needs, motivations observed, etc.), together with the frequency and nature of the creative acts for which they are responsible;
- collecting the opinions of those that make decisions, choices and judgements about the merits of the work of individuals, groups and institutions working within a domain.

Craft (2005) suggests that there are different perspectives on creativity, reflecting differences in socio-cultural circumstances. For example, western culture values more heavily the role and achievements of the individual, in contrast with the east, where the social group stands predominant. Craft suggests that values about creativity are often muddled and that, as educators, we need to consider how to promote creativity wisely, that is, to be mindful of the range of positive and negative possibilities of creative action and to make links to the moral and ethical domains. Claxton suggests wise action occurs when:

people lose self-referenced motivations . . . and that wise intuitions may emerge from a rich, experiential database of complex, value-ridden situations, and of both personal and vicarious observations of more or less successful ways of resolving them. (2005, p. 9)

**Creative acts in educational settings**

The values developed in school-based learning will continue to be vitally important as part of a participative democracy, to generate the readiness in young people to cope with a world where learning and knowledge are at the heart of the matter. Creativity, as indicated, belies simple definition and measurement, but if we wish to promote creative work there are many agencies which act as stakeholders in its identification. Teachers need to be able to recognize and support creative acts that can involve learners:

- using imagination, often to make unusual connections or see unusual relationships between objects, ideas or situations;
- having targets and reasons for working which are capable of resulting in new purposes being discovered;
• being comparatively original in relation to the work of a small, closed community, such as peers or family, or uniquely original in comparison with those working historically or currently in a field or discipline;
• judging value, which demands critical evaluation and reflection, standing back and gaining an overview position. (DfEE, 1999)

Bloom postulates that in fields of knowledge which are changing, knowledge should be presented as a transitory medium that enables users to solve relevant problems (1956, p. 33). It should not be presented as absolute truth. Creativity in teaching and learning is elusive and rarely prioritized, hence teachers are often unable to identify or support it. When it is prioritized, its nature is not defined or closely considered and is often conflated with problem-solving.

Developing creative climates and cultures in European schools

Between 2001 and 2003 four one-week-long, in-service development courses were organized by the University of Reading, funded through the European Union, Comenius 2.2 scheme (European Union, 2005a). These courses offered in-service training opportunities to teachers, school managers and teacher educators in the following locations: Krakow, Poland (22 participants from Portugal, Spain, Finland, Germany, the UK, Poland, Sweden, Malta, Greece); Norberg, Sweden (13 participants from France, Greece, the UK, Germany, Sweden); Drammen, Norway (28 participants from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the UK, Sweden, Norway, Romania, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Martinique); and Ancona, Italy (15 participants from Italy, Sweden, the UK, Spain, France, Norway).

The courses were concerned with ‘Learning to learn: building educational structures for individual creativity and autonomy’. Advertised pre-course information encouraged those with a passion for creative practice in educational management, teaching and learning who wanted to lead change in their schools. Their belief in the need to generate and release creative social and cultural capital was emphasized. The 78 participants worked in all phases of education, in schools and colleges ranging from pre-school to tertiary and higher education, including special schools. They were from 16 different European countries and represented a diverse range of subject and interest backgrounds.

The aim of each course was to consider in detail the need to reconfigure education for the twenty-first century, to meet the demands of a society which:

• has global as well as national, regional and local dimensions;
• is highly flexible and rapidly changing;
• is democratic and non-deferential;
• is based on rapid access to knowledge and instant communication worldwide—via information and communication technologies;
• is one in which individual creativity and problem-solving skills must be highly prized and nurtured by the education system.
The following themes were addressed:

- purposes of schooling in a developing world;
- curriculum and assessment;
- pedagogy;
- environments (learning and general)—creating a positive, ethical, collaborative environment;
- organizational issues and management: developing culture-building capacities;
- teacher professionalism and development;
- partnerships and relations with local community/stakeholders;
- building sustainable values and relationships in personal, professional and institutional contexts;
- leadership: new approaches to leadership in dynamic social contexts.

The approach adopted to course management was to allow participants to focus upon, and work with schools within the course locality. This enabled them to share experiences and collectively reflect upon the nature and quality of the underpinning philosophies governing institutional approaches to management, teaching and learning. This took place under the guidance of the course directors and facilitators. Finally, to agree personal and institutional action plans for implementation upon their return to home countries. These were widely informed through enhanced perceptions of theory and comparisons with different national, social and educational contexts.

Post-course developments in creativity at the participants’ home institutions were followed up one year after completion of the course by conducting a three-part, small-scale research study. This involved:

1. A survey to all participants (78 were issued, 24 were completed).
2. A second survey or telephone interview (8 respondents were selected; all completed a response).
3. The collection of case-study material describing activities and approaches in the respondents’ home institutions as indicators of creative endeavour.

**Research context**

*The first survey*

Representatives from 11 different European countries responded to the first survey. Views and values were explored on the following topics:

- the nature of the curriculum; its control and overall balance with respect to knowledge, skills, values and attitudes;
- the role and control characteristics of assessment processes; the nature of teacher/learner relationships;
the roles of risk-taking and trust; their priorities in teaching and learning linked to learning facts, intelligence-building, critical thinking, problem-solving, moral action and creative endeavour;

- types of questioning;
- the role of emotions in teaching and learning;
- support structures for creative work;
- the nature of creative characteristics that the respondents might possess as individuals.

In general, for most questions, respondents were asked to give a graded or ranked response on a measured scale, as shown below.

Assessing pupils gives information about their progress and achievement for a range of purposes

Rank the following list in order of importance as you believe they should be from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important):

To provide information for pupils
To provide information for teachers
To provide information for parents
To provide information for employers
To provide information for government

Results: first survey

Academic and cultural context

Most countries were represented by one or two respondents, with the exception of the Italians, who returned six completed surveys. Different teachers’ subject specialisms were well represented across subject areas (see Figure 1), particularly significant in the (14/24) teachers who taught secondary age learners. A further five were involved in special needs education. This in itself indicates the perceived importance of creativity in the general education of all learners. Creativity is also perceived to be relevant right across the curriculum—not just confined to arts subjects, which are often considered, incorrectly, as being the only subjects that offer creative opportunities for teaching and learning. The interest of scientists, mathematicians and technologists was particularly promising and important to European agendas set out in the Lisbon agreement (Buster, 2004).

Learning context—the curriculum and assessment

Figure 2 illustrates the perceived comparative levels of power and control respondents feel different agencies have over their curriculum in different countries.
All respondents replied to this question and their replies are accommodated within this graph. It is important to recognize that respondents replied to the survey in a way that reflected values and beliefs referenced to their own cultural context, even though the courses did allow respondents to compare and contrast each others’ experiences.
All countries (except Luxembourg) indicate similar proportions of government control among major stakeholders. (It is noted that the Luxembourg respondent felt that their curriculum was 100% in government control.) The smallest relative element of government control was perceived to be in Denmark.

The head teacher appears to exercise similar levels of control throughout the 11 countries who responded to the first survey, with least power exercised in the Mediterranean countries. It was noted that 75% of the respondents felt that creative work was well supported by the head teacher in their institution. The local education authority (LEA) also exercises limited control in these countries and, in turn, exerts limited influence over the way in which the curriculum is delivered, particularly creative activity. Spain, Malta, Sweden, Luxembourg and the Netherlands appeared to give relatively less control to their teachers. Of particular interest was the small role played by parents in Luxembourg, Spain and Poland. If creativity is to be promoted, the need for partnership between school and home is clearly identified in literature (see, for example, Rogoff, 1990; Beetlestone, 1998). Additionally, universities seem to have an extremely limited role in helping to design and control the curriculum, apart from in Malta, Cyprus and Greece. This is despite still having a strong influence over recruitment into teaching and supporting professional development. Is it the case that removing the influence of universities allows the curriculum to be more responsive to general societal factors? If so, is the research base that is being built without the universities sufficiently robust?

Figure 3 indicates attitudes to assessment. Respondents were asked to prioritize stakeholders for whom assessment results were important. They were required to create a desired priority list for the design of assessment tools and contrast this with the reality of what was actually occurring in practice.

![Figure 3. Respondents’ perceptions of what they believe assessment priorities should be](image-url)
More than 60% of respondents believed that assessment should be targeted at helping learners while only 35% believed they were currently a first priority; 15% believed that teachers should be a first priority while 50% believed that they were the first priority now. A small percentage put parents as first priority. Government and employers appear as third, fourth or fifth priority and there is consistency about where it is believed they should be and where they actually are currently prioritized. Respondents clearly put students’ learning at the heart of their concern. In order to develop more creative approaches, assessment strategies need to become more focused on learners and their needs, which include the assessing of creative work.

**Values associated with creative teaching**

In Figure 4 around 50% of respondents questioned the relevance, interest level, curriculum balance and level of opportunity for initiative-taking and creativity.

Teacher performativity is clearly, in the eyes of respondents, subservient to enabling, supporting and mentoring learners. Rewarding student creativity and student risk-taking was uniformly a high priority for teachers, with more than 50% of respondents claiming to give a lot of attention to these activities; teaching learners to be creative and teacher risk-taking were also registered as important, with more than 80% giving at least some attention to these factors. Concern for learners was also expressed through (2/3) respondents stating how important it was to respect learners’ contributions. The same proportion felt that trusting learners was important, while all respondents felt that taking learners’ feelings into account was central.

Respondents were asked to grade their attention to skills, knowledge, creativity, intelligence, values and attitudes in their teaching. Their responses clearly indicate

![Figure 4. Priorities for promoting creativity through respondents’ teaching](image-url)
that emphasizing the development of skills and knowledge and promoting intelligence and values are of the highest priority. Creativity, however, also featured as important with all but one respondent, but there is recognition of the need to build creative approaches upon the sound foundations of knowledge, skill and value. Developing appropriate attitudes was given at least some attention by 20 respondents. Overall, responses indicated recognition by the teachers of the need to build student confidence and empowerment through the way they ‘balanced’ their teaching.

Subsequent to asking respondents how they prioritized their teaching overall, they were also asked to consider how they prioritized attention to:

- information processing;
- reasoning;
- enquiry;
- creative thinking;
- evaluation.

More than 50% put creative thinking as their number one priority while 25% of each rated reasoning and enquiry as most important. Interestingly, evaluation skills were perceived as less important overall than the other criteria. In order to exercise creativity, powers of reasoning and the skills of investigation are required properly to identify needs and to shape solutions. Additionally, these processes give more ownership and autonomy to the learners. The creativity of the teachers can surely be tested in generating learning contexts that will both motivate learners and generate opportunities to develop all of these components in a balanced, progressive way.

**Questioning styles in teaching**

The roles of questioning and communication are recognized by respondents as being central to building appropriate relationships with learners in order to gain their trust. Engaging learners creatively and encouraging rigour are clearly identified through the responses. Certain types of questions are given a very high priority, with more than 50% of respondents stating the importance of the following questions that: clarify ideas; probe reason and evidence; and encourage learners to explore unusual ideas and make unusual connections. Also important is encouraging learners to generate their own questions. These all demand learner engagement and reflection, enabling learners to forge new cerebral connections and build confidence when dealing with new challenges. Recognizing the importance of learners’ own decision-making is registered by only 25% of respondents, giving it the highest priority.

**Teacher profiles to support creativity**

Respondents were invited to comment on personal characteristics that might qualify them as creative in themselves (see Table 1).
The picture is a very positive one and in general there is a feeling that these teachers are committed to their work and, in particular, to the interests of the learners they serve. They display ‘normal’ human characteristics such as concern about uncertainty and risk-taking, some difficulty in the unconditional trust of others and recognition of personal deficiencies. Overall, however, characteristics that show greater than a 50% high level response, include key dimensions of: enjoyment of subject, curiosity, commitment to keeping up to date; personal determination; tolerance of others’ mistakes; personal determination and perfectionism. Only three respondents rated themselves as mainly ones with two or less twos (a Pole, a Cypriot and an English teacher).

The second selective survey

Respondents invited to complete the second survey were those who gave evidence in their first survey that they had claimed to have ‘achieved most progress with educational creativity’ in their institutions since attending the course. Eight respondents were selected and answered questions that required more individualized explanations of the nature of the work in which they were engaged and the reasons why they selected their particular approaches. These answers gave deeper insights into respondents’ knowledge, beliefs and institutional decision-making about student learning and educational provision. The survey asked for elaborate responses to the following questions:

- What teaching approaches best develop creativity?
- What types of teaching and learning environments generate appropriate, positive, ethical creativity? What are the most appropriate management and organizational styles to develop these environments?
- How are the use and application of new learning technologies best exploited to promote creativity?
How do respondents believe the system should be changed to accommodate an appropriate balance in teaching and learning?

What developments have taken place at their institution since the Comenius 2.2 course in which they participated?

Common strands arising from this survey include recognition that:

- Curriculum balance is often poor where students are learning inappropriate material for current society, often lacking relevance or perceived relevance. Teaching themes based on: social and communication skills; economics; interculturalism; environmental issues; strategies for developing own projects; and solving conflicts are perceived as needing a more central place in learner experiences.
- Programme requirements can be restrictive based on ‘core skills’ and may prevent teachers using their talents to interest students.
- Programme requirements can be restrictive and overbearing, not allowing teachers sufficient time to be creative and/or promote creativity.
- Assessing creativity is challenging and is not encouraged or supported by the climate/culture in schools. Assessment for learning is often inadequately understood or prioritized and insufficient time is allocated to its promotion in relation to creative learning.
- The worth and value of student self-assessment is difficult to promote in a climate that values summative assessment and promotes rather than reduces fear of failure.
- There is little encouragement to take students’ feelings into account in curriculum planning and teaching. Learning is rarely planned on a student-participation basis and it is difficult to respond to and maximize learner enjoyment and fun due to time and curriculum constraints.
- Teachers do not get sufficient support in coping with their ‘fear factors’ deriving from dealing with creative learning and learners.

**Illustrative case-studies of creative work in European schools**

Finally, respondents who were selected to reply to the second survey were also asked to submit illustrative case-studies of creative work in which they were engaged. The following examples were selected to show the diverse ways in which respondents were developing creative agendas and activities, and also the importance of context—the links between teachers’ and leaders’ personal interest, passion and creative work with learners; and the need for the work to be meaningful to both teachers and learners.

**Broadening cultural perceptions**

One creative way to develop cross-cultural understanding and build a European identity through reducing fear and xenophobia was adopted by teachers from a
number of Swedish schools. They were taught how to create drama, soap opera and other genres of film-making using simple movie techniques. Using this knowledge and starting from the base-board of students’ lives, indigenous culture and folklore, learning settings were developed where their children generated storyboards, characters and backgrounds for the creation of animated film. Learners then worked together in inclusive, collaborative settings to produce ingenious, well-researched films. These have been used as a basis for collaborative curriculum development work with schools from France, England, Poland, Italy and Denmark, who were partners in school-based European Comenius 1 projects (European Union, 2005c). One primary school developed a close relationship with a school in Zimbabwe, with teachers and children exchanging letters and visits. A booklet based on each other’s ‘worlds’ has been produced for the children from which they are able to learn each other’s languages and discuss themes and topics of common interest.

**Using new technologies to enrich cultural identity**

In a second case-study, two ICT teachers in a Danish sixth form college put on a play—Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons*—before developing a digital theatre production to put onto the school’s intranet. The project challenged students at a range of levels, enabling them to work both independently and collaboratively, and it also helped them to develop their language capabilities as they worked in both Danish and English. The authors discussed in detail the challenge, rigour and fun achieved through working on a project such as this.

**Creating culture**

One respondent, a head teacher of a special school in Surrey (UK), stated why he believed that creativity was the foundation stone of any person’s individual identity. Teachers in special schools are involved in building up the spirit and self-esteem of their students in much more meaningful ways than mainstream education. Hence they should offer a meaningful enrichment of each learner’s individual horizons. Successful teachers circumnavigate, dissipate and sometime just ignore factors that disrupt their goals and ambitions. Creativity is crucial to each individual learner. Teachers and students need to understand the inadequacies that make up each individual as a unique member of the human race, and how to apply, creatively, intellectual and emotional support to overcome them. This head teacher achieves these goals and purposes through, for example, a partnership with the Globe Theatre in London. His students are regularly coached to perform Shakespearean plays and they appear on their stage with the dignity of any great actor.

**Conclusions from the study**

Teachers’ attitudes towards the place of creativity in schools are mixed (Fryer, 1996; Beetlestone, 1998). Creativity is recognized as sometimes being a powerful
motivating force for teachers and learners, and it can be a vehicle for high levels of individualized achievement. It can also offer clues to learners’ individualized development patterns. Davies states how important it is for learners to work in a highly stimulating environment in order to achieve ‘creatively’ (2005, pp. 177–180). Conversely, the results show that there are many other priorities in classrooms which tend to dominate attention, for example: basic knowledge and skills; building intelligence; managing codes of acceptable student response and behaviour; and the conduct of relationships. Holding a set of requisite personal beliefs about the importance of creativity and the qualities associated with it ensure that teachers prioritize creative learning and support it in appropriate, innovative ways in schools.

Creativity can, however, make for disruptive classrooms in that it can challenge ‘norms’ and ‘order’. It requires ‘high risk’ teaching strategies, including the use of a wide range of questioning techniques, with a concern for a ‘long-term view’ of a learner’s potential, a willingness to wait for results and the confidence to act intuitively at times. This demands sensitive leadership and support from education managers. Writers concerned with learner development highlight the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication in the promotion of a learner’s progress (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). Increasingly, we are in need of ‘wiser teachers’ capable of ‘intelligent interpretation of circumstances’ when political pressures appear to favour deskilling and regulating their professional practice and judgement. Clever but thorough interpretation of curriculum and assessment policies can ensure that the experiences learners gain are meaningful and progressive.

To develop a creative climate in a school would appear to take time, reflection and empowerment in order for teachers confidently to understand and manage the links between cause and effect in teaching and learning situations. It is obvious that, to achieve such a status, teachers need to feel in control of the curriculum they teach, able to instigate change and innovation and, crucially, have the support of the head teacher. When teachers are thinking about such matters they are possibly learning, in the most sophisticated way, about how to be ‘an effective reflective teacher’. It is well-recognized wisdom that to be the best teacher it is important to be the best learner.

What of the marginalized role of the university? With both initial teacher education and continuing education, training needs to support research-based pedagogical development, including the need to build new research that is soundly based and relevant. Government needs to be less concerned with the micro-management of individual teachers and schools, but it should have a role in ensuring that accountability frameworks and support structures are properly focused on the present and future needs of the world, with the range of stakeholders holding proportionate control.

The role of parents needs to be carefully examined so that there is more coherence between the school and the home, focused on the needs of the individual learner. New paths to the future need to be established that address the following issues:

- to place emphasis on effective, creative leadership and vision-building;
- to emphasize creativity in initial teacher training and professional development;
to balance and modernize curricula that satisfy both ‘global’ and ‘local’ needs;
- to create a more participative approach to curricula and programme construction
to ensure relevance, balance and rigour;
- to minimize fear of school, and especially examinations, that often throttles the
ability of students to think freely and feel free;
- to emphasize and value the assessment of creativity in formative ways;
- to shift the accountability emphasis from the performance of the school using
crude quantitative measures;
- to ensure that the emphasis of assessment continuity for learners helps each and
every one to find a useful path to their futures and to discover a useful role in
society;
- to improve curriculum enrichment. Teachers are too pressurized to follow up
worthwhile lines of investigation and enquiry and consequently the depth of
learning experience is minimized;
- to generate more opportunities for ‘creative collaborative work’ between teachers
and learners;
- thinking time for teachers and learners is not respected—neither have
‘psychological space’ for creative activity;
- to reward creative work in consistent and appropriate ways.

Building a human future that uses education to create hope, identity and meaning

As a result of intense political accountability, schools and teachers in many countries,
particularly in Europe, are currently over-constrained in some respects so that the
qualitative aspects of learning often receive limited attention. The reality of schools is
that there are many pressures: fixed curriculum requirements and constraints,
assessment and examination-led approaches which are more concerned with
assessment of schools and teachers than assessment for learning. In educational
settings, Seltzer and Bentley believe that:

creative learners need a wider array of contexts within which to apply their skills and
knowledge. They also need ‘teachers’ or guides who can expose them to the strategies for
thinking about the connections between their experiences. (1999, p. 29)

Gardner argues the case for drawing up covenants between professional educators
and society concerning ‘ethical standards’. He feels that there are at least five
responsibilities: to yourself; to those about you; to your calling (professional code); to
the institution where you work; to the wider world (2001, pp. 427–428). While
politicians attempt to ‘micro-manage’ school managers, teachers and learners, their
ability to exercise moral judgement with regard to themselves and their communities
is lessened in accordance with their diminished control.

We have voices articulating the capacities of schools to reorganize and recategorize
their curriculum to exploit the interconnectedness of knowledge. Controversial
issues, relevant and meaningful to present-day students, centre around human needs and the quality of life. Ecological topics, health care, nuclear testing—all might be studied and better understood in an interdisciplinary way rather than not surfacing in the traditional discipline-centred or subject-centred curriculum. Society must hold onto an understanding of what it means to be human and to have needs. Any possibility of participation in an educative democracy is strangled at birth by emasculated notions of intellectual maturity and understanding which should not necessarily be based upon traditional two-track liberal and vocational forms of education or narrow notions of academic or operational competence (Burnett, 1994; White et al., 1995). We need to see beyond these binary ways of conceptualizing the world and try to reach for a richer, more meaningful education, which recognizes the social, personal and moral requirements of self and citizenship. Bronowski contemplated the importance of creativity to the development of the ‘whole human being’:

You know Shakespeare and Goethe were just as troublesome to their teachers as Leonardo and say, Rutherford. The creative personality is always one that looks on the world as fit for change and on himself as an instrument for change. Otherwise, what are we creating for? If the world is perfectly all right the way it is, you have no place in it. The creative personality thinks of the world as a canvas for change and of himself as a divine agent for change. (Bronowski, 1978, p. 123)

At a conference in Nuremberg on the theme Project for a global ethos—education, Hans Kong put forward the notion of the reconstitution of a global ethic as a central educational task (Kong, 1995). He saw this in the light of fulfilling the goal of tolerance between religions and peoples throughout the world—indeed, the cooperation of all people of good intention. In particular he saw this as centring and targeted at adolescence, and overcoming scepticism in certain areas:

- violence in the media;
- peacefulness and the ethos of young people;
- aggression and peace education;
- the potential for violence and peace in religions;
- global ethos as part of children’s learning.

He viewed this as consisting of the following:

- solving of particular conflicts;
- ways in which we treat others and see each other, putting ourselves in other people’s shoes;
- ways in which we act and the way institutions in society reflect or do not reflect certain values.

To recognize and pay serious attention to these issues, we need to look at what it means to be moral; to the gaining of moral identity, character and reason by people;
and also to the sources of moral meaning that students find in home, school and society. This is not something that is purely articulated but is acted upon and felt which requires creative thought and creative action to break down habitual barriers of ideology and doctrine. Will moral obligations and prudential matters of self-fulfilment find a resolution in this context? It has been suggested by some moral psychologists, such as Blasi, that psychological constructs of self-consistency and personal responsibility are twin motivational springs of moral action (Blasi, 1984). There was evidence from this study that political interference was viewed as uninformed, inhibiting and crude, hence adding to cynicism about the role of politics in education.

Combined with skills, knowledge, experience, values and enthusiasm for creativity, we can hope to build an inclusive educational environment that is genuinely progressive, relevant and pivotal to building trust, confidence and creative cultures for teaching and learning.

References


