

SECOND EDITION

CREATIVITY *in the*
PRIMARY CLASSROOM

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CHAPTER 1

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF CREATIVITY



Learning objectives in this chapter:

- To understand the three different types of creativity in education
- To know how creativity has been defined
- To recognise the key elements of creativity
- To consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of a more creative approach in the classroom

Relevant Teachers' Standards for this chapter

A teacher must:

3 Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge

- 3b demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas, and promote the value of scholarship

Ask a group of teachers what they mean by creativity and you will get a huge range of responses. Creativity means very different things to different people, and in terms of the primary classroom teachers can often find it hard to envisage what it actually looks like, let alone plan to encourage or foster it. This chapter will clarify the concepts so that we can be sure we are understanding creativity in the same way.



Individual or group activity

(Potential activity spoiler! Cover the paragraph beneath this box.)

In just two minutes, think of as many words or phrases as you can that mean 'creativity' to you. Think of creativity in its widest meaning, not just in terms of schools.

If you were working in groups, share what you came up with. Can you recognise any common themes that have emerged?

When groups of teachers are asked to do the above activity their lists often contain the following: thinking 'outside the box', self-expression, having new ideas, being a risk-taker, imagination, fun, making something new, music, dance, art, drama, inventing, working together, innovation, individuality.

Already, certain strands will be appearing. Firstly, there is the element of newness – of making or thinking something for the first time. Much of the early research into creativity was undertaken by considering genius, and obviously the great names of innovation in art or science demonstrated their creativity by being the first in their field ever to do or discover something. In children it is more likely that their creativity will show the first time *for them* that they have done or discovered something. Having said that, one of the joys of working with primary age children is that sometimes they will say or do something so new and so fresh that they will make you look at the world in quite a different way. Anna Craft (2000) has used the terms 'big c' and 'little c' creativity to differentiate between the types of creativity that change the world's perceptions in significant ways and the types that everyone can practise in their everyday lives.

Another strand is that of creativity in expression or of communicating ideas in creative ways. Perhaps here the ideas are not necessarily new but are being presented in new and original ways. Linked here may well be the idea that creativity gives something of the self, that the ideas are personal and individual. Creativity is not, however, the domain for either strictly individual or exclusively group work. It can cover both of these and we will be looking at this in later chapters.

The elements of individuality and newness also imply a 'difference' to the status quo. People who are creative are, by definition, not conforming to tried

and tested ways of doing things. This can be hard for primary age children to deal with and there are issues of conformity and risk-taking that teachers will have to address in their classrooms.

Many people would equate creativity mainly, or even exclusively, with the arts. Although the arts media are highly creative areas there is huge potential for creativity in all the other subject and curriculum areas.

Finally, the word 'fun' often emerges. While, hopefully, much creative work and working creatively will be fun, there will, by its very nature, also be times when this is difficult and frustrating, and for some children more open-ended activities can be extremely stressful. All of the above issues will be dealt with in subsequent chapters in more depth.

Definitions of creativity

After sharing first thoughts about what creativity means to us, let us consider the definitions of creativity that have been most prominent in recent years.

In 1998 the government set up the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE). Its report, *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (NACCCE, 1999), proved to be one of the most significant contributions to the debate about creativity, and its importance will be looked at further in the next chapter. This report was specific in its definition of creativity and that definition was subsequently used in a number of government initiatives and other publications:

Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value. (NACCCE, 1999: 30)

This definition, as can be seen, has four distinct parts:

- Using imagination.
- Pursuing purposes.
- Being original.
- Judging value.

When using the term 'imagination' in relation to creativity the implication is that it is more than fantasising. It incorporates all the aspects of 'newness' in what people see as creativity, including originality. So, it is not only about envisaging completely new ideas but also seeing things in a new light, seeing alternatives to the way things are usually done, or combining things in unusual ways. We often use the term 'creative cook' about people who do not necessarily invent entirely innovative dishes but do not follow a recipe slavishly, who put in a dash of this or a sprinkle of that to give something a new 'twist'. You might also recognise this kind of approach in visual terms, for

example there are many people who can put together a ‘look’ in the way they dress by combining elements you might not usually think would go together, or in home furnishing where selecting and positioning things in particular ways give a sense of style that other people might never be able to achieve. We can look out for this sort of imaginative approach in children in a variety of contexts.



Individual activity

Think about a group of children you have observed. Have you noticed children who see things in a fresh, new way? Have you been surprised by the method a child has used in a maths investigation, or the way a child has described something that worked well but was out of the ordinary?

Anna Craft calls this kind of imaginative activity ‘possibility thinking’ (Craft, 2000: 3). It involves the sort of thinking that asks questions such as ‘What if ... ?’, ‘What would happen if ... ?’, ‘Suppose she ... ?’.

This leads us to the idea of creativity having distinct purposes or outcomes. Creativity doesn’t happen in a vacuum, a creative act happens when someone wants to try something or make something happen. It might, of course, turn out that other ideas occur during the process or that the ultimate outcome differs from what was first envisaged, but there is always the intention to do something or make something or try something out. This process can be very playful. Many a great discovery has been the result of playfulness with ideas or materials by the inventor. In the realm of the classroom this has many implications for time management and planning, which we will return to in later chapters.

Creativity happens in a particular medium or combination of media. It therefore demands skills in those media to be creative with. So, a child’s great idea about building a model of a tower to fit a particular land site will come to nothing if they don’t have the skills to join the component parts together strongly enough. A group wanting to create a piece of music representing the sea will not be able to communicate their ideas if they cannot use their instruments to make the sounds they imagine. Creativity maintains a balance between structure and freedom, between the linear and logical and the random or chaotic.

Being original involves putting oneself on the line, so to act creatively necessitates having a range of personal attributes. A measure of self-confidence is also essential: we must be able to be prepared to have a go at things, and to recognise that our attempts may not work out and to have persistence and the ability to bounce back if things do not go to plan. Although things can be created in solitude at some stage they have to see the light of day and be shared

with their audience – this requires risk-taking too and the confidence to accept feedback. Even accepting praise and being the focus of attention can be hard for some people.

The final part of the NACCCE's definition is of judging value. This is a particularly difficult area to judge in a primary classroom. It begs questions such as valuable to whom? What sort of value? Who is to be the judge? The report itself makes the point that just being original is not enough as this may be impractical or not fit for purpose: 'The outcome of imaginative activity can only be called creative if it is of value in relation to the task at hand' (NACCCE, 1999: 33). However, history is full of acts of creativity that were not valued at the time and disregarded. In the classroom what is needed is to foster and develop methods of critical evaluation. Firstly, ideas and outcomes can be evaluated as to whether they met the criteria set at the outset. Depending on the type of creative activity, this may involve whether it is fit for purpose: is it useful or enjoyable, does it communicate particular ideas or feelings? Different points of view can and should be taken into consideration, and even if a particular outcome is deemed not to meet the original intention, the process of evaluation should go on to consider whether it has properties that could be useful in another situation.

You might hear statements such as:

'I didn't see it was a snail, I thought it was a dragon breathing fire.'

'It was meant to be a snail but it came uncurled. I like the idea of it being a dragon; I'm going to paint it with scales and fire.'

'I think we put in too much water so it's not vegetable stew any more, it's vegetable soup.'

Children need to be able to ask these questions of themselves as they are working, they need to become their own 'first marker', to trust their own judgement and to discard, adapt or pursue ideas as they think fit. Self-evaluation should be a constant process throughout a piece of work.



Classroom idea

Learning skills, design & technology

It is always worth sharing stories with children about pieces of developmental work that appear to fail but turn out to have other uses. One good example here is Post-It notes. The glue on these, which is 'low-tack' and allows repositioning that leaves no mark or residue, was discovered by accident. Its use on small notes was invented by another colleague, who had initially envisaged Post-Its being used as bookmarks.

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Other inventions have come from looking at waste. Children in a UK primary school won a competition by inventing an extension tube that could be easily added to the end of pencil stubs to make them reusable.

Encourage children to think about the things they might usually throw away. Is there any way these could be used? What do they look like? What are their properties?

Accustom the children to using 'three stars and a wish' when evaluating any piece of work. They should say three things they like about the piece and have one piece of advice as to how it could be improved. Children should be encouraged to apply this to their own work too. Even if they feel it has failed, what positive elements can they find or what features might be useful when applied to another situation?

Anna Craft (2000) describes the process of creativity as a cycle with five stages. The first is preparation and involves getting into an appropriate physical or mental 'space' where creativity can happen. She then describes a state of 'letting go', of making an empty space where ideas can come, 'surrendering control'. This is followed by germination where the buzz of creation kicks in and ideas abound and there is energy and excitement. The fourth part of the cycle is assimilation. This is an internal stage where ideas take root and gestate, and may happen while doing other things over a period of time. The final stage is completion, where the ideas are honed and brought to fruition (2000: 32, 33).

Individuals may not be aware of all these stages and working in a group may change some of them, but what can be seen is that it is very difficult to expect someone to create something to order at a specific time in a specific place, and yet this is what we tend to do in schools. As teachers we need to see how we can build in time for reflection, for ideas to germinate, and also how we can accommodate an individual who has reached a stage where an idea really needs to be worked on.

Creativity in the classroom

Having looked at the most prevalent definitions of creativity we may be clearer about what is involved, but when people talk about creativity in terms of the primary classroom they can mean several different things.

They may mean **teaching creatively**. This phrase is defined in the NACCCE report as 'using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting and effective' (NACCCE, 1999: 89). It is often linked with a 'creative curriculum' and used to signify a teacher who may work in the following ways:

- Putting the learning within authentic contexts, using real-life situations wherever possible.
- Making links and connections between different subject areas where these occur naturally.
- Using a variety of teaching methods, including some that might involve working in role or as a facilitator.
- Using time flexibly within the day so that children may be less aware of particular 'lessons'.
- Expecting children to work in a variety of different groupings and with a variety of different outcomes.
- Being flexible in approaches, listening to children's ideas, and being willing to follow them when appropriate.
- Using a variety of approaches to assessment at different levels.

Using some or any of the above doesn't necessarily make you an effective teacher; there are any number of considerations about purpose, context, content, progression and appropriateness to take into account.



Individual or group activity

What is the difference between 'creative teaching' and a 'creative curriculum'? Can you teach creatively within a more formal curriculum? What implications are there for pedagogy if a school wants a 'creative curriculum'? Have you seen examples of schools where this works well or not so well? What were the features?

Hold on to these issues as they will be returned to later.



Individual or group activity

Look at a couple of different medium-term plans. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is there any way of ascertaining the aims or values of the school from the plan?
- Is there an attempt to make links and connections between subjects? How successful do you think these are?
- Does the plan give any indication of preferred teaching and learning styles? Have you seen any planning at this level which does?

If you wanted to teach creatively using one of these plans, would any be preferable? Why? What are your first ideas about what you might teach and how you might teach it?

There will be much more detail about teaching creatively in subsequent chapters – this is just to start you thinking.

Learning creatively is a relatively new consideration in the literature on creativity in education (see Craft, 2005; Jeffrey and Craft, 2004). It is strongly linked to ideas about pupil autonomy and pupil voice. A child who learns creatively will be involved in understanding how they learn and how they learn best. They will use and develop that knowledge to be involved in devising some of their own learning experiences; they will make suggestions about what the class might do and how they might do it. They will be developing skills in self-evaluation and the evaluation of others' performances.

So, from a creative learner you might hear:

'Can I draw it out first? I think it would be clearer like that.'

'Would an exploded diagram be better? We could write notes on it.'

'If we did a survey we could be sure how many people think that. We can't just assume everyone agrees with us.'

'Will we get a chance to find out about the ships they used? Could I make a model of one? If I made it to scale could I show it in relation to a modern cross-channel ferry?'

'I really like the way he's set it out, it makes it easy to see the connections. I'm going to try it like that.'

The third way creativity may appear in a primary classroom is **teaching to develop creativity**. There is some debate as to whether if you teach creatively you are necessarily also encouraging creativity in the children you teach (Craft, 2005; Jeffrey and Craft, 2004), but it seems most likely that the two will often happen simultaneously. However, when starting out as a teacher or deliberately trying to develop more creativity in your teaching and the children you teach, it would be useful to separate the two in your mind. This is especially important when you are planning so that you can be aware of the elements of creativity you want to foster and develop in the children you teach and plan an appropriate stimulus and activities to achieve this.

This takes us back to the key elements of creativity and our task will now be to find ways that we can foster and develop these elements both within ourselves as teachers and in the children we teach.

The key elements of creativity

Taking ideas from the definitions of creativity and the sharing of teachers' own experiences, we can identify a list of the key elements of creativity:

- Generating new ideas.
- Applying known skills and ideas in different contexts.

- Taking other people's ideas or starting points and moving them on or personalising them.
- Communicating ideas in interesting or varied ways.
- Putting different or disparate ideas together to make something new.
- Working towards a goal or set of goals.
- Evaluating their own or others' work.
- Adapting and improving on their work in the light of their own or others' evaluations.

Let's now put these in the context of a primary school classroom by considering how they may appear in practice.

Generating new ideas

These ideas may be in any subject area and need only be new to the child themselves. Think about ways of moving differently in PE; composing a melody; drawing a conclusion from evidence in a science investigation or from historical evidence; making a generalised statement from individual observations, maybe in a maths investigation; designing an implement or a recipe; thinking up a plot for a story and so on. In Chapter 3 we will look at some methods to help children develop their own ideas.

Applying known skills and ideas in different contexts

This may involve using something you have learned and applying it to a completely different subject or situation. For example, children may have real-life experience that cooking a sloppy mixture of flour, egg, sugar and liquid can make crunchy biscuits, but will never before have applied this knowledge to a scientific understanding of reversible and irreversible changes. Observing mini-beasts might lead to their applying the way these move to a dance or the way a moving vehicle is designed, and features of their appearance might be used to design a suit of clothes.

Taking other people's ideas or starting points and moving them on or personalising them

This can often happen naturally when working in a group. You may hear children's ideas tumbling over each other so that it is not clear exactly who had the original idea:

'We could make it like a battle.'

'Yeah, but in slow motion.'

‘Nobody actually touches anyone else.’

‘With spins and kicks, like kung fu.’

‘But really slow.’

In the above conversation about a proposed dance only the final comment is not actually moving on the idea – all the other participants were adding their own creative contribution.

Sometimes longer has to be spent getting to know another person’s methods or ideas before they can be personalised. Peter Dixon is rightly scathing about the value of ‘rows of six-year-olds copying rather obscure paintings by Kandinsky, for no other reason than they have been told to do so’ (quoted in Alexander, 2010: 227). However, there is a place for examining and practising the techniques of ‘masters’ before using and perhaps adapting these in creating a new work. In Chinese culture there might be years of imitation of a master artist before a student was considered skilled enough to develop their own ideas. We tend, in the West, to value individuality more and earlier, but should not underestimate the creative possibilities of building on ideas and techniques of others, be they acclaimed in their field or by our peers.

Communicating ideas in interesting or varied ways

As teachers we tend to ask children to communicate their ideas and knowledge mostly in words and more often than not in written words. It is not unusual when asking a colleague about a child’s ability in science to be told about their difficulties in reading and writing. If that teacher only assesses children’s learning through their written work they cannot see past the difficulties in writing to recognise what the child knows and understands about the science concepts. In some cases a child may be very able in science and this may not be being recognised. This is just one of the reasons that communicating in different ways can be valuable.

Try asking children to illustrate either a passage of fiction or non-fiction including as much information as they can from the passage in their picture; this shows you clearly what they have understood. Can they use movement to demonstrate the action of molecules in solids, liquids and gases? Can they make a model of a Roman town or a diagram to show how to make something?

Putting different or disparate ideas together to make something new

This is similar to applying knowledge in different contexts but in this case two or more things are combined to make something new. Some forty years ago there was a new invention called ‘splayds’, which were essentially forks with a cutting edge on one side enabling you to eat with one implement.

They never caught on, but someone had had the idea of combining the two features. Or what about composing fusion music combining two different genres or designing a dish that incorporates food from two different cultures?

Working towards a goal or set of goals

Of course almost everything that happens in a classroom will have some sort of goal or expected outcome. In this context, though, we are thinking about setting children a challenge that they have to work towards. That challenge will involve a number of different stages and necessitate the children planning various activities to achieve their goal. This will often mean that they identify for themselves what they need to learn as they go along and therefore are highly motivated to achieve that learning. It also often places the learning in authentic 'real-life' contexts. For example, challenges might involve planning a party for their class, producing 200 copies of a school newspaper on a certain day, starting and maintaining a recycling scheme. These challenges will generally involve learning and applying skills in a number of different subject areas and will also require a variety of different learning and social skills.

Evaluating their own or others' work

This was discussed earlier in terms of judging value. It is really important that this becomes an integral part of how children work and think at all stages. If it is only done at the end of a piece of work then it can just feel like an 'add-on' activity and the possibility of changing direction more fruitfully will be lost. From the moment ideas are generated they have to be evaluated to determine which are to be selected and worked on further.

Adapting and improving on their work in light of their own or others' evaluations

This is strongly linked to the point above and shows a commitment to improving their work as they go and in the future. Obviously it is important for teachers to judge at what stage stopping and celebrating their achievements is appropriate for individuals, groups or the whole class. Celebrating success and knowing what that feels like are just as important as recognising how you can improve.

Creativity in the Early Years

One of the best places to see all these key elements of creativity in action is in an Early Years setting. Young children are naturally creative and the strong interrelationship between play and creativity has meant that Early

Years provision has fostered creative learning strongly. As Paulette Luff points out in her chapter 'Play and Creativity', 'Neither 'play' nor 'creativity' can be easily defined but qualities of imagination, exploration, freedom and flexibility are common to both, and this accounts for their significance within Western traditions of early years education' (Luff, in Waller and Davis, 2013: 129).

In recent decades the influence of the Reggio Emilia approach to pre-school experiences has become more evident with many Early Years practitioners adopting the principles. Amongst these principles are those of seeing the child as someone who is already capable and has skills and competence; the cooperation and collaboration between the child, its parents and the teacher; seeing the learning environment as the 'third teacher', a strong participant in the world of learning being created; the pursuit of often long-term projects which are generated by the children's interactions and enquiries; and the careful observation, documentation and analysis of each child's learning in a number of different ways. There are many articles online or published which discuss the Reggio Emilia approach to Early Years learning and these are well worth looking at. You might try *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education* edited by Edwards et al. (1993, Ablex).



Individual or group activity

Spend some time observing in an Early Years setting. Which of the key elements of creativity can you see in action? How do the adults interact with the children? It may help you to take a list of the key elements of creativity with you as you observe.

When you reflect on your observations discuss or list which of the key elements of creativity you saw in action. What were the main features of the way learning was happening?

You may well have observed a very playful environment with children having time to experiment with ideas, equipment and materials without a set 'outcome'. Learning will most likely have crossed subject boundaries and children will have been applying knowledge and skills from one area to another. There was probably a carousel of activities so that staff could concentrate on some small groups at times. The setting was more than likely a rich educational resource with indoor and outdoor areas and many interesting things to touch, feel, see and interact with at the children's level.

Take some time to consider which of the elements you observed you could adapt for older children. How would this make their learning more interesting and effective?

As you continue through this book you will find many points which relate back to Early Years practice. Make as many opportunities as you can to continue your visits to the youngest learners – these can often help us clarify what is important about how children learn and the experiences which can best help this.

What are the benefits and potential drawbacks of creativity in the classroom?

It is probably evident by now that there are a lot of different aspects to consider if you want to teach more creatively or help children become more creative. Before we continue to look at those aspects it is worth considering why we value creativity and what we believe it can achieve for young people and for ourselves as teachers. It would also be unwise to ignore the fact that working creatively or to encourage creativity can have drawbacks or involve difficulties that will need to be overcome. Looking at those drawbacks clearly can help you either to deal with them straightaway or to decide to wait until you are more experienced before tackling that particular aspect.



Individual or group activity

(Potential activity spoiler! Cover the paragraphs beneath this box.)

Draw two columns (one for positives and one for negatives) and list as many positives and negatives as you can for both teaching creatively and teaching to develop creativity.



Group activity

Choose one positive and one negative and prepare to communicate these to the other groups. You should try to communicate in ways other than explaining in words. You could do a role play to share your idea or use modelling material to make a symbolic representation, you could draw a poster or a picture, create a short dance or a poem. After a short preparation time, share your different positives and negatives. The group sharing should try not to explain what they have done until the audience has had time to discuss what it could mean. Often, the audience will come up with points that were not intended by the performers but are valid and useful.

Discuss and 'unpick' the points raised plus any from your original lists that were not illustrated in the sharing activity.

Below are some of the points that often come up when students and teachers undertake this activity. Note that these lists are not exhaustive.

Positives/Benefits

- Children tend to remember things better if they learn them in creative, interactive ways.
- It caters to different learning styles, children can access learning in a variety of ways.

- It allows children to demonstrate their learning in ways that are not just through reading and writing.
- It raises the self-esteem of children, particularly those for whom reading and writing are difficult.
- It is more fun.
- Children have more autonomy over their learning and get more personal fulfilment.
- It is useful. Creativity is valued in society and it builds skills for future learning.
- It puts learning in authentic or 'real-life' situations. It is meaningful to children.
- It enhances motivation and builds skills in 'learning to learn'.
- It is more fulfilling for teachers.

Negatives/Drawbacks

(with some brief comments – these issues will be dealt with in subsequent chapters)

- **Time management.** This is a very real issue on a number of levels. How do you manage to find the time for extended pieces of work? How do you cope when some children have finished but others are still involved in meaningful exploration? How do you find any time within the constraints of the curriculum?
- **Unconventionality.** Being creative involves encouraging thinking that is not just following the crowd and behaviours such as relishing doing things in different ways. How does this fit with the peer pressure to conform? Or knowing when you have to do things exactly the same as other people and when you are expected to be individual?
- **Mess.** Lots of teachers worry that working creatively is inherently messy! Hopefully from your reading thus far you will realise that creativity is more about ways of thinking and enquiry than glue and sequins. However, if mess is involved, you can train children to care for resources and be good at tidying up.
- **Parents and/or senior managers not understanding; a lack of written work in books.** Hopefully you will be working within a school that values children learning in this way and has an outward-looking policy to help parents understand how their child is learning. There are lots of ways, however, of recording and assessing creative work in different media, of focusing on metacognition so that the children recognise what and how they are learning and don't go home saying 'We just played today.'
- **Making sure you have 'covered it all'.** Teaching creatively is not an easy option and a creative teacher needs to know the curriculum well, be able to make decisions about when and how it is the right time to explore something, and be responsible for making sure there is a balance between structure and flexibility.

- **The 'blank sheet' moment.** Being asked to come up with your own individual ideas, often at a moment's notice, can be very threatening. Learning creatively needs to be structured and scaffolded in exactly the same way as any other method of learning. There are skills involved in being creative that have to be learned and teachers need to build these skills and children's confidence gradually.

Final thoughts

Being creative in one way or another is a human characteristic. We all have the potential to be creative: we make things, we solve problems, we want to understand how things work or make them work better. We may have natural propensities to learn better in certain areas but we can all learn to improve our skills across the board. Teachers are creative, it is part of the job, but outstanding teachers are highly creative.

Chapter summary

In this chapter we have examined our own ideas about what creativity is and some definitions of creativity in education, particularly the very influential definition in the NACCCE's (1999) report. We have identified that there are three types of creativity at work in a primary classroom, namely teaching creatively, learning creatively, and teaching to develop creativity. The key elements of creativity were identified and introduced and possible benefits and drawbacks to teaching more creatively or encouraging more creativity in the classroom were identified prior to looking at these in more detail in subsequent chapters.



Personal thought and reflection

- In what ways are you personally most creative?
- Who is the most creative teacher you have observed so far? What were the features of their practice?
- Did you or your group come up with more positives or negatives in your listing activity?
- Do you personally feel there was more 'weight' to one side or the other? Can you identify why that is?



Further study

This section aims to offer readers who want to explore the subject in greater depth the opportunity to do so. Completing the activities in this section for each chapter will provide a progressive and cumulative exercise in critical reflection. Each activity is based on the content of the chapter.

About critical reflection

Critical reflection involves a number of different strands which will be introduced in the activities following each chapter. This might involve writing a synthesis of a paper – namely summarising, pulling out or drawing together the main message. It might involve evaluating either a research paper, your own teaching, or a child's learning. The evaluation could involve assessing strengths and weaknesses, how valid the judgement is or how reliable the evidence. It might also involve analysis: for example, parts of a problem might be broken up to look at solutions. You might test out ideas or interpretations and extrapolate various ways of looking at a situation, challenge the assumptions or hypotheses suggested, or speculate on a solution.

Reflection is a vital skill for teachers, enabling theoretical ideas to be brought together with all that is seen, heard or experienced in practice. For example, seeing someone actually helping a child to learn something new by using a supportive technique may lead to understanding 'scaffolding' learning from a different perspective from that of the understanding gained when reading Vygotskian theory or Bruner's work on the subject.

Critical reflection: Activity 1

Allow an hour for this activity.

In one short paragraph *identify* the three different types of creativity discussed in this chapter.

Identify one occasion when you have been in a position of learning creatively. In a few sentences *describe* objectively the context of this experience. *Explain why* you consider this to be a situation where you were learning creatively.

Take time to remember this experience. Where were you? Who was with you? What were you doing? What were you feeling as you were learning?

Now write a brief evaluation of this experience. One way of doing this is to *identify* what helped you. What was useful? What was positive?

Now *identify* and *examine what* changed in you as a result of this experience or *what* you see differently and *how* it will make you change some aspect of your classroom practice. It may be appropriate here to take time with some aspect of the experience that was challenging or that you found unhelpful and write a paragraph about *what* was challenging, *why* it was challenging, and *what* you learnt from that.

Remember:

- Reflection should take you forward. Ruminating or dreaming goes round in circles whereas reflection moves you on – you ‘see’ something in a new light.
- Writing after a time of reflection can help you crystallise your learning and move your thinking on to a new stage.
- Reflective writing is not very descriptive – you provide just enough description to set the context for your analysis.



Further reading

- Craft, A. (2000) *Creativity across the Primary Curriculum*. London: Routledge.
- Edwards, C. et al. (eds) (1993) *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education*. New York: Ablex.
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