



Creativity beliefs, creative personality and creativity-fostering practices of gifted education teachers and regular class teachers in Hong Kong



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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' creativity beliefs, creative personality, and creativity-fostering behaviors in 399 Hong Kong primary school teachers (68 males and 331 females). Regression analysis showed that creativity beliefs and creative personality were both predictors of teachers' creativity-fostering behaviors. A comparison of these variables was also made between teachers directly involved in gifted education activities ($n = 187$) and those who were not ($n = 212$). It was found that teachers who were directly involved in gifted education scored significantly higher than those who were not involved in all the three variables of creativity beliefs, creative personality, and creativity-fostering behaviors. Implications for fostering creativity in schools are discussed, highlighting the importance of teachers' ongoing involvement in creativity-related activities and a supportive school environment.

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1. Introduction

Creativity is now regarded as an essential attribute to be developed in all children and young people. In particular, it is acknowledged that possession of this attribute contributes to their personal development, decision making, and problem solving abilities (Beghetto, 2013; Fryer, 1996; Treffinger, 1980). Given the ever increasing local and global demands of the 21st century—resulting mainly from political changes, technological advances, economic growth, and social welfare issues—stronger effort to encourage students' creativity has become a major necessity in schools (Florida, 2002; Sawyer, 2006; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

In order to enhance the ability of teachers to foster creativity, it is crucial that teachers have a clear idea of what creativity is, and the enhancement strategies that can be used in the classroom. Research has pointed to a relationship between teachers' personal attributes, their beliefs, and teaching practices (Diez, 2007; Lee & Kemple, 2014; Sachs, 2004). Research has also indicated that teachers' personality traits are related to their teaching approach (Forrester & Hui, 2007; Kourilsky, Esfandiari, & Wittrock, 1996; Rushton, Morgan, & Richard, 2007). According to Cheung (2012), educators and policy-makers would be in a better position to promote creativity in schools if they were more informed about the nature of the relationship between teachers' beliefs about creativity and their practices in fostering creativity. Some research has already been carried out in this domain, suggesting that there is a relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. Andiliou and Murphy's

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(2010) review of studies resulted in a conceptual framework concerning teachers' beliefs about the nature of creativity, their beliefs about creative individuals, and their beliefs about the classroom environment. However, very few studies have been done in Hong Kong, and little attention has been given so far to teachers' creative personality. To address this gap, the aim of the study reported here was to examine the relationships between Hong Kong teachers' beliefs about creativity, creative personality, and creativity-fostering practices.

1.1. The Hong Kong context

Within recent education reforms in Hong Kong, creativity, together with critical thinking and communication, has been highlighted as one of the three *core generic skills* to be promoted in all areas of the curriculum (Curriculum Development Council, 2000). Interestingly, these core generic skills in the general curriculum are the same as those usually emphasized worldwide in curricula and programs devised specifically for gifted education. They are certainly the main focus of gifted education programs in Hong Kong, where they are referred to as creativity, higher-order thinking, and personal-social competence (Education Bureau, 2007a, Chap. 2, 2007b, Chap. 1).

Gifted education is not compulsory in mainstream schools in Hong Kong, but there are guidelines for schools that do implement it. Training in gifted education for teachers is available from the Education Bureau and other higher institutions, and the number of teachers trained in gifted education varies from school to school.

The approach in Hong Kong acknowledges that there is a close relationship between creativity and giftedness (Cropley, 1992), and draws to some extent on Renzulli's (2002) "three ring conception" of giftedness, wherein "creativity" must combine with "above average ability" and "task commitment." A broad definition of giftedness has been adopted, based on Gardner's (2006) theory of multiple intelligences. The guidelines indicate that gifted education should cater to *all students*, not only those who do well academically. Teaching for creativity is not confined to separate gifted education programs. Therefore, it is common for mainstream teachers to be teaching students with a broad range of ability in their classes, including those who are gifted in various areas. Schools have different policies for identifying gifted students—some have developed a precise system while others may choose not to use any identification mechanism.

1.2. Key terms

1.2.1. Creativity beliefs

Various terms have been used in the literature to mean basically the same as "beliefs"—perceptions, conceptions, views, attitudes, and implicit theories (Andiliou & Murphy, 2010). However, the term "beliefs" is preferred in this study because it refers to a personal viewpoint and involves a personal judgment. According to Pajares (1992), teachers' beliefs can include those about their students, their school, their roles and responsibilities, and their choice of pedagogy. The term "creativity beliefs" refers here to a specific set of beliefs that teachers have about creativity, its nature, importance, and cultivation. Two aspects of creativity beliefs are of particular interest in the current study – the cognitive aspects within teachers' conception of creativity and beliefs about how creativity can be fostered.

Teachers' beliefs about creativity may certainly vary. One study that compared Hong Kong and Singaporean teachers suggested that Hong Kong teachers seemed to have a more rigid understanding about creativity, believing that several random factors could limit its development (Quek, Ho, & Soh, 2008). Another study in Hong Kong indicated that Hong Kong teachers tended to associate creativity with intelligence and other cognitive aspects (Chan & Chan, 1999). Such a finding may be due to Hong Kong teachers' concern with academic performance. A more recent study found that while a sample of Hong Kong teachers had adequate knowledge about good practices for fostering students' creativity, this was not reflected in their actual classroom practices (Cheung, 2012). This was possibly due to inhibiting influences from contextual factors such as limited teaching time, workload, pressure of examinations, rather than from the teachers' own beliefs. Such factors are often out of a teacher's control (Cheng, 2010).

1.2.2. Creative personality

Investigation of the typical attributes of a "creative person" has resulted in the emergence of a set of core characteristics in the literature. Characteristics include (but are not limited to) traits such as independence in judgment, coping well with novelty, willingness to take risks, curiosity, openness to experience, and flexibility (Starko, 2010; Tardif & Sternberg, 1988). Studies have used various rating scales for assessing creative personality. An instrument that is directly related to personality characteristics of a creative person is the Creative Personality Scale (Gough, 1979), described later in Section 3.3.2.

Research has suggested a relationship between teachers' personality and their ability to encourage students' creativity in the classroom. For example, a study by Lee and Kemple (2014) supported a view that teachers' own creative traits may affect their creativity-enhancing behaviors when working with their students. Similarly, Horng, Hong, ChanLin, Chang, and Chu (2005) have shown that teachers' personality traits, among other factors, contribute to classroom instruction that encourages creativity.

1.2.3. Creativity-fostering behaviors

It has been suggested that teachers who foster creativity in their students may display certain characteristic behaviors and strategies in the classroom. Such behaviors and strategies are the basic components of a classroom environment that is

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