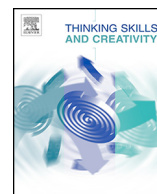




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Disclosing Hong Kong teacher beliefs regarding creative teaching: Five different perspectives



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ABSTRACT

Along with the increasing global emphasis on creativity, creative teaching has become an issue of concern for a large number of researchers. This study addresses this issue by exploring the belief of Hong Kong teachers on creative teaching. The research results obtained through qualitative approach show that the beliefs of Hong Kong teachers about creative teaching cover process and product dimensions. The informants can be grouped into five categories with reference to their various preferences. The evidence shows that a part of the beliefs of Hong Kong teachers is aligned with ideal theoretical framework advanced by scholars. The deficiency and problems in the belief of teachers in creative teaching are also discussed in this paper.

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1. Background

Creativity has been perceived as a critical element of the zeitgeist in western and eastern countries since the end of the last century (e.g., Council of the European Union, 2008b; Curriculum Development Council, 2001; Elliott, 1999; Jeffrey, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2002; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004). Since the end of last century, the education reforms of many countries have sought to foster and develop creativity, especially in the young generation. For example the Council of the European Union (2008a, p. 3) emphasizes that, “schools have a duty to provide their pupils with an education which will enable them to adapt to an increasingly globalised, competitive, diversified and complex environment, in which creativity, the ability to innovate, a sense of initiative, entrepreneurship and a commitment to continue learning are just as important as the specific knowledge of a given subject.” The implementation of these “creative” reforms remains largely dependent on schools and teachers (Cachia, Ferrari, Ala-Mutka, & Punie, 2010).

1.1. Creative teaching

In terms of teacher impacts on developing student creativity, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (, p. 90) argues that “young people’s creative abilities are most likely to be developed in an atmosphere in which

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the teacher's creative abilities are properly engaged." That is, teacher expectations of students and the surroundings that they construct can either foster or inhibit the creativity of young students (Craft, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Nickerson, 1999; Runco & Johnson, 2002; Runco, Johnson, & Bear, 1993). This gives a clue that why creative teaching has attracted attentions of related researchers and scholars.

Woods (1995) proposed that creative teaching should have four features, namely, innovation, relevance, control, and ownership. Sternberg (2000) identified an array of creative teaching characteristics as helping student in redefining problems, analyzing and selling ideas, taking balanced view to knowledge and tolerating ambiguity, believing in themselves, willing to grow, taking risks, surmounting obstacles, and finding they love to do and do it. Fasko (2001) also summarized several suggestions for generating creativity in schools, including supporting spontaneous ideas of students, considering certain types of mistakes as positive aspects of learning, allowing digressions related to student interests, providing sufficient time for optimal learning, and constructing an environment of respect and acceptance. Sharp (2005) specifically identified the following strategies for fostering student creativity: asking open-ended questions, tolerating ambiguity, modeling creative thinking and behavior, encouraging experimentation and persistence, and praising children who provide unexpected answers. Cremin, Burnard, and Craft (2006) described three principles to create a supportive environment for student creativity: standing back, profiling learner agency, and creating time and space. These principles encourage student involvement and develop their possibility thinking. Based on 14 documents, Reilly, Lilly, Bramwell, and Kronish (2011) concluded that four themes – creative process, creative person, outcomes, and community – emerged from their synthesis and that creative performance and conditions can foster creative behavior. Although a large number of studies have been launched on creative teaching, most hover at the technical or behavioral level of creative teaching and few explore teacher belief of creative teaching.

Clark and Peterson (1986) stated that a teacher always comes into a classroom with his or her own beliefs. Teachers' general beliefs about teaching and learning as well as their domain-specific beliefs have been proven crucial to understanding their decisions in the classroom (Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009; Richardson, 1996). Pajares (1992, p. 325) suggested that "the filtering effect of belief structures ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing". Furthermore, this thinking and information undermine various teacher decisions in the classroom. Thus, researchers have widely explored the beliefs of teachers, such as in student-centered education (Isikoglu, Basturk, & Karaca, 2009), the teacher's role (Löfström & Poom-Valickis, 2013), and subject education (Stipek, Givvin, Salmon, & MacGyvers, 2001). Regarding creativity, studies abound on the inception of teachers' conception of creativity (e.g., Andiliou & Murphy, 2010; Kamyliis, Saariluoma, & Berki, 2011; Kokotsaki, 2011). However, the systematic exploration and categorization of teacher belief on creative teaching remain limited. A preliminary study by Fryer and Collings (1991) showed that teachers believe building confidence (99%), exercising the right to study at home (93%), and involving students in selecting preferred learning methods (75%) as the most effective means of achieving creativity. Based on Cropley's study, Soh (2000) indexed nine teacher-based actions for creativity which comprised independence, integration, motivation, judgment, flexibility, evaluation, question, opportunities, and supporting frustration nine dimensions. The quantitative data showed that male teachers scored lower than their counterparts in terms of independence, motivation, opportunities, and frustration dimensions, while non-Chinese teachers scored higher than Chinese teachers with respect to integration, flexibility, question, and opportunities aspects. Tan (2001) used a self-designed questionnaire to explore the activities that teachers believe are effective for fostering student creativity. The items highly valued by teachers are related to fostering independent learning, collaboration, and motivation for students. Overall, the strategies that make students responsible for organizing their learning are perceived by most teachers as effective ways to foster creativity.

1.2. Creative teaching: Hong Kong's view

Creativity is widely accepted as crucial for the continual vitality of Hong Kong society. In 2001, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) issued an important document, *Learning to learn: The way forward in curriculum development*, which is the guideline for Hong Kong's curriculum reform. The document states that, "in a knowledge based society everyone must be equipped with a basic level of learning capacity in order that they can learn throughout their lives and constantly upgrade themselves (para 6.8, p. 37)." Creativity, as one of nine generic skills closely connected to life-long learning, is advanced in this document, adopted to serve a key function for classroom teachers, and considered integral to systemic education change.

In Hong Kong, creativity is emphasized by policymakers and frontline teachers (Wu & Tsim, 2004). However, fostering student creativity is challenging for Hong Kong teachers. Creativity was previously neither part of the school curriculum nor was it a component of the teacher education program (Cheung, 2012). Hong Kong teachers still implement the curriculum according to the traditional methods of rote learning and teacher-centered instruction, which are fundamentally uncreative (Chan, 2007). Thus, Hong Kong Design Century and Asia Case Research Centre (2008) stated that Hong Kong teachers must revamp their teaching approach to cultivate the creativity of the younger generation. However, prior to making positive interventions, first we must understand teachers' views and understanding of creative teaching.

In Hong Kong, creativity in education has attracted the attention of several scholars (e.g., Chan & Chan, 1999; Cheung & Mok, 2013; Craft, 2000, 2005, 2010; Lau, Hui, & Ng, 2004). Among these studies, several have sought to disclose teacher beliefs of creative teaching. Cheung, Tse, and Tsang (2003) found that Hong Kong Chinese language teachers identified the development of student confidence and providing an open atmosphere as essential means of fostering creative writing skills.

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