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Teaching creatively and teaching for creativity: distinctions and relationships

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The distinction and relationship between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity identified in the report from the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999), is examined by focusing on empirical research from an early years school, known for its creative approach. The examination uses four characteristics of creativity and pedagogy identified by Peter Woods (1990): relevance, ownership, control and innovation, to show the interdependence of the NACCCE distinctions. We conclude that although the NAC-CCE distinction between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity has been useful as an analytical tool, it may, at the same time, have dichotomised an integrated practice and we suggest that a more useful distinction for the study of creative pedagogies would be the relationship between teaching creatively and creative learning.

Introduction

The NACCCE report (1999) made a distinction between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* in its characterization of creative teaching. The former is defined as 'using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting and effective' (*ibid.* p. 89). Teaching for creativity is defined as forms of teaching that are intended to develop young peoples own creative thinking or behaviour. This distinction has been useful in highlighting the importance of *teaching for creativity*, but in making the distinction there is a danger that a new dichotomy becomes institutionalized in educational discourse, similar to those in the past such as formal and informal teaching or instruction and discovery learning. These past dichotomies have been criticised as responsible for the development of restrictive pedagogic ideologies (Alexander *et al.*, 1992) and this process has already begun with regards to creativity in education. For example, in attempting to characterise the NACCCE distinction between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*, Jeffrey and Craft (2001) emphasize, following the proposition in the NACCCE report, that the former may be interpreted as being more concerned with 'effective teaching' and suggest that the latter may perhaps be interpreted as having 'learner empowerment' as its main objective. Whilst the authors used these characteristics to highlight the positive nature of both *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*, nevertheless, creeping polarization is possible if educators take up one position or the other.

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The NACCCE report does recognize that there is a close relationship between the two terms. It states clearly that '*teaching for creativity* involves *teaching creatively*' (*ibid.*, p. 90, our italics) and notes that, 'Young people's creative abilities are most likely to be developed in an atmosphere in which the teacher's creative abilities are properly engaged' (*ibid.*). However, the nature of this relationship needs explicating further than the report's criteria allow it to do so.

There is a great deal of research and conceptual analysis, mainly, although not exclusively, from North America, over the last 20 years or so, which has explored aspects of pedagogical approaches which foster pupil creativity (Shallcross, 1981; Torrance, 1984; Halliwell, 1993; Edwards & Springate, 1995; Fryer, 1996; Hubbard, 1996; Balke, 1997; Beetlestone, 1998; Craft, 2000; Kessler, 2000). Nevertheless, none of these studies has, to our knowledge, examined the relationship between these two facets of creativity in the classroom.

An examination of the relationship between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* is possible, through focusing on some established features of creative teaching such as those developed by Woods (1990), innovation, ownership and control and relevance. These characteristics were used in research in primary schools from 1990 and initially focused on the creativity of the teacher and the nature of their creative teaching (Woods, 1993, 1995; Woods & Jeffrey, 1996; Woods *et al.*, 1999). More recently, the research has focused on the effects of creative teaching on learners, its effectiveness, the creativity they bring to the learning context and the creativity they are encouraged to develop by being part of a creative teaching context (Jeffrey & Woods, 1997, 2003). As part of this particular research programme, long-term ethnographic studies were carried out between 1999 and 2001 in, what has been recognised as, a creative English First school. That research, on which this paper is based, provides detail of how the relationship between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* in education is constructed.

Sample and methodology

The data we draw upon comes from research in this Early Years school that opened in 1971 and is now internationally famous with reciprocal connections with schools in Sweden, relations with communities in Gambia and the recently retired head teacher has lectured in the USA and recently visited China. All visitors are welcome at any time, including students, people on work placements, researchers, practitioners, community residents, officials and all varieties of performers and artisans. The recently retired head and the current head, who was her deputy, have published books on the teaching of science in primary schools and they and other teachers have lectured abroad. Nearly 40% of its 200 plus children come from an army garrison nearby. Although there are fewer pupils receiving free school meals than the national average the school intake includes up to 33% from a local army base, indigenous village children and a regular intake of Traveller children.

The school was visited for approximately a week each half term—seven in all. During this period, the school staffing consisted of six full time teachers and at least

five part time teachers. An extensive profile of the school and its practices are published in Jeffrey and Woods (2003).

Data collection was through qualitative methods, consisting chiefly of interviews with teachers, support workers, parents, children, and visitors. The research focused on the learners' experience of creative teaching in general, focusing on their perspectives, recorded through extensive field notes. We collected relevant documentation such as newsletters, governors' and inspectors' reports, timetables, school policy statements and national test results. We used photographs extensively as data and as stimuli for exploring children's perspectives. At one stage, children were given cameras to select their own observations for discussion. By comparing the various different kinds of data, both within and across cases, we were able to identify prominent issues and themes connected to our major subject of creativity in primary school education and the effect this had on the various participants.

Teaching Creatively and teaching for creativity

The relationship between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* can be seen by using a framework based on Woods' (1990) features of creative teaching—relevance, ownership, control and innovation.

Teaching creatively

Teaching at the case study school fitted the first distinction provided by the NACCCE (1999) report in that the school used imaginative approaches to make learning interesting and effective. A major effect for learners at the school, and for anyone visiting it, was an immediate experience of the dynamic, appreciative, captivating and caring ethos (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003). The construction of this type of ethos has many objectives but in terms of teaching and learning one of the school's major aims was to make the learning experience relevant to learners, to make it interesting. For young learners this meant an ethos that was dynamic and active:

> There is a continuous throb of movement and a quiet hum of activity. It is a corporeal ethos as children stretch, jump, slide, tiptoe, step cautiously, hold hands, fiddle with each other's hair and lift and swing each other round. Smiles, welcomes and laughter pervade the school. Young children are energetic people, forever moving their bodies and minds across the space they inhabit, experiencing the delights of physical expression and the excitement of encountering and engaging with new phenomena. The school understands young children as active agents who experiment with their bodies, emotions and intellects. Teachers acknowledge the enormous capacity of young children to take in an extensive variety of experiences in any one day. 'You can walk in and find one group of children with magnets all over the floor, another doing things with keys, others working with stinging nettles, or weaving and harvesting, or counting sunflower seeds'. (Parent, Jeffrey & Woods, 2003, p. 10)

Learners and visitors appreciated the qualitative aspects of each focus of learning. Maths was made exciting, literacy experienced as a set of keys unlocking a whole

range of delights and emotional journeys, science was developed as a passion for enquiry, discovery and experimentation, technology provided intensely focused activity involving problem solving, frustration and satisfaction and the arts were valued as opportunities for expression.

Ensuring the relevance of the curriculum and pedagogy to learners led to ownership of knowledge, learning processes and the resulting skills and understandings because their engagement with learning was directly related to their 'interests at hand' (Pollard with Filer, 1996). According to Winnicott (1964) very young children believe that they own their environment and the people in it. As they become more socially integrated they gradually become aware that there are other claims to ownership of the environment beyond themselves. The school's principle of emphasising learners' ownership of the curriculum, the knowledge to be investigated and the contexts in which teaching and learning took place, set a framework for creative engagement.

The school had a form of organization, unusual in First Schools, in which children moved around the school every day to different classrooms. It reflected a crucial element in the school's philosophy to satisfy young children's desire for novel experiences:

> The children experienced movements between lessons as adventures. There were excursions to other parts of the school, to different classrooms, the library, the hall and all unsupervised. These excursions developed independence, confidence and ownership of the school's space. They created an atmosphere of excited anticipation of something new and interesting about to happen each time as they set upon a timetabled 'journey'. (Jeffrey and Woods, 2003, p. 74)

The school's 'hands on' approach was a paramount feature of making learning relevant and encouraging ownership:

> The children were told the story of how the practice of 'beating the bounds' developed—the setting up the parish boundaries, e.g.: how young boys were beaten with sticks as they walked the bounds to remind them of their boundaries. The learners literally 'beat the bounds' of the school. The children all took a stick and walked all around the boundary of the school grounds. At various places they beat the fences and sang a song. They dabbled in a pond, splashed the water, beat the trees and conjured images and stories on the walk. 'We were beating the boundary. It was fun, really really fun.' Each stop was identified as a direction point of the perimeter, NSEW. The children were then encouraged later to identify the direction boundaries faced on a map and to add some features they passed. (*ibid.*, p. 101)

The teachers prioritised strategies that engaged the learner and they acted creatively to adapt the strategies to the appropriate age range, context and individual. They focused on the pedagogic relevance to the learner of that which was to be learnt or experienced and learners took ownership of the experiences. They exemplified the NACCCE (1999) description of *teaching creatively*, 'Teachers can be highly creative in developing materials and approaches that fire children's interests and motivate their learning' (*ibid.*, p. 89).

Teaching for creativity

The teachers also implemented the *teaching for creativity* principles (NACCCE, 1999) by:

- encouraging young people to believe in their creative identity,
- identifying young people's creative abilities and
- fostering creativity by developing some of the common capacities and sensitivities of creativity such as curiosity, recognising and becoming more knowledgeable about the creative processes that help foster creativity development and providing opportunities to be creative, a hands on approach.

They did this by firstly making teaching and learning relevant and encouraging ownership of learning and then by passing back control to the learner (Jeffrey and Craft, 2003) and encouraging innovative contributions. Control of learning by a young person is not a new experience. On the contrary, they mainly experience it being taken away or deciding to relinquish it in favour of other 'interests at hand' (Pollard, 1996), such as gaining someone's affection or enjoying the feeling of belonging by agreeing to acquiesce to a group's wishes. Having control is an opportunity to be innovative and expressive. The science topic of 'forces' at the school culminated in a day devoted to the subject.

> Children move from activity to activity during the day experiencing experiments with 'force'. Children fire syringes of water at each other to see if they can wet each other. There are smiles of concentration and pursed lips as their cold wet fingers pressed harder and harder on the syringes. They push and pull, around the playground, wheeled vehicles they have brought into school, to test the best approach. They experiment with a series of pulleys under a covered way. They push and pull carpets, laden with bodies, around the hall. One child rubs an eye with tiredness. They wonder what's going to happen next. They look serious and perplexed. They frown, purse their lips, put fingers on their lips in anticipation and sometimes look worried as they watch the others. They tap the floor with glee, grit their teeth to make the effort, giggle as people fall off the carpets and grin as a 'a traffic jam occurs'. There is a cry of anguish as the children pretend it's hard, and of glee as they speed up. They are then put into large boxes and try to push each other around the hall again, experiencing the resistance of friction. They hide in the boxes, peeping out from time to time with giggles and cries of delight. The pushing results in many red faces. (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003, p. 84)

One of the major characteristics of creativity itself is, we would argue, possibility thinking (Craft, 2002) and it was used at the school in technology based activities to encourage learners to take control and act innovatively. In the autumn term the children were given the task of bringing in the heavy pumpkins they had grown in the gardens. Some of the pumpkins were huge and needed two adults to shift them. The children were asked to bring into school any wheeled toys they had at home and they utilized them collaboratively and unaided to bring the crop into school safely and undamaged. Possibility thinking includes problem solving as in a puzzle, finding alternative routes to a barrier, the posing of questions and the identification of

problems and issues. The first two types often involve experimentation and investigation and these were evident in the learning experiences at the school.

> We are learning about life and electricity at the moment. Our teacher has wires, which we can use to make lights. We can make a fan spin around. We need two wires and a battery holder and a battery to go in it. And then you clip the wires on to the battery holder clips. And then you join the light clips up to the wire to make the light work or the fan work. We enjoy it because of the way that we are doing it. We don't sit down all the time. (David, Year 2)

Young children enjoy experimenting and problem solving as taking control, 'I look forward to doing experiments like the lights and batteries. It is like testing things. I don't care if it goes wrong. If I was a witch and I had to make a new potion in my cauldron I would experiment' (Craig, Year 2).

Control is considered a valuable experience:

> Some computer programmes are enjoyable because you can make things on them and play around with it. You get control of it because the computer can't do it all its own. You are controlling it like you would control a robot. (Michelle, Year 2)

and it leads to innovation, 'There are surprises on the computer painting. If you have scribbled on the computer you can still find things by looking through the painting. You can make a mess and still find something real in it' (Alice, Year 1).

The combination of relevance, ownership and control leads to innovation.

> Sarah, the teacher, introduces work on the body from two big books to her Year 2 learners. She invites them to tell the group about stories of personal accidents and then she asks them to imagine what would happen if their bones did or did not grow in relation to the rest of their body. The children collaborate to gain a fuller understanding of the body:
>
> I'd be all floppy if my bones didn't grow.
>
> My skin would be hanging down off the end of my fingers.
>
> My nose would be dangling down there.
>
> My earrings will be down touching the floor.
>
> If my bones grew when my body didn't I would be all skinny.
>
> I would have extra lumps all-over me.
>
> My bones would be stretching my body so I would be very thin.
>
> I'd be like a skinny soldier and bones would be sticking out of my skin.
>
> My brain would be getting squashed. (*ibid.*, p. 113)

Being encouraged to pose questions, identify problems and issues together with the opportunity to debate and discuss their 'thinking' brings the learner into the heart of both the teaching and learning process as a co-participant (Emilia, 1996). Sarah engaged her mixed 5–7-year-old children in a discussion about learning. She started with an investigation of how babies learn by asking them how they would fill up an alien's empty brain and the children not only used their imagination but they confronted each other's contributions.

I would do it in a laboratory.

I would do it by telling.

You can't. Because it hasn't got anything in its brain to think with.

He wouldn't be able to remember anything.

You could make him go to sleep and then open his head a little to put the right information on his brain. (Jeffrey and Woods, 2003, p. 116)

The discussion opened up a space for a more philosophical enquiry:

The following question came out of the blue and was taken on by the others. 'This question is a hard one because how did the first person in the world know all the things about the world'. 'God taught them' 'But he was a little baby'. 'How did the world get made'? 'How did the first person get made'. 'How did the whole universe gets made'. 'How did life grow'? There followed lots of chatter permeated with questions and assertions and answers. (*ibid*, p. 116)

Later, the processes of teaching and learning in their own classroom and the role of the teacher became the focus:

'I listen and you teach us'. 'You need to use your ears to listen, your nose to smell and your eyes to see'. 'You need to listen most of the time and to be quiet'. 'It is like you have dots in your brain and they are all joined up'. 'You think about it and stuff like that as well'. 'Your brain is telling you how to use your eyes'. 'The college tells you what to tell us and you tell us and we get the answer'. (*ibid.*, p. 117)

Introducing a co-participative approach (Emilia, 1996) to classroom experiences involves bringing an understanding of pedagogies into the open and can result in even more control for learners over the appropriate learning strategies to apply to learning contexts. An experience of ownership and control allowed these young learners to make the most of the opportunity to be creative and initiate investigations themselves. However, as the NACCCE (1999) report indicated, teaching for creativity cannot necessarily be made routine by planning to either *teach creatively* or *teach for creativity*. Justine had developed a topic on the art and craft of William Morris. This had originally been a light touch look at designs in materials but it developed into a major project with children constructing their own designs from materials in the environment.

I have been caught up in this. It has encompassed the children's imaginations and sustained the interest of all the children from five to seven, from new children to experienced ones. It has been more successful than I had ever dreamt it was going to be. They ran with it. Children were sneaking off behind me to start instead of waiting for me to say, 'Come on, now let's sit, and let me talk you through it'. I would turn round and there would be children behind me doing it, and doing it correctly. It was a project where children didn't need stimulating. One of the things that I enjoyed about it was sitting with the children and talking about what they were doing, and listening to them enjoying this session. It is very relaxing and I also think they genuinely had a very strong sense of achievement. (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003, p. 73)

The result was a passing back of control to learners and an innovative response:

We did our own designs on a piece of paper. They were photocopied at lunchtime to

make lots of copies. In the afternoon we stuck them on to a piece of paper how we wanted them. This is the design I chose. I have repeated it. We need to do each section the same colour to make it look like a design. If I did them all different colours it would not look much like a design. It is all the leaves and flowers on a theme. We brought these things in from outside. There is a fir cone, this is a catkin. I often see this sort of design being done on a computer. You can see designs on walls, cushions, bedclothes, wrapping paper, jars, and clothes. (Abigail, Year 2)

This research has thrown up a fourth task, to add to the three identified in the NACCCE report, for enhancing *teaching for creativity*. It is the inclusion of the learner in decisions about what knowledge is to be investigated, about how to investigate it and how to evaluate the learning processes. We would see this as being a 'learner inclusive' approach (Jeffrey & Craft, 2003) in which the learner and teacher engage in a more collaborative approach to teaching and learning. The learner's experience and imagination would be a major part of the process of investigating knowledge using such devices as possibility knowledge (Woods & Jeffrey, 1996) and possibility thinking (Craft, 2002). It is similar to that proposed in other research (Woods & Jeffrey, 1996; Emilia, 1996; Lucas, 2001; Pollard *et al.*, 2000). The approach highlights and prioritizes the 'agency' of the learner in the teaching and learning process and might be contrasted with a 'child considerate' approach (Jeffrey, 2001a) that views the child as an organism that needs nurturing rather than being democratically included. We suggest that *teaching for creativity* could involve generating a 'learner inclusive' pedagogy, where the learner is encouraged to engage in identifying and exploring knowledge. This idea is discussed and developed further elsewhere (Craft, 2003; Craft & Jeffrey, in press).

Discussion and conclusion

The research outline here shows that the relationship between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* is an integral one. The former is inherent in the latter and the former often leads directly to the latter. We suggest that if these distinctions continue to be used it should be made clear that:

- teachers *teach creatively* and *teach for creativity* according to the circumstances they consider appropriate and sometimes they do both at the same time.
- *teaching for creativity* may well arise spontaneously from teaching situations in which it was not specifically intended.
- *teaching for creativity* is more likely to emerge from contexts in which teachers are teaching creatively notwithstanding some evidence of creative reactions to constrained situations (Fryer, 1996). Learners model themselves on their teacher's approach, find themselves in situations where they are able to take ownership and control and are more likely to be innovative, even if the teacher was not overtly planning to *teach for creativity*.

Recognising some of the ways in which the two NACCCE distinctions of creative teaching identified in the NACCCE report interrelate, will help to ensure that *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* are not dichotomized.

However, there are further implications that stem from our research. The conceptual dichotomization of a teacher's practice or the creative practices of teachers in general creates a false construction of pedagogic reality. For example, we would argue that it is not possible to obtain empirical evidence as to whether a teacher's creative practice was devoid of an intention to *teach for creativity* or that the development of a creative person was specifically due to the intention of a teacher to *teach for creativity*. We suggest that the constitution of creative pedagogic practices may be more transparent if the focus is on the teacher *and* on the learner.

Research into creative teaching has been particularly prominent over the 1990s in primary schools (Woods, 1990, 1993, 1995; Woods & Jeffrey, 1996; Craft, *et al.* 1997, 2001; Beetlestone, 1998; Woods, *et al.* 1999; Craft, 2000, 2002; Jeffrey, 2001a,b; Jeffrey & Woods, 2003) and is now developing in other sectors, for example Higher Education (Gale, 2001) and has been taken up by the Department for Education and Skills and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority who have indicated the necessity of incorporating creativity into all curriculum subjects (DfES/QCA, 1999a,b).

Research into creative learning by learners is a feature of the current decade with bodies such as the National College for School Leadership including it in their programme. One European research project is currently addressing research questions relating to student experiences of creative pedagogies.

- What actually does creative teaching and learning consist of?
- What actually is learned, and how?
- What difference does it make to the learner?
- What feelings, as well as cognition, are involved, and what is the relationship between feelings and cognition?
- What is to be gained by bringing student perspectives into a creative pedagogy?
- How far do students act creatively to make their learning meaningful (CLASP, 2002)

Early findings have shown that students use their imagination and experience to develop their learning; they strategically collaborate over tasks; contribute to the classroom curriculum and pedagogy; and evaluate critically their own learning practices and teachers' performance (Jeffrey, 2001b).

A focus on the relationship between the teacher and learner makes creative practices discernible if an empirical approach is employed and focusing on the creativity agency of each enables the constituents of creative teaching and creative learning to be identified, characterized and assessed.

The NACCCE (1999) report used, as one of it sources, an NFER (1998) report, which found creative practices amongst leaders to be distinguished by

> 'professional creativity' which related to the sensitive electicism' involved in an appropriate response to the curriculum and to the needs of groups and individuals; and 'experiential creativity', which related to the pupil's experience of learning outcomes. (p. 6)

However, rather than develop the findings of the NFER report in terms of creative

teaching and creative learning, the NACCCE committee chose to distinguish *between teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*.

One of the possible reasons as to why they took this path is to be found in the report's extensive list of aims attributed to *teaching for creativity* (NACCCE, p. 91). The aims focus on both the pedagogic process and the inculcation of particular values concerned with developing creative people. The practice 'encourages a sense of responsibility for learning. It aims at a growing autonomy involving goal setting and planning, and the capacity for self monitoring, self assessment and self management. In principle, the earlier self-directed learning is internalised, the better. …' (NACCCE, 1999, p. 92). These objectives concern the development of a lifelong personal creativity and agency of the individual (Craft, 2001, 2002).

These are values that may underpin many teachers' creative practices but, we would argue, they can, to some extent, be distinguished, from the study of a teacher's pedagogy. We recognize that the NACCCE term *teaching for creativity* and its aims are a powerful set of values for those committed to the development of creative people. However, we suggest that the institutionalization of these values is better researched by focusing on the relationship between the creative teaching of the teacher and the creative learning of the learner.

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