Fostering Creativity through Art: Introducing Creative Pedagogy in Secondary Art Teacher Education in Taiwan

Hou-Yi Ting University of Exeter
Email: hyt203@exeter.ac.uk


Abstract

In the early 21st century, creativity has been recommended as a core component of education by the Taiwanese government report of the Creativity White Paper, and sequentially the inclusion of creativity in the new Grade 1-9 curriculum in elementary school (grade 1-6; age 7-12) and junior high school education (grade 7-9; age 13-15) was advocated. Since then, creativity has been recognised as reflecting everyday potential and a core capability for today's employee, and therefore, its pedagogy has become an increasingly significant topic for classroom practitioners, policy makers and researchers.

The common definition of creative pedagogy in Taiwan has been described as that teachers apply their own creativity in their teaching plans and activities, and that, through this creative activity, students’ creativity is developed. However, in practice, according to several research papers, most Taiwanese teachers believe that creative pedagogy has more to do with teaching creatively. It can be argued that the use of a creative teaching strategy may provide a positive learning environment for learners, but that this is not the same as developing the learners’ creativity. Furthermore, without understanding and training in creativity and creative pedagogy, teachers may continue to uphold stereotypes and misconceptions, and thus influence students’ development and their expressions of creativity. Whilst a wide range of international research has explored the issue of creativity education and its pedagogy, little attention has been paid in the field of teacher education, particularly in art.

The methodology associated with the case study is qualitative and will focus on a small group of 12 voluntary Secondary Art student teachers in an Art university in Taiwan, who agree to participate in an enrichment workshop element to their course. Participants will complete questionnaires and 2 participants will be interviewed before they start the workshop in order to understand their perceptions of creativity and creative pedagogy. During the workshop, further interpretive approaches will be used in an attempt to understand the conceptions and implementation of the student teachers in relation to creative pedagogy, such as video-recorded observation, focus group discussions, participants’ sketchbook, researcher’s log and any possible visual materials. Analysis allows categories to emerge from data, such as...
video/audio data and observational /other field notes, and uses a version of grounded theory to allow saturated categories to be made visible.

**Introduction**

In the past 10 years, in order to meet the challenge of knowledge-based economies, the enhancement of creativity is now more than ever becoming an increasingly important national goal, and it, therefore, has been recommended as a core component in the field of education by many countries across the world. This paper, basically focusing on the background of my research, begins with a critical discussion of creativity education and current policy of the new art curriculum in Taiwan, followed by an overview of my own research, in terms of research purposes, questions and research design. The discussion will mainly focus on what we mean by creativity and creative pedagogy in Taiwan, and how art teachers play their roles in practice, making particular references in the current statutory documents, namely the *Creativity White paper* (MOE, 2002a) and the new *Grade 1-9 Curriculum* (MOE,2000). In these documents, creativity is embedded into current Taiwanese education from the perspectives of policy, curriculum and pedagogy. For instance, the Taiwanese government considers creativity to be one of the key competitive abilities needed by Taiwanese citizens (MOE, 2002a,b). For the reason, there has been a recent flourishing of interest in the nurturing of creativity at all educational levels, as well as in industry and more widely in society (MOE, 2002a:p2), aiming to make Taiwan a ‘Republic of Creativity’ (MOE, 2002a:p1). As the *Creativity White Paper* (MOE, ibid), puts it:

‘...we want to create in our educational institutions an innovative learning environment as well as a lively teaching atmosphere. We believe that as schools expand their educational perspectives, they will also develop their own unique “personalities,” so to speak. We want our schools to construct a multicultural setting in which tolerance, imagination, and individual differences and cultural differences are all valued. It is our hope and belief that this kind of diversity will then breed further creativity.’ (p2)

Another document, the new *Grade 1-9 curriculum* (from age 7 to 15), points out two core competencies related to creativity development, specifically:
Appreciation, representation, and creativity, which involves the capability of perceiving and appreciating the beauty of things as well as exerting imagination and creativity, developing an active and innovative attitude, and expressing oneself in order to promote the quality of living.

Independent thinking and problem solving, which involves cultivating the ability and habit of thinking independently and reflectively, making thoughtful analyses and judgments about questions, and effectively solving problems and resolving conflicts’.

(MOE, 2000:5-6)

However, many studies address that the pupils’ recognition and perception of creativity is still seriously lacking. This is due to a number of common misconceptions of creativity and creative pedagogy in Taiwan (Lu, 1993; MOE, 2002; Wu, 2004; Shen, 2005; Hsiao, 2006), and the lack of cultivating creativity during the teacher training (MOE, 2002a,b; Ting2008). Since the teacher has been considered as the gatekeeper in students’ creativity learning (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000; Wu, 2004; Lin 2006), teachers actually play an important role on fostering pupils’ creativity. Hence, my own study builds on this idea that through bringing recent research on creative pedagogy, practically forcing on possibility thinking (PT) into Taiwanese teacher training; my aim is to explore how an Art teacher-training educator can help student teachers to develop their conceptions of creative pedagogy.

This study will introduce 4 sessions of a creative workshop within the concept of PT and its pedagogy. An intensive case study will involve 12 visual arts student teachers in a mixed background, including age, gender, education and teaching experience from a Secondary-level art teacher training programme at a University of Arts in Taiwan. Additionally a variety of methods will used to explore the interactions between the researcher and student teachers to incorporate their perceptions and perspectives for a deeper insight into the development of creative pedagogy in Taiwanese context. Once systematically analysed and theorised, the data will have implications for developing teacher creativity pedagogy and curriculum.

The reform of creativity education in Taiwan

In Taiwan, creativity has received considerable emphasis in education since the
1960s, but it was only developed in the gifted and talented area belonging to special education. In 2002, however, the Taiwanese government published the Creativity White Paper. Since then, creativity has been firstly acknowledged in general education at all levels (from foundation to higher education, age 5-23). This document also contains a wide range of recommendations calling for the investigation into creative education, with the three following goals:

‘First, to establish an educational policy that will encourage and support creativity; second, to develop and institute instructional strategies to implement creative education; and third, to widen the public’s vision and appreciation for a “creative culture”’ (MOE, 2002a:p1).

Sequentially, as fostering the public’s creativity has become one of the important goals of Taiwan’s educational reform, the inclusion of creativity in the new Grade 1-9 Curriculum in elementary school (grade 1-6; age 7-12) and junior high school (grade 7-9; age 13-15) education was advocated. The aim is to develop and strengthen pupils’ imagination and creativity (MOE, 2000; 2002a). In the new curriculum, creativity is recognised as a cross-discipline competence (Kang, 2002; NAEC, 2003; MOE, 2006), so that it is believed that creativity can be fostered and trained through an appropriate environment or teaching activities (Chang, 2002; Harrison, 2004; Hus & Kuo, 2007). Moreover, creativity has been acknowledged as reflecting everyday potential (Gardner, 1993; Craft, 2001) and a core capability for today’s employee (MOE, 2002a, b). As well as creativity, its pedagogy has also become an increasingly significant topic for classroom practitioners, policy makers and researchers.

Teachers in every subject and at every educational level, therefore, are being encouraged to make efforts in creative teaching in a number of areas (MOE, 2002a, b; Lin, 2002): (1) to develop creative instructional plans and teaching materials aiming to foster creativity; (2) to participate in collaborative teaching teams in order to learn from each other; (3) to carry on various action research aiming to develop teaching materials and methods for creativity in their own creative teaching. In the meantime, in order to enhance teachers incorporation of creativity in their teaching, recently there have been various creative teaching competitions, such as GreaTeach 2002 Creative Teaching Awards and the Award for Innovative Teaching, held by the Ministry of Education, universities and non-governmental organisations. These awards aim to encourage teachers to
develop their own creative teaching plans and materials, focusing in particular on developing e-teaching and learning materials (MOE, 2002b; Lin, 2002; Hsiao, 2006; CCME, 2008).

**Creativity in the art curriculum in Taiwan**

In Taiwan, the art curriculum at secondary level is divided into two stages: the junior high school stage and the senior high school stage. Each stage has its own curriculum.

The visual arts at the junior high school stage is a foundation subject in the new *Grade 1-9 curriculum*, which covers elementary (grade 1-6; age 7-12) and junior high school arts education (grade 7-9; age 13-15). It is joined up with music and the performing arts (drama and dance) to create the ‘Arts and Humanities Learning Area’ (AHLA). The new curriculum contains four stages (age 7-8; age 9-10; age 11-12; age 13-15), and junior high school stage belongs in Stage 4. The AHLA aims to cultivate an interest in the arts and encourages students to participate enthusiastically in art-related activities. Thus, it promotes abilities such as imagination, creativity, and appreciation for the arts. As the Ministry of Education in Taiwan (MOE) (MOE, 1993:p20) suggests, the AHLA in school education aims to achieve three main goals, namely: ‘exploring and expression; appreciation and understanding; and practice and implementation’.

Regarding the National Curriculum in senior high schools (age 16-18), a corresponding reform was implemented in 2006 (MOE, 2008). The art curriculum maintained its original content, but the structure and number of lessons was changed slightly. According the MOE (ibid), the new art curriculum emphasises ‘expression, appreciation and practice’, and its aims is that: through art activities, students [will] learn to make informed value judgements about the aesthetic of local and international arts and cultures of local and international arts and cultures, becoming actively involved in shaping environments.

In this study, art education at the secondary stage will only take account of the junior high school level, which also means the new *Grade 1-9 curriculum*. There
are several considerable debates that need to be deliberated in art education; for instance, “what do pupils need art for? Can they be fostered creativity through art? Do they learn to appreciate art or should they be familiar with skills in order to create professional artworks?” An American art educator, E.W. Eisner, once mentioned in his book *Educating Artistic Vision* (1972), which has been an influential publication in Taiwanese art education recently:

“The prime value of the arts in education lies ... in the unique contributions it makes to the individual’s experience with and understanding of the world. The visual arts deal with an aspect of human consciousness that no other fields touches on.” (p2)

Wang (2002) also points out that the appreciation and creation of art come from the interaction between pupils and themselves, pupils and nature, and pupils and society. From these considerations to look at the principles of art curriculum, Kuo (1991 in Kuo, J. J., 1994:p5) brings out to plan an ideal visual arts activity should consider the following three directions: child-centre, discipline-centre and society/culture-centre (see figure 1).

Kuo (1994:p5) further suggests, an ideal visual arts activity also cover three characters namely mediums and skills; aesthetic and forms; meanings and contents (see figure 2).
According to the MOE (MOE, 1993:p19), therefore, the rationales of the new art curriculum in Taiwan are that: (1) ‘art originated from life and is integrated into life; this creates a culture by all human’s daily activities’. Consequently, art education is suggested to provide students with opportunities to explore the ‘environment’, which covers all phenomena and human activities in their surroundings, and to practice ‘skills’; (2) to create a piece of artwork needs creativity, and the characteristics of creativity, fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, have suggested in many studies with a great effect upon the arts (Fox & Pittlly, 2000; Hung, 2004; Hus & Kuo, 2007). Hence, this is believed that art could help pupils’ imagination and creativity development (Lin, 1993; MOE, 1993; Lin, 2000; Hus & Kuo, 2007). In brief, from my point of view, the purpose of art education is not to instruct a professional, it is to encourage pupils to appreciate art, to enjoy making/creating art, and to be willing to apply these creative aesthetic experience into their daily life.

**Current challenges to creative education in Taiwan**

To discuss current challenges of creativity education in Taiwan, it is first necessary to have a clearly stated and widely accepted definition of what creativity and its pedagogy is in this study. Since there has been no official educational statement providing a clear definition in Taiwanese government documents, such as Creativity White Paper or the Grade 1-9 curriculum, creativity in Taiwan has essentially followed Western theories. For instance, Rhodes (1961) proposes the 4P approach to understanding creativity: person, process, products, and place/press. This approach can be used to understand the traits, characteristics or attributes of the creative person; to describe the operations or stages of thinking used in the creative process; to identify the outcomes and qualities of creative products; and to examine the nature of situations and their context within the creative press or environment. Gardner (1993) believes that creativity in the professional field is influenced by the interaction between a person’s intelligence, their personal characteristics, and the supports and opportunities provided by their society.
Nowadays, the tendency of defining the creative vision focuses on comprehensive and multiple ways in Taiwan (Wu, Hsu, Rau, Jian, Chen, Chang & Huang, 2008) that are not only based on professional knowledge, but also include the abilities of perception, cognition, conceptualisation, imagination and symbolisation, and the creative personality and environment (Mao, 1995). Taking one of the most common definitions of creativity as example, Mao, Kuo, Chen & Lin (2000) describe ‘creativity’ as:

(1) an ability to create novel ideas;
(2) an ability to solve problems;
(3) to produce a creative outcome from the thinking process;
(4) a personal characteristic, such as the more tendency towards creativity, the more creative expressions;
(5) an ability to connect or combine with any possibility into a new outcome;
(6) a knowledge-based innovation.

Furthermore, due to the increasing importance of knowledge-economy, the latest definition of creativity is acknowledged as an individual competitiveness which has to be useful for innovative businesses (MOE, 2002a,b). Therefore, original, novel, useful and valuable have been taken as the common standards to value creative products and creative education (Li, 2004, Lin, 2002). Creativity, from this description, is considered in terms of personal characteristics, product outcomes and innovative business ideas. When these concerns are taken into art classroom practice, creativity is often thought of as an ‘individual mental process’, such as imagination, aimed at the production in novel and high quality ways (Huang, 1990; Chen, 1995; Liu, 2000; Sternberg, 2003, Fleming, 2008:p49).

For creative pedagogy, named ‘teaching for creativity’ (Hong, 2005) in Taiwan, the common definition has been described as that teachers apply their own creativity in their teaching plans and activities, and that, through this creative activity, students’ creativity is developed (Chen, 1990; Mao, 1994; Chao, 2004; Hsiao, 2006; Lin, 2008). However, in practice, according to several research papers and the findings of my 2007/8 pilot study, most Taiwanese teachers believe that creative pedagogy has more to do with teaching creatively, named ‘teaching with creativity’ (Hong, 2005), which is argued to tend to teacher-focused (Lin, 2002; Wu, 2002; Ting, 2008). (Actually, there is more evidence from the informal interviews with the current secondary art teachers and teacher training educators.) It can be argued that the use of a creative teaching strategy may
provide a positive learning environment for learners, but that this is not the same as developing the learners’ creativity (NACCCE, 1999; Craft, 2000, 2002; Craft, Cremin & Burnard, 2008). Furthermore, without understanding and training in creativity and creative pedagogy, teachers may continue to uphold stereotypes and misconceptions, and thus influence students’ development and their expressions of creativity. In addition, as several studies suggest, a powerful creative pedagogy would be more focusing on the creative learning, which is suggested as learner-focused engagement (NACCCE, 1999; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Craft, et al. 2008). As Jeffrey and Craft (2006) state:

‘Creative learning is where learning is relevant to the learner, where they have a considerable amount of ownership and control over the materials, techniques and processes of an engagement with some knowledge or skills activity and where the opportunity to be innovative exists’ (p49).

Research Purposes and Research questions

In the UK, it has been proposed that possibility thinking (PT) is at the core of creative learning, and its concept and nature in creativity has been developed over recent years (Craft, 2000, 2001; Cremin, Burnard & Craft, 2006; Chappell, Craft, Burnard & Cremin, 2008a,b). Craft (2000, 2001; Cremin et al. 2006) argues that PT is implicit in learners’ engagement with problems, and suggests that it is exemplified through the posing of the question ‘what if?’ in multiple ways. It involves the shift from asking ‘What is this and what does it do?’ to ‘What can I do with this?’, particularly in relation to ‘identifying, honing and solving problems’ (Craft, 2000, 2001; Jeffrey and Craft 2004; Jeffrey 2005; Chappell, et al. 2008b:p 268).

Since several theories have been proposed in the research literature which emphasise the importance of social and cultural context to creativity, in which creativity is directly affected by differing social and cultural norms which result in differences in education and socialisation (eg. Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Sternberg, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006; Oral, 2008). The aim in this study to use a U.K. PT teaching pedagogy in a Taiwanese context may potentially cause cultural issues. To reduce this potential, the PT pedagogic model here will be based on participants’ knowledge of creativity and its
pedagogy, providing a concept of PT within a Taiwanese context, which is assumed to emerge from this study. Through encouraging participants to engage in ‘What if?’ thinking and to move from the current Taiwanese creative teaching (teacher-focused) approach into new imaginative territory in relation to how creative pedagogy (more learner-focused approach) might occur, the focus addresses the context of an enabling environment, such as posing questions, play, immersion, innovation, being imaginative, self-determination and risk-taking. These general approaches and methods are assumed to be culturally generic.

Since a wide range of research has explored the issue of PT in creativity education and its pedagogy (Craft, 2001; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Cremin, Burnard & Craft, 2006), little attention has been paid in the field of teacher education, particularly in art. Hence, this study aims to take an insight from a teacher educator to explore how an Art teacher-training course can help student teachers to develop their conceptions of creative pedagogy in terms of knowledge, teaching techniques and confidence. Through introducing the concept of PT creative pedagogy to student teachers, this work seeks to explore implications for learning futures at a systemic level and to provide an original contribution to the field of Secondary school Art education in Taiwan.

In order to carry out the aims proposed above, this study will introduce 4 sessions of a creative workshop within the concept of PT and its pedagogy in order to explore the principal research questions:

**Question 1:**
What are art student teachers’ perceptions of creativity and creative pedagogy?
1.1 What are their perceptions of creativity and its pedagogy in art education before participating in a creative pedagogy workshop?
1.2 What are their perceptions of creativity and its pedagogy in art education after the workshop?

**Question 2:**
How do conceptions of practice and creative pedagogy develop during the workshop?
2.1 How do participants’ conceptions of creative pedagogy develop?
2.2 What resources or strategies help participants develop their conceptions and implementation of creative pedagogy?

2.3 How are participants’ conceptions of creative pedagogy manifest in their performance in the end of workshop?

**Methodology**

The assumptions which underpin the workshop intervention and methods for researching it, and within these, how creative pedagogy is conceptualised and applied by the researcher and the participants, reflects values inherent in the specific culture at departmental, institutional and societal level. It is argued therefore that the nature of reality in this study is subjective and multiple and that only through interacting with the participants will the researcher be able to uncover their perceptions of the phenomena they are acquiring and experiencing. Thus, the over-arching paradigm to be used in the study is the interpretive approach reflecting epistemological and ontological assumptions that recognise relativism and multiplicity of perspectives. Such epistemological and ontological underpinnings are played out in this study through the collaborative relationship between researcher and participants, the values in this research are attempted to be grounded, constructed and shared meanings, and the meaning is co-constructed and concerned with understanding. Within the role of researcher is not only as a researcher, but also as a teacher training educator participating in the creative workshop.

**Research Design and method**

The study will adopt a case study approach within action research concept carrying out 4 sessions of a creative workshop to 12 student teachers in their second-year of the Art teacher training programme in an art university in Taiwan. The participants are of mixed age, gender, and educational background (general or vocational education system) and some of the participants may have teaching experience, either in schools or in private art institutions.

As several studies suggest, a multi-method approach is best suited to account for
a phenomenon across several viewpoints (e.g., Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Denzin, 1989). This approach is based on the idea that a given phenomenon will be uncovered by deliberately combining various types of methods (e.g., questionnaire, interview, and so on) within one study. Thus, the design for researching creative pedagogy is divided into 3 stages, and the multiple methods and instruments of data collection in each stage are employed. In addition, the analytical framework will be developed through an iterative process, which will draw on the literature from previous studies and the nature of the data gathered in this study. Internal validity will be achieved through utilising multiple data sources (questionnaire, interview transcripts, research diary and so on), which will ensure triangulation. These methods are all dependent on deeper methodological considerations of the nature of knowledge and the nature of being in order to gain a deeper insight into the development of creative pedagogy.

Stage 1 (refer to research question 1)
Stage 1 of the empirical research uses questionnaires and in-depth individual interviews and will take place before the creative workshop. The aim is to identify the participants’ basic perceptions of creativity and creative pedagogy in order to provide foundation knowledge as the starting point for the workshop. Informed consent is obtained from all participating student teachers before the research process commences, so that they are voluntary enrolling in this study. The stage begins with an open-ended questionnaire in which participants’ general conceptions of creative pedagogy are explored. This will be followed by a detailed exploration of a few cases through semi-structured interviews.

The data analysis in this stage including the data from open-ended questions in the questionnaires and the interactive information in the interviews will be undertaken using content analysis. Several ‘meaningful categorisations’ will emerge according to my interpretation from the transcripts (Kvale, 1996:p192).

Stage 2 (refer to research question 2)
Stage 2 of the research is the main segment in this CP study and focuses on an intervention approach, in which the role of researcher will be both as a researcher and an educator involving in the workshop. The main purpose of the investigation is essentially to explore how student teachers develop their conceptions of
practice and creative pedagogy in the course of the creative workshop. 4 sessions of a creative workshop to 12 student teachers is selected to provide a structured content containing the following focused categories: (1) participants’ conceptions of creativity; (2) participants’ conceptions of creative pedagogy; (3) the resources or strategies help participants develop their conceptions and implementation of creative pedagogy; (4) participants implement creative pedagogy in their performance. Therefore, within the workshop, the issue of the development in creativity and creative pedagogy in a wider professional context will arise from empirical account of researcher’s pedagogy, video-recorded observations for the student teachers’ engagement, as well as the interactions and discussions between researcher and participants. The methods for data collection include field notes, researcher’s diary, participants’ logs (sketchbook), video-recorded observations, group discussion, and any possible visual data.

Analysis allows categories to emerge from data, such as video/audio data and observational /other field notes, and uses a version of grounded theory to allow saturated categories to be made visible.

**Stage 3 (refer to research question 1)**

Stage 3 will be applied after the workshop, involving the comparison of research findings along with the interview used in Stage 1. Open-ended questions are used to clarify and test whether student teachers’ conceptions of creative pedagogy are built up in a broader and wider content, and whether they have more confidence to use creative pedagogy in their future professional work.

**Ethical considerations**

Informed consent is firstly obtained from all participating student teachers. In order to ensure that the participants’ would be fully aware of their rights and have some understanding of the context and purpose of the study, written information will be provided before all the research process, so that they become involved on a voluntary basis. They will be assured that they could withdraw at any time for any and no reason.
Secondly, participants are assured that confidentiality and anonymity would be protected in every stage of this study and that the data would be stored securely, including questionnaire and interview stages, video-recorded observations and participants’ sketchbook/log. Particularly, video and photographs will be only used for observation purposes and be viewed by the researcher. Care is taken in designing and operationalising instruments to ensure minimum stress and disruption, and maximum care of the participant.

Finally, trustworthiness is also concerned in this interpretive approach. In the current study, the researcher and the participants of the study all contribute to the interpretation of meaning as multiple realities. Thus, it is vital to be given a focus on co-construction meanings made by researcher and all participants and a close focus on transformation/change. The need, therefore, for both a clear analytic trail and also explicit opportunities to negotiate interpretation and meaning will be a key concern in this study.

**Conclusion**

It was the aim of this paper to discuss the role and value of creativity in education in Taiwan. It is certainly apparent that although some positive statements are made about creativity in the current documents: the *Creativity White Paper* (MOE, 2002) and the *new Grade 1-9 Curriculum* (MOE, 2000), there are also some current challenges that need to be fully recognised. There has been limited space here to discuss in detail creative pedagogy literature based on cultural issues, but within my own study it will be an important part. In the following stage, this study will be taken in an arts university in Taiwan. It will be interesting to see how this study develops, and also the implications its outcomes may have for understanding how creative pedagogy is formed by student teachers.

**Reference List**


National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999). *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*. London: DfEE.


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