

Developing Creativity in Higher Education

Our ability to imagine and then invent new worlds for ourselves is one of our greatest assets and the origin of all human achievement, yet the importance of creativity in learning and achievement is largely unrecognised in a higher-education world that places more value on critical and rational thinking. It is a vision of a higher-education world in which students' creativity is valued alongside more traditional forms of academic achievement that provides the driving force for this book.

Developing Creativity in Higher Education has grown out of the Imaginative Curriculum network-based collaborative learning project. It is the first book to systematically address the issue of creativity in higher education. It features:

- an analysis of the problem of creativity in higher education and rich perspectives on the meanings of creativity in different teaching and subject contexts;
- illustrative examples of teaching and assessment strategies, augmented by web-based curriculum guides and aids to encourage teachers to examine their own understandings of creativity in order to help students to develop their own creativity;
- practical advice on how to foster creativity at an individual and an institutional level.

Developing Creativity in Higher Education will appeal to teachers, educational developers and institutional managers who want to enrich the higher-education experiences of their students and enable them to develop more of their potential.

Norman Jackson is Director for the University of Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTre) and Professor of Higher Education. **Martin Oliver** is a Senior Lecturer at the London Knowledge Lab, Institute of Education, London. **Malcolm Shaw** is Professor of Education Development at Leeds Metropolitan University. **James Wisdom** is a higher-education consultant, Co-Chair of the Staff and Educational Development Association and a visiting Professor at Middlesex University.

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Developing creativity in higher education

An imaginative curriculum

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**Edited by
Norman Jackson, Martin Oliver,
Malcolm Shaw and James Wisdom**

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First published 2006
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 2006 Norman Jackson, Martin Oliver, Malcolm Shaw and James
Wisdom selection and editorial matter, individual chapters the contributors

Typeset in Times by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear
Printed and bound in Great Britain by ????

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Developing creativity in higher education : an imaginative curriculum /
[edited by] Norman Jackson . . . [et al.].

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Creative thinking. 2. Education, Higher. I. Jackson, Norman,
1950-

LB1062.D495 2006

378.1'99-dc22

2005030864

ISBN10: 0-415-36533-3 (hbk)

ISBN10: 0-415-36532-5 (pbk)

ISBN13: ????

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Acknowledgements

This book has been co-created by many people. Many of the chapters were grown from conversations with academics or students, were captured in transcripts, working papers or notes of meetings and then reworked through further conversation with peers. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the peer review process: Christine Sinclair, John Cowan, Russ Law, Michael Pittilo, Fred Buining, Richard Seel, John Biggs, Lewis Elton, Ron Barnett and Victor Borden. The book would have been very different without their critical and constructive contributions.

In the sort of emergent and socially constructive knowledge-building process we are engaged in, it is sometimes very difficult to associate an idea with an individual, a conversation or event. Throughout the Imaginative Curriculum project, people have been very generous with their ideas and opinions in order that we might all advance our understanding. This book is dedicated to every academic, student, staff and educational developer, manager and researcher who contributed to our project; without your contributions this book would not have been possible. We would particularly like to pay tribute to the members of the Imaginative Curriculum network who have participated in email conversations and network events, or who have provided personal accounts of their teaching, and the 94 National Teaching Fellows, 100+ academics and 100+ students who contributed to our five research studies.

The project would not have been possible without the financial support provided by the Learning and Teaching Support Network Generic Centre (January 2001–May 2004) and the Higher Education Academy, which replaced the LTSN (May 2004–present). We also acknowledge the financial assistance and encouragement provided by the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA). Support for network meetings was also provided by the Centre for Academic Practice at the University of Strathclyde and the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching at the University of Hertfordshire.

Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has inspired many people with his thinking and writing on creativity, and influenced our approach to exploring the idea of creativity in higher education. Thank you for adding your voice to those of the other contributors.

In keeping with the idea that creativity is a socially constructed phenomenon

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we must also recognise that it is a socially supported phenomenon and acknowledge the enormous contribution made by our families to giving us the time and space to turn our imaginations into reality. You thought we were mad but thank you, Taraneh, Navid, Yalda, Neda, Ben, Jodie, Gemma, Kathy, Elizabeth, Daniel, Jenny, Jasmine and Jake for putting up with us.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the creative contributions of the Routledge team especially Kirsty Smy and Helen Pritt in shaping the book.

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Abbreviations

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13	CACE	Central Advisory Council for Education (England)
14	CETL	Centres of Excellence for Teaching and Learning
15	CPD	Continuing professional development
16	DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
17	DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
18	DFES	Department of Education and Skills
19	DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
20	HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council England
21	ILTHE	Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
22	LTSN	Learning and Teaching Support Network
23	NACCCE	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Educa-
24		tion
25	NCSL	National College for School Leadership
26	NESTA	National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts
27	OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
28	SEDA	Staff and Educational Development Association
29	QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
30	QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
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Foreword

Developing creativity

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Doctoral students drop out of universities before graduation not because they cannot pass exams or get good grades in courses, but because they cannot come up with an original idea for a dissertation. They are bright and know an enormous amount, but all their academic careers they have learned how to answer questions, solve problems set for them by others. Now that it is their turn to come up with a question worth answering, all too many of them are at a loss.

One hears the same story in industry and the business world, in civil service and scientific research. Technical knowledge and expertise might abound, but originality and innovation are scarce. Yet the way our species has been developing, creativity has become increasingly important. In the Renaissance creativity might have been a luxury for the few, but by now it is a necessity for all.

There are several reasons for this, some that are in conflict with each other. The first is the undeniable increase in the rate of change, mainly spearheaded by technology but also involving lifestyles, beliefs and knowledge. Today's technical marvel is obsolete tomorrow; the diet so many swear by today turns out to be unhealthy after all; the scientific specialty one has trained in for many years no longer provides a stable career. Great nations collapse, wealthy corporations dissolve in bankruptcy. It takes creativity not to be blinded by the trappings of stability, to recognize the coming changes, anticipate their consequences and thus perhaps lead them in a desirable direction.

A second trend is the rapid globalization of economic and social systems. Ideally, this would lead to a better distribution of labor and of resources; a better integration of beliefs, values, and knowledge. At the same time, globalization involves a great deal of what Schumpeter called 'creative destruction' – without a certainty that the destruction will actually result in a creative outcome. It will take a good dose of creativity to avoid the result that the division between rich and poor will not replicate on a global scale the former division between capitalists and proletariat; that the valued traditions of less powerful cultures will not be lost, but integrated with the Western patterns so as to enrich the future instead of impoverishing it.

Another emerging trend is the specialization of knowledge, leading to new forms of fragmentation based on knowledge rather than tradition. A great number of breakthroughs in science of the past century have come at the interface of disciplines: between physics and chemistry, between chemistry and

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1 biology. As each discipline keeps becoming deeper and more complex, it is easy
2 to lose sight of those neighboring branches of knowledge that might help trans-
3 form one's own.

4 Any society, any institution that does not take these realities into account is
5 unlikely to be successful, or even to survive in the coming years. On the other
6 hand, individuals who see the opportunities in this new scenario are going to be
7 in a better position to add value to their communities, and prosper in the process.
8 But this requires the ability to recognize the emerging realities, to understand
9 their implications, and to formulate responses that harness the energy of evolu-
10 tion to build products, ideas, and connections that add value to life. And that
11 requires creativity.

12 How is education preparing young people for this creative task? So far, not
13 very well. The culture-lag between what is needed in the present and what the
14 schools offer has always existed; now it threatens to grow ever larger. Schools
15 teach how to answer, not to question. They teach isolated disciplines that, as the
16 years pass, become more and more difficult to integrate. Reference to the
17 present, let alone to the future, is lacking in most school curricula which are
18 dominated – understandably, perhaps – by a concern with transmitting past
19 knowledge. Yet the past is no longer as good a guide to the future as it once had
20 been. Young people have to learn how to relate and apply past ways of knowing
21 to a constantly changing kaleidoscope of ideas and events. And that requires
22 learning to be creative.

23 The present volume, edited by Norman Jackson and colleagues, is thus very
24 timely. To my knowledge, this is the first volume addressing the role of creativ-
25 ity in higher education. It is a difficult but essential project. Difficult for several
26 reasons, some more easily avoidable than others. The most obvious danger is
27 that of reducing creativity to a facile routine of exercises in 'thinking outside the
28 box.' These days the popular view of a creative person is someone who spins off
29 original ideas left and right, a person one would like to hang out with at a cock-
30 tail party so as to be amused by a constant stream of witty apperceptions.

31 But if one is to go by the evidence of the creative individuals of the past, cre-
32 ativity requires a focused, almost obsessive concern for a clearly delimited prob-
33 lematic area. Neither Isaac Newton nor Leonardo da Vinci would have been great
34 hits at a party. Neither Johann Sebastian Bach nor Dante Alighieri were known for
35 their witty repartee or fluid imagination – except in their own work. There are
36 occasional exceptions: Benjamin Franklin was more like the current conception of
37 what a creative person should be like, as apparently he *was* the life of the party at
38 the French court during his residence there. But within their domain of interest, all
39 creative individuals love the task that engages their whole energy. They all echo
40 the words of Paolo Uccello, the Florentine who was one of the first to learn how to
41 use perspective in painting, who according to his wife used to walk up and down
42 the bedchamber all night, shaking his head and muttering: 'Ah, what a beautiful
43 thing is this perspective!'

44 So if one wishes to inject creativity in the educational system, the first step
45 might be to help students find out what they truly love, and help them to
46 immerse themselves in the domain – be it poetry or physics, engineering or

xx *Foreword*

dance. If young people become involved with what they enjoy, the foundations for creativity will be in place. Vittorino da Feltre, who at the turn of the 1400s started one of the first liberal arts colleges in Europe, well understood the relationship between enjoyment and creative learning. He called his school *La Gioiosa* – The Joyful Place – and many of his students ended up among the leading thinkers of the next generation.

But how can the joy of learning be instilled in modern universities? There are several approaches one can take: First, making sure that teachers are selected in part because they model the joy of learning themselves, and are able to spark it in students; second, that the curriculum takes into account the students' desire for joyful learning; third, that the pedagogy is focused on awakening the imagination and engagement of students; and finally that the institution rewards and facilitates the love of learning among faculty and students alike.

But even this is just a first step, a setting of the stage, so to speak. When students are eager to immerse themselves in learning because it is a rewarding, enjoyable task, the basic prerequisites for creativity are met. What next? That is where the readings of this volume come in. They present a variety of perspectives on the stimulation of creativity, on how to support and nurture it. Taken together, they provide a much needed cornerstone for the systematic introduction of creativity into higher education.

Claremont, December 2005

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