

Teaching Geography Creatively

2nd
Edition

Edited by Stephen Scoffham

LEARNING TO TEACH IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SERIES





GA Publishers' Awards 2014

In 2014 the first edition of *Teaching Geography Creatively* won the Geographical Association gold award for the best geography teaching resources of the year. The prestigious gold award is only awarded to materials of sufficient merit and is not awarded every year. The judges commented:

'The judges found this publication to be dynamic and engaging, with lots of practical approaches for geography teaching in the classroom. Teachers will be able to dip into the book then introduce and apply the ideas to their own setting.'

This publication will be valuable for experienced and specialist teachers of geography with responsibility for leadership and implementation of geography in the primary setting. This book will also be useful for teachers of varying levels of expertise, including student teachers and those who lack the confidence to teach exciting geography lessons.'



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TEACHING GEOGRAPHY CREATIVELY

***Teaching Geography Creatively* was Winner of the Geographical Association Gold Award 2014.**

This fully updated second edition of *Teaching Geography Creatively* is a stimulating source of guidance for busy trainee and experienced teachers. Packed full of practical approaches for bringing the teaching of geography to life, it offers a range of innovative ideas for exploring physical geography, human geography and environmental issues.

Underpinned by the latest research and theory, expert authors from schools and universities explore the inter-relationship between creativity and learning, and consider how creativity can enhance pupils' motivation, self-image and well-being. Two brand new chapters focus on creative approaches to learning about the physical world, as well as the value of alternative learning settings.

Further imaginative ideas include:

- games and starter activities as entry points for creative learning
- how to keep geography messy
- the outdoors and learning beyond the classroom
- how to teach geography using your local area
- the links between geography and other areas of the curriculum
- looking at geography, creativity and the future
- fun and games in geography
- engaging with the world through picture-books
- teaching about sustainability.

With contemporary, cutting-edge practice at the forefront, *Teaching Geography Creatively* is an essential read for all trainee and practising teachers, offering a variety of practical strategies to create a fun and stimulating learning environment. In the process it offers a pedagogy that respects the integrity of children as joyful and imaginative learners and which offers a vision of how geography can contribute to constructing a better and more equitable world.

Stephen Scoffham is a visiting reader in sustainability and education at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK. A leading member of the Geographical Association, he is the author of many books for teachers and children on primary geography, and a school atlas consultant.

THE LEARNING TO TEACH IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SERIES

Series Editor: Teresa Cremin, The Open University, UK

Teaching is an art form. It demands not only knowledge and understanding of the core areas of learning, but also the ability to teach these creatively and foster learner creativity in the process. The Learning to Teach in the Primary School Series draws upon recent research which indicates the rich potential of creative teaching and learning, and explores what it means to teach creatively in the primary phase. It also responds to the evolving nature of subject teaching in a wider, more imaginatively framed twenty-first-century primary curriculum.

Designed to complement the textbook *Learning to Teach in the Primary School*, the well-informed, lively texts in this series offer support for student and practising teachers who want to develop more creative approaches to teaching and learning. Uniquely, the books highlight the importance of the teachers' own creative engagement and share a wealth of research informed ideas to enrich pedagogy and practice.

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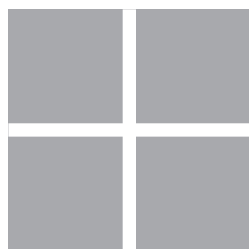
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TEACHING GEOGRAPHY CREATIVELY

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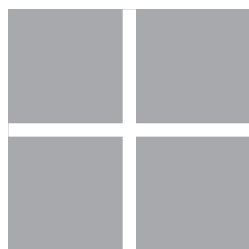
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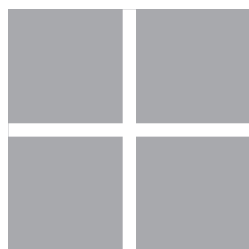


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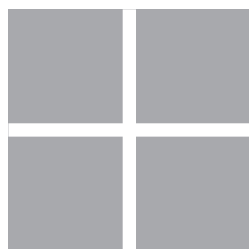
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CONTRIBUTORS

Anthony Barlow is senior lecturer in primary geography education and BA Primary Education Programme convener at the University of Roehampton. He is co-chair of the Early Years and Primary phase committee of the Geographical Association (GA). He has a fascination with trees.

Jonathan Barnes is a visiting senior research fellow at Canterbury Christ Church University and a National Teaching fellow. He currently works as education consultant to Migrant Help UK. He is author of *Cross Curricular Learning 3–14* (now in its third edition) and the forthcoming *Applying Cross-curricular Approaches Creatively*.

Simon Catling is emeritus professor of primary education in the School of Education, Oxford Brookes University. A past president of the Geographical Association, he is author of *Mapstart*, co-author of *Teaching Primary Geography* and edited *Research and Debates in Primary Geography*. Though retired, he continues to research and write.

Anne M. Dolan is a lecturer in primary geography at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland. Her research interests include geographical education, geo-literacy and creativity in education. She is the author of *You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for Teaching Development and Intercultural Education* (Trentham Books and IOE Press, London).

Arthur J. Kelly is a senior lecturer in education at Chester University. He is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Primary Geography* and is a moderator for the Primary Geography Quality Mark, a national scheme benchmarking geographical teaching and learning.

Margaret Mackintosh was senior lecturer in primary geography education at Plymouth University. She is a member of the Geographical Association's Early Years and Primary phase committee and serves on the editorial board of *Primary Geography*.

Paula Owens is an education consultant. A former primary and deputy head teacher, Paula worked for the Geographical Association for many years leading the Primary

Geography Quality Mark and curriculum development. She is a member of the Geography Expert Subject Advisory Group and the *Primary Geography* editorial board.

Stephen Pickering is senior lecturer in primary education at the University of Worcester and course leader for primary and outdoor education. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a consultant for the Geographical Association (GA) where he sits on the GA's *Primary Geography* editorial board.

Susan Pike is a lecturer in geography education at the Institute of Education, Dublin City University. She teaches geography education at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Her research interests include all aspects of children's learning in geography as well as teacher education. She is the author of *Learning Primary Geography: Ideas and Inspirations from Classrooms*.

Stephen Scoffham is a visiting reader in sustainability and education at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK. A leading member of the Geographical Association, he is the author of many books for teachers and children on primary geography, and a school atlas consultant.

Julia Tanner spent her career in teaching and teacher education, and now works as an education trainer, consultant, and author, specialising in primary humanities, outdoor learning, and effective pedagogy. She is a member of the Geographical Association's Early Years and Primary phase committee, and Publications Board.

Peter Vujakovic is professor of geography at Canterbury Christ Church University. He has written widely on cartography and information graphics and has recently run a national workshop on primary school atlases as co-convenor of the British Cartographic Society's Map Design Special Interest Group.

Niki Whitburn is a former senior lecturer at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, now retired. She has also previously worked for Earth Science Teachers' Association as chair of their council and a member of their Primary team.

Jane Whittle is a classroom teacher and technology integration coach at the International School of Bologna. She is co-author of a number of texts including *Back2Front: The Americas* and *The Everyday Guide to Teaching Geography: Story*.

Terry Whyte is senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Canterbury Christ Church University. He has written in books, journals and electronic publications about his research and his approach to education in which learning, creativity and fun are intrinsically linked.

Sharon Witt is senior lecturer in education at the University of Winchester. Her research interests include playful, experiential approaches to primary geography and place responsive education. She is a member of the Early Years and Primary phase committee of the Geographical Association and the Geography Expert Subject Advisory Group.



SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Teresa Cremin

Over recent decades teachers working in accountability cultures across the globe have been required to focus on raising standards, setting targets, and 'delivering' prescribed curricula and pedagogy. The language of schooling, Mottram and Hall (2009: 109) assert, has predominantly focused upon 'oversimplified, easily measurable notions of attainment' which, they argue, has had a homogenising effect, prompting children and their development to be discussed 'according to levels and descriptors', rather than as children, as unique learners. Practitioners, positioned as passive recipients of the prescribed agenda appear to have had their hands tied, their voices quietened and their professional autonomy both threatened and constrained. At times, the relentless quest for higher standards has obscured the personal and affective dimensions of teaching and learning, fostering a mindset characterised more by compliance and conformity than curiosity and creativity.

However, creativity too has been in the ascendant in recent decades; in many countries efforts have been made to re-ignite creativity in education, since it is seen to be essential to economic and cultural development. This impetus for creativity can be traced back to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE 1999), which recommended a core role for creativity in teaching and learning. Primary schools in England were encouraged to explore ways to offer more innovative and creative curricula (DfES 2003) and new national curricula in Scotland also foregrounded children's critical and creative thinking. Additionally, initiatives such as Creative Partnerships, an English government-funded initiative to nurture children's creativity, inspired some teachers to reconstruct their pedagogy (Galton 2010). Many other schools and teachers, encouraged by these initiatives, and determined to offer creative and engaging school experiences, have exercised the 'power to innovate' (Lance 2006). Many have proactively sought ways to shape the curriculum responsively, appropriating national policies in their own contexts and showing professional commitment and imagination, despite, or perhaps because of, the persistent performative agenda (e.g. Cremin *et al.* 2015; Neelands 2009; Jeffrey and Woods 2009).

Schools continue to be exhorted to be more innovative in curriculum construction and national curricula afford opportunities for all teachers to seize the space,

exert their professionalism and shape their own curricula in collaboration with the young people with whom they are working. Yet for primary educators, tensions persist, not only because the dual policies of performativity and creativity appear contradictory, but also perhaps because teachers' own confidence as creative educators, indeed as creative individuals, has been radically reduced by the constant barrage of change and challenge. As Csikszentmihalyi (2011) notes, teachers lack a theoretically underpinned framework for creativity that can be developed in practice; they need support to develop as artistically engaged, research-informed curriculum co-developers. Eisner (2003) asserts that teaching is an art form, an act of improvisation (Sawyer 2011), and that teachers benefit from viewing themselves as versatile artists in the classroom, drawing on their personal passions and creativity as they teach creatively.

As Joubert too observes:

Creative teaching is an art. One cannot teach teachers didactically how to be creative; there is no fail safe recipe or routines. Some strategies may help to promote creative thinking, but teachers need to develop a full repertoire of skills which they can adapt to different situations.

(Joubert 2001: 21)

However, creative teaching is only part of the picture, since teaching for creativity also needs to be acknowledged and their mutual dependency recognised. The former focuses more on teachers using imaginative approaches in the classroom (and beyond) in order to make learning more interesting and effective, the latter, more on the development of children's creativity (NACCCE 1999). Both rely upon an understanding of the notion of creativity and demand that professionals confront the myths and mantras which surround the word. These include the commonly held misconceptions that creativity is the preserve of the arts or arts education, and that it is confined to particularly gifted individuals.

Creativity, an elusive concept, has been multiply defined by educationalists, psychologists and neurologists, as well as by policy makers in different countries and researchers in different cultural contexts (Glăveanu 2015). Debates resound about its individual and/or collaborative nature, the degree to which it is generic and/or domain specific, and the differences between the 'big C' creativity of genius and the 'little c' creativity of the everyday. Notwithstanding these issues, most scholars in the field believe it involves the capacity to generate, reason and critically evaluate novel ideas and/or imaginary scenarios. As such, it encompasses thinking through and solving problems, making connections, inventing and reinventing, and flexing one's imaginative muscles in all aspects of learning and life.

In the primary classroom, creative teaching and learning have been associated with innovation, originality, ownership and control (Woods and Jeffrey 1996; Jeffrey 2006) and creative teachers have been seen, in their planning and teaching, and in the ethos which they create, to afford high value to curiosity and risk taking, to ownership, autonomy and making connections (Craft *et al.* 2014; Cremin *et al.* 2009; Cremin 2015). Such teachers often work in partnership with others: with children, other teachers and experts from beyond the school gates (Cochrane and Cockett 2007; Davies *et al.* 2012; Thomson *et al.* 2012). These partnerships offer new possibilities, with teachers acquiring some of the repertoire of pedagogic

practices – the ‘signature pedagogies’ that artists use (Thomson and Hall 2015). Additionally, in research exploring possibility thinking, which Craft (2000) argues drives creativity in education, an intriguing interplay between teachers and children has been observed. In this body of work, children and teachers have been involved in immersing themselves in playful contexts, posing questions, being imaginative, showing self-determination, taking risks and innovating – together (Burnard *et al.* 2006; Cremin *et al.* 2006, 2013; Chappell *et al.* 2008; Craft *et al.* 2012). As McWilliam (2008) argues, teachers can choose not to position themselves as the all-knowing ‘sage on the stage’, or the facilitator-like ‘guide on the side’. They can choose, as creative practitioners do, to take up a role of the ‘meddler in the middle’, co-creating curricula in innovative and responsive ways that harness their own and foster the children’s creativity. A new pedagogy of possibility beckons.

The Learning to Teach in the Primary School series, which accompanies and complements the edited textbook *Learning to Teach in the Primary School* (Cremin and Arthur 2014), seeks to support teachers in developing as creative practitioners, assisting them in exploring the synergies between and potential for teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. The series does not merely offer practical strategies for use in the classroom, though these abound, but more importantly seeks to widen teachers’ and student teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the principles underpinning creative approaches, principles based on research. It seeks to mediate the wealth of research evidence and make accessible and engaging the diverse theoretical perspectives and scholarly arguments available, demonstrating their practical relevance and value to the profession. Those who aspire to develop further as creative and curious educators will find much of value to support their own professional learning journeys and markedly enrich their pedagogy and practice right across the curriculum.

ABOUT THE SERIES EDITOR

Teresa Cremin (Grainger) is a Professor of Education (literacy) at the Open University and a past president of UKRA (2001–2) and UKLA (2007–9). She is currently a director of the Cambridge Primary Review Trust, co-convener of the BERA Creativity SIG and a trustee of Booktrust and UKLA. In addition, Teresa is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts, the English Association and the Academy of Social Sciences.

Teresa’s work involves research, publication and consultancy in literacy and creativity. Many of her current projects seek to explore the nature and characteristics of creative pedagogies, including for example, examining immersive theatre and related teaching techniques, children’s make believe play in the context of story-telling and story acting, their everyday lives and literacy practices, and the nature of literary discussions in extracurricular reading groups. Additionally, Teresa is researching creative science practice with learners aged 3–8 years and possibility thinking as a driver for creative learning. Teresa is also passionate about (and still researching) teachers’ own creative development and their identity positioning in the classroom as readers, writers, and creative human beings.

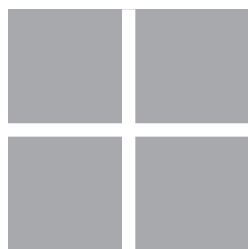
Teresa has written and edited over 25 books, and numerous papers and professional texts, most recently editing with colleagues *Researching Literacy Lives: Building home-school communities* (2015, Routledge), *Teaching English Creatively*

(2nd edn 2015, Routledge), *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for Pleasure* (2014, Routledge) and *The International Handbook of Research into Children's Literacy, Learning and Culture* (2013, Blackwell). *Storytelling in Early Childhood: Enriching Language, Literacy and Classroom Culture* is forthcoming (2016, Routledge). In addition her book publications since 2000 include *Writing Voices: Creating Communities of Writers* (2012, Routledge), *Learning to Teach in the Primary School* (2014, Routledge), *Teaching Writing Effectively: Reviewing Practice* (2011, UKLA), *Drama, Reading and Writing: Talking Our Way Forwards* (2009, UKLA), *Jumpstart Drama* (2009, David Fulton), *Creative Teaching for Tomorrow: Fostering a Creative State of Mind* (2009, Future Creative), *Documenting Creative Learning 5–11* (2007, Trentham), *Creativity and Writing: Developing Voice and Verve* (2005, Routledge), *Teaching English in Higher Education* (2007, NATE and UKLA), *Creative Activities for Character, Setting and Plot, 5–7, 7–9, 9–11* (2004, Scholastic) and *Language and Literacy: A Routledge Reader* (2001, Routledge).

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Stephen Scoffham
Canterbury Christ Church University
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CHAPTER

1

GEOGRAPHY AND CREATIVITY

Making connections

Stephen Scoffham

This chapter explores what we mean by creativity. It begins by considering some of the different definitions and features of creative thought and how these might relate to class-room practice. It is suggested that creative learning experiences have the potential to enrich the curriculum and enhance personal well-being. The rich possibilities that are offered by geography are outlined. The chapter concludes by arguing that creative approaches involving joyful and imaginative learning set in a values context, will build children's capacities in the face of an increasingly uncertain future.

INTRODUCTION

Creativity is an elusive concept. It is treasured by many educationalists as one of the key elements of effective teaching, yet remains ill-defined and poorly understood. Historically, creativity was associated with the act of creation, which was seen as a divine gift. The notion that the world was created by God is a central tenet in many religious texts. We learn from the Bible, for example, how, in the beginning, God created the heavens and Earth, progressively adding light, water, sky and living things. Certainly, there are good reasons why people in the past might have wanted to invoke superhuman powers to explain the magic and beauty of life in all its diversity. How else could these wonders have come about? Interestingly, the association between creation and creativity is embedded in our language. Both terms are derived from the same Latin verb *creare*, which means to produce or to make. It is no coincidence that the word 'creature' also shares the same linguistic root. Small wonder then that we sometimes feel uncomfortable when we are invited to be creative. The student who, when asked to note her responses to a heritage site, roundly declared 'I don't do creativity!' was reflecting this unease. Her fear was that she would be unable to come up with something that required exceptional talents or gifts.

In modern times the meaning of creativity has shifted considerably. While the idea that creativity implies a special gift still informs popular usage, it has also taken on a more prosaic dimension. Solving the problems that make up our everyday lives has come to be seen as a creative activity. As we think of solutions, suggest alternatives and imagine what might happen in the future, we are drawing on our creative powers. In education, especially, creativity has come to be associated with thinking and learning. Scoffham and

Barnes (2007: 13), for example, argue that creativity is a ‘fundamental aspect of human thought’. This means that, rather than being restricted to the expressive arts, creativity has relevance for all curriculum areas.

The overlap between creativity and human thought places it at the centre of the educational agenda. Moreover, there is an increasing realisation that creativity is not fixed. Some years ago, a key UK government report, *All Our Futures* (NACCCE 1999: 28), made the point that ‘all people are capable of creative achievement in some area of activity’. It now seems that we can develop our creative capacities whatever area we are involved in. Drawing on research, Lucas and Claxton (2011) argue that our mental attitude and temperament are not set in stone but are capable of change. Not only do they offer compelling evidence to support this claim, but they also outline practical strategies for effecting change. This is encouraging news because teachers are in a prime position to construct situations in which creativity is likely to flourish.

DEFINITIONS OF CREATIVITY

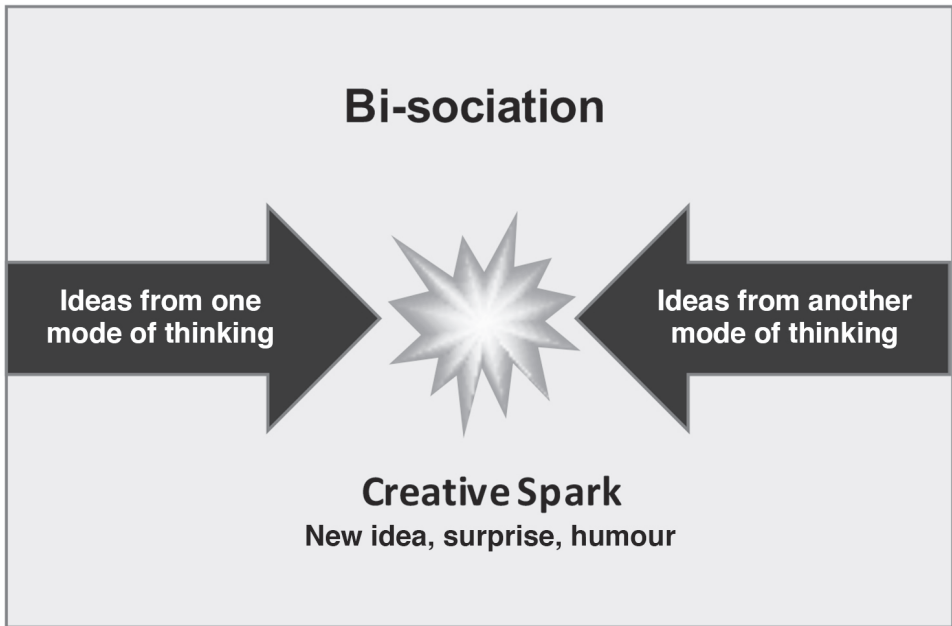
There are many definitions of creativity. In educational circles the definition that was put forward by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE 1999) has gained considerable currency and informed much subsequent thinking. The committee argued that creativity always involves the four following characteristics:

- (a) thinking and behaving imaginatively;
- (b) purposeful activity directed towards an objective;
- (c) processes that generate something which is original;
- (d) outcomes that are of value in relation to the objective.

This led the NACCCE to define creativity as ‘imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value’ (*ibid.*: 30).

The NACCCE definition places considerable stress on products and outcomes and underplays the role of experimentation and flexibility. Sometimes we simply do not know where our thoughts are heading. Craft (2000) draws attention to this aspect of creativity in what she calls ‘possibility thinking’. This involves both solving problems and raising questions. She also reminds us that creativity is not a single process but involves multiple dimensions that include looking into ourselves as well as outwards towards our surroundings. De Bono (2010), who coined the term ‘lateral thinking’, takes a different approach when he highlights the importance of making connections and seeking alternatives. He stresses how creativity involves going beyond the obvious to generate novel solutions. One of de Bono’s particular interests is to develop strategies that allow people to pool their thoughts. His ‘thinking hats’ is a neat device for avoiding the limiting effect of binary approaches. Another enduring insight comes from Koestler (1964), who emphasises the link between creativity, surprise and humour. The way that two ideas, often from different subjects or discipline areas, can come together to generate a creative spark underpins his notion of bi-sociation (Figure 1.1).

There is increasing recognition that creativity needs to be viewed in a cultural context. Western interpretations tend to emphasise the role of the individual and are orientated towards products and innovation. Eastern perspectives are more likely to focus on team and group endeavour. They may also emphasise personal fulfilment, the expression



■ **Figure 1.1** When ideas from two different modes or lines of thinking interact it generates humour, surprise and creative sparks
Source: after Koestler (1964)

of inner truths and a sense of oneness with the world. Hinduism, for example, interprets creativity in spiritual or religious terms and sees time and history as cyclical. In education, where many teachers will be working with pupils from multicultural backgrounds, the dangers of adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to creativity will be immediately apparent.

To conclude, it is perhaps best to think of creativity as having a number of different dimensions ranging from the cognitive to the social and emotional. Choosing to focus on one aspect of creativity may lead us to neglect the others. However, it is generally accepted across cultures that creativity is a positive concept. There is also significant agreement that creativity is strongly associated with play, imagination and the emotions, and that it leads to new ways of seeing and thinking. These ideas are explored further in the following section.

Play

Young children are well known for their curiosity and their desire for play. They have a seemingly insatiable interest in the world around them and are constantly asking questions that adults find alternatively charming and annoying. Their questions appear charming because they often suggest unusual or unexpected connections. They are annoying partly because children ask them so persistently and partly because we often don't know the answers ourselves; or if we do, we find it hard to express them in terms children can understand.

One of the great qualities of play is that it is experimental, flexible and entertaining. Katz (2004) declares that play is about making and remaking the world. Young children are particularly good at this. Schools and teachers are sometimes accused of undermining children's natural capacity for inventiveness, but this is perhaps unfair. As children become older they come to recognise how ideas can fit together in useful patterns and networks. In other words, experience teaches them how best to approach different situations, and their capacity for unusual or divergent thought is reduced in consequence.

Generating ideas

Creativity is also strongly associated with generating new ideas. Some people, such as famous musicians, artists, scientists and mathematicians, have been so successful at devising new ideas that they have changed the way we see the world. This is sometimes termed 'big C' creativity, and it is, by definition, a comparatively rare phenomenon. By contrast, the kind of creativity we are likely to engage in on an everyday basis is known as 'small C' creativity. Both 'big C' and 'small C' creativity are about being original, even if the scale and impact are vastly different. It is also important to note that coming up with new ideas can be a highly stimulating and rewarding process. In his review of the primary school curriculum, Alexander (2010: 213) reports that children 'valued those subjects that sparked their curiosity and encouraged them to explore'. We are all attracted by novelty, and the complaint that something is boring usually arises because it is repetitive and lacks challenge. Developing new ways of thinking is stimulating even if it may also be unsettling.

Imagination

Using imagination is another aspect of creativity. This can take make different forms. It may involve asking unusual questions, envisaging alternatives or re-examining something that is taken for granted and seeing it in a different light. Coming up with new ideas can be fun, but unless these ideas are applied in some way they remain in the world of fantasy. The problem is that it is not always clear at the time whether a new idea is useful or not. Thus divergent thinking can oscillate between appearing highly creative on the one hand and whacky and weird on the other. Perhaps this is why genius and madness are often associated in the popular imagination. There are times when the boundary between the two is surprisingly thin.

Emotions

Creativity is not purely intellectual activity. Harnessing our emotional energies is an essential part of creativity and it involves accessing layers of thought that lie beneath the surface of everyday cognition. Drawing on evidence from neuroscience, Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007) argue that while creativity may be informed by high reason, it is fundamentally based on a platform of emotional thought in both social and non-social contexts. They go on to argue that motivation – the dynamo that drives our learning – derives from emotional rather than cognitive neural networks. Craft (2000) makes a similar point when she declares that the sources of creativity are not always conscious or rational. She reminds us that 'the intuitive, spiritual and emotional also feed creativity' and that these are themselves 'fed by the bedrock of impulse' (*ibid.*: 31).

Intuition

There is a sense in which creativity involves a particular type of thought. It involves making links and connections, allowing ideas to emerge and being open to suggestion. Lucas and Claxton (2011) draw on a metaphor used by neuroscientists to suggest that we can view mental processes as a landscape that can be made either steeper or flatter according to our state of mind. Definite modes of thinking correspond to a steep, mountainous landscape while more playful and dreamy modes relate to a gentler, flatter terrain. There are times when we need focused thinking that channels our thinking down deep valleys, but the flatter terrain is better at handling ambiguities. As Lucas and Claxton explain, ‘because the land is flat, neural patterns are much more able to bleed into one another, so you can find connections which are less stereotyped or conventional’ (*ibid.*: 75). It is also important to be able to switch between different modes so as to get the benefit of both. People who are less creative tend to be stuck in one mode. Being flexible and receptive to new ideas is part of a creative mindset.

CREATIVITY IN PRACTICE

So what does creativity look like in a classroom context? One distinction that has proved useful is the difference between (a) teaching creatively and (b) teaching for creativity.

Teaching creatively focuses attention on the teacher; it involves teachers drawing on their own skills and abilities to make learning more stimulating. Self-image is important here. Research shows that when teachers regard themselves as creative it can enhance their practice (Cremin *et al.* 2009). Confidence is important too. Working alongside other colleagues or with non-teacher practitioners such as artists, musicians, engineers and town planners is often an affirmative experience that can release latent talents. Your own enthusiasm, curiosity and desire to learn are liable to be much more important than being theatrical or showy.

Teaching for creativity, by contrast, directs attention to the learner and the quality of their experience. A focus on creativity is likely to involve giving pupils greater control over their learning. It may also favour collaborative and co-operative approaches in which children spark ideas off each other. Providing different entry points, encouraging pupils to ask questions and getting them to make connections are key strategies. Research suggests that a combination of teaching methods is likely to be more effective than any single approach. In their study of creative teachers, Cremin *et al.* (2009) found that over 30 techniques and activities were used in just a few lessons (Figure 1.2).

Teaching creatively is not an easy option. It requires good subject knowledge so that teachers are able to answer questions imaginatively, have the confidence to engage with unfamiliar material and identify new learning opportunities as and when they occur. Of course, we cannot actually make children think or learn creatively. However, we can, as Barnes (2015) points out, provide the conditions where creativity is more likely to flourish. Careful lesson planning in which pupils are exposed to an appropriate stimulus and provided with a supportive environment where they can develop their ideas is important. There will be times when individual study is appropriate but opportunities for group and team work also need to be exploited. Collaboration helps to trigger new ideas and sharing findings can prompt further thoughts. As Perkins (2010) concludes, learning from ‘the team’ is often more effective than learning ‘solo’.

Child-initiated activity	Explanation	Library research
Discovery	Problem-solving	Personal computer
Reverse/open questioning	Investigations	Fieldwork
Music	Conversation	Breaks for 'brain gym'
Practical activities	Time for reflection	Photographs
Construction	Shared/individual writing	Videos
Demonstration	Stories	Map work
Electronic games	Poems	Competitions
Worksheets	Role play	Presentations
Edible and visual aids	Drama	Tests
Classroom displays	Dance	Class league tables
Interactive whiteboards	Crosswords	Merit marks

■ **Figure 1.2** Creative teachers use a range of techniques and activities to engage children
Source: after Cremin *et al.* (2009)

It is also important to recognise that there are different stages in creative thought. An initial period of drafting and incubation is followed by a period of development and testing that leads eventually to some form of iteration. The timescale is very variable. Tentative ideas and suggestions can be extremely fragile and appear silly or inappropriate until they are refined. The final resolution will be much more robust. The NACCCE (1999: 34) observe, 'At the right time and in the right way, rigorous critical appraisal is essential. At the wrong point, criticism and the cold hand of realism can kill an emerging idea.' Judging the moment is one of the arts of teaching.

Creative teaching presents teachers with other challenges. When pupils engage in deep learning it leads them to reappraise their basic concepts. This can result in a period of uncertainty and confusion. Festinger (1957) uses the term 'cognitive dissonance' to describe the disturbance that occurs when our assumptions and expectations are challenged in some way. Pupils need a supportive environment that encourages them to speculate and experiment. This in turn will serve to build their self-confidence and mental resilience. As one teacher remarked, 'It's all about taking chances ... letting them take risks with their own learning' (Cremin *et al.* 2009: 25). In the way that they relate to pupils and structure learning, teachers can generate the social and educational environment that will provide the necessary nurture and support.

CREATIVITY MATTERS

Central government has an enduring interest in creativity and creative teaching. The Roberts (2006) report and Warwick Commission (2015) summarise some of the key arguments:

- 1 The creative industries employ over two million people in the UK, account for around 8 per cent of the economy and are important drivers of economic growth.
- 2 There is a strong moral case for giving children creative experiences. These help pupils to develop their sense of personal identity and can prepare them for twenty-first-century society.