Introduction

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The title of a book always carries with it a huge responsibility and potentially competing perspectives. Authors, editors, contributors and publishers want to make sure that the title is snappy and engaging but an accurate reflection of content, so that the cover draws the readers in. Yet, readers approach books with specific expectations and their own interpretations based on the title and their previous understandings. This is especially so when book titles consist of big terms and complex concepts. Therefore, the ultimate decision for the title of this book was not taken lightly and it is the result of a discussion that started with the book proposal submission and only finished with submission of the full manuscript. Ultimately, the title *Creativity in Education: International Perspectives* was agreed on, and with it the challenge of delivering to expectations with new and exciting innovations across international perspectives and a wide interpretation of education.

This introductory chapter outlines the aim, purpose and philosophy of this book while highlighting the conversational nature of its approach to creativity in education from international perspectives. We introduce key concepts and discussion points to explore teacher education in its broadest interpretations and philosophies underpinning theory and practice, including how creativity within the role teacher education is afforded. This is undertaken specifically from a range of international and at times completely contrasting contexts. The inclusion of 'responses to chapters' draws on voices from across the world to critique and discuss the content in relation to their own experiences, commonalities and potential lessons to be shared from each contributor in pursuit of creativity. In doing so, we aim to support readers in engaging with discussions and perspectives about creativity that might in other circumstances seem irrelevant to their context. The

text provides a discussion and literature review on creativity in general terms, but more specifically looking at what creativity is, and what counts as creativity in educational contexts and fields.

Understanding teacher education

Teacher education is a deceptively simple construction. However, it is also one that excites huge variation in approach and policy. At one level it could be understood to mean the leading forth or development of teachers, relying on a more direct translation of the source of education from the Latin (*educare*, *-atum*, to rear; and *educere* from *ducere* to lead, Chambers, 1989). But that direct and historical translation has morphed into a complex set of approaches and contexts, all determined by local interpretations of policy, which in turn is informed by underpinning values and aims for education. In taking a more international perspective on creativity in teacher education, this book considers those variations, their applicability and role in supporting educators now and in the future.

Within Anglo-Western-centric contexts teacher education is commonly understood as the training of and for individuals who would like to become teachers in primary and secondary education. Usually, such education is divided into initial and then continuing or ongoing professional development, although there is a shift, particularly in Europe, to the term 'professional learning and development' (Ostinelli and Crescenti, 2021) or to 'professional learning communities' (Antinluoma *et al*., 2018).

The terminology is contested, with many preferring the term 'initial teacher education' to 'initial teacher training' to describe the formal process of gaining Qualified Teacher Status, a legal requirement to teach in England (DfE, 2022). However, it is possible to teach in some contexts without such credentials, and they apply to the primary and secondary sectors but also to other educational contexts, such as education settings in the creative and performing arts or sport. This is where professional learning communities and professional development play a role. Professional learning and development occur through collaboration, coaching, creativity in problem-solving curricula, pedagogical and practice issues, and they often involve leadership (Lucas *et al*., 2021) and professional services staff alongside teaching communities (Hord and Sommers, 2008; Wenner and Campbell, 2017).

Education is much broader with early years and tertiary, including further and higher education establishments, many of whom now also require specific certification and/or degrees. This links to an American import of a more technical and 'what works' approach, which potentially limits creativity within initial teacher education across all phases. It also plays into a view that education is a tool for economic improvement and a more market-driven understanding of its aims and values that might suggest that there is no place for creativity.

In China, teacher education is often seen as the remit of so-called 'normal universities' that provide initial, usually four-year degree programmes. Teachers are then required to complete further on-the-job work and a final examination to gain the teacher qualification (Song and Xu, 2019). However, with a population of approximately 1.4 billion and, since 1986, a free education system for nine years of compulsory schooling from the age of six, there is huge demand and there are schools with teachers who are unqualified in some locations (Hu *et al.*, 2014). As a countermeasure, there is now a huge policy drive to improve the situation with China's Education Modernisation 2035 plan. This aims to continue a move from capacity to quality. There is ongoing training and development that teachers must engage with throughout their careers to gain promotion and reward. China is also influenced by globalisation and economic drivers, with education a competitive marketplace, as exemplified by Gaokao, a highly competitive national examination to gain entry to the best educational establishments that drives the whole education system for parents and children (Zhou *et al.*, 2021). However, Chinese education is also tempered by the influence of Eastern philosophies such as Confucianism, Taoism and the political ideology of Communism.

These two examples of Anglo-Western and Eastern approaches to teacher education are by no means definitive or all encompassing. They do, however, highlight both similarities and differences between otherwise quite culturally diverse education systems, some of which are evident in other countries beyond these examples. But the initial education and training of teachers is just one part of a complex educational landscape – and this is explored in the next section.

Context of teacher education

Within the broader discourses of improving teaching, leading and learning, ensuring best teaching practices and guaranteeing positive student experiences, teacher education activities have entered the professional

development narratives far beyond the limitations of the primary and secondary classrooms. Higher education institutions, further education colleges, nursing and medical training and sports coaching programmes are only some examples of what today constitutes training for teaching; thus, a form of teacher education (Ashwin *et al.*, 2020). Educational contexts are therefore much broader than the immediate understanding of a classroom of 30 pupils aged five to 18. Within this premise of a broader understanding of what constitutes 'teacher education', therefore, creativity and the role of creativity become even more relevant.

What is creativity?

Creativity is a complex yet universal phenomenon (Shao *et al.*, 2019). Most people feel confident in recognising creativity and what constitutes creativity, with many thinking that they are creative in some way or other. The internet is awash with quotes on creativity attributed to scientific geniuses, old masters, artistic highflyers, successful entrepreneurs and celebrities. Most famously, theoretical physicist Albert Einstein is believed to have said that 'creativity is intelligence having fun', while entrepreneur and industrial designer Steve Jobs of Apple fame and physician and psychologist Edward de Bono, most famous for his 'thinking hats', have focused on creativity as making connections or 'thinking outside of the box'. Creativity in this respect is not so much about finding something that is new, as it is about finding new ways of thinking about common occurrences. Just like Isaac Newton allegedly developed his theory of gravity as he watched an apple fall from a tree. Many people had watched apples fall from trees, but Newton started thinking about that everyday occurrence in a new way; something that everyone has the potential of doing.

However, when it comes to defining 'creativity' we seem to struggle to put into words what it is that is required to 'be' creative, how to 'do' creativity. The complexity becomes even more pronounced once the different fields of research involved with and related to creativity are included and considered. There are, of course, the disciplines such as those related to arts, design and performance, which are considered as inherently creative fields. But then there are also fields where creativity is involved that may not in themselves be inherently creative, such as in the social sciences and humanities. Shifts in what constitutes good research, how funding is allocated and how research impact is measured, have led to many social and humanist scientists drawing on creative approaches for data collection, analysis and dissemination. It is not uncommon for

geographers to create poetry or for educators to curate and create bespoke photographs, as creativity is often linked to aesthetic artfulness or the processes of making (Sefton-Green and Sinker, 2000). In contemporary society, the links between the sciences and the arts are further strengthened through how museums and galleries present their work to ensure that visitors understand these powerful connections that may have been previously considered unlikely and unscientific.

Finally, there are researchers who focus specifically on creativity itself, on what creativity is, how creative thought develops in human beings and what creativity means for human understanding, communication and life more generally (Glăveanu, 2018). Each of these disciplinary vantage points brings its own interpretation, which impacts on how creativity is viewed. Though it has been defined and conceptualised in multiple ways, there is consensus among researchers that creativity comprises two attributes: originality, something unusual, novel or unique; and usefulness, something fit for purpose or appropriateness (Runco and Jaeger, 2012). In contemporary everyday life, particularly in connection with an increased interest in social media in the digital age and the resulting widening of communications via visual forms of expression being used alongside or even instead of speech, creativity also takes on a particular role. This heightened focus on creativity has in turn affected and influenced the education sector. Scholars report on the relationship between creativity, technology and education (Henriksen *et al.*, 2018), the link between creativity and environmental sustainability (Cheng, 2019), the role that school environments play regarding the development of creativity in education (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2019), and, more broadly, the relationship that creativity plays in contemporary education (e.g., Pllana, 2019; Kaplan, 2019). Research has also been undertaken to consider student and pupil experience of creativity (e.g., Fleith, 2019; Gong *et al.*, 2020; Kasirer and Shnitzer-Meirovich, 2021; Matraeva *et al.*, 2020). Within wider literature relating to educational settings, there are also numerous publications regarding creativity in primary or secondary education and even within the tertiary sector (e.g., Craft, 2010; Cremin, 2018; Desailly, 2015; Harris, 2016; Loveless and Williamson, 2013; Wegerif, 2010). Thus, over time, 'creativity' has become a buzzword across all disciplines in higher education and all phases from early years and primary, through to tertiary education.

To better understand creativity, it may therefore be helpful to delve a little further. The third draft of the Creative Thinking Framework (OECD, 2019), for example, distinguishes between what it calls 'Big C' creativity and 'little c' creativity. In this definition, 'Big C' creativity requires that 'creative thinking be paired with significant talent, deep expertise and high

levels of engagement in a particular area, as well as the recognition form society that the product has value' (OECD, 2019, 8). 'Little c' creativity, by contrast, does not relate to masterpieces or genius inventions, but is the kind of 'everyday creativity [that] can be achieved by nearly all people capable of engaging in creative thinking' (OECD, 2019, 9). The framework not only recognises the value of both forms of creativity, but also emphasises that within those broad categories creative thinking skills must be distinguished further, as some people may be very creative in a specific domain, whereas others may be creative thinkers in general. This distinction is important as studies show that the previously assumed transfer of critical skills is not necessarily a given (Baer, 2015). It is therefore not quite as simple as teaching learners some creative thinking skills and then knowing that those skills can be applied elsewhere. This is where a sociocultural view of creativity proves particularly useful. According to Glăveanu *et al*. (2020, n.p.), creativity is a sociocultural phenomenon that is:

> at once, a psychological, social and material (physical and embodied) phenomenon
> . . . culturally mediated action
> . . . at all times, relational
> . . . meaningful
> . . . fundamental for society
> . . . dynamic in both its meaning and practice
> . . . situated but its expression displays both similarities and differences across situations and across domains.

It is against the backdrop of this view of creativity that this book explores the role of creativity in educational settings, where two contradicting trends can be observed: the devaluation of creativity and the revaluation of creativity. With the increasing relevance of league tables and comparison charts (e.g., the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)), curricula are being redeveloped to emphasise knowledge and attainment. This means that subjects usually associated with creative productions, such as the arts or music, become more peripheral. However, simultaneously, skills such as criticality, reflexivity and/or creative thinking among pupils in compulsory education and students in post-compulsory settings are centralised. In practice, this means that educators are required to embed the teaching of these soft skills within the delivery of their subject contents. Despite the shift towards a more embedded and integrated approach to teaching creativity in primary, secondary and higher education,

the role of education programmes remains largely invisible, as publications do not tend to focus on how creativity is modelled, nurtured or taught to future teachers, who, in turn, are supposed to foster creativity among their learners. Yet, education programmes have adjusted to explore the teaching of creativity and to impart knowledge, skills and techniques that prepare trainees for a future in a creative classroom and for teaching creativity themselves (Ata-Akturk and Sevimli-Celik, 2020). It is therefore the aim of this edited book to fill this gap by presenting case studies of creativity in teacher education settings from countries across the world.

Each chapter is based on ethically conducted practice-based enquiry or other forms of empirical research. These studies provide the scholarly foundations on which a particular form or conceptualisation of what creativity is and means in the country-specific educational context. Contributors thus provide ideas that are generally applicable and relevant and are therefore transferrable to new educational settings and contexts. Each contribution is followed by responses in relation to other parts of the world. These responses are, in effect, a critical reflection and commentary discussing themes and issues to draw out commonalities and lessons that could be applied across contexts and inform future developments in creativity in education. They potentially support a social justice agenda that is inherent to education and teacher education. In philosophical-conceptual terms, social justice relates to the inherently unequal, unjust, oppressive policies and procedures that are embedded in the core of societies and cultures (Hytten and Bettez, 2011). Yet, social justice is also defined as a practice and praxis fostering strategic initiatives, experiential methods and pedagogical principles that seek to equalise and level the playing field of all stakeholders (Bell, 2016). In our current times, humanity faces significant changes from the effects of global warming, war and the resulting influx of refugees from those areas most affected. The Covid-19 pandemic both highlighted and exacerbated equity-related issues in all sectors, including in education, deepening inequalities and access to technology, resources and services. Suddenly, skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration grounded on creative capacities became essential to help find solutions that would otherwise not have been considered (Anderson *et al.*, 2021). The immediate shift at the onset of the pandemic to remote and distance learning across all educational contexts is just one example.

While all chapters provide an insight into creativity across the world, their individual focus on country-specific contexts allows the chapters to grow and expand on their differences. These range from practical strategies within teacher education, such as the use of art exhibitions and object-work, to more philosophical approaches and teacher education.

Overview of chapters

The opening chapter by our Swedish colleagues describes a course in the final semester of the preschool teacher programme called *Playworld and Play as Phenomenon and Tool in Preschool Education*. Throughout this course the contributors work consciously with different tools to stimulate the students' meta reflection over their own learning processes and to help them see the connection between theory and practice when it comes to creativity, imagination and play. In the final exam in this course, the students write about applying theories to different cases and they are tasked with making their own process throughout the course visible. Colleagues from Austria, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United Kingdom then discuss this chapter on Sweden.

The second chapter focuses on South Korea and presents how a university, which trains elementary school teachers, has been working on a project to model how key competencies can be developed for pre-service teachers by using a resident art gallery within the university. The basic idea is to foster creativity through curriculum integration and collaboration around the exhibition. Colleagues from Chile and New Zealand respond to this chapter on South Korea.

In Chapter 3 we hear about reading initiatives and literacy practices in Qatar. The chapter presents the educational context of the Qatar National Library in Doha. Here, librarians engage in professional development aligned with typical teacher training activities to improve children's literacy and cognitive development with the help of creative reflective activities and lucky-dip story bags. Conversation with the Qatar example relates to different settings in Malawi, Mauritius and Sweden.

The next chapter reports on teacher education in Chile, where creativity-related areas are given low importance in initial teacher training. Although as part of the pedagogical courses or within the practicum immersion experiences, pre-service teachers are permitted some preparation to solve school problems and challenges from creative perspectives. However, as the chapter shows, the tools provided are not always considered sufficient, since they are only part of a formal course and are not always included. The responses for this chapter refer to education settings in Hong Kong, Botswana and Namibia.

The chapter based on the US educational context focuses on creativity in relation to social justice and equity. Through an autoethnographic lens we learn how students on a teacher education programme are not only taught culturally sustained pedagogy and critical

thinking, but also focus on presenting their own understanding of social justice in creative assignments. The responses to the US chapter come from Finland and the United Kingdom.

Our colleagues from China then present their case study examining how in Shanghai Normal University TianHua college creativity is taught to future kindergarten teachers through the Kindergarten Curriculum incorporating Chinese traditional culture. The chapter outlines how the Kindergarten Curriculum course aims to develop student teachers' understanding of teaching and learning theories, practical skills and reflection capabilities. Responses to the chapter on China are from Finland and the United States.

Our last case study interrogates the teaching practice of a dance educator in dance studies at the University of Auckland. The chapter theorises dance teacher education through the creative process of dance-making. Within this chapter, the choreographic process is described and reimagined as a series of pedagogical tactics including thematic research, improvisation, movement generation, manipulating the movement language, choreographic structuring, refining, rehearsing, performance and reflection. Teaching pre-service dance teachers requires spontaneity, play, experimentation and innovative methods of response, which are also required within the creation of a new dance. The international conversations on this chapter from Aotearoa New Zealand are with colleagues from the United States and Brazil.

In the concluding chapter, we reflect on the relationship between creativity and education in the current climate. We use the contributions from the chapters and responses as a stepping stone to outline our vision for the future of creativity in education.

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