

# What Counts as Creativity in Education? An Inquiry into the Intersections of Public, Political, and Policy Discourses

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## Abstract

In this essay, the authors examine the varied public, everyday, and academic discourses of creativity that combine to influence our current educational goals and policies, particularly in North America and Europe. From Sir Ken Robinson's (2006) cutting remark that "Schools kill creativity!" to the Action Canada Foundation's (2013) assessment that creativity is one of the seven core learning competencies required in the 21st century, this article portrays the compelling push and pull of creativity in education today. The authors found themselves in search of this seemingly crucial, yet increasingly undersupported aspect of their work in teacher education and research. Coming from literacy and arts

education, the authors were called to question what they had always taken for granted. This article contextualizes creativity amid everyday, public, and academic discourses. Through engaging in this inquiry, the extent to which creativity is the recipe for success, as it is so often deemed to be, is assessed and a conceptual framework for creativity in action is proposed.

*Keywords:* creativity, arts, education, discourse, every day, innovation

## Résumé

Dans cet essai, les auteures examinent la créativité dans les différents discours de tous les jours, publics, et académiques qui se combinent pour influencer nos visées et politiques éducatives actuelles, particulièrement en Amérique du Nord et en Europe. À partir du propos tranchant de Sir Ken Robinson (2006) pour qui « Les écoles tuent la créativité! » et en passant par le bilan de l'Action Canada Foundation (2013) selon lequel la créativité est l'une des sept compétences de base de l'apprentissage requises au 21<sup>e</sup> siècle, cet article dépeint l'irréfutable branlebas autour de la créativité dans l'éducation d'aujourd'hui. Les auteures se retrouvent à la recherche de cet aspect apparemment crucial, mais de moins en moins soutenu, de leur travail en formation des enseignants et à la recherche. Issues de l'éducation en littérature et en arts, les auteures ont été appelées à remettre en question ce qu'elles avaient toujours tenu pour acquis. Cet article contextualise la créativité dans les discours de tous les jours, publics et académiques. Cette enquête évalue dans quelle mesure la créativité est, comme on la considère si souvent, la recette du succès. Un cadre conceptuel pour la créativité en action est proposé.

*Mots-clés :* créativité, arts, éducation, discours, de tous les jours, innovation

## Introduction

Creativity, creative economies, innovation, and innovative science are all terms and concepts that roll off the tongue today. Whatever walk of life you turn to, these ideas have a contemporary, progressive 21st-century connotation. They have currency in public and political forums for economic and sociocultural reasons, and where this is the case, we invariably see a manifestation of these movements in educational policy. It is in this juncture, between public, everyday, and academic discourses, and educational policy and consequent practice, that this inquiry is positioned. Prompted by calls from school boards, employers, and public intellectuals to articulate and apply creativity in our practices, we questioned the concept of “creativity” to better understand its ever-increasing pull in our education systems.

In the public forums of media and social critique, “creativity” is taken up with avid opinion, from Ken Robinson’s (2006) cutting remark that “Schools kill creativity!”—which has become world renowned through his TED Talk and viewed over 45 million times across the world—to Tham Khai Meng’s (2016) comment, “Creativity is the most powerful competitive advantage a business can have” (see also Turok & Hamdullahpur, 2013). In direct relation to public policy, the Canadian government-funded *Future Tense: Adapting Canadian Education Systems for the 21st Century* (Action Canada Foundation, 2013) identifies creativity as the first of seven core learning competencies essential in contemporary education (along with innovation and entrepreneurship, collaboration, communication, character, culture and ethical citizenship, and digital literacies). Furthermore, the United Nations (2008) concludes that the “creative industries are among the most dynamic emerging sectors in world trade” (p. 4).

In search of educational research to illuminate this socio-political context that is palpable in our work as teacher-educators, we uncovered a widely multidisciplinary set of histories that leads to an almost ubiquitous presence today across the academy. From philosophy to psychology, from natural science to sociology, creativity has a role and recognition in diverse models and discourses. We then, as educators, find ourselves analyzing the use of the term in classrooms and communities; coming from literacy and arts education, we were called to question what we had always taken for granted. We wondered about the ways that the term creativity is bandied about in educational discourse as a good thing, and we were particularly curious about the equation of creativity with the arts. This equation

becomes a call to include more arts in learning, and an assumption that the arts would necessarily improve creativity.

The relationship between public and political discourses of education (broadly defined) and educational research and practice is notable here, but not central to our project. Rather, we mingle between these discourses to inform our positions as educators and, in particular, as teacher-educators. We contextualize creativity amid everyday, public, and academic discourse and focus on a theoretical framework that is made up of recent work in literacy studies (e.g., Pennycook, 2010), post-structural theory (e.g., St. Pierre, 2015), and applied arts (e.g., Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Within theoretical literature, along with public and policy texts, we probed for unspoken ontological drivers of discourses of creativity. Finally, we took stock of everyday discourses of creativity that we encounter in our public and private lives. Resisting the temptation as much as we could to contribute another definition of creativity in this study, we confront the call for creative approaches to teaching by unsettling and expanding the concept of creativity. Through engaging in this inquiry, we assess the extent to which creativity is the recipe for success it is so often deemed to be and propose a conceptual framework for creativity in action.

## **Author Introductions**

### **Mia Perry**

From a background in arts education, both as a student and as a faculty member, I am, in the context of the university, frequently positioned as a “creative” person; able to bring something “creative” to the table, the workshop, the meeting. I have at times worn that label willingly, if a little sheepishly. It has allowed me the freedom to think, look, behave slightly differently or unexpectedly if I so wished, whilst at the same time allowing me equal status at the table of theoretical debate, policy development, and social critique. I have questioned practices in the social sciences that remain firmly positioned in physical or dramatic media, taking their part only through dance, only through drama. This creativity can be a tool for affect, but in critical dialogue only with those others that speak the language (of dance, of drama); to everyone else, it is creative, even aesthetic, but eschews debate. I begin with this to explain my motivation to shake out the term creative,

to investigate the mystique around it, and the people and activities that seem to inherit it versus those that have to earn it.

### **Diane Collier**

As an ethnographer of literacies defined broadly and concerned with everyday literacy practices (at home, school, in community), and a former elementary classroom teacher, I have been thinking about schooled vs. everyday literacies and how creativity is touted as valuable yet ambiguous across a range of learning opportunities. I have noticed in elementary classrooms (including my own) how teachers value creativity, or what they describe as creativity. On the other hand, students are asked to produce a certain kind of work. What we/they appear to be asking is for children to be innovative or creative and what we/they seem to mean is for children to do something that they have not seen the teacher do. This is a kind of impossible situation. In schools, in my experience, there is a preoccupation with copying and preventing copying. I am similarly obsessed and find it unavoidable as it is so entrenched in educational discourse. Those who are not seen to copy are viewed as more intelligent and valued. Thinking about language and literacy as everyday practices, I cannot help but think that copying is entangled with creativity.

### **Interweaving Discourses**

Creativity as a field of study originated in the 1950s, although related or constitutive concepts have been theorized for a lot longer. According to Runco and Jaeger (2012), in 1839 Bethune wrote about value and beauty, and about creativity as the result of these two elements combined. The standard definition of creativity—described by Stein in 1953—developed in the field of psychology requires two elements: novelty and utility. Runco and Jaeger also trace the history of the definition of creativity in psychology and describe how creativity and genius were conflated in the 1800s. Contemporary debates continue to address whether or not creativity exists within specific domains (Gardner, 1993, 2006)—individual versus collective conceptualizations of creativity (Moran, 2010; Sawyer, 2010)—and most still focus on the individual and specific attributes and motivations needed for one to be creative (Hennessey, 2010; Runco, 2010; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Singer, 2004). In educational theory, play is equated with imagination (e.g.,

Hetland, 2013), creativity with learning (e.g., Goodwin & Miller, 2013), and all with personal development (e.g., Higgins & Reeves, 2006). Led by the field of psychology, the relationship between creativity and education is supported by a strong body of scholarship. As stated in the outset of this piece, however, our intention is not to give a comprehensive history of creativity research and theory but rather to tease apart how creativity is understood and taken up today, particularly in relation to the way it informs how we, and others, think about learning and teaching.

Public intellectuals such as Sir Ken Robinson (2011) call for creativity in education as the way into a more productive and viable economy. In the corporate world, we hear how today's workforces need to be more flexible and move with change, and creativity proponents draw relationships between corporations/industry/employers and educational policy (e.g., Bateson & Martin, 2013). Governments have called for public and institutional pedagogies that encourage creativity in schools and in the public at large (Banaji, Burn, & Buckingham, 2010; Lee, 2014). Instead of finding an alternative to discourses of schools as training grounds for future workers, creativity proponents argue that the creative path in education, whatever that is, will lead to a better workforce. Robinson's TED Talk "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" is the most viewed TED Talk of all time (49 million views at the end of February 2018—over 15 million views since we started writing this article). In this talk, Robinson argues that children are naturally creative and that schools take away that natural ability by insisting on conformity rather than the pursuit of individual interests and talents. He defines creativity as the "process of having original ideas that have value, [and that] more often than not comes about through the interaction of different disciplinary ways of seeing things" (Robinson, 2006). Sternberg (2015), in some ways like Robinson, equates creativity and innovation: "People who are creative are people who are willing to defy the crowd. When everybody else is sort of thinking about things one way, they think about things in a different way" (p. 378). Furthermore, the metaphor of business is paramount in Sternberg's thinking about creative people: "So metaphorically, they're like good investors who buy low and sell high" (p. 378). Similarly, Gardner's (2008) ideas about creativity focus on personalities, where types of intelligence are distinct.

It is easy to recognize the close allegiance to business and economy in current movements in public discourse on creativity. This is not surprising, considering the predominance of an individualist and humanist approach to creativity, which complements

the individualist nature of the Western capitalist mindset. There is a focus on the “special” talents of all people that suggests an interest in the “cult of the individual” (Durkheim, 1964, p. 407) as well as societies that may benefit certain individuals over others, and may ignore collective, interconnected, or everyday understandings of creativity. Looking a little further, we began to see a variety of themes in the discourses of creativity, most significantly the romantic or artistic creative genius; the political, strategic, and economical creative ingenuity; and the ubiquitous everyday creativity. These discourses are interconnected and interdependent in complex ways, and again, the space between rhetoric, policy, and practice is important to pay attention to.

In this rich space of inquiry there are ongoing projects to frame, name, and understand the conditions, processes, and natures of creative practices. For example, Craft (2005, 2011) focuses on creativity in children and primarily “possibility thinking,” where creativity is defined as four p’s: “playfulness,” “plurality,” “participation,” and “possibilities.” Working in psychology, Moran (2010) writes about creativity in a contemporary context and proposes a “relationship between creativity and wisdom” (p. 84) that mirrors the earlier elements of novelty and utility while also recognizing collaborative or societal influences on creativity. Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham (2010) pull out nine distinct uses, or rhetorics, of creativity: the creative genius, the political and democratic creativity, ubiquitous creativity, creativity as a social good, creativity as economic imperative, play and creativity, creativity and cognition, the creative affordances of technology, and the creative classroom. Although this may be a pragmatic organization of ideas (the work was commissioned by the Arts Council of Britain) to inform policy, the underlying challenges that face teachers and learners today, in the name of creativity, cannot be addressed by compartmentalizing or naming sweeping trends. But, as we will argue later, these trends and ever-shifting sands point to both the specificity and the contingency of the creative in every context.

Finding our way through the various discourses surrounding creativity, we began to take stock of everyday discourses of creativity that we came across in our public and private lives. Conversations with friends, family members, and colleagues led us to think about creativity in highly contextualized and tangible ways. In critical conversation and reflection, we considered the vocabulary, gestures, and interactions we have encountered in our day-to-day lives in relation to our topic. We considered known contexts, commonalities, differences, and surprises in our experiences. We wondered how this type

of reflective and informal inquiry might contribute to our understanding of creativity in teaching and learning. The outcomes of this aspect of the study are worth making explicit, and we do this in two ways. First, in the spirit of appropriation and relocalizing, we borrow from the form of articulation used by renowned “creative” artists and theatre directors, Tim Etchells and Matthew Goulish, in their writing about failure (in Heathfield, 2001). In this way, we created a list of “found” texts. Second, we interweave everyday discourses into the narratives and arguments of this article, recognizing the inherent partialities of this approach.

Creativity is:  
surprise  
inspiration  
process  
unusual and effective combinations  
openness  
not related to skill  
relaxed/safe  
experiment  
by myself  
a state of mind  
risk-taking  
visible to others  
telling about self  
a new vision  
personal  
self-expression  
problem-solving  
dreaming up something  
resourcefulness  
wondering (making something from nothing)  
interesting  
beautiful  
relief/opening the window and letting the air in  
requires more effort (beyond constraint)  
open-ended  
making the most of things  
play  
original  
doesn't fit categories  
new combinations

games  
making art  
“being” arty  
an identity/way of life  
new/unexpected  
combination/ideas/images  
effect  
playful  
making something up

## **Creativity in Arts Education**

Aligning with many other scholars in creativity, we find the arts always at the right hand of creativity, through discourse, through research, through common usage (Pahl, 2007; Parker, 2013; Robinson, 2009). Looking at creativity in education strongly draws us into a discourse and framework of the “arts” (broadly defined). A “creative output” in education can be unshackled from the constraints of conventional uses of language, typical assessment and evaluation criteria, and often free of the conventional expectations and purposes of a particular context. It might be a “break” from the day-to-day work in the subject area, and it is typically positioned in contrast to “standard” or “textbook” work. In this space, we very often find an engagement with the arts. “Creative writing,” “drama games,” or “a hip-hop workshop” might be just the creative addition required to satisfy teacher, student, or policy objectives.

Within the disciplinary field of arts in education, we were challenged and inspired by Gaztimbide-Fernández’s “Why the Arts Don’t Do Anything” (2013). This article is a critique of the arts as panacea for education, in which the author looks closely at the ways that the challenges that permeate education (i.e., unequal access, powerful discourses, transmission models, hierarchies of valued knowledge, and others) also permeate the arts. Arts education is not benign by any means, and not necessarily creative as per the definitions historically leaned on in the field of creativity. Primary/elementary school arts practices are often as formulaic, craft-based, and product-oriented as they are playful and imaginative. For teachers in arts education, incorporating creativity into teaching

plans and portfolios seems more than comfortable. However, Robinson (2011) succinctly defines creativity as *applied imagination*. If we take up creativity in this way, which is an accessible descriptor in all sorts of contexts, the relationship between the arts and creativity becomes as proximal as the relationship between maths and creativity, law and creativity, language and creativity. So, can we take “art” out of the equation? In the professional world, it seems to be the case: creativity is demanded of engineering, technology, finance, science.

This contrast between creativity in the educational and professional worlds seems to have given birth to quite a paradox. On the one hand, many professional, corporate, and theoretical fields espouse a need, an urgency even, and expectation of creativity (in the workforce, in social and scientific innovation, etc.). As this call filters through to policy and practice in education, the term creativity carries over, but the meaning or association of the word necessarily emerges in the particular context of schools, and as we have argued, in the case of schools, creativity is typically allied with the arts. On the other hand, the arts in schools are gradually being devalued through reductions in time allotted, expertise available, and hierarchy of importance. So, creativity is increasingly called for, yet the arts are decreasingly supported.

Like arts advocates, advocates for creativity in education are embedded in a *rhetoric of effects* that focuses on particular outcomes to be achieved or enhanced in order to validate creativity as practice and as goal. Part of the process here is to question what counts as creativity in a way that inevitably questions creativity as intrinsically good. Creativity is always part of particular locations, particular social and cultural moments in time and space, and part of particular histories and relations. We argue that creativity does not rest in individuals but is socially produced in relation; the extent to which we are creative is contingent on context. We are beckoned then, to look to the minutiae of every day, to consider how learners get positioned differently and respond to the power dynamics operating in, or circulating through, their locations. Attending to political, economic, and social spheres, we wonder who gets “creative” opportunities, and to what end?

Particularly supportive to our inquiry in this field has been work in cultural and linguistic practices. From the early theorizing work of digital cultural production and appropriation, scholars have provided a commentary on the various practices of copying, recycling, and mimicry associated with young people and cultural outputs, particularly regarding popular culture (Jenkins, 2012; Pennycook, 2010). Pennycook has focused on

the ways in which global forms or genres, such as hip hop, challenge the notion of mimicry or copying (characteristic of hip hop) as uncreative, in opposition to creativeness or creativity. From a structuralist-humanist perspective, mimicry or copying is denigrated, while creativity is seen as original and the result of individual production. Pennycook (2010) uses the term *relocalization* to describe a creative process that acknowledges repetition as production. Because the repetition takes place in a new locale, in a new time, the meanings that can be attributed change. Work/texts/practices are transformed as they are reused and relocalized. This recycling or relocalization can be seen as a form of creativity or play. If repetition, remix, recycling, up-cycling, reappropriation, and relocalization are all creative, or potentially creative, then the dichotomy or binary of creative/uncreative is also disrupted. Fuchs (2001) argues that it is important to see mimesis “as a deliberate performance of sameness that necessarily threatens, or at least modifies, the original” (p. 586).

### **What Isn’t Creative?**

We have established that creativity means many things, depending on the context and value system. However, there is one thing that can remain a common denominator in the use of the term, and that is that it assumes one side of a binary. The other side of the binary is uncreative. As hard as it is to define creativity, it is harder to define uncreative. Is it even possible? Do creative and uncreative equate with good and bad, and if so, who decides? Does an uncreative product or output describe something that is not new, something that is copied from a neighbour, something that is slow, something that is old? Is a museum, a mash-up, or a meme uncreative? In our rhetoric, we are of course suggesting that to pretend that there is something that is uncreative is tricky. Perhaps one could suggest that uncreative describes something that is restrictive, that doesn’t allow for imagination—but what could that possibly be? What could not allow for imagination? A prison cell, a rote test of multiplication, a paint-by-numbers task? Considering a different binary opposition, that of the mind/body, St. Pierre (2015) believes that “embodiment is thinkable only if one believes the body is absent and must be re-introduced” (p. 146), as opposed to beginning with the assumption that everything is entangled. We use this proposition to inform our thinking on creativity. Artists, philosophers, and scholars alike have agreed that creativity thrives in constraint. Stravinsky (2008) famously wrote

I shall go even further: my freedom will be so much the greater and more meaningful the more narrowly I limit my field of action and the more I surround myself with obstacles... The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees oneself of the chains that shackle the spirit...the arbitrariness of the constraint only serves to better precision of the execution. (p. 53)

Back to the age-old arguments of the binary: we know something in part by knowing what it is not. This is an epistemological frame explored by many, particularly in the context of feminist and post-structural theory (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; St. Pierre, 2000). When that relationship becomes simplified, selective, and narrowed due to social, political, or cultural conditions, our epistemological frame becomes constructed accordingly, and our experience of life begins to take shape. When binaries develop affinities with other binaries, in accordance to value systems and social convention, the sedimentation develops. So, when good becomes polarized from bad, and then creative becomes associated with good, it lends meaning and status to both bad and uncreative. Usually binaries catch on because they are relatively superficial and held by transient values, and they help to organize (our thoughts, behaviours, alignments, etc.), much like a stanchion. However, like a stanchion, they can be moved or unsettled by anyone who has the will or independence of thought.

With a quick look at what “creativity in education” is leaning on, we see that it is leaning on its other half: uncreativity, which is, at best, a watery, vague term. Or, it’s leaning on creativity as proposed by the business sector, equating with innovation in business, flexible and agile models of collaboration. Or perhaps it is leaning on the fine arts, equating with learnt skills, crafts, genres, and intentions to give value to an output. The purpose in unsettling these binaries in the context of education is firstly to assess whether they are really useful, or simply distracting from more important or tangible elements of teaching and learning, or alternatively, discriminating according to an unquestioned value system or cultural background. Inquiry into “creativity in education,” for example, attempts to assess the meaning such terms carry in today’s world; for today’s students, and if you like, today’s employers. Looking a little further at manifestations of creativity and the accompanying language and terminology around them further complicates what we think we mean when we call for “creative.”

## Enacting Creativity

As we gradually move toward a conclusion that we can be content with, and without giving away the ending, we can't find a way around a direct invitation to you, our reader, to actively (either practically or hypothetically) engage in your *own* "creative." We have designed a short activity, and, at the 2015 UK Literacy Association (UKLA) conference in Nottingham, we piloted this exercise with a group of delegates, in the context of this topic. Below is our description interwoven with our consequent invitation to you.

The first part of our activity involved asking the delegates at UKLA how much time they would like to use up with the activity (in awareness of how much time this would therefore allow or take away from the theoretical framing and discussion). One person opted for the longest possible time period to engage in the activity (25 minutes, allowing only 10 minutes for our theoretical framing). The remaining 12 people preferred the compromise of 10 minutes, which gave ample time to discuss the topic more traditionally.

To you, we ask: Do you want to actually do this activity, or just read the descriptions and imagine what that might look like? If you are one of those (we speculate) few people who wish to take the time to practically take up this invitation, then we ask you: How long do you want to spend? 2 minutes? 5, 15 minutes? There is no minimum or maximum requirement, the awareness of time taken is the only thing we ask.

To you, we invite: Gather whatever is at hand, whatever piques your interest, either practically (do you have paper, Lego, a computer, a bag of flour...?) or hypothetically (the list increases dramatically).

We also provided a warm-up of sorts: a short exercise aimed to encourage people to move from their seats, explore the space a little, hear the sound of their own voice, and play with their own mental associations.

To you, we invite: Just take a look at where you are, how you are sitting, what you can see, hear, feel at this moment. Take a moment for yourself.

Finally, we provided a prompt, or direction for the activity.

To you, we invite: Articulate/illustrate a lived experience of “right and wrong”—the living meaning of the words, not the literal or dictionary meaning, but what the words mean to you, and how they relate to your lives. Use the time you have allowed and the tools you have gathered to do this.

This “section break” is as long as you needed it to be.



### **Framework for Creativity in Action**

Shaking up the concept, ideas, theories, and common usages of creativity has positioned us with a motivation and perspective to clarify and translate this work into a practical conclusion. We resist devising essential components of pedagogical practice for creativity. Based on our own lived experience of teaching and learning, we propose practical concepts to think and to play with, that might enable particular and contingent creativity

to emerge as an inherent part of a learning process; or, depending on which way you look at it, that “teach” creativity in education. We propose an active propagation of creative practice by playing or experimenting with these concepts. Below, we break these down into four distinguishable concepts, each with very simple meanings, but at the same time deeply complex relations with the education system. The extent to which each individual teacher or learner can manipulate or work with these concepts will depend upon the systems and influences surrounding her. To put this another way, and to remind us of the recurring theme of the contextual nature of creativity, we quote Hallam and Ingold (2007): “The mind’s creativity is inseparable from that of the total matrix of relations in which it is embedded and into which it extends, and whose unfolding is constitutive of the process of social life” (p. 9).

## **Time**

Time is something so very organized and structured in schools, something shared across classes, teachers, and non-teaching staff. Time is a simple thing. You don’t have to have any former skills, funding, or equipment to make it, it simply is there for us to choose to use as we will. And time is a contested, pressurized, and precious thing in schools. The bells, programmed in advance to dictate the overall rhythm of the day, include periods of time in the hands of teachers. In these periods, time is up for grabs, but is very often considered in short supply. We propose that a renewed attention to the role of time given to any activity can play a significant role in students’ creative engagement with a task. Making big, spacious time for an activity, time to think, time to be still, time to make, cut, remake. But also, give 10 seconds to an activity and another type of engagement emerges, an improvisatory or impulsive engagement. Time is taken up here as a tool that we all have access to, for creativity.

## **Tools**

Tools can be material things, mediums, equipment, or they can be human skills acquired or developed through school or life experience. Either way, we consider the availability of tools an essential component of the conditions of creative practice. Materially, tools might be pens, paper, glue, rope, calculators, iPads, software, mats, or wood...the list is endless. Tools that are skill-based include imagination, confidence, perseverance,

independent thinking, and again, the list is not a definitive one, and will change with every situation. The tools at hand will determine, to a huge extent, the creative process or output afforded in that situation. Like time, tools can be considered as a simple provision. On the other hand, they are a pedagogical, and by extension, a political, decision. A single glue stick and two pieces of paper per student allows for a certain number of options, a certain extent of creativity. There are inherent limitations in these tools but also the potential for creative outputs. Tools matter, and offer a set of constraints and possibilities. If we have 10 glue sticks or a pot of glue and a *stack* of paper, the possibility of each student to make and create may proliferate. What happens if an iPad is introduced? Or an internet connection?

## **Rules**

In any given task, from a literature interpretation, or a play-building process, to a mathematical equation, the setting of the task assumes a certain outcome. The parameters and expectations of that outcome are given by the teacher. The nature of the rules (which can be thought of in terms of instructions or conditions) can determine the nature of the practice and outcomes. Let us take a history unit for example: A teacher might ask a group of students to create a presentation on a historical era. The teacher could set expectations and possibly pass assessment rubrics around: students could be marked on timing, the use of pre-set sources, pre-set imagery, and slideshow software competence, for example. The more rules, the more students may push and explore the limits of these rules. Alternatively, the teacher might ask the students to create a presentation with no set expectations of how they might do that. In this situation, the ability to predict what the students might do becomes less likely, the choices the students have may proliferate; yet the level of creativity may be consistently supported.

## **Self**

In contemporary educational contexts, it is commonplace to consider each student as positioned and constructed by social, cultural, historical, and biological contexts. The final concept that we propose for thinking and playing with creativity in teaching and learning is the role of this individual positioning in a learning context. In other words, we can invite various proximities of self into diverse endeavours. We might focus on how

each student can relate to a task: In what ways does it affect the student? In what ways can the student affect it? But equally, we might consider how abstraction and distance from one's own lived experience or bodies of knowledge might also invite new perspectives and creative learning. For example, a teacher might facilitate a task of writing about what happened "last weekend," but could do this in relation to the students' own lives, or in abstraction of it; that is, in relation to new distant and unfamiliar places, where our experience and understanding is more limited or relies entirely on the imagination of the unknown.

## Conclusion

We began this journey investigating creativity and its pervasive presence in educational discourse and we wondered why discourses are so charged with newness and innovation. Just as importantly, we wondered what relationships and conditions might determine creativity in education. We have endeavoured to remember the practice suggested by the term creativity and have invited you, hypothetically or actually, to add practical tangible experience into the reading of this work.

We are only beginning to shake loose our own habitual assumptions and associations, a process that is never complete. We have explored and exposed corners of the landscape in this essay and shared an understanding of the roots and forces that underpin everyday, public, and academic assumptions about creativity. The current discourse and favourable status of "creativity" may be connected to neoliberal and humanistic inclinations towards the "special" and the "individual," but is also opening active debate with that position.

In some ways then, discourses of creativity continue to reify certain individuals and practices over others. In the process of questioning arts and creativity, and the alignment of the two, we reject the argument that creativity is good and desirable and that it increases productivity and contributes to a valuable and economically advantageous workforce. We argue that it is a much less comfortable concept than that, one that cannot easily stand for one particular social, political, or educational movement, but that inevitably shifts to the particular nuances of space, place, person, and time.

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