

Changemakers: Creativity and Value

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Creative Approaches to Education

When working within an educational setting being creative is seen as one of the most important skills a child can learn, one definition on creativity found is “the ability to make or otherwise bring into existence something new, whether a new solution to a problem, a new method or device, or a new artistic object or form.” (Kerr, B., 2022) anyone can be creative but it’s the job of a practitioner to make sure they bring the best out of the child, allowing them to develop many skills such as problem solving, communication, teamwork and many more. When it comes to bringing creativity into education there are many means that have been done to make sure that children are learning whilst also keeping the spark that makes them unique. “Creativity in education is an important in education as literacy” (Robinson, 2007) creativity within education tends to take a less important role as compared to skills such as numeracy and literacy, it has been debated that education is the reason children’s creativity is damaged when going further into life, that rather than enhance a child’s creativity, education is a suppresser that prevents children from expressing themselves in a way that suits them. “We are educating people out of their creative capacities” (Robinson, 2007) though in more recent years we see a rise in creative outlets being near the forefront of education with things such as flying start, foundation phase and the new curriculum.



1 - (pxhere, 2017)

One key aspect being promoted within education is creative play, creative play can be defined as “children’s play, such as modelling or painting, that tends to satisfy a need for self-expression and develop manual skills” (Winfield N/A) creativity and play allows a child to scaffold their learning for the future. Theorist Jerome Bruner recognised the idea of scaffolding that the interaction between the child and adult is important when it comes to a child’s development. “Scaffolding can help the learner move beyond their initial ideas and develop their contextual understanding” (Welsh Assembly Government 2008) by using the practitioner as a more knowledgeable other they can direct children along the right direction of their own learning. The children are encouraged to explore, craft and use the senses to develop. The foundation phase identifies the need of play in education as a way for children to enhance their creativity skills “children should engage in creative, imaginative and expressive activities in art, craft, design, music, dance and movement.” (Welsh

Assembly Government 2008) all these activities can help promote different life skills that the child can use as they grow such as teamwork, communication, confidence and empathy.



2 - (Pxhere, 2017)

Creative Play allows a child to not only develop multiple different skills, but it can also improve physical development. Creativity can be used in many ways and doesn't have to be through verbal means, the use of physical play can help develop things such as fine motor skills, hand eye co-ordination, even playing games constructs the idea of rules and methods. Piaget's cognitive developmental theory puts children at the forefront of education, making it child-lead and active rather than teacher-led with observations. "Children learn about the world through exploration of it" (Doherty and Hughes, 2013) the use of the outdoors allowing children to use their senses through touch, taste, smell, listening and sight to explore the world around them and make their own understandings from it. Forest schools can promote physical activity and allow children to explore their natural environment.

"Forest School is a child-centred learning process, providing learner inspired, hands-on experiences in the natural environment. It's creative and can increase a child's confidence as they problem-solve and learn to manage risks."

(Plymouth Marjon University)

Forest schools link to the idea of Piaget's child-led learning, forest schools not only make connections to the environment, but they expand this to the parent and carers and to their local communities, this supports a child's local environment allowing them to learn about their own town.

"Activities in forest school are as child led and child initiated as possible. There are some children who, by the age of 4, have lost the ability to spontaneously play outdoors. And therefore, there is a place for adult contributions and enhancement"

(Knight 2013)



3 - (Pxhere 2017)

Forest schools help children who may have lost the spark due to the harshness of education to regain it, by encouraging spontaneous play, through encouraging this they are allowed to be creative and imaginative. Thinking of new ways to use the environment for their play through the means of non-verbal movements such as climbing, running, jumping, or using vocal expressions such as shouting, singing and communicating with others. By using the outdoors as the focus of learning children can improve on certain skills such as “improved stamina and gross motor skills through free and easy movement; fine. Motor skills by making things.” (Knight 2013) the practitioner can prompt fun tasks through storytelling to allow children to come up with their own conclusions.

While Creative play can be seen as a positive thing there are some things to take into consideration when looking to include it within an educational setting, creative play is seen as quite unstructured which could lead to any learning happening within the classroom, due to it being so child-led. While many theorists believe that children can only learn through experience Bandura believed that children could learn through observation, “In the model, personal, behavioural, and environmental factors influence one another in reciprocal fashion” (Ozer, 2022) children can learn from the action of others and don’t have to experience this in order to learn. Therefore, sometimes unstructured play can be seen as a negative as children may choose not to learn important ideals like right from wrong or basic life skills that can support them in later years. By using observations children can see how another person views the world and learn important information such as culture, emotion and behaviour. The National Curriculum published in 1999 discusses the importance of learning through observation in order to learn specific aspects of life, it was said that “The school curriculum should aim to promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.” (Department for Education and Employability, 1999) sometimes creativity needs to be put at hold so children can learn about experiences they may not be able to think of things like culture and learning responsibilities, while could hurt a child’s creativity need to be taught for a child to gain understanding on how society works.



4 - (Shutterstock, n/a)

When using different techniques to help education bring out its creative side one use could be the mantle of the expert, “Mantle of the Expert is an education approach that uses imaginary contexts to generate purposeful and engaging activities for learning.” (Taylor 2016)

Children can roleplay as different experts joining together in order to come together to design, create and bring their knowledge together in order to get a bigger picture. “Children took on the role of experts with knowledge and experience greater than those of the teacher in role” (Fisher 2004) when children become the experts the teacher takes a step back in the learning becoming more of an observer, or the consumer, they give the children the task in turn they look for answers to give back to the practitioner. This builds a great number of skills including teamwork and communication. The mantle of the expert can bring in a range of techniques for children to get the best experience out of the drama piece. “Teaching children, the fundamental skills of improvising, composing, exploring and imitating when making music, drawing first on their own culture, the process builds on existing knowledge” (Hall 2014) children get to decipher the world on their own, while also gaining new skills that can help them with their own education, using improvising when it comes to subjects such as English or Art.

Reggio Emilia schools wanted children to be able to think creatively as well as help develop a child social skill.

“Creativity is a characteristic way of thinking and responding to the world and wanted to change the culture of childhood, through debate on the rights and potentials of young children in our changing society”

(Williams and Johnston 2014)

By allowing the child to learn about society through using a technique like the mantle of the expert a child can be creative in coming up with new solutions to tasks by thinking in a different field. The Reggio Emilia approach encourages children to be in different environments for them to learn, “The stimulus of field trips, visitors to the classroom,

the introduction of specific artefacts, animals or plants to the

learning environment, and so on, can be intensified” (Craft, 2002) a practitioner can use the outside world to help children get a better idea on how to work as a team, and see different job areas and the skills they use, by showing them this they can get a better idea when acting out idea of the

mantle of the expert. The practitioner could also bring in visitors that could encourage problem solving tasks or creative pieces while using mantle of the expert, people like artists, writers, chefs, animators etc... giving children hands on activities with the guest while being able to act as the expert, not just observing but working with the public in order to gain better understandings.

An example of the mantle of the expert being used is one primary school called Barry Island Primary School, its goal is to bring in opportunities that give the children life experiences, they do so by working in tangent with St Fagan's Museum of Welsh History (Estyn 2020) to give a more enriched humanities and maths lessons, each year group was given a time period to discover "Learners were challenged to script and create a factual documentary film about their location to focus on historical and literacy-based skills" (Estyn 2020) using mantle of the expert children can really get to grasp of what it's like to try produce their own documentary, being able to use teamwork to give roles and responsibilities, from researcher, editor to producer. They can learn new skills and understand the basics of what it would be like to create and produce their own documentary, it gives children a look into a potential career they may never have thought of before. On top of creating this documentary the pupils are encouraged to visit St Fagan's "St Fagan's' team were engaged in school visits 'in costume,' to support the four purposes and help to build authentic learning experiences." (Estyn 2020) giving children a sense of what the time they are studying would be like the environment they are surrounded by when going on these trips are catered to their chosen era being able to fully experience what that time period is like supporting their documentary.

However not all children may be able to grasp the concept of acting in the role of someone else, which may make trying to teach from perspective a more difficult task as the child cannot picture themselves in the role of a doctor or a builder. "Instructivism succeeds where other teaching approaches fail, especially with students who have learning and behavioural difficulties" (Swanson 2001, cited in Smith 2017) not all children learn the same way while some learn through doing not all can learn this way, when using creative techniques, it's important that we can cater to all children's needs not just using acting or learning through doing but also using different techniques such as observation, listening and writing.

In conclusion both techniques encourage schools to use creativity in their lessons in order to help children learn a range of skills, by using both creative play and mantle of the expert together children can use their environment to learn about the world around them. Play can allow children to use the senses to explore while also keeping their excitement to learn and play. Education can encourage those who may not want to learn skills through observation to be able to get involved, it can also help those who are non-verbal or verbal to act through creating, painting, acting or through physical activity, rather than speaking or writing. They can take what they have learnt inside of the classroom and be able to use it in real life experiences.

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