

Adopting Creative Pedagogy into Asian Classrooms?

–Case Studies of Primary School Teachers’ Responses and Dilemma

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Abstract

Albeit school teachers’ traditional concepts are believed one of the obstacles of fostering children’s creativity, their voices and demands were not heard among the attempts of promoting creativity education in Taiwan. This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of primary school teachers’ responses of adopting creative pedagogy in an Asian context. Ten-week lessons based on the framework of creative pedagogy were designed and taught to two six-grade classes by the researcher. During the lessons, the classroom teachers acted as non-participant observers; their views concerning the pedagogy and ethos were collected through individual interviews in the end of the project. Strategies employed in the lessons were considered useful in developing creative qualities. Tensions of adopting creative pedagogy were also indicated. Their concerns revealed certain misconceptions of as well as the support they need in adopting creative pedagogy. A need to contextualise creative pedagogy is urged in this paper.

Keywords: creative pedagogy, teacher perspectives, case study, contextualization

1. Introduction

There have been a few attempts of promoting creativity through education in Taiwan. An earlier one can be dated back to 1970s-1980s when western creativity theories and assessment were introduced by first-generation scholars returned from pursuing degrees outside Taiwan (Niu, 2006). In the 1980s, the focus of creativity research was extended from the gifted to enhancing creative thinking of every school pupil. During this period of time, pragmatic approaches such as instructional programmes and thinking tools were promoted (Niu). However, these earlier efforts were considered unsuccessful and impeded by the conservative concepts held by teachers and the wider society (Chen, Wu, & Chen, 2005). Attention on enhancing creativity has not revived until the late 1990s when creativity was re-conceptualised as human capital and competence for future success (Choe, 2006; Craft, 2005; Thornburg, 2002). Responding to the global interest in maximizing creative potential, Taiwanese government put keen efforts into promoting *creative education*, including producing documents such as the White Paper on Creative Education (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2003), and implementing creative education projects 2000-2004 to encourage creative teaching. Creativity was included for the first time as a core capacity in the reformed curriculum.

Notably, whether in the earlier or the recent attempts as mentioned, teachers and their traditional values are regarded as obstacles of promoting creativity in the classroom (Lee, 2008; MoE, 2003; Wu, 2004). Although teachers are criticised as being resistant, there is little research that takes into account teacher perspective regarding enhancing students’ creativity. In addition, there is limited discussion on issues of pedagogical practices and nurturing creativity from a socio-cultural viewpoint; questions of how compatible Taiwanese educational values are with the objective of enhancing creativity, or how creativity can be fostered through everyday practice in Taiwanese context were not examined, either.

In light of the problems, this study proposed a framework of creative pedagogy which provides pedagogical principles of nurturing creativity. The pedagogy was employed to foster creativity of primary school pupils, to challenge the perceptions and ways of teaching/learning taken for granted in Taiwan (and other Asian regions), as well as to understand how local teachers respond to the strategies and ethos of creative pedagogy.

2. A Framework of Creative Pedagogy

In addition to offering pedagogical principles, the framework of creative pedagogy intended to provide a more holistic view of fostering creativity through education. As there are varied theories and insights concerning development of creativity, these views can be scrutinized into three aspects, namely, innovative *teaching* (Chen, 1997; Torrance & Myers, 1970) or stimulating *teaching* (Craft, 2000; Cropley, 1992; Fryer, 1996, 2003; Yeh, 2006), stimulating *environment* (Collins & Amabile, 1999; Hennesay, 1995; Lucas, 2001; Woods & Jeffrey, 1996), and supportive *teacher ethos* (Chen, 2008; Craft, 2001a, 2005; Esquivel, 1995; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education [NACCCE], 1999). Due to different approaches of creativity however, these insights often focus on different dimensions of developing creativity, and distinctions between pedagogical views are made. Yet the assumptions behind each views are not necessarily opposing. Furthermore, the aspect of student learning is often neglected. Therefore theorised with a confluence approach which integrates multiple factors of creativity (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999), the model of creative pedagogy consists of three interrelated elements – *creative teaching*, *teaching for creativity*, and *creative learning*. The elements complement and result in each other, forming an interactive process of teaching and learning. The term pedagogy in this model does not imply specific method of teaching, or certain “science” (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999) related to predicatable effectiveness. Rather, it is more focused on the practice that reflects the dynamics of teacher beliefs (of different cultural contexts) (Bernstein, 2000), and the interactions between teacher and learners’ creative endeavours (Lin, 2011).

2.1 Elements of Creative Pedagogy

In the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education report (1999), *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* are described as two different approaches of enhancing creativity. The report defines teaching creatively as “using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting and effective” (NACCCE, 1999, p. 89), emphasizing teacher practices. Whilst teaching for creativity, according to (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004, p. 81), embraces the objective of identifying young people’s creative abilities, as well as encouraging and providing opportunities for the development of those capacities. Albeit underlining different objectives, the two practices are deemed interconnected in this framework. The features of *creative teaching* such as imaginative, dynamic, and innovative approaches (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004) often inspire children’s imagination and new ideas and lead directly to teaching for creativity. On the other hand, the pedagogical strategies of *teaching for creativity*, e.g., strategies of learning to learn, not only facilitate children’s agency and engagement, but often seek to be inventive in order to arouse curiosity and learning motivation (Cropley, 1992; Torrance, 1963).

Moreover, a supportive ethos for nurturing creativity can be found in both practices. The pedagogical principles of foster children’s possibility thinking identified by Cremin, Burnard, and Craft (2006), are useful to describe how teachers create a supportive environment with strategies that prioritize children’s autonomy. They maintain that the three principles, involving *standing back*, *profiling learner agency*, and *creating time and space*, help to encourage the children’s questioning and active engagement in learning, by passing the decision making and the responsibility for learning back to the child.

Most studies of classroom pedagogy seem to focus on the teacher, classroom context, or teaching content, and rarely consider the importance of learning until the complex model of pedagogy proposed in recent years (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999). *Creative learning* is considered a salient feature in the framework of creative pedagogy, which argues that the negligence of a spontaneous and creative learning could result in difficulties in fostering children’s creativity.

A distinction was made by Torrance (1963) between *learning creatively* and *learning by authority*. He expounded that children learn by authority when they are told what they should learn and accept the ideas from the authority (e.g., teachers, books); whereas children learn and think creatively by means such as questioning, inquiring, searching, manipulating, experimenting, and even aimless play. Torrance also connected learning and teaching by suggesting that, children’s creative skills and spontaneity in learning are required whilst at the same time stimulated and flexes through the learning context, which is filled with curious problems to explore (Lin, 2011).

There are other features of creative learning revealed in recent studies, including playfulness (Kangas, 2010), collaboration (Mardell, Otami, & Turner, 2008), development for imagination and possibility thinking (Craft, Cremin, Burnard, & Chappell, 2008; Spendlove & Wyse, 2008), and supportive/resourceful context (Oral, 2008). These features of creative learning echo the previous argument as well as imply the interplay between creative endeavours of teachers and learners. In other words, the three elements of creative pedagogy contribute to each

other, forming a dynamic process with creative inspiration, supportive teacher ethos, effective inquiry-based strategies, and learners' creative and autonomous engagement.

Underpinning this multi-dimensional framework are two premises: creativity can be developed (Fryer, 1996; Parnes, 1963; Torrance, 1963; Torrance and Myers, 1970), and all individuals have the potential to be creative (Craft, 2001a; Esquivel, 1995; Feldman & Benjamin, 2006; NACCCE, 1999). The abilities and qualities of creativity promoted in this framework are relevant to little c creativity (LCC) and possibility thinking. The concept of LCC, as researchers (Craft, 2001a; Gardner, 2004) suggested, is in contrast to "big C" creativity which highlights remarkable achievements and wider influence in society. The foci of LCC are on the agency of ordinary people and their potential in everyday problem-solving. To illustrate its features, Craft (2000, 2001a) proposed the notion of "possibility thinking" as the core of LCC, involving nine qualities, namely, self-determination and direction, innovation, action, development, depth, risk, being imaginative, posing questions, and play (Craft 2001a, b). These qualities are underlined through the elements and pedagogical principles of creative pedagogy.

2.2 Teaching Creativity in an Asian Context

Creativity in Taiwan, like in many other Asian areas, is one of the major skills to be developed through regular curriculum (Lin, 2011). It is dubious that how teachers would appreciate creativity education policy implemented in a top-down mode. In addition, Taiwan is one of the Confucian-heritage societies, where conformity and collective benefit are embraced (Lin, 2010). It is social duties that are underlined rather than individual freedom (Teng, 1996). Thus the characteristics of creativity, such as being innovative, self-determined, and thinking independently, are less encouraged. In Confucian culture, a hierarchy between teacher and student has been established in which teachers are respected by the students as the authority of knowledge and source of wisdom. Therefore when promoting creative qualities, the hierarchical relationship may be disrupted and teacher authority challenged (Ng & Smith, 2004; Lin, 2008).

Another paradox related to learning may happen when adopting the practice of creative pedagogy. According to Ng and Smith (2004), the features of learning in the traditional Eastern model contrast sharply with Western ideas of learning. Rather than being a fun activity as it is frequently viewed in the west, learning is considered as serious work and lifelong process (Ng & Smith). Furthermore, academic performance and memorisation of knowledge are more emphasised than the ability to explore new discoveries or solutions (Lee, 2008; MoE, 2003). Thus the kind of creative learning as indicated by Torrance and current researchers is still a new concept, whilst learning by authority is the mainstream type in Asian classrooms, particularly those in Confucian societies. Consequently, the objective of identifying and encouraging children's creative potential is often overlooked. Hence to enhance creativity in an Asian context such as Taiwan may arouse conflicts, e.g., the concept of what abilities and dispositions to be developed through education, the role of teachers, and the ways of teaching and learning. Facing the dilemma between promoting creativity and achieve teaching objectives according to social expectation, school teachers' responses of the two different sets of educational views are worth being addressed.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

In light of the research context and theoretical framework of creative pedagogy, this study was conducted to address the concern of how desirable and feasible creative pedagogy is in a Taiwanese context. In fact, the study investigated the research question by collecting accounts of three different perspectives – the views of the classroom teachers, the pupils, and the researcher as reflective practitioner. This paper reports, mainly based on the classroom teachers' observations and appraisals, how primary school teachers in Taiwan would respond to the urge of fostering creativity through curriculum, and how they would evaluate the practices and ethos behind creative pedagogy.

3.2 Drama Lessons

In this research, drama lessons were the main vehicle for facilitating the children's possibility thinking and for initiating interactions between two sets of values, i.e., the practice of creative pedagogy and the local context, which involves the participants and their educational beliefs. Ten-week drama lessons were designed based on the principles of creative pedagogy. The lessons were taught to two six-grade classes by the researcher. It is notable that drama in this study is valued as *educational medium* with its emphasis on development and learning (Heinig, 1993; McCaslin, 1984). Drama practitioners in the U.S. tend to use the term "creative drama", whilst in the U.K., Canada, and Australia, the terms "developmental drama", "educational drama", and "process drama" are employed (Bolton, 2007; Heinig, 1993). The objectives of the drama lessons in this study thus focus on

children's personal development such as creativity or independent thinking, rather than performing skills or a final outcome.

During the ten weeks, there were 20 drama lessons for each class (2 sessions per week), and the lessons were divided into three units (Note 1). In order to make the learning more relevant to the pupils' everyday life, as well as to encourage the local teachers to facilitate their pupils' creativity with any text, contents and themes of the lessons were tailored to the local curriculum and the textbooks used by the two classroom teachers. The lessons therefore combined with subjects such as the Chinese language, history, and integrative activities (Note 2).

The main approaches of drama lessons involved story and role playing, which set a context for children to imagine, explore possibilities, and try out solutions. Each drama session involved warm-up, main, and wrap-up sections. Warm up activities relevant to the main section were introduced to prepare a playful context for learning. Then techniques (refer to Appendix) involving higher-level thinking were used to assign tasks. Finally reflective activities were introduced to encourage discussion on what had been learnt and on each other's creative work. Take one drama unit, *Behind the success*, for instance, it is based on an argumentative essay in the Chinese lesson. Normally teachers would teach the vocabularies, phrases, and idioms of the article. If time allows, themes of the article will be explained and highlighted to denote important information for exams. Pupils on the other hand are required to listen carefully, memorise information, and practice on basic skills such as writing. Yet through the extended drama lessons, pupils are allowed to simulate the particular moments, analyse the roles and their thoughts, or explore alternatives through dramatic tasks.

3.3 Research Methods

Yin (2009) defines three types of case study according to different research purposes; among which descriptive case studies are particularly useful in explaining complex interventions, describing interventions and real-life context, and illustrate certain topics. In order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' responses, as well as to capture and describe the interaction between the participants and the new pedagogy, a descriptive case study approach was adopted in this research. Two six-grade classes (11-12 year-olds) of different primary schools were involved in this project; they were selected based on accessibility and availability. One of the schools (New Hill) is a new and medium-sized primary school situated in Taipei, the capital city; whilst the other (Green Port) (Note 3) is an old, typically large-sized school in the rural area near Taipei (Note 4) where the educational resources and demographic features are different. The reason for choosing two cases is not for setting control/comparison groups to compare the effects of the pedagogy. It is argued that two-case case study creates a compromise between the difficulties of multi-case approach and the limitations of a single case study (Yin, 2003). The two selected schools not only complemented each other with distinct situations, but helped in attaining an in-depth and holistic understanding of the experience by providing rich information and multiple perspectives.

In total 67 children aged 11–12 years old (35 in New Hill and 32 in Green Port) and two classroom teachers were involved. During the 20 lessons, the two teachers acted as non-participant observers in their own class. Their views concerning the teaching objectives, the strategies used, and student development were collected through individual semi-structured interviews in the end of the teaching project. Unstructured daily conversations between the researcher (the drama teacher) and the two teachers were also included into the data for analysis.

The accounts of the two teachers were analysed by qualitative analysis approach, which involves systematic steps of data processing from familiarising oneself with the data, identifying recurrent themes, to constructing categories for coding the data (Creswell, 1998; Radnor, 2001). To ensure the rigour of the research process, a pilot study was conducted beforehand to refine the instruments for data collection. Accounts collected from the other two perspectives – the pupils, and the researcher as reflective practitioner – also served as the sources of establishing data triangulation. Constant checks of the transcripts and interpretation with the respondents were also made to confirm the correctness of the accounts and the re-presentation of the data.

4. Findings

The contextual information of the two cases will be briefed before the findings are presented; the descriptions are based on the observations made by the researcher before starting the ten-week teaching.

4.1 Background Information of the Two Cases

The first school, New Hill, is a “star school” awarded one of “Taipei high-quality primary schools” and draws many students from areas outside of Taipei city. With 35 eleven to twelve year old pupils, the classroom of Class 608 appears packed; therefore the seats of pupils are normally arranged as six groups, though quite often seven lines of seats replace the group setting because of paper-based exams. In a typical lesson, the classroom teacher

reads and explains the meaning of the texts, and asks students to note down what is important for exams. If the teacher's responsibility is talking and explaining, then the pupils' responsibility is sitting properly and paying attention to the teaching. As to the interaction during teaching and learning, it is one way input-output from the teacher transmitting knowledge to the pupils. There were few, if any, questions raised during the lessons, no sign of any challenge from the pupils, and no active involvement of the pupils. Therefore the teacher uses group scores to encourage their answers and morale, or punish misconducts. Overall, the classroom teacher is the absolute authority in knowledge and in making decisions. The pupils were totally new to the kind of drama activity involving their own creative ideas, imagination, or improvisation; though few of them have been chosen to participate in traditional drama performing, which requires continuous practices.

The second school, Green Port, is famous for its long history (92 years) and magnitude. As stepping into the school, its buildings, trees, equipment, classroom setting, and the offices and ways of administration, reminded the researcher of her primary school days some twenty years ago, and present a contrast to the previous school built only 12 years ago. There are 32 pupils in the class 608; a typical lesson usually begins with the classroom leader leading the class to recite Three-Word Book (a Chinese classic book) until the teacher is ready to teach. Again, the teacher reads and explains texts while the pupils are supposed to sit quietly. Normally there is plenty of time spent to deal with disputes: the teacher scolds those who are noisy, violate rules, quarrel/fight, to name a few. As a male teacher, it seems easier for the 608 classroom teacher to use his authority rather than to use subtle classroom management techniques to maintain order. Yet reward system and exam scores are useful in motivating the pupils' involvement in this class. Notably, the Green Port classroom teacher introduced games related to theatre warm-up activities through PE class. The pupils seem love their PE class where there is a happy atmosphere though less apparent in other lessons taught by the teacher. Therefore, drama-related activities are not entirely new to the pupils of this class.

The two teachers' concerns and evaluations regarding the lessons and pedagogy used were categorized into four main themes, namely, appraisals of creativity, expectations for pupils, strengths of the lessons, and tensions. Their views are not always akin and their varied opinions add on to the understanding of Taiwanese teachers' educational values. Yet interestingly, the respondents' concerns are often allied in terms of fostering creativity in an Asian context, particularly in issues and tensions raised by the new pedagogy.

4.2 Appraisals of Creativity

Two topics emerged under this strand of coding, i.e., *teachers' views of creativity*, and *evaluations of the objective of fostering creativity*. Firstly, Green Port (GP) teacher welcomes creative ideas demonstrated by the pupils, such as being playful, flexible, and acting in roles which are different from one's normal behaviours. Whereas, New Hill (NH) teacher makes a distinction between "positive" and "negative" creativity. She welcomes creative ideas/works that are inventive, unique, and meaningful, but frowns to funny yet meaningless creativity of her pupils. She explained that: "When thinking of using creativity, many pupils will let loose their thoughts like riding horse in the sky (Note 5); so some ideas will be ridiculous. I'm not saying it's bad, but there should be a limit". NH teacher also suggested that values behind the western concept of creativity, such as emphasis on individuality or independent thinking, are not entirely adequate and may cause social problems. There seems to be hesitation to encourage creativity in her stance.

Secondly, GP teacher casts doubt on the possibility to enhance creativity through teaching for he considers creativity "a talent that is not likely to be developed". NH teacher also deems creativity as inherent gift; yet she is inclined to believe that creativity could be stimulated through creative teaching. Nevertheless, regarding the objective of enhancing creativity through teaching, neither GP nor NH teacher saw it as an immediate or desirable educational objective. GP teacher was aware that creativity was included as an objective in the reformed curriculum in 2000. Yet he suggested that fostering children's creativity in the primary schools, especially in fifth and sixth grades, is not an easy task for two reasons: time constraints, and the limit of textbooks. He explained that the timetable is crammed with too many subjects and examinations. Also, "it is difficult for teachers to turn the dull textbook contents into creative teaching". NH teacher holds a similar view, stating that the textbook of grade 5-6 is "much more profound and difficult in contents" for making changes to inspire pupils' creativity. She implied that the learning of lower graders can be more creative for being "less relevant to knowledge-acquiring". At last, NH teacher added one more constraint: pressure from parents concerning pupils' academic performance. For her, insisting to fostering creativity under the conditions means lack of support from both inside and outside the school.

Table 1. Summary of teachers' appraisals of creativity

Green Port teacher <i>Creativity is...</i>	New Hill teacher <i>Creativity is...</i>
A talent not likely to be developed	A talent yet may be stimulated
Being different, flexible, or playful compared to oneself	A unique outcome that is meaningful and laudable
Not an immediate objective because of – 1. time constraint; 2. limits of textbooks and examinations	Not an immediate objective because – 1. creativity is less relevant to knowledge-acquiring; 2. creativity is relevant to negative social outcomes; 3. lack of support from inside/outside the school

4.3 Expectations for Pupils

When evaluating creativity, the teachers implied the kind of educational values they hold, as well as the abilities and attitudes they encourage. GP teacher seemed to be more “westernised” regarding his expectations for the pupils; whilst NH teacher wished to pass down good traditional values.

GP teacher wished his pupils to involve in learning more actively as well as to learn happily. He explained: “That’s why I use games in PE class when there is extra time. It’s like rewards for their good behaviour or performance in exams”. Yet he stressed that his expectation is only an ideal and not easy to achieve in everyday practice.

On the other hand, NH teacher expected her pupils being able to “be vigorous as well as clam”. She longed to see her pupils participate in learning with efforts and enthusiasm without her push, and be able to control their order at times. She said: “The most basic thing is to know when to answer the questions and when to pay attention. ...if I let them do an activity, they should discuss and participates eagerly, instead of sitting there indifferently. ...When it’s time to think calmly, they should think seriously and come up with thoughts, rather than saying something funny or meaningless”.

In short, NH teacher expected pupils to know how to balance the two different attitudes and, act properly. According to her, the pupils should develop several attitudes in achieving this objective, including being polite, considerate, and able to bear hardships. These features, in contrast to the kind of creativity celebrating individualism and selfish actions, are of “real creative people”. The expectations of NH teacher echo her appreciation of “positive creativity”.

4.4 Strengths of the Lessons

After the project, the two teachers observed their pupils’ development in certain creative abilities and qualities and accredited to the learning in this project. Both teachers mentioned their pupils’ progress in imagination, independent thinking, risk-taking, and being playful. NH teacher added that some pupils are more confident to express their own ideas, as well as capable of solving problem and collaborating with others. She realised that these qualities were less nurtured in the past.

The teachers also indicated how certain features and strategies employed facilitate the pupils’ creativity, including *unconventional teaching* and *stimulating strategies*. Regarding the features of the lessons, GP teacher considered the drama lessons as “unconventional teaching which provided enough space for the children to display their creativity”. He found that the lessons resulted in in-depth learning which fostered the pupils’ possibility thinking: “The extended learning of the Chinese lessons through drama context made the pupils think more about the roles, and discovered different perspectives. The lessons also provide ‘real situations’ for them to experience problems and practice imagination”. For NH teacher, the lessons were “vigorous”, “innovative”, “fun”, and “relevant to children’s daily life”, and therefore helpful to stimulate the children’s creativity.

Concerning the strengths of the lessons, the two teachers indicated certain useful strategies they observed. GP teacher scrutinised the strategies used in the lessons, including “brain-storming”, “group work”, “tasks in dramatic situations”, and “space” offered for creative expression. He maintained that these helped in “stimulating” his pupils’ creative talent. For NH teacher, what made her pupils’ progress possible are those strategies employed, involving “group discussion”, “challenging tasks, games, group collaboration”, and “instant

feedback or guidance” from the drama teacher. Although it is not a goal in this study to prove the link between children’s progress and effect of the creative pedagogy, these strengths indicated by the classroom teachers became evidences of the children’s development as well as the effect of the practice based on creative pedagogy framework.

Table 2. Summary of strengths of the lessons

Green Port teacher <i>The lessons involves...</i>	New Hill teacher <i>The lessons involves...</i>
Unconventional teaching; in-depth learning	Vigorous, innovative and fun teaching
Strategies such as brainstorming, group work, tasks in dramatic situations, and space	Strategies such as group discussion, tasks, games, group collaboration, and teacher feedback/guidance
So as to stimulate pupils’ development in imagination, independent thinking, risk-taking, and problem-solving skills	

4.5 Tensions

Despite the strengths and positive pupil development in creativity, the ways of teaching/learning based on creative pedagogy framework were not entirely successful to the two teachers, who observed several tensions during the lessons in terms of *boundary (space)*, *teacher’s role*, and *ways of learning*.

GP teacher appreciated the space offered for creative expression during the drama lessons, nonetheless, both he and NH teacher found it hard to agree with the “broad boundaries” defined during the lessons. GP teacher stated that “a teacher should take control of the whole learning process without allowing ‘unexpected’ reactions or decisions made by the pupils”; whereas the NH teacher was more concerned about the pupils’ varied and “un-reigned” creativity. She noticed the encouragement given by the drama teacher to pupils’ creative ideas, yet she suggested that the teacher should make the baseline clearer and “let the pupils know their creativity is too much”. For her, “it is a teacher’s responsibility to correct children’s values”.

Secondly, teacher’s role seemed to be another conflict. Both teachers pointed out that the teacher in this project played an important role in facilitating children’s creativity by being open, and by using strategies creatively to inspire the children. Nevertheless, they maintained that in addition to a supportive ethos, a teacher should “keep hold of authority to maintain classroom order” on one hand, and to “control the learning process” on the other hand. Therefore both teachers suggested the drama teacher to take “stricter control with punishment or rewards”. Yet in the end, NH teacher also admitted her surprise that with tender voice and without reward system, the drama teacher could make the pupils involving in their learning actively.

Finally, the way of learning encouraged during the lessons is viewed as a tension by NH teacher. She commented that the learning seemed to be fun and motivate the pupils, yet it is not “serious” enough. For her, the pupils seemed only “playing and enjoyed the games” during the lessons. In addition, she noticed that in the beginning her pupils were not accustomed to expressing ideas or working out a solution during the class. She suggested the reason being pupils were used to listening and rote-learning, and that therefore this way of learning may not be successful in a current Asian classroom.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1 Ambivalence of Promoting Creativity

Asian teachers seem rather resistant to creative traits and behaviours which are incompatible with the goal of maintaining order and traditional virtues of learning (Beghetto, 2007; Ng & Smith, 2004). However, rather than seeing their worries as opposition against creativity, this research found the teachers’ responses as ambivalence of promoting creative abilities and attitudes. According to their accounts, the two teachers cherish the traditional culture of teaching and learning whilst at the same time appreciating the characteristics of the Western learners. For instance, GP teacher wishes his pupils to engage in their learning actively; NH teacher expects her pupils to develop abilities and attitudes that combine the advantages of traditional Chinese (e.g., enduring hardship) and Western cultures (e.g., thinking independently). Both of the two teachers are aware of the need to enhance pupils’ creative capacities.

Whereas they are probably too clear about the cost of doing so: it would be a great leap for them to alter their teaching objectives, pedagogical strategies, and the authoritarian nature of teaching and classroom management. In facilitating creativity, as the teachers observed and commented, they have to put aside their worries, to be playful, to be open, to “stand back” as well as interact with the children, to name a few. These pedagogical strategies are very different from their normal teaching. Although the respondents appreciate certain aspects of the creative and active learners, they also worried that they may lose obedient and polite pupils, lose control over them and become unqualified teachers, who cannot maintain authority. The negative images of creativity, such as the exaltation of individuality, creative but wild thoughts, and the tensions arouse during the process of applying creative pedagogy, seem to keep lingering in their mind and make them hesitate to promote creativity. Finally, as the respondents mentioned, it could take efforts for them to prepare interesting lessons and manage the time constraints. Due to the emphasis on examinations and academic achievement, the teachers believe there is not enough support for them from the school or the parents to make such changes.

5.2 The Blindness of Traditional Values

As discussed, the teachers’ ambivalence towards facilitating pupils’ creativity could result from their fear of losing “good” traditions, such as respect of authority, respect of social tradition or moral norms, and good classroom order. However, when focusing on the negative impressions of creativity, for instance, relating creative behaviour to destructive results, the teachers seemed to bear misconceptions toward creativity on one hand, and ignore the shortcomings of the traditional values which they were trying to retain. From the respondents’ accounts, several misconceptions of creativity and blind spots of the educational tradition were perceived, involving:

- Deeming creativity as un-reined imagination, prone to meaningless outcomes without any contribution to the group/society;
- Deeming the role of a *democratic guide* as merely standing back without managing classroom order or offering value-clarification;
- Discouraging *independent* and *critical thinking*, relating which to disrespect for authority and traditional wisdom;
- Overlooking *playfulness* and *taking risks*, seeing which as being opposed to hard-working and serious-learning.

In other words, facing the dilemma of fostering creativity or keeping traditions, the teachers were critical in examining the Western concepts and practices, yet ignore problems and overlooked aspects in the educational context in Taiwan. Their worries could even make them neglect the possibility of keeping the strengths of both value systems.

5.3 Implications

In light of the teachers’ ambivalence and dilemma, implications are suggested in adopting creative pedagogy in an Asian context, namely, *bridging the gap between different perspectives of creativity*, and *contextualising creative pedagogy*.

As discussed, the attempts of promoting creative education in Taiwan were in a top-down mode. And as perceived in this study, a gap exists between the practical and academic understanding of creativity. Western theories and assessment of creativity were introduced without exploring the compatibility of creativity with Taiwanese cultural context or educational discourse. The concerns and difficulties of first-line practitioners were not heard. What the teachers observed to be the shortcomings of creative behaviour are neglected. Without understanding teachers’ conflicts and worries, the chance to learn the misconceptions held by the teachers and take further action is missed as well. Therefore it is strongly suggested that more research should be conducted to let the voices of teachers and pupils heard, and to trigger dialogues between different sets of educational values. Through constructive dialogues, mutual understanding between academic and practical fields and consensus can thus be built.

Secondly, to resolve the tensions of adopting creative pedagogy due to different educational and pedagogical frameworks, the need of contextualising creative pedagogy should be considered. Contextualising in this study is referred to as the endeavour of re-evaluating the traditional culture, whilst at the same time adopting Western theories and practices with an open yet critical attitude. In recent years, creativity has been questioned to be value-neutral (Craft, 2005) and many Western researchers perceived limitations of the Western model of creativity (Craft, Gardner, & Claxton, 2008). Some of the new notions proposed by the researchers as remedies are the very elements seen as the strengths of traditional Chinese culture, for instance, moral cultivation, social

responsibility, and wisdom (Craft, Gardner, & Claxton; Puccio & Gonzalez, 2004). Therefore when adopting the theories and practices of creative pedagogy, traditional values should not be discarded, and the interaction between traditional and new values should be recorded, to offer implications for balancing the two sets of values and practices.

By examining how the ethos and pedagogical strategies of creative pedagogy fit in Taiwan's unique education system, a local model of creative education could merge which clarifies the misconception of creativity, embraces the elements and ethos of creative pedagogy, and maximize the strengths of the traditional culture. In this model, a balance should be formed between in-depth learning and playful learning. A balance should also be sought between an authoritative role model and a facilitator who stands back at the right time to create space for the learners to learn on their own, and at the same time offering guide and value clarification.

The view of contextualising creative pedagogy may provide insights for nurturing learners' creativity within contexts similar to those of Taiwan; nonetheless, it is not to be deemed a fixed formula and educators/teachers are urged to go through their own process of finding the balance by embracing and negotiating multiple teaching roles. It is also urged that teacher education should be provided in knowledge and pedagogical guidelines of fostering creativity, and that more initiatives and studies of adopting creative pedagogy should be encouraged through teacher education to trace teachers' experiences and the support they need in applying creative pedagogy in an Asian context.

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Notes

Note 1. The three units with New Hill class were *Drama basics*, *Behind the success* (argumentation of an athlete's success), and *Yang-Tzi the envoy* (a historical event); with the Green Port class were *Drama basics*, *Kong-Ming borrowed arrows* (a historical story), and *News reporters* (current issues).

Note 2. It is a new subject included in the reformed curriculum. Because of lacking teacher training, most teachers find this subject difficult to teach (Zhang, 2004).

Note 3. Both New Hill and Green Port are pseudonyms.

Note 4. This area is now renamed "New Taipei City".

Note 5. This is a Chinese idiom meaning not reining in one's thoughts.

Appendix

Drama techniques used in the lessons

Name	Content
<i>Warm-up activities</i>	
Body Movement or Exercise	1. Mimed activity: a) walking (with situations/ in roles); b) mirroring; c) helping hand; d) imaginary sports ★ e) puppetry and the master ★ 2. Game: Zi-Za-Boing ★
Voice Exercise	Voice-in-Role: ★ Decide a sound or a sentence, then practice them in different role, could be a famous person, an animal etc.
Freeze-frame/ Still image/ Tableau	Groups with their own bodies devise one or serial images that describe a specific moment, idea, or theme of the drama. Often it will represent people “frozen” in the middle of some action.
<i>Drama conventions used in the Main activities</i>	
Role on the wall	A role is presented in picture form on the wall. Information about the person can be added as the drama progresses and we learn more about them.
Improvisation	Students take the roles in the situation teacher gave them, and improvise their dialogue or response. Usually in pairs or in small groups.
Thought-tracking/ Thought-tapping	The private thoughts/reactions of participant-in-role at specific moment are spoken publicly. It can be used when the action is frozen and participants “tapped for thoughts”, or used in conjunction with still images.
Hot-seating	The teacher or pupils take a role in the drama, and the group question/interview the person to find out more information. The role may be signaled by sitting in a particular seat or by wearing an item of costume. Or it can be released from a frozen image.
Teacher in role	The teacher takes a full part in the drama, often using her role to manage the drama within the action. Teacher roles can have a variety of statuses to achieve the teaching purpose (e.g., provoke tension, excite interest, add information or challenge, and create choices).
Conscience alley/ Thought tunnel/ Voices in the head	Similar to hot seating, but the character does not answer the questions or respond to what others say to him/her when walking down the “alley”, two lines formed by others of the group. Students in the two lines speak out the possible conflict thoughts of the character at certain moment, or act as a collective conscience which may give the character advises on choices.

★ These activities are adapted from common games or theatre trainings to prepare the pupils for main activities.