Chapter 22

On the Relationships between Creative Learning, Creative Teaching, and Roles of Creative Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aimed to discuss the relationships between creative teaching, creative learning and the role played by creative teachers in the contexts of students’ creativity development. Firstly, this chapter analyzed the characteristics of creative teaching and creative learning. The history of the research on creative teaching and learning since the first half of 20th century was briefly introduced. Secondly, the authors discussed the nature of creative teaching, the features of creative teachers compared to non-creative teachers, the environment for the development of creative teachers and the measures that should be taken to promote the growth of creative teachers. Accordingly, this chapter contributes to development of creativity in higher education both theoretically and practically in the future.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the creativity development has been paid great attention since human beings entered the 21st century. Most countries put particular emphasis on creative teaching in higher education in order to promote the learner’s creativity and the growth of creative talents. However, it has been controversial for the nature of the creative teaching, creative teaching methods, and the growth of creative teachers, despite many studies have been done on such topics.

The objective of the chapter is to clarify the relationships between creative teaching, creative learning and creative teachers, and to point out the way to creative teaching based on the discussion of the role of creative teachers in the contexts of students’ creativity development. In the following sections, the brief review of the history of studying creative learning and creative teaching will be firstly conducted,
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and the characteristics of creative teaching and creative learning will be analyzed. And then the features of creative teachers that are necessary for developing creative teaching will be discussed. Finally, this chapter will focus on how to foster the growth of creative teachers.

BACKGROUND

Undoubtedly, creativity has been the key theme of 21st century. According to International Society of Technology Education’s National Educational Technology Standards for Students, the first educational technology standard for students is “creativity and innovation”. Similarly, the standards set by American Association of School Librarian (AASL) for 21st century learners emphasized that learners create new knowledge, express their innovative opinions, and create new and useful products in realistic life (Johnson & Lamb, 2010). Accordingly, in the era with creativity highly emphasized, creative teaching has been developed rapidly and constituted the core of creative education, which represents the current trend of education in diverse countries around the world.

Due to the influences of progressivism that was prevalent in the first half of 20th century, as a headmaster of Wisconsin Middle School, H. L. Miller in Department of Education, University of Wisconsin in the U.S.A, published the book Creative Learning and Teaching, based on his educational practice, in 1927. In this book, Miller claimed that every student had enormous potentials for creativity development, and teachers should not set the upmost limit for the students. According to Miller (1927), learning should be the process in which students actualized themselves and found their potentials, and in the process students developed themselves, regulated themselves, improved themselves, changed themselves, tested themselves, and created themselves, and they are not “custom-made” by teachers. Accordingly, teaching was not the process in which schools provided some kind of “articles of order” or “parts” for society, and teachers solely provided some sort of knowledge or conclusion, but the process in which they should liberate students, inspire creativity, and guide students to find the novel solutions. Therefore, Miller (1927) suggested creative learning should be regarded as a result of creative teaching from a perspective of how to teach. Obviously, Miller’s ideas reflected the theory of progressivism that emphasized to develop children’s ability as the core of teaching process. Actually, at that time, the school education in the U.S.A was deeply affected by the progressivism that improved greatly contemporary classroom atmosphere and democratized the relationship between teachers and students that still can be found today.

Influenced by Jean Piaget’s theory of structuralism, a famous educator and cognitive psychologist, Jerome Seymour Bruner (1960) put forward a series of concepts: knowledge structure, analytic thinking, intuitive thinking, spiral course, discovery learning, and heuristic method. These concepts elaborated the development his structuralism theory of education that has been shown in the published book The Process of Education in 1960. As emphasized by Bruner (1960), students should be guided to learn to study by heuristic teaching, which inspired a series of relevant scholastic exploration. For example, in 1967 B. G. Massialas and J. Zevin discussed how to improve the ability of analytic thinking and discovery learning in the courses of the disciplines such as biology, geography, language, music, and society, etc. They stated that students’ motivation for exploration should be inspired, and teachers should encourage students to draw their own conclusions based on the materials provided and to discover the relationships between diverse concepts in the processes of achieving the conclusions.

In the 1970s, researchers began to explore the learning process from a perspective of creative thinking due to the influences of cognitive studies development. For example, E. P. Torrance and R. E. Myers did