

1. Introduction

This research has developed from previous research conducted by the authors on 'Developing Creativity in Early Childhood Studies Students' (Yates and Twigg, 2017). The results of the previous project identified that engagement in practical creative activities within a first year Early Childhood Studies undergraduate degree module, 'Play and Creativity' enhanced students' confidence in their own creative abilities and influenced the implementation of creative activity in their practice with children. We felt that it was important to take this further by focussing on the experiences of second year students on work placement in relation to the practice they observe in these settings and how they see creativity being promoted. At stage two the underpinning theme of the degree considers the crucial role of reflection whilst in practice. We therefore decided that we would like to conduct the research from this angle, and encourage students to reflect on their work placement experiences in light of their learning from the first year creativity module. Alongside this, we wanted to capture the views of students on how they see the place of creativity in early childhood in relation to observed practice within their settings, given the continual changes seen within the Early Years Curriculum. The recent Warwick Commission Final report (2015) made fresh claims that creativity is being side-lined from the curriculum in place of a focus on STEM subjects. This study will therefore consider how creativity features within current early years practice and how students and practitioners conceptualise and value creativity as part of their practice. The concepts of 'teaching creatively' and 'teaching for creativity' (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004) will be utilised within the research, alongside 'first generation' and 'second generation' creativity as described by Ole Jensen (2014:45). The role of reflection upon experience to enhance learning, will also be explored within the research.

1.1. *The value of creativity within early years settings*

It is widely recognised that the early years is a fundamental period for laying the foundations 'for future innovators and creative thinkers' (Leggett, 2017:2). The emphasis on the development of creativity should therefore be placed within the early years and more broadly within education (Carlile and Jordan, 2012). This though, is not always the case with recognition that 'the importance of creativity continues to remain on the fringe of education, rather than at the heart of all learning' (Leggett, 2017: 3).

We increasingly see the need for young children to be ready for the formal learning of school (DfE, 2017) which leads them to a 'highly prescriptive and narrowing curricula (Prentice, 2000:150) with no room for individual creativity.

Prentice (2000) and Neelands et al., (2015) argue that creativity needs to be recognised and valued within education, thus allowing children to 'have an opportunity to open the gate of a better world' (Prentice, 2000:146) whilst 'nurturing and training 'tomorrow's creative and cultural talent (Neelands et al., 2015:15).

Leggett (2017) emphasises the importance of educators promoting strategies in their own pedagogical practices to encourage creativity within the children they educate. Findings, however, from her research reveal that in fact educators do not always fully understand their role in promoting children's creativity, therefore affecting the values they place on it.

It can be argued, that not only does the culture of the education system in the UK inhibit the development of creativity in children, but that some education and early years environments do so also. When considering the many definitions of creativity, Carlile and Jordan (2012) discuss one which 'fits' well within the thinking of educationists. They discuss 'creativity [as being] viewed as a product (pg. 11) and when considering this in the context of education aligns with an outcome based environment such as that of the school environment. Together with this, the place of creativity as a cross-curricular approach is sometimes inhibited to just art and craft activities. Crowell and Reid-Marr (2013:67) acknowledge also that educational establishments are much more in favour of 'testing'. This though, is not a new concern, Beetlestone in (1998:24) stated that...

'Creative tasks are often perceived to be of lesser importance than reading, writing and number work. The 3Rs dominate classroom time.....Yet, despite this, there is a call for more work on the basics, as if mere quantity of time will solve national or local shortcomings in literacy and numeracy.'

Despite these concerns, Dehouke (2006) points to a plethora of research projects that support the benefits of creative activity for children in relation to thinking and learning, socialization, affective development, self-regulation, and aesthetic awareness. 'Thus, the arts and accompanying creative and imaginative activity enrich and empower the lives of children' (Dehouke 2006, pg. 291). Together with this, Crowell and Reid-Marr (2013:69) acknowledge the importance of creativity and children becoming fully immersed in the 'process and the unfolding possibilities' rather than that of the end product. Beghetto (2013) identifies these opportunities for developing children's creativity as 'micromoments' which are 'in the moment' opportunities for supporting creativity which often take the form of unplanned events which emerge when planned lessons take unexpected turns. This though, is not an easy task as educators tend to be 'risk-averse' and uncertainty can result in them feeling out of control.

Internationally creativity is viewed quite differently and it could be said in a much more positive manner. Ole Jensen (2014:39) states that 'Danish pedagogues and pedagogical institutions have a long tradition for working with creativity' expressing the importance the Danish education system places on this. Tanggard et al 2012 (cited in Ole Jensen, 2014) however, point out that although children's creativity is promoted within the Danish education system, this does not confidently support the view that these children will become 'creative adults'. They do however, report on a number of studies that view the importance of children being able to 'play' in the setting and the promotion of creativity through this. Together with this, they note the strong characteristic 'that if children [are to] develop creatively, it is pivotal that they feel confident' Tanggard et al., 2012 (cited in Ole Jensen, 2014:48).

1.2. *Creative Teaching and Teaching for Creativity*

Craft et al (2014) identified the differences between 'teaching creatively' which focuses on imaginative approaches in teaching and 'teaching for creativity' which is concerned with teaching practices that inspire and nurture students own creative abilities' (pg. 92). Craft's (2014) ideas imply that in order to 'teach for creativity', ownership and choice needs to be

afforded to children, alongside time, opportunities and resources for creative potential and individuality to flourish. This suggests the need for open-ended exploration without the constraints of specific outcomes or products which may put practitioners in an uncomfortable position in relation to the expectations placed upon them by the curriculum, managers, head teachers and regulating authorities such as OFSTED. Craft has previously asserted (2002) that adults can better develop the creative potential of children when they are confident in their own creativity. This is supported to some degree by Dehouke (2006) who suggests that early years educator students in the US need to have authentic arts experiences in order to get in touch with the 'artist within' before they can empower children to be creative. This will be discussed further in the subsequent section. Ole-Jensen (2014, pg. 45) identifies two different understandings of creativity present in pedagogical practice within Denmark. The first focuses on the process of 'creating', which may include children completing the same activity with similar end products to learn specific skills and techniques and the second is concerned with 'novelty' which must 'contribute with something better than what already exists'. Ole Jensen (2014) further discusses Tanggard's et al's (2012 cited in Ole Jensen, 2014:45) ideas on first generation and second generation creativity. First generation creativity comes from a romantic view of children as 'natural creators' who will develop creativity given the right environment and resources. Second generation creativity, in opposition, considers children as 'unfinished human beings' who develop creativity through participation in 'cultural and human communities', hence the social environment is the most significant factor in the development of creativity. According to Ole Jensen (2014) second generation creativity is now dominant in practice and approach within Danish educational day-care institutions. Tanggard (2012 cited in Ole Jensen, 2014) suggests practitioners adopt a creativity promoting model which positions 'creating' as a pre-requisite of 'novelty' through three elements of creativity. Namely the first being 'immersion in profession or tradition (knowledge and skills) for example, learning how to cut using scissors; cheating and experimental learning. Secondly, playful exploration without 'right answers' and finally opposition to the material being used (questioning the established, creating new rules/new solutions). These views highlight that 'creating' alone cannot support children's creativity, but 'processes with opposition, difficulties, uncertainty, play, experiments, searching and wondering are significant for the development of children's creativity' (Ole Jensen, 2014, pg. 47). This view supports Craft's (2014) ideas of children's ownership and agency within creative activities and opportunities in early education institutions.

Crowell and Reid Marr (2013) offer the concept of 'emergent teaching' which encompasses 'engagement, playful discovery, deep enquiry and creativity' (2013, pg. XIV). They assert that creative adaptation is apparent

'... in classrooms where students are engaged and involved in their own learning, where they are given choices, and where learning is facilitated rather than delivered.'
(Crowell & Reid Marr, 2013, pg. 1)

These ideas may seem problematic to some within the education sector in the UK in the present system, where there is the expectation that teachers will not only control what is happening but also ensure children can replicate very specific activities knowledge and 'facts' in relation to narrow and poorly justified targets and goals as exemplified within the

statutory Standard Assessment Tasks. The authors continue to critique the notion of learning 'linear' stating,

'Our society has conditioned us, though, to appreciate the straight line. Going from point A to point B without detours represents efficiency, practicality, value. Clear, unambiguous language, goals that are realistic and achievable, objectives that are sequential, concrete, measurable, and irreducible – these are the attributes infused in our psyche, embedded in our organizations, and are part of the hidden curriculum in our schools.' (Crowell & Reid, 2013, pg. 41)

They further identify emergent teaching, in opposition to the above, as being responsive to ambiguity and open ended- with an attendance to working in the present and acknowledgement of the insight that can come reflective observation.

Elton-Chalcraft and Mills (2013, pg. 482) identify a number of key factors necessary for creative teaching and learning including, 'learning which is 'fun', achievement through intrinsic motivation, willingness to take risks and learn from mistakes, children's ownership of learning and the teacher's role as facilitator.'

1.3. Supporting students' creativity

Craft has previously asserted (2002) that adults can better develop the creative potential of children when they are confident in their own creativity. Previous research by the authors (Yates and Twigg, 2017) proposed that engagement in creative, practical experiences within an Early Childhood Studies degree course did appear to support students' confidence in their own creative abilities, skills and techniques, which in turn, resulted in replicating creative activities in their practice with children. These ideas are underpinned by Dehouke's (2006, pg. 292) research which highlights the importance of students' engagement with 'authentic art experiences.' She asserts:

'adult students are not usually encouraged to have their own authentic experience with the arts as adults. Yet it is only through this that early childhood college students can apply their own personal experiences to teaching children, thereby supporting and encouraging the experience of artistic self-expression in children.'

She discusses this using four dimensions, the 'adult within', the 'child within', the 'teacher within' and the 'artist within'. This involves recognizing multiple identities and viewing creativity from these different perspectives.

Beghetto (2013) asserts that the best time to help develop teacher's confidence and awareness of these opportunities is before they start their formal teaching, through guided reflection and shared exploratory discussion of possible actions. However, Dehouke (2006, pg. 292) also points out that 'adult students are not usually encouraged to have their own authentic experience with the arts as adults', therefore not allowing potential practitioners to be confident within their own practice.

Supporting students with their creativity does not just allow them to consider creative activities for children but to also critically consider their own definition of creativity and the conditions that are required for this. As Prentice (2000) states different people have different perspectives on the concept of creativity. It is important that students can consider and challenge the differing views that are apparent and have the confidence to be able to do this, especially when going out into practice. Another fundamental issue highlighted by Leggett (2017) is that educators do not fully understand their role in the development of children's creativity. She further highlights that educators do not always have the capacity to encourage children to think creatively. Giving students these challenges prior to going out into practice further allows them to develop their own strategies for practice.

A fundamental part of early years practice is that of reflection. Sylva et al., (2004) clearly identified in their research that early year's practitioners who regularly look at ways they can adapt and improve on their practice, work in settings that are 'more effectively run.....and more open to change and challenge' (Hayes, 2017:2). Paige – Smith and Craft (2011: 14) further identify with this and state that practitioners who not only allow for reflection of their own practice, are also able to reflect and respond children's learning. In doing this, practitioners are able to acknowledge 'the child's own interests [by allowing] space for ideas and possibilities to emerge', a fundamental skill in the encouragement of creativity.

Students on the Early Childhood Studies degree are required to engage in work experience, to allow for the development of such skills. Svojanovsky (2017) notes that work placement experiences themselves cannot guarantee insightful or valuable learning, however he asserts that the process of reflection on experience can contribute to this transformation. He identifies the need for students to experience a paradigm shift from the traditional to the alternative paradigm of education in order for reflection to be fruitful. The traditional paradigm 'is based on the assumption that knowledge is absolutely correct and certain and is extracted through an authority figure' (Svojanovsky, 2017, pg. 344) whereas the alternative paradigm rests on students taking on reflective thinking, and becoming responsible for the process of their own learning.

Within our second year practice module 'The Developing Practitioner' our students are required to reflect upon their personal, academic and professional development in relation to their work experiences. As part of their studies students keep a reflective diary to record their thoughts and experiences, which are subsequently used as evidence to support their final assessment in this module. This research hoped to capitalise on these reflections, by encouraging them to reflect upon their own and observed practice of creativity.

Within Dehouske's (2006) research, students were encouraged to reflect upon their identity through four dimensions, the child within, the adult within, the teacher within and the artist within. Her research illustrates the tension between these identities and the importance of the context and framing of reflection. Hey (2014) identifies that the student practitioner is in a privileged position in that they are expected to 'observe, question and critique what they see and do' (pg. 63) This is further illuminated by Oates (2014) who asserts that in constructing a professional identity, students need to reflect upon and contest their own practice and 'different truths' (pg. 143) about children. However there is a tension between

these different identities as a student, as they are on the one hand 'apprentices' learning from observed practice and on the other, constructing their own professional identities based upon their experiences, theories, learned skills and reflection with tutors and peers.

2. Design and methodology

2.1. Background to the study

The research took an interpretivist approach to uncover student's reflections, feelings and thoughts on both their observed experiences within work placement and their views on the influences of the first year creativity module on their practice and understandings of creativity (Hughes, 2010). Opie (2004a) defines this as the way that knowledge is observed and consequently created by the individual. The research aimed to elucidate the place of creativity within early childhood practice through student reflections on their placement experiences, therefore this research adopted a qualitative, mixed method approach. The study used questionnaires and interviews as data collection methods. Although the research looked at a small sample, the researchers felt that the research would still provide unique insights into the overall aims, though would not be representative of the wider population. The researchers wanted to gain the student's perspective on the recognition of creativity within the work place.

2.2. Aims of the research

The aim of the research:

- Student reflections on the place of creativity in Early Years practice: Reflections on second year work placement experience.

With the following objectives:

- To identify examples of creative teaching and teaching for creativity students have experienced within their placement settings practice.
- To explore student opinions on the value placed on creativity within their placement settings based on their experiences.
- To identify how their experience on the play and creativity module has impacted upon their own practice.

2.3. Sampling

The study sample were purposively sampled (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtler, 2010) from the second year cohort on the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies Degree at a UK university. Criteria for selection was based on option module choices in year two of the degree, specifically 'Creative Approaches to The Curriculum' and 'The Young Child in School'

modules. Typically, but not exclusively, students who choose these modules are interested in pursuing education careers, so would be more likely to be invested in taking part in the research. All second year students complete the 'Play and Creativity' module in their first year, as this is a core module and is concerned with developing creative skills and confidence in planning, carrying out and evaluating creative activities within practice. Each option module had 30 students enrolled, making a total of 60 in the population. Together with this, the students sampled are required, as part of the degree, to undertake a work placement within an early years setting. This work placement allows students to experience real-life work situations and conduct a range of tasks and activities to enable them to gain the Early Years Educator award at the end of their degree (NCTL, 2013). Placements enable students to work with children aged 0-5 years (usually day nurseries and childminders) and with children aged 5-7 years (usually within a school setting). Within our second year module 'The Developing Practitioner' our students are required to reflect upon their personal, academic and professional development in relation to their work experiences. As part of their studies students keep a reflective diary to record their thoughts and experiences, which are subsequently used as evidence to support their final assessment in this module. This research hoped to capitalise on these reflections, by encouraging them to reflect upon their own and observed practice of creativity.

2.4. *Materials*

2.4.1. *Questionnaires*

Questionnaires were distributed to all students on the above modules during the first teaching session with information and consent forms. Questionnaires and consent forms were returned in separate envelopes at the end of the session. The questionnaires were anonymised and students were asked to use a self- chosen participant code. Questionnaires enable the researcher to obtain quality information using questions written around a specific subject (Opie, 2004b). The questions were written in order to find out the views and experiences of students in relation to the aims of the research.

2.4.2 *Interviews*

Having completed the questionnaires, participants were asked if they would consent to take part in an interview at a later date, as part of the research. Five positive responses were received. Of these 5, 2 only responded to appointments and took part in the interviews. The interview questions encouraged the students to reflect on their work placement experiences, a skill Early Childhood Studies students are encouraged to adopt on work placement and critically discuss within a number of modules, both within class time and within module assessments. Interviews further enhance the interpretivist paradigm, by allowing for 'each person..... [to] have their own voice and opinionsreported impartially' (Walker and Solvason, 2014:83). The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed by the researchers to enable ease of analysis. Transcription of the interview by the researcher enables an early idea on the themes that may be emerging as part of the study (Bathmaker, 2004)

2.5 Analysis

20 questionnaires and 2 interviews were analysed by the researchers together. It was decided that this would take place, so that the researchers could fully immerse themselves and 'become familiar with the data' (Mukherji and Albon, 2010:230), prior to 'data reduction' (Walker and Solvason, 2014:96). Themes very clearly emerged upon immersion of the data. The researchers were aware of the potential difficulty in analysing qualitative data, in that reliability and validity can potentially be affected with the possibility of subjectivity of the reader (Opie, 2004c).

2.6 Ethics

Ethical approval was initially sought from the Ethics committee at the University of Derby. Prior to starting the study, the researchers spoke to the groups of students identified to make them fully aware of the intentions of the study and their participation in the study if they wished to. Participants were given an information letter which explained that their involvement in the study was on a voluntary basis and that they had the right to withdraw from the study, if they chose to do so at a later stage (Walker and Solvason, 2014). They were also fully informed on how their data would be used with reference to the Data Protection Act 1998 (Mukherji and Albon, 2015). Once participants had made the decision to be involved, they were given a consent form, so that the researchers could gain their informed consent. Roberts-Holmes (2005) highlights the importance of this and explains that gaining informed consent is part of the research relationship and the development of trust. Participants were assured of their anonymity throughout the research and that the confidentiality of their information would be maintained by the researchers. If participants chose to withdraw at a later stage, they were asked to enter a personal code onto their questionnaires so that removal of their data could be made easier.

3. Results

3.1. Results from the questionnaires

Twenty questionnaires were completed, of the respondents, 11 students had work experience with children within key stage 1 and 9 with children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). As stated previously, the questionnaire questions were shaped in order to elicit answers in line with the study aims as highlighted below:

- To identify examples of creative teaching and teaching for creativity students have experienced within their placement settings practice.
- To explore student opinions on the value placed on creativity within their placement settings based on their experiences.
- To identify how their experience on the play and creativity module has impacted upon their own practice.

3.1.1. Identify examples of creative teaching and teaching for creativity

Students were able to reflect and identify a range of activities that they observed within their placement settings, these activities identified as three different themes:

- 8 students stated art and craft activities
- 10 students stated activities linked to the curriculum
- 7 students stated free choice activities

Table 1

Examples of Creative Teaching (Adult directed/Outcome based):	Teaching for Creativity (Free choice activities/child led):	Open comments:
All activities/lessons	Play time	'children told off for perceived scribbling'
In literacy activities	Forest School	'very rarely opportunity to be completely creative'
Maths	Role Play	
Recipe Art	Drawing/Painting	
Science	Baking	
P.E	Lego	
Creating flags for a history lesson	Creative/making table	
	Small world activities	
	Construction activities	
	Free choice	
	Mark making	
	Christmas and Easter card making	

3.1.2 Explore student opinions on the value placed on creativity

When students were asked to reflect on whether they saw creativity in practice, 12 responded by saying that they did see creativity, 4 stated that they did not and 1 said that they saw creativity 'very rarely'. Comments students made in relation to this, ranged from students observing creativity as being 'essential / embedded' to 'not being the main focus' and 'not having enough time' to 'it [creativity] not being allowed' and 'not promoted enough'.

Students were asked to identify which areas of development they thought creativity stimulated. The majority of the students (8) stated that they thought creativity supports children with their learning and development. 5 stated that they felt it supported their self-expression and 3 students stated that they felt creativity supported individuality/uniqueness and physical skills. Other comments included; Cognition, Relationships, Inclusion, Self-esteem and Imagination.

3.1.3 Identify how student's experience on the play and creativity module has impacted upon their own practice.

15 students felt that the play and creativity module at stage 1 had made an impact on their practice, only 1 stated that it had not.

Table 2 shows two themes identified in student answers, around what it was they found particularly useful through the module. The first being that the module made them realise how important creativity was for children and secondly that the module helped them to think about activities and ideas to promote creativity.

Table 2

Importance of creativity:	Generation of ideas:
'Encouraged me to be much more critical of the provision for creativity in settings'	'inspiration in to the ways we can be creative'
'Importance of creativity/ Helped me understand the importance of creativity and how it can benefit children'	'I will always think of how I can make it more creative and interesting It encourages me to think about how activities could be made more creative in order to allow for more inclusive'
'Yes – more aware of creativity, how to promote it and the importance of child initiated time to enable creativity'	'find different ways of doing things'
'Importance of loose and not rigid guidelines'	'It has given me lots of ideas of different activities' 'learned some ideas I can use in practice/ Linking the curriculum to creativity'
'Recognition that some settings inhibit creativity'	

3.2. Results from the interviews

3.2.1 Creative teaching/teaching for creativity

Question 2 of the interview asked students if they had seen any examples of creative teaching. They made the following comments:

- There are planned activities but child led
- Dance club at school
- With numeracy/literacy activities
- The teacher leaves half an hour at the end of the day to tell a story or sing songs.

'it's always there but it's not necessarily touched uponmainly they would have their areas and they would say at the start of the day what was available for them to do today and what was happening on what table, so they had like a creative table, a

maths area, a role play area. They would introduce what was available and often demonstrate how to do it'

'within numeracy she [the teacher] will plan one activity that [the children] can do, but she knows that it will suit them more and she will set them off independently, but for another group she will make it perhaps a story'

There were also asked 'What sort of activities do you think are good for promoting creativity in children? Their answers included the following:

- Activities that aren't typically creative – spontaneous
- Using natural resources – outdoors
- Open-ended activities where there isn't a set recipe or formula
- Science activities in relation to experimenting and finding things out
- Activities where they are using their imagination

3.2.2 *The value placed on creativity*

Here are some of the comments the student's made with regards to the value placed on creativity within the settings that they attended through work experience:

- Quite difficult to be as creative as perhaps we would want to be within teaching because there is so much to cover.
- It is all like recipe activities
- Creativity is valued in some ways, but things they do are all the same.

'Errm I think its valued because they do try and promote the children to do it but I don't think its valued so much as the main curriculum areas like the maths, the phonics, the time to talk..... I don't know whether it's just because they have to, and there's the testing and things like that, and there's the guidelines and achievements they have to reach.'

'they don't really have much time to choose what they want to do, so I think it is quite difficult to promote'.

- Yes, but promoted more in nursery
- Not in outdoors – not many resources available for yr 1 (sand and water only for nursery children)
- Sometimes...in art, they do tend to do the same thing.

'I don't feel it's promoted as much as reading, writing, because they're asked to read and they're asked to write and told all the time they need to do this whereras the creativity it'll be if they choose to do it'

3.2.3 The impact previous learning has had on practice

Comments made during the interviews with regards to the impact the Play and Creativity module, at stage 1, has had on students:

- Wider definition of creativity
- Examples to use in practice
- Thinking about the ways in which you can approach different activities
- I think about how my activities can be more open-ended

'I've definitely learned a lot what you can do outside with it, I've found that really useful, and what different things are creative, so we did that teepee exercise, where we did those and it was all about teamwork as well; it wasn't just an individual sat down with paper and colours it made me think we can be creative in lots of ways even with the music and things like that as well.'

One student reported that she had developed a wider definition of creativity, was more open minded about how to approach different activities, and placed more emphasis on individuality.

'It has changed my view on it. That you don't have to do things in a set way and not everything has to be a recipe or formula of how to do something. Just as long as it turns out the way you wanted it'.

A more reflective approach in relation to planning open ended opportunities for children was also mentioned by one respondent.

4. Discussion of questionnaires and interviews

The interviews and questionnaires have been analysed according to the three key themes, Creative teaching and teaching for creativity, the value placed on creativity in the early years and supporting student's creative practice.

4.1 Creative Teaching/Teaching for Creativity

The responses from the questionnaires indicate that creative teaching (Craft, 2014) was clearly seen within the students' work placements. Students referred to creative approaches being used within the curriculum in literacy, maths and in 3 responses 'all lessons'. While this is encouraging and to be expected, the use of 'recipe activities' was also mentioned, mainly in relation to 'art and craft' activities (8 responses) including adult led seasonal crafts, such as card making for Christmas and Easter. Recipe activities were also mentioned within the two interviews within the following responses to question 3.

It is all like recipe activities (p.11)

Creativity is valued in some ways, but things they do are all the same (p.11)

'I've not seen much probably out of the blue or spontaneous creativity, it's always been a planned so they have like a schedule..... of make a handbag and there's step by step instructions and you've got your resources, there's no 'how do you think you could make a handbag and what could you use?' or there's no 'see what you can make with this' (p.12)

Recipe activities, can be useful for teaching specific skills and supporting children to follow instructions and can be linked to the ideas of Tanggard et al's ideas (2012, cited in Ole Jensen, 2014) around 'creating'. While these activities in themselves, do not support children's individual creativity, they can be seen as a pre-requisite for 'novelty' (Ole Jensen, 2014) Creative teaching was also identified in activities that were specifically linked to the curriculum (10 responses) in maths, literacy, science, history and PE and it was also noted that the 'creativity table' supported 'planned activities', supporting the ideas expressed by Carlile and Jordan (2012). These responses suggest that creative approaches are being used to support specific outcomes which may, in some cases, limit choice and the use of children's own ideas. This is reflected in the quote below,

'quite often the creativity table was always child led but they would say if they'd got an activity that was quite complicated they would ask me to try and entice children and show them how to do it, cause often they were finding they were doing it but not doing it properly, so they wanted me to model the behaviour'

The use of the words 'they were not doing it properly' suggests that specific outcomes were expected by the teacher in this particular setting and could be interpreted as limiting children's individual creativity.

This was also reflected within the interviews, where the modelling of behaviour and demonstration of how to complete activities was clear within the responses, further suggesting that children's own ideas and originality is not always encouraged. Responses in relation the students' role included 'Modelling positive behaviour and 'Modelling a certain activity to get children involved'.

When asked to identify specific examples of creative teaching, 'story times and singing songs' were identified by one respondent and another mentioned the 'after school dance club'. These activities, while beneficial for children in relation to the development of the imagination and 'creating' do not necessarily encourage individual creativity, however more contextual information may be needed to fully understand the respondent's answers. The dance club clearly sat outside of the 'formal curriculum' and was an 'added extra'. While this is a positive move to encourage participation, this suggest that 'dance' may not be valued in the same way as core curriculum subjects to be included in formal lesson time. The Warwick Report (2015:47) discusses research by the Sutton Trust which indicates that 76% of children participate in extra - curricular activities. These tend to incur costs for families which may exclude children from low income families. In this case, presumably the dance club was open to all, but the report identifies a 'two tier' system which allows more well off parents to 'buy' extra creative provision which is not provided in the formal curriculum.

Teaching for creativity is conceptualised by Craft et al (2014) as affording ownership and choice for children, alongside time, opportunities and resources for creative potential and individuality to flourish. This emphasises the need for open-ended exploration without the constraints of specific outcomes or products. Crowell and Reid- Marr similarly (2013:1) refer to 'emergent teaching' encompassing uncertain outcomes where children *'are given choices, and where learning is facilitated rather than delivered'*

Within the questionnaire responses there were a number of activities identified where children were given their own choices, these included, forest schools and baking. Forest schools are becoming common in schools and have been seen as a response to the perceived lack of outdoors activity in children's lives (Knight 2011). Harper (2017:323) suggests that forest schools offer an 'idealized approach' to children being able to manage risks and problem solve in the outdoor environment. Leather (2018) contests this and states that Forest schools within the UK are highly regulated, controlled activities that require children to follow certain procedures, for example, whittling and fire making. Risks and unexpected outcomes are usually assessed and removed by adults to ensure health and safety, but this may also limit spontaneity.

Baking, similarly due to the risks involved, is usually 'recipe based' which demands following instructions rather than using individual ideas. While there are opportunities for individual creativity here, it is not clear how, from the responses collected. Activities where children were afforded choice included drawing/ painting, mark making and the creative/making table; also mentioned were free flow play activities, including lego, small world, construction, playtime and role play. These types of activities are clearly open ended and afford children multiple possibilities and opportunities to be creative. These responses however were countered with comments about the lack of free time for children to choose them. As seen below in an interview response,

'they don't really have much time to choose what they want to do, so I think it is quite difficult to promote.'

The lack of free choice time was also identified within the questionnaires

'Not enough time (to get resources out)'

'Some choice time- but very limited – children can't be as creative as they would like.'

'Less in KS2'

The key reason for this lack of choice time and the limited opportunities for teaching for creativity was undoubtedly curriculum constraints and pressures and the value afforded to STEM subjects as identified in the Warwick Commission Final report (2015)

'Quite difficult to be as creative as perhaps we would want to be within teaching because there is so much to cover.'

'Errm I think its valued because they do try and promote the children to do it but I don't think its valued so much as the main curriculum areas like the maths, phonics, time to talk..... I don't know whether it's just because they have to, and there's the testing and things like that, and there's the guidelines and achievements they have to reach.'

These comments could be interpreted as evidence of the ‘highly prescriptive and narrowing curricula’ noted by Prentice (2000:150) with limited room for individual creativity. The value placed upon core curriculum subjects by teachers was also alluded to in the following comment.

‘.....creativity is often seen as a treat, for when the children have finished their numeracy or writing. Often children who are slower have to miss out on the art activities to catch up on their work.’

Though this particular quote refers to ‘art activities’ it is a concern if less able children, or children with specific learning needs are missing out on free choice activity in this way.

4.2 *The value placed on creativity*

Students were asked to reflect upon whether creativity was valued and promoted within their work place settings. Through the questionnaires, 12 students reported that they did see creativity within their placements, 4 did not see creativity and 1 stated that they observed creativity ‘very rarely’. Both students within the interviews also reported that creativity was observed within the placements they attended. This is encouraging given the reported lack of recognition given to creativity within the National Curriculum (2014). Beetlestone (1998: 1) proposes that this lack of recognition is ‘because [creativity] is so much more difficult to deliver and assess than subject content’. It could further be argued that more emphasis is not just given to the STEM subjects within education, but also to subjects that evidence an outcome. This is highlighted in the student comment below:

‘I don’t feel it’s promoted as much as reading, writing, because they’re asked to read and they’re asked to write and told all the time they need to do this whereas the creativity it’ll be if they choose to do it’

Two of the comments made by the students interestingly focussed on children all making the same...; *‘creativity is valued in some ways, but things they do are all the same’* and *‘sometimes....in art, they do tend to do the same thing.’* This would suggest that creativity is not wholly promoted within the settings and therefore not truly valued. When considering the many definitions of creativity as proposed by Yates and Twigg (2017), creativity focuses very much on uniqueness and individuality of a given process or product. These comments would suggest that this is not the case. One of the students during the interview commented that within her setting *‘most activities have a planned outcome to the curriculum’*. When considering this, it is surprising that more emphasis is not given to the encouragement of creativity within education given the many benefits it has in relation to children’s development. This is supported by Duffy (2006) who confirms that creativity is a fundamental life skill and it is important not only in childhood but also throughout life.

Students were asked why they believed encouraging creativity was beneficial to children. They expressed that creativity develops children’s; ‘learning and development, expression, physical skills, individuality and uniqueness’. The Warwick Commission Final Report (2015)

together with many including (Dehouske, 2006; Crowell and Reid-Marr, 2013; Beghetto, 2013) reflect this.

Although it could be said that the existing literature in the whole, favours children being encouraged to be creative, there are reported difficulties to this especially within early years and education settings. Students within both the questionnaires and interviews identified difficulties/barriers in the promotion of creativity within their settings. These were specifically in relation to space, time, access to resources and curriculum constraints including targets that are set for groups or individual children. One student commented that children *'don't really have much time to choose what they want to do, so I think it is quite difficult to promote'* another stated *'the different year groups have the playground at different times, it's not like they can go outside and play with the mud kitchen or when they feel like being creative, it's when there's available time and space'*

These findings reflect very strongly with the literature (Leggett, 2017; Prentice, 2000) and the limited opportunities children are given to fully engage in creative activities. Joubert (2001:26) also recognises this and states that the curriculum does not always allow *'enough time or space...to give teachers the freedom to be creative, to experiment and to allow children to experiment.'* Together with this, practitioners have to also value the importance of creativity and be confident with it themselves. As Yates and Twigg (2017) highlighted earlier, if practitioners are not confident in their own approach to creativity then the emphasis to promote it within practice will not be there.

4.3 Supporting student's creative practice

The majority of student responses clearly identified that their Stage 1 Play and Creativity module had influenced their practice with young children with 15 agreeing and 1 providing a negative response. Two clear themes emerged from this, *the importance of creativity and the generation of ideas.*

Some of the comments that reflected that the module encouraged students to see the importance of creativity included *'the module encouraged me to be more critical of the provision of creativity in setting'* and the *'recognition that some settings inhibit creativity'*. These comments reflect very much with the views of Svojanovsky's (2017), who states that students have to be able to use the process of critical reflection to be able to determine their own thoughts and ideas on the things they learn and then observe in practice. Hey (2014) asserts this further by stating that students are uniquely placed to be able to critique what they see. During the degree reflection is encouraged in students, especially when they are away from the setting, allowing them to be able to think through their observations. Many of the responses also pointed as to how the module had inspired and encouraged students to explore new ideas and activities; *'I think about how my activities can be more open-ended'* and *'it has given me lots of ideas of different activities'*. This links closely with findings from previous research by Yates and Twigg (2017) which identified the value of practical experiences in developing student confidence in their own creativity. The responses also demonstrate the confidence students are displaying around their own practice with children, comments such as *'I find different ways of doing things'* and *'I will always think how I can make it more creative and interesting'*. These comments would suggest that the Early Childhood Studies Stage 2 students are starting to construct their own

thoughts, views and opinions on the role of creativity, thus constructing their own personal identity (Oates, 2014) and their ethos around the importance of creativity.

'It has changed my view on it that you don't have to do things in a set way and not everything has to be a recipe or formula of how to do something. Just as long as it turns out the way you wanted it.'

5. Limitations of research

The research was small in scale and cannot be representative of the wider population, however, it provides an insight into the views of our students on creativity and the practice they observed.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion a number of interesting points have emerged through the results of this research these include:

- That students observed more teaching for creativity, than creative teaching.
- That creativity is not always valued in all settings, and
- The increased confidence that students display in their ability to encourage creativity.

Creative teaching and teaching for creativity were clearly seen within the settings that students experienced. It was interesting to note, that more students highlighted teaching for creativity rather than creative teaching. Observations include recipe type activities, which although do not promote individual creativity, could be seen to have a place within settings based on the ideas of Tanggard et al., (2012 cited in Ole Jenson, 2014). There was recognition though, that this does limit both choice for children. Subjects viewed to be of a much more creative nature, were presented as clubs that children could join at the end of the day. This could suggest that they are not valued and actually not inclusive as they were only be able to be attended by families who could afford the 'extra costs'. A couple of the students commented on forest schools encouraging children's creativity. Forest schools are a growing idea evident in more and more early years and education settings, however, many question the creativity children are really able to express (Leather, 2018). The majority of students highlighted that creativity to an extent, is valued within the settings they attended, there are, however, a number of limitations to this, which do potentially question the value that practitioners truly place on creativity. These limitations includes time and constraints within day to day practice, stemming in the main and as a result of the requirements of the UK National Curriculum. These comments unfortunately are very reflective of the literature (Leggett, 2017; Prentice, 2000 and Joubert, 2001). As a consequence the time becomes limited for children to be creative, which then limits children's ability to show their uniqueness and individuality.

Lastly it was very encouraging to see that students not only felt that the Play and Creativity stage 1 module helped them gain confidence in their own ability to be creative, but it also gave students the skills and knowledge to be able to plan creative activities and also critique the practices they were observing when out in the settings. Being able to critique practice is

a skill encouraged in all students, through the process of reflection. It is hoped that all students will continue to use this skills, which will only benefit our future practitioners as they go into settings fully aware of the benefits and importance of promoting and encouraging creativity with children.

This research has captured 'Student reflections on the place of creativity in Early Years practice: Reflections on second year work placement experience'. All students questioned were able to provide a valuable insight into their own and the practices of the settings, they have had experience with regards to the place of creativity.

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