

How Teacher Can Develop Children's Creativity through Facilitating Possibility Thinking in Chinese Folk Dance Classroom

Yingying Hu

Chengdu Vocational University of Art, Chengdu, Sichuan, 611433, China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 20 March 2021

Revised: 27 March 2021

Accepted: 24 April 2021

Published Online: 30 April 2021

Keywords:

Possibility thinking

Chinese folk dance

Creativity

Teaching

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, people has gradually focused on creativity especially in education and society. Through teaching activities, students may be able to use possibility thinking in their classes for developing creativity. Hence, it is important that understanding how teachers can develop children's creativity by supporting possibility thinking. As a dance teacher, I am looking forward to bringing this knowledge into my teaching. Through a theoretical analysis and experiential combination, this paper aims to explore how teachers can cultivate children's creativity by facilitating possibility thinking.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, creativity has gradually become a focus both in education and society^[1]. It is not only regarded as a crucial element of personal development, but also as an impetus behind social progression^[1]. All people have an inherent and ubiquitous capacity to be creative^[5]. A variety of research into developing creativity in classrooms has revealed that possibility thinking is a core aspect of creative teaching and learning involves transforming 'What is this?' into 'What can I or we do with this?'^[5]. Thus, it can be seen that possibility thinking in classrooms can drive students' 'knowing-this' and 'knowing-how' instead of 'knowing-that'^[7]. Through a number of teaching activities, students may be able to use possibility thinking in their classes in order to develop their creativity. In turn, they will utilise creativity not only for learning in school

but also for many aspects in their lives^[1]. Therefore, understanding how teachers can develop children's creativity by supporting possibility thinking will be a significant research direction. As a Chinese folk dancer, I am looking forward to bringing this knowledge into my teaching settings. Through a theoretical analysis and experiential combination, this essay aims to explore how teachers can cultivate children's creativity by facilitating possibility thinking. Primarily, this involves question-posing, question-responding, the process of possibility thinking, and individual, collaborative and communal creativity^[5-6]. In addition, I will provide some examples where I have endeavoured to bring possibility thinking into my Chinese folk dance classes. The age group of the students discussed in this essay is 7 to 15. They were asked to develop individual stories supporting individual choreography, and the

*Corresponding Author:

Yingying Hu,

Chengdu Vocational University of Art, Chengdu, Sichuan, 611433, China;

E-mail: 3217631571@qq.com.

teacher constructed a class framework and introduced an appropriate intervention with regard to the pedagogy^[6]. At the end of the essay, by combining theory with practice, a conclusion will be provided to summarise the domain perspectives.

2. How Can Teachers Bring Possibility Thinking into the Classroom? (Theoretically)

After having carried out a variety of reading, I can clearly see that possibility thinking is a crucial element of creativity in young children's learning because it can drive their creativity^[6]. As Chappell et al. stated, creativity is ubiquitous^[5]. It can not only be big-c creativity which means that the creativity was produced by a minority of geniuses and it is new and useful in a broader range, but it can also be little-c which is everyday, life-wide and pervasive^[4-5]. Generally, possibility thinking can be found in the context of an enabling environment and it involves question-posing, play, innovation, immersion, self-determination, being imaginative and risk-taking^[5]. Thus, firstly, there will be a discussion of how teachers can build an appropriate context for possibility thinking. Then, according to Chappell et al., there will be an examination of the significance of question-posing (QP) and question-responding (QR) as the heart of possibility thinking, and how teachers can use QP and QR in the classroom^[5]. Subsequently, three types of possibility behaviour – stimulating and sustaining possibilities, communicating possibilities, and children's agency, roles and identities – will be analysed^[6].

2.1 An Appropriate Context for Possibility Thinking

This essay discusses teaching through stimulating PT to cultivate children's creativity^[6], therefore it is relevant to teaching for creativity^[7]. Teaching for creativity generally has a close relationship with teaching creatively^[7]. Teaching for creativity refers to teacher use of effective pedagogy to develop and foster students' creativity^[7]. Teaching creatively is when the teacher uses imaginative approaches to make learning interesting and effective; its aim is not necessarily to foster creativity^[7]. Teaching creatively is beneficial to teaching for creativity, because it can build an appropriate context in which students will feel comfortable and safe^[7]. According to this perspective, I believe that how teachers foster creativity through bringing PT into the classroom also needs creative teaching to support it. Creative teaching can build an enabling context in which students are more confident, imaginative, motivated, self-determinative, and have more time, space and willingness

to take risks^[5-6]. For example, creative teaching makes the learning experience relevant to students, therefore, the learner will be more confident in this setting^[7]. At the same time, they can obtain the impetus to better develop their creativities^[5-6].

Besides this, balancing the fixed and fluid parts in class is also a key factor in establishing an appropriate environment for PT^[3]. If there are more fixed teaching parts than fluid parts in class, students will be restrictive and uncomfortable, which will hinder students from freely imagining^[3]. In order to build a setting in which children have sufficient time, space and opportunity to do what they want to do and think what they try to think^[6], the fluid part needs to be greater than the fixed part^[3]. The teaching contents tend to depend on children. As Craft et al. noted, child-initiated and adult-initiated creativity also need to be balanced during a creative class^[6]. Teaching for creativity may require that the teacher encourages child-initiated creativity^[6-7].

In a word, so as to construct an environment in which the student can adequately develop PT for creativity, the teacher should creatively teach children, put more of the fluid aspect into the class and provide more opportunity for child-initiated creativity^{[3][6-7]}.

2.2 Using Question-Posing and Question-Responding to Drive Possibility Thinking

A large number of researchers have found that there are some differing but interlinked features of student and teacher engagement with possibility thinking. These include posing questions, play, immersion, innovation, being imaginative, self-determination and risk-taking^[5]. Question-posing and question-responding are important driving factors of PT and creativity^[5]. According to Chappell et al., we can analyze and discuss how teachers use questioning for PT in the classroom from three dimensions; question-framing (including leading, service and follow-through questions), question degree (including possibility narrow, possibility moderate and possibility broad), and question modality (including verbal and non-verbal questions)^[5]. Question-framing mainly reflects the purpose of questioning^[5]. According to Chappell et al., leading questions are primarily aimed at providing the overarching framework and the key question of PT so they play a crucial role within the class because they can influence the development of the whole lesson^[5]. For example, if a leading question is narrow, then possibility thinking could be narrowed down from the outset. At the same time, in all likelihood, possibility thinking cannot obtain sufficient development. Perhaps if the leading question is not clearly expressed verbally, the students may find it

difficult to follow a clear and developing direction in the classroom. As a result, how to pose a leading question at the beginning is important^[5]. Secondly, service questions are more likely to be asked by students and teachers would intervene to assist their possibility thinking because they use leading questions to encourage possibility thinking in relation to responding to the leading question^[5]. A service question normally appears during the teaching process instead of at the beginning of class^[5]. For service questions, striking a balance between standing back and intervening requires teachers to use consideration since they not only need to guarantee that the possibility thinking is going in the right direction, but they must also ensure that there are sufficient spaces and opportunities for the students to be imaginative and take risks^[5-6]. In addition, follow-through questions are utilised to make sure that the necessary outcome is achieved and these generally emerge at the final stage^[5]. Sometimes, students can use a non-verbal format to measure whether the correct outcome has been accomplished. Teachers should be sensitive to follow-through questions and perceive and respond to them to ensure that the correct result emerges.

Furthermore, with regard to question degree, a broad question is not clearly focused on one specific answer but a 360-degree question will allow children to view it from multiple angles^[5]. As a result, the possibilities are broad and asking this type of question at the beginning is appropriate for the class framework^[5]. In addition, the possible answers to moderate questions are narrower than for broad questions and broader than for narrow questions. Thus, they would not only have a possible direction but they would also not hinder children's creativity. Thirdly, narrow question as the narrowest question is very limited^[5]. According to Chappell et al., it is able to pinpoint focus clearly on an image^[5]. Therefore, this is suitable for discovering and developing details in the teaching activity.

Moreover, question modality was also mentioned by Chappell et al^[5]. This includes verbal and non-verbal question formats.

By examining the three types of question classification, it can be observed that their features are clear. Teachers should use them according to their features. At the same time, it should be mentioned that question-responding is also significant with regard to possibility thinking^[5]. It is led by question-posing which then catalyses fresh question-posing^[5]. Therefore, this is an important link in questioning.

Questioning is a core driving power of PT and teachers should use it appropriately during class. Moreover, there needs to be an analysis of the three behaviors of possibility thinking.

2.3 Facilitating Possibility Thinking in Individual, Collaborative or Communal Settings

According to Craft et al., children's creativity can be expressed in individual, collaborative and communal settings^[6]. Individual possibility thinking for creativity could be more independent and personal. The collaborative approach is an outcome of the students' cooperation so the creativity combines multiple ideas. Moreover, communal creativity could involve a group achievement which combines everyone's ideas in the activity; as a result, this is a universal creativity^[6]. Collaborative and communal creativity are related to communicating possibilities^[6]. Children communicate verbally to share their ideas and intentions which are then shared and played to achieve creativity in pairs or groups^[6]. Through communication, students can be stimulated by the ideas of others. With regard to individual possibilities, because children's self-determination, imagination, intentionality and confidence are required, teachers need to support these aspects through some methods^[6]. More importantly, the interconnections between all three types of creativity are part of the outcome^[6]. In other words, the final outcome may be a combination of them or it can be the result of the interaction between all three^[6]. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers encourage the three types of creativity by developing different methods of possibility thinking.

The analysis of these theories has clearly demonstrated how teachers can facilitate possibility thinking. Using these theories, the example below will highlight how a teacher, through story-making, can use possibility thinking in a Chinese folk dance choreography class.

2. How Can Teachers Utilise Possibility Thinking in A Chinese Folk Dance Choreography Class? (Experientially)

The above theoretical analysis will be applied in an actual dance class. In accordance with my cultural background and specialty experience, these theories will be combined in a Chinese folk dance choreography class. The aim of the class is to cultivate children's creativity through a series of possibility thinking tasks. The students will be required to create dance phrases by designing an individual story and then their work will be linked together in their own way. Firstly, because of the children's age (7 –15), these students have mastered some specialist knowledge before the class but their self-control abilities are insufficient. I will not tell them about the teaching content or the aim. The teaching content is child-initiated in order to foster their confidence^[6]. In the beginning, building a comfortable context is crucial for the whole class

so I will initially carry out a short warm-up for building a comfortable and safe environment. When they feel relaxed, I can begin the first part of the lesson. I will pose a broad leading question to drive them to use imagination^[5]. For example, ‘What story do you want to share with your classmates?’ They can do this depending on their experiences and interests. As Melchior revealed, according to the cultural responsive pedagogy, students are more willing to grasp knowledge if it involves an area that they are interested in or familiar with^[6]. Then, sufficient time and space will be provided to the students so they can freely think about and create their story. I will generally stand back and only occasionally will I make appropriate interventions^[6], for instance, by inviting the children to communicate their ideas in pairs or in groups, using some moderate or narrow questions to guide them^[6]. In addition, in order to maintain their possibility thinking, I will drive their consideration by introducing a stimulus or by beginning a discussion^[6]. When they have finished their stories, I will ask them, ‘How can you use Chinese folk dance to express one or two short parts of your stories?’ Then, their possibility thinking will be involved again. I can provide some movements such as fruit-picking, rowing and kite-flying in Chinese folk dance to stimulate them or to give them some hints^[6]. Furthermore, I will encourage them and give them recognition for their work. Through question-posing and appropriate interventions, the class will proceed step by step as part of a pre-planned framework. Finally, the students’ work will be linked together in their own way. They should communicate with each other and decide how to do the whole dance. Communal creativity can be developed in the final part^[6].

3. Conclusion

This essay has discussed how teachers can foster creativity by facilitating possibility thinking in a Chinese folk dance choreography class. Firstly, the analysis of the variety of theories revealed some possible methods and pedagogies for developing possibility thinking in a classroom. Then, these methods and pedagogies were combined with an actual setting of a Chinese folk dance choreography class to discuss how they can all be practically used in a dance class. According to the analysis, it is clear that question-posing, having an appropriate environment, play, innovation, being imaginative, self-determination and risk-taking are important factors in encouraging possibility thinking^[5]. Before and during class, teachers should consider the appropriate time to ask questions, balance standing back and stepping in, and enable individual, collaborative and communal creativity in the teaching space^[6]. Combining these theories in my setting is a new experi-

ment and further research and consideration is necessary to develop practice, research and pedagogy^[2]. Therefore, in future work and learning, I will continually explore this question and find an improved pedagogy to foster creativity in a Chinese folk dance class.

References

- [1] Banaji, S., Burn, A. Ubiquitous creativity. In: Banaji, S and Burn, A. *The Rhetorics of Creativity: A Review of the Literature*[M]. 2nd ed. London: Arts Council England,2010.
- [2] Bannerman, C. View a/new: the landscape of dance in 2009[J], *Research in Dance Education*, 2009,10(3):231-240.
- [3] Beghetto, R., Kaufmann, J. Teaching for creativity with disciplined improvisation. In Sawyer, R.K. (ed.) *Structure and improvisation in creative teaching*[M]. New York: Cambridge University Press,2011.
- [4] Beghetto, R.A., Kaufman, J.C. Toward a broader conception of creativity: a case for ‘mini-c’ creativity[J]. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts*,2007, 1(2):73-79.
- [5] Chappell, K., Craft, A., Burnard, P., et al. Question-posing and Question- responding: the heart of ‘Possibility Thinking’ in the early years[J]. *Early Years*,2008, 28 (3): 267-286.
- [6] Craft, A., McConnon, L., Matthews, A. Creativity and child-initiated play: fostering possibility thinking in four-year-olds[J]. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 2012,7 (1):48-61.
- [7] Jeffrey, B., Craft, A. Teaching Creatively and Teaching for Creativity: distinctions and relationships[J]. *Educational Studies*,2004, 30 (1): 77-87.
- [8] Melchior, E. Culturally responsive dance pedagogy in the primary classroom[J]. *Research in Dance Education*, 2011,12(2): 119-135.
- [9] Reid, L.A. Art: Knowledge that and knowing this[J]. *British Journal of Aesthetics*,1980, 20 (4):329-339.

Annotated bibliography

Banaji, S., Burn, A. (2010) (2nd ed) Ubiquitous creativity. In: Banaji, S and Burn, A. *The Rhetorics of Creativity: A Review of the Literature*. London: Arts Council England.

Creativity is a universal ability which can be flexible in meeting the ubiquitous demands of life. This is little-c creativity and it involves our everyday experiences. According to this article, all children and adults can learn to make choices in their lives which are either creative or not. In addition, the author proposes that this is based on possibility thinking.

Banaji, S. and Burn, A. (2010) (2nd ed) creativity as a social good. In: Banaji, S and Burn, A. *The Rhetorics of Creativity: A Review of the Literature*. London: Arts Council England.

the author primarily argues how creativity connects with social empowerment. Firstly, creativity is an ability to compete in a global market and face national economic changes. Furthermore, it can feed 'creative industries' and allow young people to adapt to technological change. More importantly, it is beneficial to social and personal development. Currently, creativity is more likely to involve products or goods emerging in our lives.

Banaji, S. and Burn, A. (2010) (2nd ed) creativity as economic imperative. In: Banaji, S and Burn, A. *The Rhetorics of Creativity: A Review of the Literature*. London: Arts Council England.

Creativity as intangible resources rather than raw materials will potentially be the most successful response to economic change. It can be learnt, not innate; it is collective, not individual and it is important for social development because it involves problem-solving, knowledge transfer, incremental learning and goal-oriented work. It is related to skills and abilities rather than fixed knowledge. Therefore, it is an economic imperative.

Bannerman, C. (2009) View a/new: the landscape of dance in 2009, *Research in Dance Education*, 10(03):231-240.

The relationship between practice, research and pedagogy is a key point in the research. According to the author, practice, research and pedagogy should not just be seen separately, they also need to be seen together. There is a circle which links them together because they are all supportive of each other. Moreover, they have different functions and features in an educational setting. The understanding of this relationship will support teachers' further improvement in dance education.

Beghetto, R. and Kaufmann, J. (2011) Teaching for creativity with disciplined improvisation. In Sawyer, R.K. (ed.) *Structure and improvisation in creative teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

The fixed and fluid parts are the core knowledge in this article. Through a series of examples, the author revealed that depending on the different teaching content and the diverse students, teachers can conduct their lessons in different ways. They can not only begin with a fixed part as a foundation, but they can also begin with a fluid part to foster children's creativity. Teachers need to be flexible in class and carry out and plan lessons according to the actual conditions.

Beghetto, R.A. and Kaufman, J.C. (2007) Toward a broader conception of creativity: a case for 'mini-c'

creativity, *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts*, 1(2): 73-79.

This research explains the three types of creativity – big-c, little-c and mini-c creativity – and how they differ from each other. Big-c creativity can involve changing a field and making some visible contributions to society. It generally requires long-term learning in a certain field or specialty. Little-c creativity is everyday creativity which can make solid contributions and this requires some level of schooling or general experience as support. Mini-c creativity is intrapersonal creativity which is part of the learning process. This would not contribute to a field so there is no need for experience or knowledge.

Chappell, K., Craft, A., Burnard, P. and Cremin, T. (2008) Question-posing and Question- responding: the heart of 'Possibility Thinking' in the early years. *Early Years*, 28 (3):267-286.

This journal article has provided a variety of examples from Cunningham Hill and Hackleton School to reveal different questions to drive possibility thinking. By classifying the questions in three different ways, they were divided in terms of function, degree and form. According to these different questions, how teachers can ask an appropriate question at an appropriate time is a central consideration of this article. At the same time, to reflect the questioning, question- responding as an important part was also discussed.

Craft, A., McConnon, L. and Matthews, A. (2012) Creativity and child-initiated play: fostering possibility thinking in four-year-olds, *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 7 (01):48-61.

The article has built on previous studies and continual research about the nature of possibility thinking and some pedagogies which foster it. The seven key features of PT were revealed. In addition, some authors have argued about the significance of the three behaviours and a child- initiated pedagogy for possibility thinking. Three behaviours were manifested in child-initiated play: stimulating and sustaining possibilities, communicating possibilities, and children's agency, roles and identity. Communicating possibilities was the main behaviour used to underpin my essay.

Jeffrey, B. and Craft, A. (2004) Teaching Creatively and Teaching for Creativity: distinctions and relationships, *Educational Studies*, 30 (1): 77-87.

The article clearly demonstrates explain the distinctions and the relationship between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Teaching creatively means that teachers use imaginative approaches to make their lessons more interesting and effective. On the other hand, teaching for creativity refers to the fact that the teaching purpose

is to foster student creativity. Furthermore, teaching creatively has a close relationship with teaching for creativity because teaching creatively is beneficial to teaching for creativity.

Melchior, E. (2011) Culturally responsive dance pedagogy in the primary classroom, *Research in Dance Education*, 12 (2):119-135.

This research aims to develop culturally responsive dance pedagogy in primary schools. With globalisation and social development, our education system will face diverse students from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, culturally responsive pedagogy should ask teachers to teach lessons according to their students' back-

grounds. This is an interactive pedagogy.

Reid, L.A. (1980) Art: Knowledge that and knowing this, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 20 (4):329-339.

The main finding is the definition of the three types of knowledge: knowing-that, knowing-how and knowing-this. These are obtained in three different ways. Knowing-that refers to knowing what it is which may be an indirect experience which comes from some other factor. Knowing-how involves learning how to do it. Knowing-this is a type of knowledge which people obtain through direct feeling and experience. By understanding the difference, different knowledge can be given further consideration.