'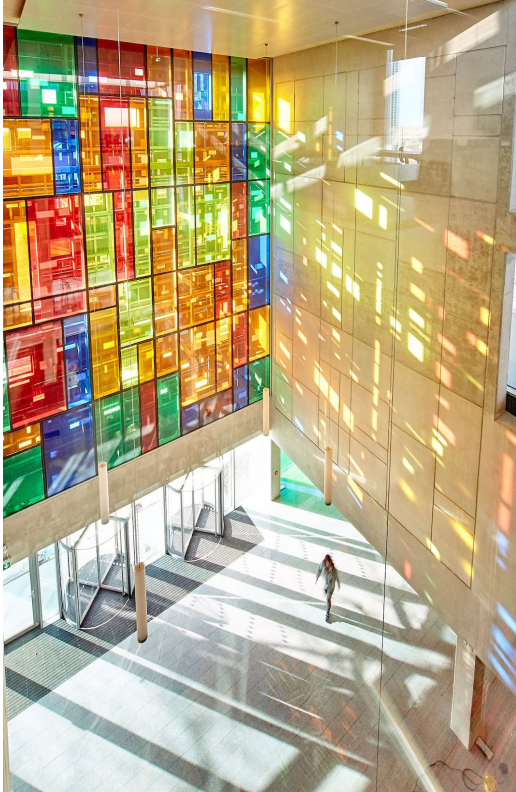Now I Understand What Being Creative Looks Like': Empowering Preservice Teachers to Become Creative Inclusive Practitioners

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Overview

1. Module on fostering creativity and innovation in education delivered on a postgraduate programme in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in DCU.

2. Literature on creativity in education and the role of the teacher

3. Research findings

4. Concluding remarks

Some Literature

- Creativity has been foregrounded in policies and action plans for education (DES, 2015; NCCA, 2015; DAHG and DES, 2013)

- Critical role of teachers in the implementation of these policies and the consequent need for a more explicit emphasis on fostering creativity in teacher education and pedagogic practices (Anderson et al. 2022; Huang et al. 2021; Patston et al. 2021).

- Teachers' perceptions of their own creativity and their self-efficacy for teaching creativity have significant implications for fostering creativity in the classroom (Paek and Sumners, 2019; Cremin, Barnes and Scoffham, 2009)

- Teaching creatively is integral to teaching for creativity (Jeffrey and Craft, 2004; Craft, 2005; Cremin, 2017)

Research Findings
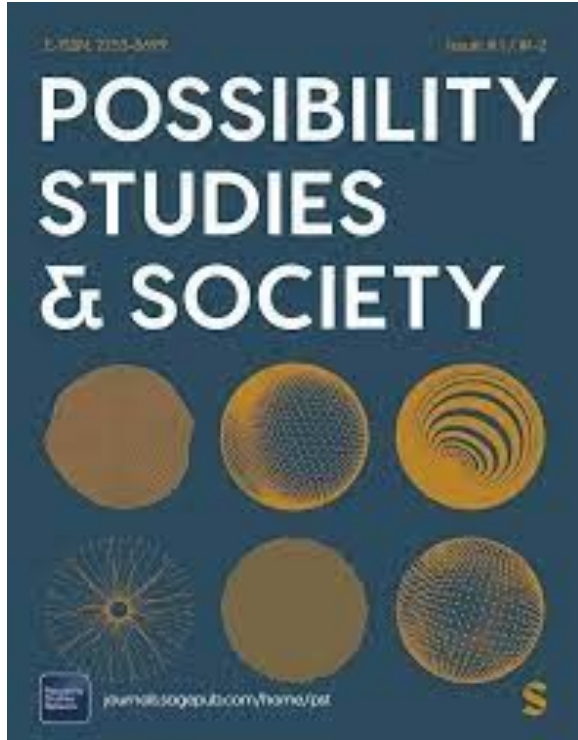
1. Our research on preservice teachers' experiences of the module

2. Data gathered via Surveys and Focus Groups

3. Research findings presented here through the prism of Possibility Studies, especially in relation to a number of assertions from Glăveanu's (2023) manifesto

ASSERTION 15: Pedagogies of the possible are an educational necessity

Traditional forms of education, focused on standardised goals, **uniformity in teaching**, and sameness of outcomes, are increasingly recognised as not suitable for the challenges (and impossibilities) of today. **Living within uncertain, complex and difficult environments,** defined by a fast pace of change, our responsibility is **to educate individuals and communities who can envision and enact new possibilities in a reflective, proactive, and ethical manner**. Twenty-first century education needs to rise to the challenge of helping students and teachers go beyond the world 'as it was' and 'as it is' and enrich it with imaginations of how it 'can and should be'.

Rationale for the module:

1. What being creative in the classroom looks like

2. Across all subjects

3. Every teacher can be creative

ASSERTION 15: Pedagogies of the possible are an educational necessity

*This module influenced my understanding of creativity. I thought it was really helpful **to consolidate what the 'Being Creative' element of the Junior Cycle** is… Like, [...]I find that all the key skills in Junior Cycle, **when I read them on the Specification, they don't make much sense to me, but then when I see it happening, it's like, 'Ok, now I get what they're trying to achieve'**. [...] Now I understand what they want and what being creative looks like in the classroom.*

*This module has taught me the value of implementing creativity in the class and **how it can be utilised as an educational tool rather than a 'fun' activity used solely as a reward**.*

***It's fantastic to have a module focusing on creativity, as** this is such an important area in education. It is a difficult topic for teachers to approach, and **the gap between theory and practice is daunting**.*

Assertion 5: The possible is grounded in difference

The possible emerges in human experience whenever there is **a multitude of perspectives […] Minds and societies defined by diversity and dialogue are, consequently, open to new possibilities** in ways that monological, fixated, and totalitarian worlds and mindsets are not. Last but not least, **discourses about human possibility should not be Eurocentric or Western centric** but actively invite experiences and ideas that grow out of **decolonisation** as a position from which we can actively reimagine self, other, and world.

Module structure:

One overarching theme with three strands

Assertion 5: The possible is grounded in difference

*I liked the fact that we had different people talking about creativity, all coming from **different backgrounds**. It **made the course very rich**.*

*Yes, we tried to include all the strands in our assessment, and that **allowed us to explore different possibilities on how to use creativity***

I thought it [the three strands] *made sense as they gave **different perspectives** on creativity in the classroom.*

*I learned so much that is applicable to my current **students from other backgrounds**. I used one of the ideas from my group project "This is the bowl I was baked in" as **a way to harness funds of knowledge** and there was a rich discussion and students had a real **pride sharing their culture** through a common medium of food*

Teachers of different subject disciplines collaborating to create video artefact

*I suppose **sometimes we don't consider ourselves to be creative as such**. The video assignment meant we had to work in a different kind of way and particularly **being part of a group meant we had to work together to make sense of it and we were looking at what other people would consider to be creative.***

*It gave an open platform in which to explore, reflect and create from what we had learned - a creative assessment for a creativity module! Having a group project was a good way to approach this, as **we could collaborate and see how others were integrating creativity across different subject specialisms and school contexts**.*

*It was really really helpful to hear **other people's perceptions** [...] and what they thought creativity was. **I think that's the thing I actually learned from the most.***

Assertion 9: Experiences of the possible transform the self

The fact that humans can pretend things are not what they are, reimagine the past, envision multiple futures and conceive the impossible, are all transformative experiences. It could even be argued that we emerge as human selves because of **our engagement with an expanded field of possibility and** because of **the consequences this type of engagement has for our identity, self-efficacy, and self-presentation.** As beings dwelling within a world that is at once actual and possible, the human condition involves **a radical open-endedness and orientation towards the future that change how we are and how we understand ourselves.**

Students' Experiences:

a. Identifying as creative teachers.

b. Learning to teach creatively and for creativity

Assertion 9: Experiences of the possible transform the self

*I think it has probably influenced my overall understanding of what creativity is, [...] Growing up in primary school I would have considered myself really creative and then when we got into secondary school my sister kind of did all the artsy music subjects and **I did a lot of the business maths-y subjects so I would have thought I wasn't creative but** I think that the module definitely reminded me that **creativity looks different for different people and you can promote creativity in students that wouldn't consider themselves creative or imaginative per se.***

It opened my eyes** to how much creativity I was already using and that a lot of teachers are **using on a daily basis without identifying it as 'creativity'.

*I think it definitely **broadened my perception of what creativity could be within the classroom** like it doesn't have to be a big output at the end, **it doesn't have to be something that is performed or it doesn't have to be a song and dance** at the end **it could literally be just drawing notes instead of writing them***

Learning to teach creatively and for creativity

*I really enjoyed the practical element of it because I was practising it and then felt more comfortable implementing it [...] so I could picture it in my head how it had panned out in the lecture and so **I felt comfortable actually doing it myself because I had seen it happen and I had taken part in it** and [...] if I had just been given the activity I probably would have just 'ehhh' you know … I would have looked at them and probably thought that they were great but probably wouldn't have done them.*

*You could kind of implement it within like a day so we'd go to the lecture and the next day I'd put that into my lesson. [...] like working with jam boards, using story making, storyboards [...] **it was easy to just literally go 'that was pretty cool; I'm going to do that in my next lesson'**.*

*And I think it's always helpful to have someone kind of show you the way, because it's this sense of being creative, **sometimes you feel you have to come up with all these ideas yourself** and then you're wondering 'are they right?' and ok you have to try things and that's important **but to have a little bit of guidance, a little bit of scaffolding***

Concluding Remarks

- Starting small - slight shift in mindset with a view towards more transformational changes in the future

- Adopting a two-pronged approach

- Exploring creativity through different lenses

- Seeing creative identity as a continuum

Thank You

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