

## **JULIET DESAILLY: CREATIVITY IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM (2ND EDITION). LONDON: SAGE PUBLICATIONS, 2015.**

In 2015, the second edition of “Creativity in the Primary Classroom” by Juliet Desailly was published by SAGE Publications. The purpose of the book is to define creativity and describe it in the context of primary education using practical examples of classroom activities, which teachers can use to plan and establish a creative classroom. The author does not restrict the definition and implementation of creativity to a specific subject, so the book presents a broad definition of the elements of creativity. However, the numerous examples in the book illustrate how creative teaching can be used in a variety of situations in the classroom and in several subjects.

The book consists of nine chapters, which are divided into four parts. The first part “What is Creativity?” contains two chapters that introduce the definition of creativity and provide the theoretical background of creativity in education. The second part “A Creative Child in a Creative Classroom” contains two chapters in which the author presents an overview of the skills children need to be creative and how they can develop those skills in class through numerous activities. The third part “A Creative Teacher” contains two chapters that introduce the teachers’ skills and personal qualities associated with helping students develop creativity. The fourth and final part of the book “A Creative Curriculum” contains three chapters that aim to help teachers become acquainted with the implementation of creative learning outcomes into the school curriculum.

In the first chapter “The Key Elements of Creativity,” the author discusses various definitions of creativity and introduces the three types of creativity that appear in primary education. The first type of creativity is *teaching creatively*, and it refers to the ability of the teachers to use imaginative teaching strategies that make learning interesting and effective. The second type of creativity is *learning creatively*, and it is associated with the autonomy of students to create their own learning experience according to their preferred learning styles. The third type of creativity is *teaching to develop creativity*, and it refers to the application of classroom activities that deliberately aim to develop creativity. The remainder of the chapter introduces the eight elements of creativity (e.g., generating new ideas, applying known skills and ideas in different contexts) and discusses the advantages and drawbacks of teaching and learning creatively.

The second chapter “Creativity in Education: History and Theoretical Background” covers the history of creativity in education. Several prominent theories, such as Piaget’s cognitive development theory, are brought up as the first theories that support learning through play for younger children. The author discusses the historical and current state of creativity in the national curriculum and other official documents related to public education in England. Although England’s national curriculum does not specify developing creativity as a statutory requirement outside of the arts, the author

recommends developing creativity in every subject.

The third chapter “Building the Skills to Work Creatively” lists the following skills and dispositions children need to work creatively: persistence, setting milestones, trial-and-improvement, generating ideas, working in groups, listening and responding, thinking skills, and focus. According to the author, students can obtain and develop all of those skills and dispositions through classroom activities. The skills and dispositions for working creatively are transferable, so the students will find them useful in any subject, discipline, or context.

The fourth chapter “Establishing the Ethos” provides guidelines for creating a creative classroom, in which the students feel safe, comfortable, and empowered. The author provides examples of classroom layouts and ways to organize the environment for different creative activities. The individual student-centered approach, the inclusion of special education needs students, and the recommended forms of interaction with students are covered to assist teachers in creating a learning environment for their students. At the end of the chapter, the author brings up the role of the teacher as the model for learning. Teachers need to develop their own creativity so that they can demonstrate what they want from students, but they should also include other adults with various interests from different backgrounds in classroom education. For example, teachers can arrange visits from the students’ parents or people from the local community who have interesting hobbies so that they can show their work and answer student questions in the classroom.

The fifth chapter “What Makes a Creative Teacher?” provides an extensive list of characteristics that are often common to creative teachers. Some examples of those characteristics include curiosity, flexibility, love for their work, self-discipline, the ability to provide creative criticism, and self-actualization. However, it is important to note that a creative teacher does not need to develop all of those characteristics to be creative. The author suggests that teachers can use the list of characteristics to learn more about how their own creativity manifests itself and how they can best use it in class. The most important characteristic of creative teachers is the ability to identify various types of creativity as they appear in different situations because they will be able to support and nurture creative learning and work in the classroom. Some pedagogical skills required for teaching creatively include: respecting students, allowing multiple outcomes of a single activity, understanding and supporting different learning styles, and supporting the development of multiple intelligences.

The sixth chapter “Key Skills for Creative Teachers” presents the five skills of creative teachers, and those skills are: support, communication, using the sketchbook/scrapbook approach, motivating others, and the application of drama techniques. Support refers to the ability of the teacher to implement activities that support active learning in the classroom and intervene in the learning process only when the students need guidelines. Communication is a skill teachers need to ask open-ended questions that require students to think and give students enough time to respond to their questions. Teachers can teach the students use the sketchbook/scrapbook in class to record ideas and random thoughts, write up observations or research results, and use those materials in reflexive practice for

a thorough exploration of their ideas. The ability to motivate students in the classroom refers to the ability to encourage student participation using a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Most schools use grades as an extrinsic reward to motivate learning, but intrinsic rewards are what encourage students to engage in lifelong learning, even when they do not receive extrinsic rewards. Drama techniques like role playing provide students with interesting way to learn something new, but they also develop self-confidence, presentation abilities, an emotional bond with the learning material, and the ability to learn through practical work.

The seventh chapter “Planning and Assessing Creative Outcomes” creates a link between the statutory requirements for student achievements in the national curriculum and creative teaching. For every subject included in England’s national curriculum, the author lists examples of activities that allow students to simultaneously achieve the mandatory learning objectives and develop creativity. The author emphasizes the possibility of using the integrative approach to plan activities with multiple learning objective. An essay in geography is used as an example because working on the essay requires students to learn facts, develop the ability to gather and organize information, and develop the ability to use their native language in writing. Concerning the assessment of student creativity, the author only mentions that the assessment should be creative like other aspects of class and uses two examples from practice to support that statement.

The eighth chapter “Medium-term Planning for Creative Outcomes” focuses on building a teaching framework for every content unit. The most important step in planning each unit for each subject is answering the following questions:

- What are the needs and interests of the students?
- What are the learning objectives listed in the current school curriculum?
- What are the most important learning objectives?
- Which context will support coherent learning?

In addition to the four key questions, the chapter also includes an additional seven questions teachers can use to select specific contents and teaching strategies for developing creativity and meeting the learning objectives.

The ninth chapter “Case Studies: Creativity in Practice” presents three case studies, and each case study serves as an example of a different type of activity and a different type of creativity. The first case study presents a year-long project that was given to children between 10 and 11 years of age. The topic of the project was multiculturalism, and the students had to answer questions about their own cultural background, including the geographic and historical background of their ancestors. To complete the year-long project, the students gathered knowledge from multiple subjects, including geography, history, and art. In the second case study, the teacher created a fictional character called Salazar, who asked the students to learn how to draw geographic maps so that they can help him and his people one day. That activity lasted one unit, in which the students had to learn about maps in geography, and helping Salazar was a form of intrinsic motivation to encourage student participation and learning. The third case presented how creative teaching can be used in a single lecture. The teacher invented a problem similar to those people encounter in daily life and asked the children for their help. The children wanted

to help, so they proceeded to explore new information and skills in mathematics to solve the problems presented by the teacher.

After the fourth and final part of the book, the author reflects on the purpose of the book in the chapter “Conclusion and Forward Planning” and provides an overview of the steps for implementing creative teaching practices. The guidelines include the steps for planning the implementation of creative elements in the classroom and questions teachers can use to assess and adapt the plan as necessary.

Marijana Županić Benić  
Faculty of Teacher Education  
University of Zagreb