

Resource 21

Five Myths About Creativity



As well as being clear about what creativity is, school leaders need to be aware of a number of unhelpful myths that it may be helpful to counter if progress is to be made. The following are five of the most common myths:

1. **Creativity is too vague to be teachable.** While educational jargon such as ‘21st century skills’ may not have helped to dispel this myth, in the last decade in England, organisations from the Confederation for British Industry to the Department for Education have used the word ‘creativity’ without feeling the need to explain or define it.¹
2. **Creativity is inherited and not learned.** While genetics have a part to play in any aspect of human intelligence, in the last decade there has been growing evidence as to the teachability of creativity and the mechanisms by which it’s learned.
3. **Creativity is uniquely the preserve of the arts.** In fact, while the arts do have a particular contribution to make,² creativity is possible in all areas of human activity, and the Durham Commission on Creativity and Education rebuts such thinking strongly.³
4. **Creativity detracts from the standards agenda.** Far from detracting from a proper focus on raising standards, recent research suggests that creativity might in fact contribute to raising achievement.⁴
5. **Creativity isn’t connected to ‘domain knowledge’.** Increasingly, it’s clear from research that there are strong relationships between knowledge and creativity: Tim Atkinson emphasises the importance of domain knowledge for creativity.⁵ Creativity doesn’t exist in a vacuum; it’s applied in a domain or context.

1 Confederation of British Industry, *First Steps: A New Approach for Our Schools* (London: CBI, 2012); D. Hinds, *Five Foundations to Build Character* (London: Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership, 2019).

2 R. Alexander, *The Arts in Schools: Making the Case, Heeding the Evidence*. Paper presented at Curious Minds in conjunction with RECAP Conference on Intercultural Dimensions of Cultural Education, University of Chester, 13 July 2017. Available at: http://robinalexander.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Alexander_Curious_Minds_July17.pdf.

3 Arts Council England and Durham University, *Durham Commission on Creativity and Education* (London: Arts Council England, 2012), pp. 66–67. Available at: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/creativitycommission/DurhamReport.pdf>.

4 D. Davies, D. Jindal-Snape, C. Collier, A. Howe, R. Digby and P. Hay, *The Roles and Development Needs of Teachers to Promote Creativity: A Systematic Review of Literature*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 41 (2014): 34–41.

5 T. Atkinson, *Using the Creative Cognition Approach in Essay Assignments in Leadership Education*. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 17(1) (2018): 152–161.