



The feasibility of enhancement of knowledge and self-confidence in creativity: A pilot study of a three-hour SCAMPER workshop on secondary students[☆]



Jelena C.Y. Poon^{*}, Apple C.Y. Au, Toby M.Y. Tong, Sing Lau

Center for Child Development, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the design and implementation of a three-hour creative thinking workshop as a framework for practitioners to design their own short creativity programs. The workshop incorporated several components known to facilitate creative thinking: an encouraging environment, opportunities for exploration and presentation, psychological safety, content knowledge, and creative thinking skills. The SCAMPER techniques were introduced to 74 senior secondary students. Feedback from students indicates satisfaction with the workshop and enjoyment of creativity-enhancing workshop components. Students' comments on their favorite workshop stages and stages in need of improvement shed light on how the workshop can be improved. The experience of running this workshop provides practical information on designing short-term creativity programs and can hopefully inspire practitioners to promote creative thinking when long-term training is not possible.

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Recent years have seen increased interest and emphasis in creative education in various countries around the world (Craft, 2006; Lin, 2011; Shaheen, 2010; Smears, Cronin, & Walsh, 2011) as educators recognized the importance of nurturing students' creativity (Craft, 2006; Laius & Rannikmäe, 2011). Some have even suggested creativity as a survival skill required for the 21st century (Craft, 2006). Indeed, being creative is beneficial to individuals as well as to society as a whole. At the individual level, people need to be creative in order to solve problems encountered at work and in everyday life (Sternberg & Lubart, 1996). As Sir Ken Robinson explained in an interview (Azzam, 2009), the world has become more unpredictable than ever with many pressing problems to be solved. For a person to cope with uncertainty and to meet the demands of the constantly changing and increasingly complex world, the utilization of one's creativity is required (Gardner, 1999; Shaheen, 2010; Smears et al., 2011). To the society at large, creativity also brings numerous benefits in the forms of "new scientific findings, new movements in art, new inventions, and new social programs" (Sternberg & Lubart, 1996, p. 678). Moreover, being creative as a society can lead to economic achievement and help the society stay competitive (Shaheen, 2010). Given the many advantages of being creative, it comes as no surprise that practitioners have become interested in promoting creative thinking in education.

The problem, however, is that despite recognizing the need for creative education, teachers may not know how to incorporate creative education into their classrooms while still making sure they have enough time to prepare students for

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^{*} Corresponding author at: Center for Child Development, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Tel.: +852 3411 7249; fax: +852 2337 8902.

E-mail address: jcypoon@hkbu.edu.hk (J.C.Y. Poon).

tests and assessments (Longo, 2010). This paper hopes to help these practitioners who have limited time but still want to help promote creative thinking in their students. In this paper, the design and implementation of a three-hour creative thinking workshop for senior secondary students is described. The workshop used the SCAMPER creative thinking techniques, which represents a group of nine techniques: substitute, combine, adapt, modify, magnify, put to other uses, eliminate or minify, reverse, and rearrange (Michalko, 1991). While the SCAMPER techniques were taught in this workshop, it is believed that the choice of creative thinking techniques does not matter; the presentation of creative thinking techniques plays more crucial roles in the learning of creative thinking skills. Thus, factors known to facilitate creative thinking, which were incorporated into the workshop, are also discussed in this paper. Finally, student comments about the workshop were analyzed to identify areas of improvement. Given the scarce amount of literature describing the design and implementation of short creativity programs, it is hoped that this workshop will shed light on how creative workshops can be run in limited time with few resources and encourage practitioners to promote creative thinking even in face of limitations.

Before details of the workshop are discussed, it is worthy to mention to practitioners that creativity can be taught. Most educators and psychologists think that all individuals possess some degree of creativeness, and their creative potential can be enhanced. Everyone is born with a natural creative ability (Esquivel, 1995; Guilford, 1950; Lin, 2011). Actually, children are “naturally creative, open to experience, and tend to be attracted by novel things” (Lin, 2011, p. 151). However, if the environment around them is unsupportive of creative expression, their creative tendency may reduce over time (Lin, 2011). This environmental influence is one of the reasons why the degree of creativeness and frequency of creative acts among individuals vary (Guilford, 1950). Still, there is hope for everyone to reach their creative potential. Because the process of creative thinking involves ordinary cognitive processes, every person has the ability to learn to be creative (Simonton, 2000).

1. Workshop implementation

The workshop lasted for three hours and involved 74 senior secondary school students (ages 14–17 years; 29 boys and 45 girls). The workshop was part of a 10-month self-development youth program, and its purpose was to have young people experience the creative thinking process and generate new ideas when collaborating with others, as well as to increase students' awareness of their creative potential.

A team of 11 adults was recruited on a voluntary basis to form a workshop committee. One of them acted as the speaker; eight of them assumed the role of group leaders for the facilitation of activities, and two assumed supportive roles to help the workshop run smoothly. All members of the committee had prior experiences in running creativity programs. To familiarize themselves with the SCAMPER techniques and the overview of the workshop, they all had attended a two-hour training session before the workshop, during which they tried out the workshop activities and gave comments for modification of the workshop design and activity arrangement. The SCAMPER workshop consisted of five stages, which were to facilitate the establishment of different goals to be discussed in the Analysis of Workshop Components section.

1.1. Stage 1: Group formation (5 min)

As soon as the students arrived at the venue, they were placed into eight groups, with 9–10 students per group. Each group was guided by a leader and was further divided into two sub-groups (i.e., four to five students per sub-group) for easier management of group activities and discussion.

1.2. Stage 2: Inspiring games (15 min)

Before the SCAMPER activities, the speaker played three games with the students with the intention to create a playful environment and illustrate a principle of creative thinking, “By changing your perspective, you expand your possibilities until you see something that you were unable to see before” (Michalko, 1991, p. xi), as well as the fundamentals of the SCAMPER techniques, “Everything new is just an addition or modification to something that already existed” (Michalko, 1991, p. 71) and “The best way to get a good idea is to get as many ideas as you can” (Michalko, 1991, p. xx).

1.3. Stage 3: Story tour (40 min)

The committee set up eight story corners and invited the groups to take turns to learn the stories. The stories were excerpted from the book *Thinkertoys* by Michalko (1991) to show students how the SCAMPER techniques have helped to foster innovation and how eight people had used a particular SCAMPER technique to create ideas and breakthroughs. Some stories had been revised to fit the workshop objectives. In each story corner, students learnt the story and were then asked what new ideas the characters came up with and what questions asked by the characters led to their invention. This activity aimed to show students that many innovations are the results of asking the right SCAMPER questions at the right time (Michalko, 1991).

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