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FOSTERING CREATIVE THINKING THROUGH DRAMA EDUCATION: TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Researchers have long recognized the significance of creative thinking in equipping students with the necessary skills for success in the contemporary world. However, the current approach to teaching drama in Sri Lanka has been deemed obsolete, failing to adequately prepare students to thrive in the globalized era. In response to this concern, a non-randomized control group study was undertaken to investigate the impact of process drama techniques on creativity within secondary school settings. Notably, two teachers from the intervention group were actively engaged in the study and later interviewed to gain deeper insights into their perceptions of employing process drama techniques instead of conventional methods. This article delves into the myriad ways in which drama teachers' pedagogical strategies can effectively enhance creative thinking in their students. Moreover, the study's results offer valuable implications for developing targeted professional learning opportunities for teachers, aiming to foster a comprehensive understanding of creativity and its practical application within the classroom environment. By embracing innovative and experiential approaches like process drama techniques, educators can empower their students to cultivate imaginative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability - essential skills for navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Keywords: student creativity; creative thinking; process drama techniques; drama teachers; Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Creativity is mostly considered today essential to success and also essential to development in knowledge societies. It is therefore not astonishing that, around continents, creativity is important for education and is central to the discourse on twenty-first century learning. However, in Sri Lanka, educational practice in schools has failed to keep up with the rapid global changes in society and technology (Sedera, 2016; The National Education Commission, 2014a; UNICEF, 2013; World Bank, 2011a; 2011b; 2017)^{1,2,3,4,5,6}. School pedagogy and the teaching system in Sri Lanka have not advanced in underpinning the development of human capital for a knowledge economy. The education system does not encourage creative thinking skills (The National Education Commission, 2014a)². The students do not show their creative and initiative abilities and are deficient in conceptual, analytical and critical thinking skills (Perera, 2004)⁷. Present, over 80 % of students in Sri Lanka take accurately the same subjects, which does not allow students to discover their various interests and abilities (The National Education Commission, 2014b)⁸. A significant percentage of school adolescents' underprivileged life skills even when they have finished their schooling (UNICEF, 2013)³. The assessment system depends on the standard examination framework and students are required just to memorize facts (The National Education Commission, 2014b)⁸. Teachers still teach for examinations, and students are compelled to attend private tutoring and cram— even from grade one. The Skills Toward Employment and Productivity (STEP) survey conducted in Sri Lanka showed that 70% of employers have not shown up-to-date knowledge of methods, materials, and technology in their workstations because of the lack of skills in employees (World Bank, 2017)⁶. The inadequacy of these major skills such as creativity, imagination and critical thinking is a threat to the Sri Lankan economy, limiting growth and development. Creativity is closely associated to economic development, with more developed nations scoring higher on the Global Creativity Index (GCI). According to the GCI, Sri Lanka continues to struggle and is ranked 106 out of 139 nations (GCI, 2015)⁹. Consequently, to create an open-minded and economically viable society, education in Sri Lanka needs to change to work towards encouraging creativity in students. To equip students for future demands and not examination demands requires them to be creative thinkers. However, the school educational program in Sri Lanka is extremely decentralized which makes it difficult to effect change (UNICEF, 2013)³.

The OECD highlights the importance of preparing students for the unidentified: jobs that do not yet exist, technologies that are yet to be created, and problems that have not yet been expected (OECD, 2017)¹⁰. The OECD's Innovation Strand also contains a strong emphasis on fostering creativity in education. Some research outcomes recommended that teachers need to be role models for fostering student creativity (Araya & Peters, 2010; Davies, 2017; Ewing, 2011)^{11,12,13}, because creativity is teachable (Jeffrey, 2005)¹⁴, and definitely well within the influence of the motivated teacher (Sawyer, 2012)¹⁵. Jeffrey and Craft (2004)¹⁶ make a valuable difference between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*. Teaching creatively comprises the improvement of resources and methods that cultivate students' attention and inspiration in learning. Teaching for creativity aims to develop all students' creative skills. Teaching by drama is one way that has been shown to increase creativity skills in students (Anderson, 2016; Howell & Heap, 2017)^{17,18}. Drama allows students to invent and construct the meaning of a word, a concept, an idea, an experience or an event by the utilization of theatre techniques and the play processes (Irugalbandara & Campbell, 2020)¹⁹. Drama creates an environment in which students construct their own knowledge by means of their experiences rather than imitating what has been taught (Irugalbandara et al., 2021)²⁰. Drama, therefore, can and should play a main role in teaching and learning in most key learning areas (Ewing, 2011)¹³. Drama techniques across the curriculum can encourage creativity, critical

thinking, social harmony, adaptability and the development of empathy and reflection (Irugalbandara, 2020; Miller & Saxton, 2011)^{21,22}. Therefore, the most important practical operation should be a ‘hands on’ approach implemented in education. However, in Sri Lanka even the subject of drama is taught as all other subjects by teachers lecturing, students taking notes and regurgitating the facts in an examination (Irugalbandara & Campbell, 2020; Irugalbandara, 2020; Irugalbandara et al., 2021)^{19,20,21}.

Many drama educationists propose that process drama can be an active mode for promoting creativity in a school context (Anderson, 2016; Howell & Heap, 2017; Hulse & Owens, 2017; Saunders, 2019).^{17,18,23,24} Davis suggests that process drama can be used for development of creative thinking (Davis, 2017)¹². In process drama, it is the question ‘what if’ that increases creative thinking, the opening to create and step inside and inhabit the stories, to try out the possibilities outside ourselves (Davis, 2017, p. 86)¹². Further, she said that the themes, content, the ‘things’ we make, are all due relationships, and occur ‘as me becomes we, as I share from me to you, and as we consider who we might be, through roles and relationships’ (Davis, 2017, p. 86)¹² which is the basic foundation of drama (Haseman & O’Toole, 1987)²⁵. The purpose of process drama is certainly not just to enact, but to problematize, to make the students ask questions and cross-examine the learning context. The teacher always take part energetically, not only arranging the dramatic act as dramatist and director, but also through the key technique of teacher-in-role, as an actor/character in the unfolding drama. This paper examines two teachers’ perceptions when they were introduced to teaching drama by process drama techniques to enhance creative thinking in their students.

Researchers agree that creativity is a multifaceted and complex concept, which makes a commonly established definition difficult to agree on (Harris & Ammermann, 2015; Treffinger et al., 2002)^{26,27}. However, one significant difference in the concept of creativity is between ‘Big Creativity’ and ‘little Creativity’. Big C, is out of the reach of most people and its creators themselves are often as extraordinary as their creations (Craft, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009)^{28,29,30}. Little c is the skill of an individual to answer everyday problems in unique ways. It is about ‘acting with flexibility, intelligence and novelty in the everyday’ (Craft, 2005, p. 43).³¹ Little C concentrates on a person’s skills to adapt to find a meaningful answer (Craft, 2003). This type of creativity can be developed in school students if they engage in purposeful practice in their discipline (Craft, 2003; 2005)^{28,31}. This type of creativity, as a general capability to be cultivated within all subject areas, is advocated both in the United Kingdom and in Australia (The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999)^{32,33}.

In this paper, the researcher investigates how a larger focus on creativity changes the dynamics of teaching and learning and is concerned with how teachers cultivate everyday creativity and how they themselves develop more creative approaches to teaching. Two Sri Lankan drama teachers were interviewed as part of a larger non-randomised control group designed study to examine whether process drama in secondary school settings increased creativity. As a researcher, she wanted to explore methods of teaching that may better support students’ creativity in open learning context. By focusing on these specific areas she hoped to know more about the teachers’ experiences of teaching drama with process drama strategies in this revolutionary way and *for them* to understand how to promulgate this method to other drama teachers in Sri Lanka.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of two secondary school teachers, one male and female, taught a class of Grade 7 students (ages 11 and 12 years old) with about 30 students, located in two different national schools in Sri Lanka. Both were graduates with degrees in Drama and Theatre Education. One teacher had completed his professional qualification (Post Graduate Diploma in Drama and Theatre Education) and other teacher had completed a Diploma in Drama and Theatre and was an artist in stage drama and tele-drama. Both teachers had had about 10 years of teaching experience in secondary schools in Sri Lanka.

Procedure

Ethical approval was gained from an Australian University Human Research Ethics Committee. Before interviewing the teachers, a participant information sheet was given to the teachers and consent was obtained. Prior to the main study, the two intervention group teachers participated for one day in an intervention training workshop. The workshop consisted of the theory of process drama and its effectiveness; selected process drama techniques associated with classroom practice; and practicing reflection and reflective notes for teacher development and student development. The workshop also gave the teachers practice at microteaching with Sri Lankan undergraduate students. Small group discussions facilitated sharing knowledge and experience about selected process drama techniques

Data Collection and Analysis

A qualitative approach was used to investigate teacher perception and understanding of creativity change over a term of their teaching. Data were gathered from twenty semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions, with both teachers. Each teacher had four face-to-face and six Skype technology interviews consecutively for five weeks. Each interview ranged from 30 -45 minutes and were conducted in the teachers' first language. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The interviews were transcribed and translated by the first author. After that all back translations were done by an official translator in Australia.

Thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)³⁴ was used for data analysis. Firstly, transcribed data was annotated by reading and re-reading. After that the features of interest in the data were coded and data relevant to each code were identified. Thirdly, codes were arranged into possible themes and all data relevant to each possible theme were grouped. Then, themes were reviewed in relation to the coded citation and each theme was defined and named to generate clear definitions. Finally, examples relating the analysis back to the research question and literature were identified and a research report of the analysis was produced.

Results

Considering the research questions two main themes emerged from the teacher interviews: (1) perceptions, (2) pedagogic practice. Then, the researcher studied the themes themselves and identified each particular theme as it related to the others. To a certain degree, to improve the

thematic analysis, the researcher identified each theme contained and linked with sub-themes. Sub-themes are basically subjecting inside a theme. It can be helpful for offering a form to an especially massive and complicated theme. Figure 1 presents each emergent main theme according to the research questions and all the different subthemes.

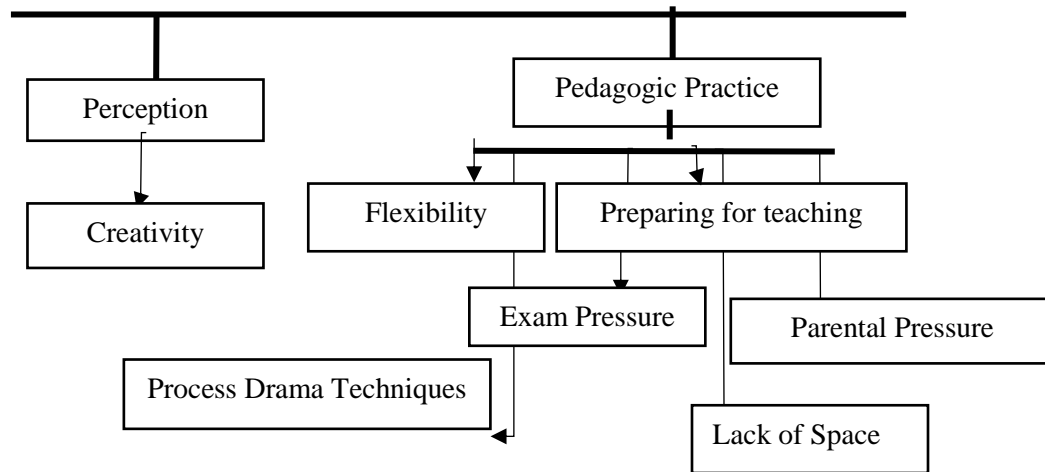


Figure 1- Emerging themes from data

Themes and sub-themes from the interview data will be discussed in the next sections.

Teachers' perceptions of creative skills

The first theme focused on identifying the teachers' perceptions of creative skills. Thematic analysis of all the interview data revealed a variety of important information related to the teacher's perceptions of creative skills in secondary education drama education classrooms in Sri Lanka. However, in general, the analysis showed both teachers had clear ideas about how to recognize creativity. In this first theme, the female teacher defined creativity as the making of new ideas or new solutions. *'Creativity is doing something novel'* (Female teacher, 1st interview). Further she explained it as processes of imagining, discovering and creative thinking. *'Creativity is a process... Students need time to think and re-think'* (Female teacher, 1st interview). The male teacher said creativity was a process of making things better or newer. Further he mentioned that creativity has no limitations. *'Creativity is thinking without limitations'* (Male teacher, 1st interview). While the teachers demonstrated they understood the concept of creativity, they found applying the concept to their teaching challenging. It was evident in the very first intervention lessons they were unable to apply given techniques properly in their instruction to develop creativity skills. They struggled to change their traditional teacher-centered approach to teaching.

Reflecting on the teacher's perception of conditions for developing creativity, both teachers agreed that students need a stress-free environment for the development of both skills. The female teacher said, most of the students were under pressure (meaning that students were burdened by an overloaded curriculum); therefore, the students didn't pay attention to any creative expression. *'Students don't have any chance for their creative expression. You know, some students in my class started their private tuition around 5 am and they are back home at 9 pm. Then, how does creativity develop?'* (Female teacher, 5th interview). The same idea was expressed by the male teacher who said that students were stressed in the drama subject too. *'Some students in my class*

had drama tuition. Then, sometimes I asked them what are you doing in the tuition class? Then they said that most of the time they were doing drama past papers' (Male teacher, 5th interview).

Moreover, the male teacher said that permission for creative involvement should be another condition.

Most of the students have regular schedules, they are like robots. They don't have any time to experiment and play with ideas...this is similar to our school too. The curriculum or subject teachers did not give spare time to allow silliness, childishness, untidiness and faults. I think these are essential for creativity and also the adaptability. If they have time to understand what their fault or silliness is then they can adopt another solution ...

(Male teacher, 7th interview).

Both teachers believed freedom and an encouraging stress-free environment would support creativity development in the students.

Apart from that, the female teacher built a logical argument for conditions for creativity development. According to her, a teacher with a creative attitude always had the desire to teach new things every time and keep students engaged and that would develop students' creative skills. *'Before development of student's creativity, teachers should be creative. Teachers need to have at least a basic understanding of creativity and how to use a creative approach for developing students' creative skills. Otherwise, we cannot produce creative students'* (Female teacher, 7th interview).

Furthermore, both teachers reflected that amenities was another important factor for creativity development. This can be observed and reasonable as most Sri Lankan schools lacked facilities. Observations of both schools discovered that classrooms were restricted, and they don't have proper ICT facilities, notwithstanding huge student numbers. The male teacher said his school authority didn't pay much attention to providing some facilities for drama subjects.

Overall, this theme showed that teachers had a good understanding of creativity skills, also, they mentioned some conditions essential for the development of creativity and adaptability among students, such as the stress-free environment, permission for creative involvement, creative teachers and the proper facilities for the drama subject.

Pedagogic Practice

The second theme focused on identifying the teachers' pedagogic practice, which was effective when they helped to develop students' creative skills through their practical application. This theme had six sub-themes, and all are illustrated in detail below.

Flexibility

Flexibility is an important characteristic for the development of creativity; it allows time and space for students to generate novel ideas. It is a skill, which concerns students looking from different perspectives, moving to opposite approaches, path or placing themselves 'in someone else's shoes'. To understand the teacher's pedagogic practice of flexibility, both teachers emphasized that the approach was new in their teaching experience. The female teacher said that the term and the

approach were also new for her and she had never given time for students to experiment with their own way of looking at different perspectives before the intervention.

I didn't think about the time much thus far... I always used to think only to teach children what I have learnt. I taught in my way and no one showed me the way of teaching children. I'm always thinking how to bring forth a talented person like me, but what I knew from you is that it cannot be like that. I learnt to teach in different, vivid ways without staying in one frame of teaching..... (Female teacher, 1st interview)

Further she said that she hadn't had proper experience in this regard.

Normally, I gave notes to the students... Actually, I don't know the exact meaning of flexibility because as a teacher I don't have such a practice in my life... generally, I know the content of the regular teachers' guide, but I don't have a sense about intervention lessonsIt means that much preparation should be needed (Female teacher, 2nd interview)

In her 3rd interview, she said that she needed time for the adaptation. *'....your manual and its approach is very new to me. I am adapting'* (Female teacher, 3rd interview). The male teacher said that he had taken much time to understand it properly. *'When I started to teach the first lesson, I felt that something was happening by mistake. But, soon I understood the way the lesson was going'* (Male teacher, 2nd interview).

Further, both teachers in these interviews highlighted that the intervention manual supplied had given chances for flexibility and students preferred close interactions through accepting and adapting their peers' ideas. *'They are more eager to perform fresh things. I have never seen these things before from them'* (Male teacher, 3rd interview). The students' behaviour and their involvement captured in the observations seemed to show their active participation and they continued flexible and open-minded. Most of the students responded openly to the ideas of others because the teachers demonstrated that they were eager to be flexible. This was confirmed by the female teacher, *'Now I am flexible in customizing my class'* (Female teacher, 3rd interview).

Preparing for teaching

Preparation for teaching is one of the important characteristics in teachers' pedagogic practice. The interview data showed that the teachers in the intervention schools were not prepared and organized for teaching. The main difficulty stressed by teachers was that they had to use proper lesson plans for their new teaching strategies. They said that usually they did not use a proper lesson plan for teaching the drama subject. They used the previous year's notes and there was no need to plan. The male teacher said, *'I didn't prepare proper lesson plans, I believe that it was a time wasting exercise...to be frank, regularly I have not used lesson plans correctly. After my teaching practice in PGDE, this is the first time I have used a proper lesson plan for teaching'* (Male teacher, 1st interview).

Preparing for lessons involved a collection of thoughtful decision-making processes in the classroom. In order to teach effectively and creatively, teachers need to be focused on lesson objectives, teaching aids, time and evaluating the student performance. However, the female teacher believed that her content knowledge was sufficient to teach without lesson preparation. *'When I*

start to teach, I know the depth of the lesson. Therefore, I am always confident with my knowledge. No need for additional preparedness' (Female teacher, 1st interview). Similarly, the male teacher said his draft format was adequate and a comprehensive plan was not needed. *'I believe that a short note is as good as a detailed plan'* (Male teacher, 3rd interview).

Pressure from the exam system

Teachers in Sri Lanka are responsible for their students' academic performance in examinations. As a result, they tend to stick to methods that are tried and tested instead of experimenting with a new and open pedagogical approach like drama, especially when it comes to preparation for an examination. Both teachers emphasized that pressure from the exam creates a stressful time for many students and as well for them. *'Personally, I struggle with the pressures of today's exam system. Sometimes as a teacher, I've failed to perform my best of my skills, due to the pressure around examinations'* (Female teacher, 3rd interview). She further added, *'Some students have acted passively in the drama classroom and some were too examination-oriented'* (Female teacher, 7th interview).

Both teachers reported that students also have overly high expectations and they were trying to memorize every theoretical fact and the argument is that the traditional teaching techniques help students considerably to memorize facts. *'Students memorize every theoretical concept thoroughly in drama'* (Female teacher, 6th interview). This teacher further emphasized that the current education (exam) system is only concentrated on developing the cognitive domain of students, not on possible applications. *'...but they don't know to apply it properly....as an example, although the most of students obtain more than 80% for written paper but, they don't show their practical performances when they are asked to do. They are very low in performing new things'* (Female teacher, 8th interview). Further she indicated that some students were not interested in changing learning approaches, because they (students) believed that creativity would not enhance their grades. *'Some students might think the teaching for creativity in the drama subject was not as important as other areas..., because developing creative skills was not directly changing their grade'* (Female teacher, 8th interview). Moreover, the female teacher said that she used to let students memorize facts and let them repeat those facts after her. She explained that in the present education system where a student is evaluated only on the basis of the marks scored in the exams or in other words on the basis of how much data the student can memorize, 'notes giving' is very important as it helps the students to save time and score better marks in the exams. Further, she suggested that if this system (exam competition) is continued in the future there is a higher tendency of students to be depressed and to develop mental health disorders. The male teacher said that student confidence, self-esteem and motivation to do well were being damaged by the present education system. *'Students are under pressure...some students are not willing to discuss or share ideas...also, teachers perceived that, students who are in the high marks (more than 75%), they focus on 'thoughtful work' instead of just 'performing' or 'intervention' drama techniques'*(Male teacher, 10th interview). This can be seen in the classroom observations and it was evident that a few students in both schools were more eager to learn content knowledge than perform drama practicals. Sometimes they took some notes, during the teacher's explanation time.

The intervention manual suggests process drama activities to develop creativity, not to prepare for exams. This led to the male teacher stopping process drama in his class prior to the examination, because he felt that it was time to 'focus more on written work' as his students had done badly in the previous term test. Since the examinations focus on recall and written drama

theory, the teacher wanted to be sure to give the students the familiar practice as examinations were approaching. *'...there are upcoming exams for the end of the second term. Western province prepares papers.... I have to prepare students for it... I have taken three or four periods and discussed the past papers with them'* (Male teacher, 7th interview).

Pressure from parents

Both teachers reflected that parental pressure for high achievement of their children's education was a limiting factor in the teaching of process drama to develop creativity and adaptability. The male teacher said that parents feel that teachers are required to perform wonders. *'Many parents believe that it is the teacher's job to get a child good grades'* (Male teacher, 8th interview). The female teacher added, *'I know parental pressures and desires of high achievement of their children's education. If someone achieves low-marks for the drama subject it will have a negative effect on me'* (Female teacher, 9th interview).

Also, the parents expect teachers to give lesson notes for drama focusing on drama assessment by exams. The male teacher said that parents regularly checked their children's notebook to get some idea whether the teacher taught or not. *'Student says that mothers looked at the book and say that there are no notes. They are (mothers) questioning whether I am teaching drama or not, and scolding'* (Male teacher, 5th interview). The female teacher said, *'Previously I was teaching drama with traditional methods and I have given notes for students. Then they (parents) identified that I was teaching. Now, I didn't give notes, then they decided that I am not teaching'* (Female teacher, 7th interview). Both teachers said that the parents and students thought that the teachers' essential duties was to complete the activities which were important for them. All of these possibilities affect teachers' ways of teaching and as a result they avoid teaching for creativity skills.

Process drama techniques

Process drama techniques transform the traditional teacher-student relationship from teacher-centred to student centred authority using collective experiences to investigate questions creatively. It offers a practical and effective approach to teaching that transforms the learning environment. To get proper understanding about teachers' practical experience among process drama techniques to enhance creativity and adaptability skills, analysis of the interview data revealed a variety of important information related to the improvisation, hot-seat and storytelling techniques. Both teachers had different favourites among those techniques.

Considering the hot-seat technique, both teachers said that the technique was implemented in the Sri Lankan drama classroom for the very first time, *'Considering the techniques, I experimented with this technique for the first time in my life and it was successful'* (Female teacher, 2nd interview). *'Actually, I never heard about this before. This is the first time I used this'* (Male teacher, 1st interview).

Both teachers had different experiences with the hot-seat technique and therefore, each teacher's views are discussed below separately. The male teacher identified that hot-seat was a strong technique, that helps to develop numerous student skills. According to him, this technique was a tool that kept students together, made them energetic and had them asking questions constantly during the lesson. *'When they sat on the hot seat, they converted themselves to the*

character. *Not any abashment, not any hesitation*' (Male teacher, 5th interview). Further, he explained,

This can be simply modified to suit the needs of the students. This is a great way for the students to practice asking and answering questions. Also, for students who are eager for more speaking, using an interactive, conversational activity, hot seat is the best opportunity for them. This technique helps for communicating genuinely in whatever scenario and to get to know each other on a more personal level (Male teacher, 5th interview).

In addition, he identified that 'silliness' was an important characteristic, which was important for creativity development. 'I found surprising things during a Hot Seat session. Some discussions went through completely silly and out of character. At the same time, some students identified errors and they straight away corrected them' (Male teacher, 5th interview). This was directly connected to his perception of creativity and adaptability and this was seen in the observation session as well. He gave time for exploration of student ideas and he used teacher direction and intervention less during the lesson.

Moreover, he believed that the hot-seat technique helped students to develop self-confidence to adapt to any situation.

I believe that the hot-seat helps to build student confidence too! ...students were eager to come forward voluntarily during the hot seat... this activity encourages students to get practice in more argument as well as using novel approaches. Likewise, this builds self-confidence... (Male teacher, 5th interview).

Apart from that, he stated that hot-seat helped the students to find ways to face everyday problems and also future problems. He said that during the one hot seat session (teacher-in-role), he gave a few minutes to create a list of five questions and all students created unbelievable queries for him. 'It provides students with an arena to express new ideas and voice their opinions. Sometimes students developed more critical arguments; these arguments gave them the opportunity to challenge each other logically and spark off of each other's ideas' (Male teacher, 5th interview).

Furthermore, he gave a very good argument how hot-seat would help to develop creativity, saying hot-seat would help to develop agency for their learning.

When using this technique, students become specialists on the learning. Once all groups have learned their topic, each group member shares the information they gained in their group. This technique carries lessons for life and tasks students to create their own learning. This tasks engages students and inspires them to share their learning with others (Male teacher, 8th interview)

The female teacher identified hot-seat as a medium of enthusiasm. 'I noted that there is big excitement in the children and they loved it a lot' (Female teacher, 1st interview). She also related that the hot seat technique helped to enhance student interaction. 'Children like it and the questions that were asked from those who sat by others were wonderful too. Some were very logical' (Female teacher, 2nd interview). However, considering the whole interview data with the female teacher, it can be seen that her preference was the technique of storytelling.

The female teacher said that she and her students liked the storytelling approach. 'This approach was close to performing. Students and I need something happening in the drama,

therefore, all prefer' (Female teacher, 2nd interview). She said that the technique of storytelling substantially improved the creative thinking of students and herself. *'I believe this technique allows students and myself to recall information in a more creative, memorable way'* (Female teacher, 5th interview). Her idea was that before implementing this technique she never thought about the benefits of storytelling and had never applied it in the classroom successfully.

To be frank, I never understood that storytelling can be fun and active. I never imagined teaching a storytelling class in interesting ways. Because during my teaching experience I always gave notes for students. But the intervention lessons gave me tasks and motivation to really learn more. I hope your study will be longer and more continuous than now. It would be ideal to learn more during the session and I could envision being a clever teacher...Actually, I didn't know faithfully how to teach storytelling, nor was I very confident in using storytelling techniques such as voice modulation before the intervention. But I now feel more confident (Female teacher, 3rd interview).

Further, she said that from time to time she used the storytelling technique in different approaches throughout the intervention lessons. She used it sometimes as 'pre-text' or setting up situations or making dialogues with voice modulation.

At the beginning of a lesson, sometimes I used a story as a 'pre-text' for presenting a new topic. Sometimes I used the situations in which they might tell a story in everyday life or a story for future predictions. On the other hand, I used the popular stories with voice modulation and asked students to present another character's point of view or come up with a continuation of the story (Female teacher, 3rd interview).

She also used the storytelling technique as a student motivation strategy. *'In fact, students also loved this technique and they encouraged me to continue. This was good because it is improved students' motivation'* (Female teacher, 3rd interview). This was apparent in the classroom observation lessons. When she used the storytelling technique, she created an energetic engaged environment in the classroom. For example, she used CD players for background music, some props or performed herself using dramatic expression. Sometimes she invited students to spontaneous actions and encouraged them to create a situation about something they were passionate about.

Compared to the male teacher, the female teacher had a positive commitment to the improvisation technique. *'It provides students with an arena to express new ideas and voice their opinions. Sometimes students developed more critical arguments. These arguments gave them the opportunity to challenge each other logically and spark off of each other's ideas'* (Female teacher, 5th interview). Further, with the use of process drama techniques, the female teacher noticed that students had overcome their self-consciousness *'Earlier, these students were shy when they needed to perform or express their moods... now I notice that they are at ease in any situation'* (Female teacher, 3rd interview). Both teachers finally agreed that students were always trying to do something novel when process drama was taught.

Lack of Space

Lack of space was another key restraint factor for developing creativity and adaptability skills. This limited the pair work or group work activities. The average number of students in classrooms observed was 30 to 37. The female teacher said that in this year she had a manageable number of

students, but in future it would be definitely increased. *‘I have 25 students for drama subject and they are all very crowded in the drama period....I am pretty sure, next year this may be a problem. Because this year 45 students selected drama subject for grade six. M...mmm (breathing). Next year these 45 come for the drama subject’* (Female teacher, 4th interview).

Both teachers reported that a barrier to developing creative skills through practical activities was the limited space in the classroom. The male teacher said that students struggle with attention and performance difficulties with classroom space that was too small and too crowded because it was unsuited to their physical size. *‘But, unfortunately, we haven’t got enough space....there were 37 students in my class’* (Male teacher, 3rd interview).

For example, before starting the dramatic activities the male teacher used his loud voice to guide students. Sometimes due to the classroom disturbances, the teacher had to use his loud voice more than five times. Then teachers believe that the traditional lecture method was more useful than having additional worries doing practical. *“The main reason for this is I haven’t had a proper drama classroom. We are all packed in a normal classroom with 37 students, and there is no chance of doing practical. Then it is easy to give notes to them”* (Male teacher, 1st interview).

Discussion

This paper examined two teachers’ perceptions on their creative teaching and enhancement of students’ creativity through process drama techniques. Overall, considering the awareness of creativity, the theme showed that teachers had a good understanding of creativity skills and also indicated positive attitudes toward teaching for creativity in the classroom. Interview data revealed that both teachers believed that they could enhance students’ creativity with support of the context of a stress-free environment, permission for creative involvement, creative teachers and suitable facilities for the drama subject.

An interesting observation which bodes ill for the implementation of process drama in Sri Lanka was the lack of preparation that teachers in this study did for their drama lessons. Every teacher in the education sector in Sri Lanka is expected to prepare a complete lesson plan, specifying the planned cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domain development for all students (Ministry of Education, 2013)³⁵. However, both teachers in this study emphasized that they did not prepare lesson plans for drama as they felt that lesson planning took too much time. The lesson plan is a detailed description, which comprises aim and objective, lesson structure and explicit teaching. For example, setting objectives for the lesson gives clear learning goals that clarify what success looks like. Lesson objectives always explain what students need to know, and what they must be capable of doing. This helps the teacher to plan learning activities, and supports students to understand what is mandatory. Explicit teaching helps to decide on learning goals and success criteria, makes them clear to students, and models them by demonstrating (Hattie, 2008)³⁶. Preparing for teaching and being organised for successful teaching is at the heart of being an effective teacher (Reed & Michaud, 2010)³⁷. Researchers have found that a blend of teacher preparation, strategies, curricula, settings and assessment for creativity needs to be carried out to promote student creativity development. (Banaji et al., 2010; Brady & Edelman, 2012; Bunt, 2009; Cheng, 2004)^{38,39,40,41}. The important factor was both teachers had a foundation degree in Drama and Theatre and one had a Post Graduate Diploma in Education qualification. This means that both teachers were well-qualified. But findings reflect that the teachers’ professional qualifications and teaching experiences

would not help them to be good teachers. Then, unfortunately, their lack of detailed preparation for teaching would have a great impact on students' academic expectations and their creative development.

Furthermore, teachers' lesson plans are compulsory in other countries. In the US, procedures have been developed to boost creativity (Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century, 2010; National Endowment for the Arts, 2010)^{42,43} to meet the twenty-first century citizenship standards where creativity and innovation development is a priority (P21, 2007)⁴⁴. In Australia, the curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013)⁴⁵ entails the development of critical and creative thinking for students and therefore, training has been given to teachers to plan lessons successfully. However, the Sri Lankan teachers indicated that lesson planning was not important to them. It is concerning that these highly educated teachers felt it was not necessary to plan drama lessons because they just used the notes of the previous years. This culture in the schools that is dominated by examinations would seem to hinder not only the student engagement of the students but also the engagement of the teachers.

Moreover, both teachers criticized the present learning context. They said that the student learning context did not support students' development of creative thinking skills. Knowledge transmission and examination pressure which were common in Sri Lankan schools discouraged teachers from teaching for creative thinking. This means that teachers believe that the school environment does not encourage the development and fostering of student's creativity, especially in the drama classroom. They identified some barriers for the development of creativity in schools, including a lack of administration support, a lack of educational resources, classroom size, teaching resources, and unavailability of electronic equipment. Edinger (2008)⁴⁶ found that teachers' capacity to promote creativity would be enhanced by helpful administration. This outcome could be improved by the Sri Lankan Government paying greater attention to education and arranging training programmes for teachers to develop their abilities to develop students' skills and creativity, and by instituting many projects in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. In addition, universities which are responsible for teacher professional development should focus on offering specific programmes for teachers to enhance their self- efficacy and self-esteem strategies.

Parents' expectations of the higher academic achievement of their children also impacted on teachers' practice. Both teachers reflected that parental pressure was a limiting factor in the engagement of creativity and its expression. The male teacher said that if he stopped giving notes, he and his school would be blamed. Parental pressure for their children to achieve academic excellence, and economic distress are some of the circumstances rated as highly stressful by adolescents (Annual Report on Family Health Bureau, 2016)⁴⁷. Researchers propose that teaching and assessing always need to be aligned and should be focused on the development of students' creative capabilities (Lee et al., 2015; Lubart et al, 2015)^{48,49}.

Both teachers expressed concern about the lack of space for teaching drama using these new strategies. The male teacher did not have a proper space to teach process drama. His classroom was filled with desks and chairs and there was no space for the practical activities with 37 students. The female teacher did teach in a separate room, but it was also filled with 28 desks and chairs. It could be that class size and space might be a barrier to the development of proper student engagement. According to the National Council of Teachers of English, USA, suitable class sizes gives students many advantages: more chances for participation, more specific attention, and better-quality instruction (NCTE, 2014)⁵⁰. In addition, Richard Sallis suggests that 'schools should limit classes

in drama to no more than 25 students per class in recognition of the practical nature of drama with its emphasis on group work, participation and presentation and the need for active teacher supervision and an appropriate level of duty of care' (Drama Australia, 2009. p. 7)⁵¹. Research emphasises that a spacious drama class will allow collaboration and socialisation with peers with many chances for students to participate in a variety of group work situations. Unfortunately, this is not the case for drama teachers in Sri Lanka. The atmosphere of the classrooms in which the drama subject was conducted was poor in Sri Lanka because the internal arrangement of the classroom space has not been organized for drama, but for the suitability for teaching any subject. Most of the teachers used the corridor spaces, school isolated places or even playground for practicals.

The results obtained from teachers identified that they have positive perceptions of process drama techniques that enhance students' creative thinking. Teachers said that recommended techniques were appropriate for students' diverse needs and would help to develop creative skills. This is similar to Crane's idea which suggests that giving practical support can be an effective strategy in engaging learning (Crane et al., 2013)⁵². Furthermore, data showed that teachers had confidence in the new techniques and were willing to use these techniques in their regular drama lessons. There are sound grounds to believe that intervention manuals that are well targeted and well delivered can be successful with students from a range of backgrounds and with a range of skills.

Similarly, teachers identified that two techniques would help to enhance students' creativity. A broad selection of teaching techniques is important for effective teaching (Kulinna et al., 2006; Duffy & Elwood, 2013; Grieve, 2010; Jaakkola & Watt, 2011)^{53,54,55,56}, and there is no one and only teaching technique that is going to be generally effective for all students in all situations (Rink, 2001)⁵⁷. Students learn in numerous ways, the female teacher in this study identified that Hot Seat was the best technique for developing creative thinking. Storytelling in drama is strongly recommended as an intervention tool because it can also stimulate students' emotions, creative feelings, critical judgments, and can promote their responsiveness (Edmiston, 2000; 2013)^{58,59}. Another finding of the study is that teachers who are applying new techniques feel comfortable with their teaching. This clearly indicates that teachers who used process drama techniques are open to having a discussion with students in a setting where students freely discuss and exchange their ideas. Further, it showed that process drama techniques promote students' creative thinking skills and make students more actively involved in the learning process.

Implications for Teacher Education

The insights derived from teacher perceptions about creativity and the effectiveness of process drama techniques have the potential to benefit both current and future educators. This study holds particular significance for students pursuing the Bachelor of Education Honours in Drama and Theatre Degree at the Open University of Sri Lanka, as it offers valuable guidance for enhancing their teaching practices. These aspiring teachers can apply the suggested techniques in their future classrooms, fostering a more creative and engaging learning environment. The findings of this study also highlight the importance of open thinking and dramatic thinking skills, which can serve as a focal point for the B.Ed degree program and other professional development opportunities for teachers, such as the Post Graduate Diploma in Education. Strengthening teachers' competency in

open thinking skills can lead to stronger connections with their students, thereby fostering highly motivating and positive learning experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper sheds light on the perceptions of two Sri Lankan teachers who adopted process drama techniques to promote creativity in their students. While they encountered some challenges in adjusting their teaching strategies, they found the techniques enjoyable and effective, resulting in a significant boost in their students' creativity during lessons. This demonstrates the potential of process drama as a valuable tool for cultivating creativity and enriching the educational experience for both teachers and students alike.

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