

The Demise of Creativity in Tomorrow's Teachers

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In the last several years a good deal of public discourse was devoted to describing the effects that more than two decades of education reforms, the last iteration of which was known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), has had on teaching and learning. It is widely argued that coupling teacher evaluations with students' test scores, enforced standardization, and over-reliance on testing for measuring achievement results in a deadened curriculum hyper-focused on math and ELA achievement, divorced from lived experience, the arts, sciences, and history (Ravitch, 2013). The specific focus of this study was to examine the consequences of schooling under the reform mandates of the last two decades on the next generation of teachers. The authors investigated anecdotal evidence shared by teacher educators regarding teacher candidates' diminished ability to think and plan creatively, engage in intellectual risk-taking, independently solve problems, and foster creativity in their own students. The research was conducted using qualitative data collection strategies including interviews with veteran (those who began teaching prior to 2000 and the implementation of No Child Left Behind), early career (those who began teaching between 2010 – 2013, prior to the implementation of Race to the Top), and pre-service teachers (2013 to present) as well as observations and document analysis. This study explores the perceptions of educators on their dispositions in regard to creativity in lesson planning with focus on now early career teachers in the field that underwent training from 2013 to present.

Introduction: Creativity in Education

In a TED Talk that went viral, Sir Ken Robinson (2006), the renowned expert on creativity and education, argued, “My contention is that creativity is as important in education as literacy and should be treated with the same status.” This statement resonates with Americans who celebrate our history of innovation, barrier-breaking and entrepreneurial spirit. Our cultural heroes are inveterate rule breakers. Given the speed with which change occurs in our modern world, the pertinence to our collective future of Ken Robinson's call to situate creative enterprise at the center of the curriculum would seem self-evident. According to Cathy N. Davidson, co-director of the annual MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Competitions, 65 percent of today's grade-school students may end up doing work that hasn't been invented yet (as cited in Heffernan, 2011). In the coming decades, the only thing certain is that change is

inevitable and that flexibility, resourcefulness, and imagination are at a premium. The need for education reform was predicated on the imperatives of economic growth. At the same time, it has been widely recognized that equipping young people with a capacity for innovation is key to economic competitiveness (Shaheen, 2010). Despite the apparent necessity for and commitment to promoting creativity in our educational system, there is a different reality enacted on the ground. There is an inherent contradiction between the oft-repeated mantra that we need creativity and innovation in tomorrow's workforce and the kind of education that has been mandated in successive waves of reform over the last two decades, an education marked by standardization and prescription. Our focus for this research was to examine the consequences of these reforms on the next generation of teachers. We investigated anecdotal evidence shared by teacher educators regarding teacher candidates' diminished ability to think and plan creatively, engage in intellectual risk-taking, independently solve problems, and foster creativity in their own students.

To better define what we mean by creativity, we have chosen to draw on the Four C model described by Kaufman and Beghetto (2009), which makes a distinction between *Big-C*, *little-c*, *mini-c*, and *Pro-c* creativity. *Big-C* creativity describes creative greatness, what they describe as, “remarkable and lasting contributions made by mavericks in some domain” (p. 2). *Little-c* is defined as “everyday innovation” (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, p. 2), such as a local artist who has refined her craft and won a local art show award. *Mini-c* is identified as “transformative learning” (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, p. 3), such as a student or novice that learns a new concept and is able to apply it in practice. *Pro-C* reflects “professional expertise” and the work of those that have revolutionized the field but do not have “eminent status” (p. 4).

For the purposes of our study, we adopted the *little-c* model in that teachers are crafting for the local classroom community and for one's own needs. These teachers, while displaying professional expertise in their everyday endeavors, do not typically receive status and acclaim associated with the work. Crafting a definition of creativity also requires one to examine the multiple aspects involved in the act of creation. According to Amabile (1983, 2013), there are three critical components that must exist for creativity to occur; these include domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and task motivation. All of these components are highly relevant when looking at creativity among teachers.

Nurturing imagination and innovation requires an environment that is supportive and rewarding of creative ideas. A person could have all of the internal resources needed to think creatively, but absent an environment where creative risk-taking is nurtured and rewarded, the creativity that a person has within him or her might never manifest itself (Sternberg, 2006, p. 88). Research by Kyung Hee Kim indicates that U.S. children's collective capacity for creativity is diminishing. Kim examined nearly 300,000 Torrance tests, the most widely used test for creativity in the world, from 1966, 1974, 1984, 1990, 1998 and 2008, and notes that creative thinking scores have been declining steadily over the last 20 years. The most statistically significant drop was in children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade (Kim, 2011). Clearly, children need opportunities and the right environment to develop their ability to think creatively, to solve problems independently and take intellectual risks. It would seem that we are neglecting this imperative in today's classrooms. *Teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity* are mutually reinforcing and interconnected concepts (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004, p. 77). Pelfrey (2011) found that student creativity was enhanced when teachers encouraged collaboration, student choice, imagination, a risk-free learning environment, and inquiry. Further, if teaching creatively and teaching for creativity are mutually reinforcing and interdependent, it follows that teaching *for* creativity requires a teacher who is creative herself (Lin, 2011, p. 152). Henrickson shows in a 2014 study that excellent teachers are highly creative in their personal and professional lives, and that they actively transfer creative tendencies from their outside avocations/interests into their teaching practices. This study describes common themes in creative teaching, including intellectual risk-taking, real-world learning approaches, and cross-disciplinary teaching practices (Henrickson & Mishra, 2015, p. 4). The teachers Henrickson studied indicated that they made frequent mental connections to teaching activities, even when they were engaged in completely different activities or pursuing leisure activities. This "ongoing mindset" was one of the most pervasive and prevalent themes these teachers described creative thinking. Creativity related to their teaching was simply part of their everyday lives. A key theme that emerged in the practices of creative teachers was the notion of intellectual risk-taking. "This is not framed in the sense of haphazard or risky teaching, but in a willingness to try out new ideas and approaches in their classrooms. This openness to trying things differently allows them to come up with new and interesting approaches to teaching" (Henrickson, 2014, p. 34). Sternberg & Lubart (1991, 1995) describe what they call an investment theory of creativity according to which creative people are

those who are willing and able to “buy low and sell high” in the realm of ideas, i.e. buying low or pursuing ideas that are new or unpopular, but that have the potential for growth. The creative individual often faces resistance but persists despite the attendant discomfort and eventually sells high, moving on to the next new or unpopular idea (Sternberg, 2006, p. 87).

People who are creative in a productive sense need to have developed the capacity for independent action and a sense of self-efficacy. Bandura (1994) originally identified self-efficacy as a belief in one's own capacity for success, self-confidence, and optimism. Self-efficacy plays a key role in determining the degree to which teachers believe in their own creative capacities as well as the processes by which they approach the task of lesson planning. Of particular interest is the importance of vicarious experiences in developing self-efficacy in a particular domain (Bandura, 1997). Seeing people, especially those whom we see as role models, succeed in a particular area raises the sense of possibility in the observer. When students are not exposed to teachers presenting content in novel and creative ways, as opposed to highly scripted and standardized ways, they lose the necessary vicarious experiences that contribute to growing their confidence in being creative themselves.

Impact on the Profession

In the last several years, a good deal of public discourse was devoted to describing the effects that more than two decades of education reforms, the current iteration of which is known as Race to the Top, has had on teaching and learning. It is widely argued that coupling teacher evaluations with students test scores, enforced standardization, and over-reliance on testing results in a deadened curriculum hyper-focused on math and ELA achievement, divorced from lived experience, the arts, sciences, and history (Giroux, 2012; Ravitch, 2013) limits creativity. The implications of limiting creativity in the teaching profession are many. As noted by Kohn (2000), "Our children are tested to an extent that is unprecedented in our history and unparalleled anywhere else in the world" (p. 46). This drive to perform on standardized tests and use those tests to evaluate the success of teachers leads to a climate of fear, and, as a reaction, teachers come to question their own units and lessons in favor of those created by "experts," and they become risk avoidant. Administrators are also caught in this system and may become hesitant to encourage teacher creativity as they too are judged by the success or lack of success by students on standardized tests. According to Olivant (2015), “teachers perceive the current high-stakes

testing climate to be negatively affecting their ability to foster creativity and creative thinking in the classroom through its emphasis on compliance and conformity at the expense of teacher autonomy and self-direction” (p. 215). This message is documented again and again by researchers who link current educational policy to a scripting of teaching in that teaching is de-professionalized and the craft of teaching is narrowed to prepared lessons by an outside entity (Harrison, 2012; Giroux & Schmidt, 2004; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Olivant, 2015; Milner, 2013). De-professionalizing and deskilling are impacts that have echoed throughout earlier attempts to reform education through policy implementation and standardization.

In her dissertation study from 2012, Harrison notes that "participants observed that the strong emphasis on standards and testing creates a rigid and overly structured teaching environment, leaving neither time nor flexibility for creative exploration" (p. 3). For example, this was evidenced in New York State with the creation and subsequent imposition of English Language Arts modules (prepackaged scripted curriculum) on school teachers starting in 2013. This highly scripted set of unit plans left no room for creativity or teacher authorship when used with fidelity. The use of these modules ignored differences in student populations and left teachers out of the discussion. As pointed out by Giroux and Schmidt (2004), “under such conditions, teachers are excluded from designing their own lessons and the pressure to achieve passing test scores often produces highly scripted and regimented forms of teaching. In this context, worksheets become a substitute for critical teaching and rote memorization takes the place of in-depth thinking” (p. 222). Crocco and Costigan (2007) wrote specifically about the impact of No Child Left Behind and the standardization movement on New York City teachers and schools. They discussed the narrowing of the curriculum and the loss of creativity through the implementation of "packaged" programs. They note that "new teachers find their personal and professional identity thwarted, creativity and autonomy undermined, and ability to forge relationships with students diminished" (Crocco & Costigan 2007, p. 513). Many of the teacher participants in this study indicated that they found the scripted lessons “oppressive and insulting to their developing sense of professionalism” (p. 526). Not only is the teacher creativity stifled under packaged programs, but so too are the students. “These cookbook strategies [have] negative unintended consequences on students, who might be less likely to be creative themselves as a result of these teacher-centered methods” (Jones, Jones, & Hargrove, 2003, p. 43).

We believe that the current reforms stand in polar opposition to a pedagogy that nurtures creative capacities as described above. We are further suggesting that the reforms have not only had negative consequences for children, their developing capacity for creativity, and the independence of mind needed to bring it to light, but also on the teachers some of them will become. This, in turn, will have a negative impact on their future students. The concerns outlined in the foregoing section led us to question which students choose to enter the profession as pre-service teachers today. Is it those individuals most comfortable with this hyper-standardization and prefabricated curriculum? Will today's pre-service teachers, who have essentially apprenticed for twelve years under a system that emphasizes conformity and test-based achievement, have the capacity to model creativity and independence for their own students?

Financial Influence on Public Education Policy

It has been argued that neoliberal capitalism and the education reform movement cannot be decoupled (Giroux, 2012). It is difficult, in fact, to find an educational initiative currently underway in the United States that hasn't been underwritten by rich corporate donors such as the Gates, Walton and Broad Foundations. Their contributions are motivated by a neoliberal political and economic ideology that favors marketizing virtually all aspects of public life by handing public institutions over to the free market in order to improve them (Harvey, 2010). The stream of money flowing from the government through schools into corporate pockets since No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has turned into a flood with Race to the Top (RTTT) as the educational industrial complex capitalizes on billions of federal dollars allocated to states which must comply with its mandates or forgo federal funds. Consultants and vendors sell their services and products to design and align curricula, develop testing and data collection systems, teacher evaluation systems, and technology support for test preparation and testing itself. There is no sign of slowing of this marketizing of education as we move into 2020.

One of the reasons that vendors and consultants have been so successful in marketing to schools during the NCLB and RTTT eras is that they have capitalized on the culture of fear which blossomed under these policies. Under both NCLB and RTTT, there has been increasing pressure for schools and students to perform on high stakes tests. The tests, based on the Common Core State Standards, are "pernicious, because curriculum must be aligned with the Common Core to prepare for the tests, districts are compelled to force teachers to use scripted

curriculum plans known as modules to deliver instruction in order to make sure teachers are staying on track for test preparation” (Bloom, 2015, p. 6). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed by President Obama in 2015, includes only superficial changes to the reauthorization of NCLB. States, districts, schools, and individual teachers continue to feel intense pressure to push for ever higher scores at the expense of arts, play, experimentation, and creative expression.

In addition to the type of students choosing to pursue certification, federal and state policies have also had an impact on the number of young people selecting to enter the profession. With a high number of veteran teachers selecting retirement or early retirement, and a lack of new teachers entering the field, combined with an exodus of pre-service teachers leaving our state of New York after teacher preparation program completion, we are poised to face significant teacher shortages in the near future. As stated in an NYSUT (New York State United Teachers) publication, "enrollment in teacher preparation programs statewide has declined by 40 percent – more than 25,000 students - in the five years between the academic years of 2008-09 and 2012-13" (McGrath, 2015, p. 21). A decline in teacher enrollment as a result of de-professionalizing policies has been a long-established trend, and "there is no better formula for alienation and burnout than loss of control of one's labour” (Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986, p. 180). The coup de gras in dissuading talented young people from following their teacher preparation programs through to completion is the current certification assessment known as the edTPA. It is an enormously daunting task that must be undertaken over the course of the first half of student teaching. The assessment requires that students submit two, ten-minute videotapes of themselves teaching accompanied by up to forty pages of required commentary explaining and justifying their pedagogical choices. The cost ramps the stakes of the assessment even higher by bringing the cost of initial certification in New York State for example, to between \$750.00 and \$1000.00, that is, if the student passes them all the first time around. If not, it can run much higher. Though the edTPA was developed by the well-regarded Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE), in New York they chose the corporate giant Pearson as their ‘operational partner.’ Students must pay \$300.00 directly to Pearson to upload their electronic portfolios. As of 2017, 18 states are using it for program completion or state licensure. Other states are either taking steps toward implementation or exploring its use (edTPA, 2019).

The edTPA privileges conformity over experimentation. Videos and templates abound on the internet explaining how candidates can ‘plug in’ the right answers to pass. The sheer amount of time and effort required to complete the edTPA diverts students from fully engaging with their classrooms. Traditional student teaching, during which the pre-service teacher is fully immersed in planning, practicing, and reflection in relation with their Collaborating Teacher, must be set aside in the interest of meeting the demands of the edTPA.

Now the very language that we are compelled to adopt in our teacher education courses serves to distance us from lived relational experience; children become “focus learners” and a lesson becomes a “learning segment.” The imposition of this ill-defined proprietary jargon is just one way in which edTPA traps teacher candidates and the teacher education program into compliance. Only the acceptance of a new language, and with the concomitant acculturation to the new and proprietary norms and assure success; edTPA’s language must insert itself into teacher training curricula if teacher candidates are to become adept performers at the edTPA protocols. Perhaps the feelings of demoralization on the part of teachers and teacher educators... a common reaction to the mandates of the edTPA indicates some level of awareness of a kind of death of ourselves, our students and their students (Bloom, 2015, p. 92).

Our project aims to show how the neoliberal agenda, with regard to education, has come full circle by effectively producing an incoming teacher force, schooled in a ‘pedagogy of management’ from kindergarten through to the edTPA, which has been rendered far more compliant and malleable than their predecessors in the profession. A key research question that guided this study was, “what impact have the recent changes in education policy and practice had on teacher creativity and self-efficacy?” As the veteran teachers retire or change careers and the new generation of teachers moves in, will we find that the new teachers will be satisfied to take up their role as deskilled technicians dependent on pre-packaged and scripted curricula?

Methodology

Not only is there a significant decline in the number of students enrolling in education courses at both public and private institutions, but the attitudes of the students have also shifted. As a result of our concerns with the effect of increased standardization on creativity and teacher autonomy, we began to reflect on the student attitudes we saw evidenced in our pre-service methods classes. In an effort to document this shift, the specific focus of this study was to

examine the consequences of schooling under the policy mandates of the last two decades to investigate whether anecdotal evidence shared by teacher educators regarding teacher candidates' ability to think and plan creatively, engage in intellectual risk-taking, independently solve problems, and foster creativity in their own students has a basis in fact. This qualitative study utilized a pre-interview dispositions survey and follow up interviews with participants to explore the questions from the survey in more detail. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. This phenomenological study employed qualitative feminist methodology and interview protocol with a focus on active listening as described by DeVault and Gross (2012). Interviews were conducted in a naturalistic setting, (i.e., they occurred as conversations with loose guiding questions as opposed to a strict interview protocol).

The study employed a pre-interview dispositions survey that was collected digitally through an online form. The purpose of the survey was to serve as a springboard for the interview conversation. This survey was based on a Likert scale, however, the scale was designed to generate discussion rather than to collect evidence for analysis. Survey prompts were generated as a reflection of the literature reviewed. The directions for the survey asked participant educators to rate themselves on questions on a scale of 1 to 5, five being “very much like me” and one being “not at all like me.” In addition, we collected and reviewed journal entries written by pre-service teachers reflecting on their senior year methods course placement. Both journal entries and interviews collected were examined and coding was established as emergent themes developed. These sources were triangulated with the survey results.

Participant Selection and Limitation

The research was conducted using qualitative data collection strategies including interviews with veterans (those who began teaching prior to 2000 and the implementation of NCLB), early career (those who began teaching between 2010 – 2013, prior to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards) and pre-service teachers (2013 to present). Pre-service students from both public and private institutions were included. There were 102 total survey respondents. Survey respondents were invited to participate through an online invitation with a link to the survey. This invitation was shared via email, social media, and posted to listservs. The invitation suggested that recipients forward on to other educators that may be interested in participating. The survey completers were self-selected and the simple

sampling was representative of the target population. As participation was voluntary, proportional random sampling was not a goal. Participants included 12 early career teachers, 70 pre-service teachers, and 20 veteran teachers. Those participants that indicated they would be willing to participate in the interview were contacted using the contact information they provided. Unless contact information was provided, survey responses remained anonymous. Post survey, 10 one on one follow up interviews with early career teachers and pre-service teachers were conducted. Each interview lasted between half an hour and an hour. Participants in the survey responded from across the country with the majority responding from New York. All of the follow-up interview participants were from New York State. Interviews were coded using reflexive analysis in which the researchers relied on their own intuition and personal judgment to thematically examine the material collected.

The age range strata was established to examine those young people who were schooled under both NCLB and RTTT in contrast with those who went through the system prior to their implementation. The participants in this study reflected a sample of convenience. Many of the teachers involved in the study were from the home state of the researchers, but there were several surveys completed from out of state. All the interviews were completed with individuals living within an hour drive of the researchers.

A Changing Field

After sorting the survey data and coding the interviews, a number of themes among the pre-service teachers emerged. Two dominant themes to emerge were “stagnation” and “approval seeking,” and this was partly manifested in an over-reliance on Internet resources. Stagnation and approval seeking are intertwined in many ways, and both impact the development of future classroom environments and how learning is defined. Both also limit creativity and critical thinking in the classroom as well as opportunities for inquiry-based or problem-based learning. As a result of stagnation and approval seeking, the curriculum becomes scripted and dry, thus less engaging for students and without consideration of the context of the community in which the lessons are delivered.

Stagnation

One of the freshman students interviewed stated that:

When I was doing my lesson plan, I have to admit, that is where my mind went. I thought that I could only stay in one area and spew information to these kids, expecting them to pay attention and pray they took something from my lesson. I mainly thought that way because throughout my elementary school experience that is how all teachers taught us. We did not have fun activities to help us learn the material, maybe one or two field trips, but there was really no discussion after explaining what we learned. When you said we could use different rooms and create stations, it shocked me! I was so used to staying "inside the box" because my elementary school teachers did.

As this pre-service teacher stated in the interview when reflecting on the creation of a lesson in an introductory education class, teaching is viewed as a stagnate process and, as she puts it, "spewing information." This young person has been trained in such a way through her public school experience to feel that prepackaged and closely controlled curriculum is normal.

Another pre-service interview subject, a sophomore, stated that she believed a hands-on model of teaching was best for learning. When asked, "Did you ever experience a hands-on model that you could reproduce in your own classroom?" she responded,

I don't really know. I feel like I don't have enough experience of teachers who have taught that way. Especially in high school, I can't think of like any teacher... maybe it's just because I was in a lot of AP and honors classes. I think it was all just PowerPoints. It would just be PowerPoint slides with blanks like you wouldn't even be copying the whole notes, you would be copying parts of it... So I feel like my entire high school career, was just at desks, very black and white. And middle school too was kind of the same deal. And I had some pretty good elementary teachers, but I feel it was pretty much basic, like nothing, I never really had an out there teacher, not that that's a bad thing but I can't really think of... I don't feel like I have experienced or observed enough to figure out how I would do hands-on teaching and then still meet the school's like standards.

Her creativity was diminished because she did not have the opportunity to observe her own teachers be creative. Through twelve years of apprenticeship in the profession of teaching, her expectation that students sit silently at their desks echoes what has now become normalized behavior in school culture.

During another follow-up interview, a first-year teacher who was asked to reflect on her student teaching responded to the prompt, "Describe a typical day in your classroom in terms of the degree of teacher-directed versus student-directed time." She responded by stating that,

I want to say it was teacher-centered because the whole time, and this might have just been me, this was my first experience really teaching that I was very concerned with making sure that I was doing what the module said and that I was meeting these requirements. I was very concerned with making sure that I was asking the questions and getting the answers that the modules were looking for, and I wasn't, I wasn't really letting... I could have done a better job with letting students, you know letting conversation grow organically, and you know if it were up to me I would have loved for the lessons to be more student-centered and led by what the students were interested in.

As indicated by Figure 1 and survey question 22, the youngest pre-service teachers experienced more stagnate learning in contrast to the other distinct groups of participants. Stagnate learning is that which takes place in a high-stakes learning environment where instruction is highly individualized, teacher-centered, and rote in stark contrast with Pelfrey's (2011) characteristics for nurturing creativity. This pre-service teacher's statement is concerning when paired with the findings in response to the prompt to question 8, see Figure 2: "I like the state approved modules (math/ELA) because they make planning more efficient." The pre-service teachers are strongly in favor of the modules in contrast with veteran counterparts who feel constrained by them.

22. As a child, much of my day was spent sitting at a desk completing worksheets.

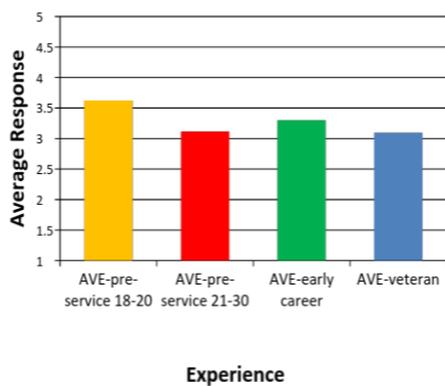


Figure 1

8. I like the state approved modules (math / ELA) because they make planning more efficient.

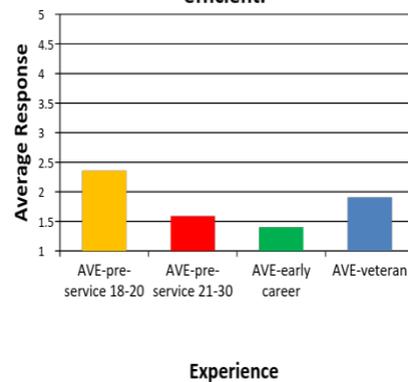


Figure 2

In New York State, the location of this research, modules are curriculum units that were developed and then shared by the state for free on the website engageny.com. These modules were initially shared as exemplars for how teachers could implement the then newly adopted Common Core Standards. The effect, once they were released, however, was that many districts across the state mandated teaching the modules because to ignore them, or even to modify them to meet the needs of particular populations of students, was to risk poor test performance. They are much contested across the state and to discuss them with teachers has a polarizing effect. This "commodified curriculum" deskills teachers and "dehumanizes not only the process of teaching and learning but also the students and the teachers" (Sider, 2015, p. 20). Of those teachers who have embraced the scripted curricula, many cite them as a means of protection in an ever more punitive Annual Professional Performance Review in which their rating is partially derived from student performance on standardized tests. As Sider (2015) notes, "creativity, child-centered instruction, and the arts are immediate casualties of test culture" (p. 24) that now pervades the public school system. "Though the New York State Department of Education insists that the modules are to be used as resources only, the fact remains that teachers, whose jobs depend on their scores... have little else to go on" (Bloom, 2015, p.6). This environment reflects what Foucault (1977) refers to as the "panoptical society" in which the state maintains control over the population (in this case teachers) through the suggestion that the government is a constant surveilling presence. Individual administrators can blame the state and the state can blame the federal government, but the threat remains the same: that one must bend to the reforms or suffer consequences, from being shamed by higher performing colleagues all the way to loss of career.

A scripted curriculum may also contribute to a sense of alienation as the teachers lack a personal connection to the material. Without a personal investment in the creation of the unit plans, teachers may experience both a disconnect from the material and a lack of enthusiasm for it, which students will notice and react to accordingly. Researchers Norton, Mochon & Ariely (2011) document a similar reaction in their work with the IKEA effect. The IKEA Effect describes an increase in the valuation of products when they are self-constructed. They noted that "consumers' increased valuation for goods they have assembled when compared objectively with similar goods not produced by the self" (p. 7) and that "successful assembly of products leads to value over and above the value that arises from merely being endowed with a product" (p. 18). In

this study, consumers valued self-designed products over those designed by others and the more effort that was put into the pursuit, the more they came to value it. With a scripted curriculum, the consumer, in this case, the teacher, does not value the product as much because they were not part of the design or construction process. Teachers that feel removed from the process may feel less effective in the classroom and certainly less valued.

In contrast, a twenty-three-year veteran teacher spoke of his own process for creating lessons, and this process reflects a deeply held convictions about the meaning of teaching and learning:

In a classroom that centers on students, not scripts or manuals, there exists a need to prepare unique lessons all the time. As my students become knowledgeable about new topics and informed of challenging issues, I am constantly crafting new experiences to help them interact with topics that are designed to meet their interests at their level. Recently while studying Ghana, my third graders happened upon an article about malaria in West Africa. They were shocked by the number of Ghanaian children who die annually from a disease that has been eradicated in their hometown. This interest led to a student-directed, interdisciplinary service learning project that required the students to educate their schoolmates and families about malaria. After allying with Nothing But Nets, a UNICEF affiliate, the students sold 300-bed nets and helped over 1,000 Ghanaians. Lessons on malaria and the many malaria-related topics do not exist in Common Core or learning modules, so a teacher who endeavors to make the classroom a more democratic, progressive space must actively craft lessons that not only meet grade-level standards but also meet the students where they are and encourage them to continue to move forward in their learning and activism. As a teacher, I educate myself through reputable sources then determine what content can be brought to the classroom intact or adapted to meet students' needs. Unlike the standardization of curriculum that is underway in the United States, this type of responsive teaching demands fidelity to the goals that students generate. I see my role as a facilitator and one who brings not merely information, but also encouragement and guidance. Students are capable of much more than most educators believe. The results in my classroom have been very impressive and prove that children have much more to contribute to their own learning than we currently give them credit for.

Approval Seeking

Another concerning theme that emerged from both the survey and the interviews when examining the responses of the youngest participants was the need to consistently have an outside expert “approved” curriculum and validation of the material rather than to trust and rely on one’s own ability to craft unique lessons. Approval seeking overlaps with the theme of stagnation with regard to a reliance on scripted curriculum, but it adds in an additional concern for the researchers in that many of the youngest teachers and pre-service teachers interviewed noted an inability to trust their own knowledge and their capacity for designing their own means of sharing it. Unless prompted by the curriculum or another source such as a department chair or administrator, these teachers were unable to deviate from a plan, think creatively, or even challenge an error presented in the module. When asked how the pre-service and early career teachers planned units (when given the flexibility to move away from the modules), they in large part noted that they immediately went to the Internet. As stated by one student teacher:

Okay, my ideas, I guess I'll have a full text or a unit theme that I want to address, and I'll start, the internet for me is the best place to start, but most of that, the ideas be altered a little, based on what I think it should be. At [school name removed], I make up units entirely by myself. She gave me the books and said “you can use this,” but she also let me choose the short stories. I had *Speak* and that was the book I had used, and she said: “I have stuff if you want, but I’d like you to make up your own stuff.” So I went to the internet and I’d look up things like, first of all, I read the book obviously, and I had an idea of motifs, symbols, and themes that I wanted to address, and then I would go to the internet and check out maybe what other people thought, and what worked in their classrooms. I wanted to know what worked before.

The youngest participants appeared unable to trust their own intuition and creativity. When asked in an interview, “When you’re given an academically challenging task, like a project, what steps do you take to attack solving or doing the project?”

Honestly, it's kind of sad. In early middle school, I remember I had a project on Ella Fitzgerald, and in sixth (6th) grade, I made a collage, and it was really creative. And then I did something like a map of Spain and I put a lot of effort into it and it was all my ideas. I didn't have my own computer until before I left for college. So I feel like it was all my own, but then as time went on, as I progressed, and my educational career in high school, the first thing everyone would do was go on the internet and try to find the answer key

online. Everyone just reworks stuff they find from the Internet. It's almost like I can't come up with my own ideas sometimes. It's like a safety net. Like even when I was writing the personal statements for scholarship essays, I was trying to find people online who had similar life experiences as me, just so I could read through someone else's to come up with my own ideas.

When prompted by the survey to respond to the statement "Instruction derived from scientific research is best for students" (see Figure 3), the youngest participants were far more likely to voice support of this statement. Current educational trends have an emphasis on "scientifically proven instruction" and data-driven pedagogy. Pre-service teachers do not trust their intuition and the ability to think independently to take creative risks. This exacerbates an already established concern that education, as a profession is undergoing a deskilling and the belief that instruction must come from an outside expert, establishes a mistrust of the self.

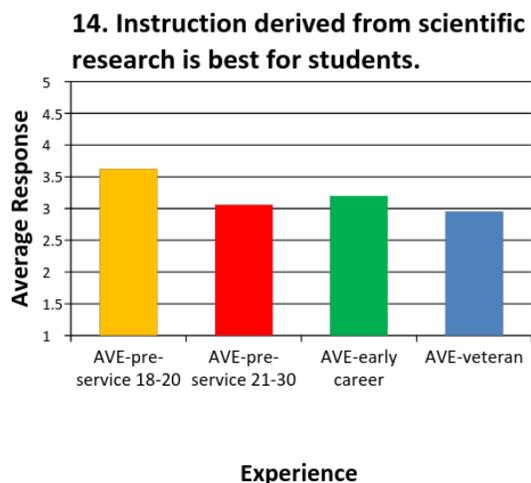


Figure 3

When following up with pre-service teachers with a journal prompt in the senior methods course, two students chose to respond specifically to the topic of module scripted curricula. One stated that she was glad she learned about them in her field placement because "modules are very useful and often times come with challenging readings that are fun and interesting to modern readers" (personal communication, 2015). She continues on to say this was a direct contrast to what she had come to believe about modules through her college classes and stated that she "realized there were no bad modules or lesson examples, rather there were only bad ways of

implementing them." Thus, the lack of success lies with the teacher rather than the scripted curriculum.

Another student reflected in his journal after participating in a professional development state conference that the class had attended and his encounter with a vendor who was selling books that explained the Common Core modules. He notes that he spent a significant amount of time listening to "this very passionate vendor talk about how easy it is to teach the modules" (personal communication, 2015). Later in the journal entry, he states that he "found it very intriguing and thought [he] might use those books to help [him] while attempting to break down the modules" later in his career. This pre-service teacher is already resigned to teaching this curriculum and has bought into the concept quite literally of needing additional publisher support in managing this curriculum. As Cherry-McDaniel (2014) states, "I allowed the rhetoric of the accountability movement and standards-based education to creep in and overtake my convictions about teaching and learning. It happened subtly...where "experts," told me the world was changing" (p. 94). Cherry-McDaniel documents how she and other teachers were sold a new view of teaching that contrasted with the progressive ideas she once loved and had given up because of those "ideas did not produce data" (p. 94). Teachers move to these materials because "they feel powerless to do anything except prepare children for the tests" (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000, p. 395).

In contrast with bygone days when the hallmark of student teaching was experimentation, student teaching has also become a time for reinforcing the message that compliance matters above all else, even for a student teacher who bristles against it:

The thing that upsets me the most is how the edTPA has transformed my own education and my own experiences in the classroom day to day. Rather than spending two hours with my peers during our student teaching seminar talking about the students we have, my professor has to spend those two hours helping us get through the overwhelming amount of information and work that is required by the edTPA. Rather than spending those two hours talking about my students, I have one whose mother has recently passed and he's really struggling, or about my student who recently got a 504 plan and how he now feels his identity has changed for the worse, or about how I can improve how I reach students with lessons that help them develop and grow as people, I now have to sit and worry about whether or not my edTPA will be good enough, whether or not I will be able

to get a job by the start of the next school year or if I've wasted the last three years and a whole lot of money of my college education to have to end up sitting behind a desk in some office thinking about what could have been while I have to look at a future filled with ever-growing debt. The edTPA has turned the focus from my students—who are at the very root of why I wanted to be a teacher in the first place—to worrying about passing this test. Rather than spending my time outside of school working on creative projects that will help my students grow and demonstrate their own strengths, I have to slave away writing edTPA commentary, hoping that whoever the stranger hired by Pearson to score my papers finds me good enough to try to make a difference in kids' lives.

Discussion and Recommendations

It is our contention that tomorrow's teachers, schooled under a regime of standardization, may have lost their capacity for rich, creative pedagogy based in their own unique sensibilities and driven by the unique needs and interests of a particular group of children. According to our preliminary results, early career teachers in the field and pre-service teachers are increasingly dependent on pre-packaged, corporate-produced curricula and materials. This closed loop, taken as a whole from highly prescriptive curricula through to the rigid portfolio certification assessment used in many states known as the edTPA, conspires against the development of independent-minded, intellectual, risk-taking, creative teachers.

Finally, we question what this reliance on scripted curriculum and loss of teacher creativity will mean for tomorrow's children. The National Center for Literacy Education in a 2014 executive summary recommends that districts should "encourage and support educators to take initiatives in designing and using innovative ...teaching resources that are appropriate for their students, and not rely on prepackaged programs or solution" (p. 29). Our preliminary results suggest that the last two decades of reform will have long term consequences for tomorrow's children. The best and brightest, those we most want to attract to the profession, may well be turned away.

We recommend that teacher certification programs and departments of education explicitly and forthrightly confront these issues by exposing pre-service teachers to many opportunities for creative, experience-based pedagogy in our own classroom practice as well as

in the practice of other exemplary teachers. We also encourage advocating in the public arena as activist professors on behalf of a return to policies that privilege creativity, problem-solving, and independent thinking in K-16 in substantive rather than simply in rhetorical ways. As Montgomery (2014) states, "just because these standards and tests appear to have been concocted in a studentless vacuum does not mean we have to follow their lead and banish the students' own interests and passions from the classroom" (p. 14). Perhaps then the capacity for creative, self-efficacious, student-centered teaching will be reawakened in our pre-service teachers and allowed to flourish in their classrooms.

Future considerations for this study include a follow-up survey and interviews with participants that are now entering the tenure phase of the teaching profession. We seek to inquire about the lasting impact that the early adoption of edTPA and scripted curriculum modules had on their own practice. Now that many schools in NYS are relaxing the "module instruction with fidelity" we seek to investigate if these early career teacher's own creativity in planning was hampered long term as their lesson planning and early experience with curriculum development were shaped in a highly standardized environment. We seek to explore what professional development may be designed to enhance self-efficacy and lessen the reliance on scripted curriculum for a generation of teachers that grew up and trained under a regime of hyper-standardization and help them reclaim their own creativity.

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Appendix A

Introductory Survey of Teacher Dispositions

Please rate yourself on the following questions on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very much like me and 1 being not at all like me. For In-service teachers, answer based on your current experiences. For Pre-Service teachers, answer based on your experiences to date or how you expect you would answer as an in-service teacher.

1. I feel responsible for creating my own curriculum
2. I provide opportunities for my students to solve problems independently.
3. I think it is better to get messy and make mistakes than it is to get the “right” answer.
4. I do not think authentic assessment is necessary to measure learning.
5. I use the community I live in as an inspiration for planning curriculum.
6. I will pause my plans to follow up on a teachable moment and do not worry about not adhering to plans.
7. I feel pressured to stick to my plans.
8. The state approved modules make planning more efficient.
9. I’m always trying something new.
10. I feel I am creative in my planning.
11. I am supported by my administration in the creation of my lesson planning.
12. I give my students real life problems to solve.
13. Among my peers I am considered an innovator.
14. Instruction derived from scientific research is best for students.
15. What I learned as an undergraduate is aligned with what is expected of me in my classroom today.
16. Sometimes my ideas fail, but I consider that a learning experience.
17. I talk over my lesson planning ideas with peers and colleagues.
18. Being creative is a very important characteristic of good teaching.
19. I am willing to take a chance on something new.
20. I am willing to speak up when I do not agree with other professionals in my district.
21. My professional opinions matter to the people who make policy decisions.
22. As a child, much of my day was spent sitting at a desk completing worksheets.
23. There were many opportunities for creative expression for me as an elementary student.
24. I am well-informed regarding current issues in education policy.
25. I feel free to speak my mind and debate with colleagues on education issues that concern us.