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### Developing a Creativity Skills Curriculum for Youth Leadership Development Programs

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Developing a Creativity Skills Curriculum for  
Youth Leadership Development Programs

by

Heidi Matthee

An Abstract of a Project  
in  
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Science

June 2021

Buffalo State  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

## ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

### Developing a Creativity Skills Curriculum for Youth Leadership Development Programs

Creativity is becoming an increasingly sought after commodity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Despite this awareness, there is still a lack in teaching creativity and problem solving skills to students during their educational years. Couple that with teachers being inundated with curriculum, administration, and standardised testing demands, opportunities to include creativity teaching within the curriculum seem very limited. This project explores leadership training programs at secondary level, and the inclusion of creativity and problem solving skills within these programs. The literature review examines creativity teaching within the Australian educational context and the project then focusses on developing a curriculum to teach creativity as part of student leadership development within schools.

*Keywords:* creativity, education, leadership development, creativity training



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Heidi Matthee

06/30/2021

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Date

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State University of New York  
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06/30/2021

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Susan Keller-Mathers  
Associate Professor

06/30/2021

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Heidi Matthee  
Student

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## **Section One: Background to the Project**

It was a very hot humid summers day. There was nothing special about that day. It is always hot and humid in Brisbane. My second year film students were ready to pitch their short film ideas to the class and to me – the facilitator of the module. I love teaching this class, since it's the first time the students have the opportunity to produce a short film which usually results in great excitement and participation. Paul (not his real name) told me the week before, that he had been working on his short film concept for months and was very eager to present it to the class.

Paul asked if he could go third. Apparently, the number three is his lucky number. He was clearly nervous, hands slightly shaking and his breathing heavy. Regardless of his nerves, he did an excellent presentation, he knew his story, had visuals to capture his audiences' attention and spoke quite eloquently. When he finished, he waited with bated breath for feedback from his peers, but most importantly me. I could see the anticipation in his body language – he clearly thought he delivered a masterpiece. I felt so disappointed for Paul. Like I said, there was nothing special about that day and even though Paul did an excellent presentation, there was nothing special about his presentation either. His concept was disappointing - one I had heard so many times before. There was nothing novel about his idea, neither did he consider presenting it from a different point of view or incorporating a slight twist. Unfortunately, Paul represents 90% of the students I have been teaching the past 7-8 years.

However, looking back over the past two years of studying creativity, I realised there was in fact something special about that day – something inside of me changed. This time I finally decided things had to change. Surely, there had to be a way to help my students come up with more original concepts!

The prospect of listening to another 7 years of mediocre concepts that will likely result in below average student films was just not acceptable. It was my students who inspired my creativity journey, my learning and ultimately lead to this project. Over the past two years I have learned how to teach and foster creativity skills in others. I finally know what and how to teach creativity and help my students.

However, I soon faced a new problem. Even though I now have the skills to teach creativity I find it extremely difficult to make time within my curriculum to teach meaningful Creative Problem Solving (CPS) or creativity tools. It is virtually impossible to properly teach my students these skills during my classes without compromising required content. This led me back to the unfailing question we have been trained to ask: what might be all the possible ways to solve this problem? My first instinct was going back to foundational teaching in the K-12 or what we call in Queensland P-12 classroom. After all, most of us are well acquainted with Sir Ken Robinson's infamous TedTalk, *Do Schools kill Creativity?*. Helping teachers address creativity in the classroom will undoubtedly benefit students, teachers, as well as those of us working in higher education.

My studies at Buffalo State, offered me the opportunity to investigate the Australian educational system, interview teachers, and examine the environment they are working within. Unfortunately, it is not a pretty picture. I concluded that most educators seem to face the same problem as me – an overcrowded curriculum with barely enough time to cover content, unrealistic expectations and an ever increasing administration responsibility. But let's not just take their word for it.

Newspapers report that fifty percent of new teachers entering the profession leave within five years, and a national trend shows alarming drops in enrolment into Education degrees (Bahr & Ferreira, 2018; Garoni & Lampert, 2020; Schipp, 2017). The main reasons listed for this are the great deal of time teachers are required to spend on standardised testing as well as a crowded curriculum. The situation is so dire that the Australian government recently decreased the costs of teaching degrees by 46% trying to funnel students into designated careers (Duffy, 2020). It soon became clear to me that teachers are overworked with the expectation of duties and responsibilities associated with their roles and expecting them to address creativity in the curriculum will only be an added burden.

I then faced the challenge: if the school curriculum and higher education curriculum were too crowded to fit in meaningful creativity training, how do we teach our young people these skills? One option that excited me was leadership training programs in schools. Most schools in Australia opt for some level of leadership training for students and this training is not regulated by State governments. By combining creativity and leadership training, it would take the pressure of the curriculum and teachers to include creativity in their teaching and open a new niche, yet extremely relevant discipline to leadership development.

My vision is to create a curriculum of leadership development workshops specifically focussing on creativity skills such as CPS, mindtools and FourSight. It will be workshops that I offer to schools since the goal is not to add to teachers' workload and make it their responsibility to learn new content.

My personal goals for this project include:

- To identify the creativity skills relevant to a leadership development program
- To create leadership development workshops specifically related to creativity skills

- To assess if and how current external leadership providers are offering creativity to schools
- To use this opportunity to transfer my creativity knowledge in a meaningful way by developing a curriculum specifically focussed on teaching creativity skills within a leadership development context.

## **Section Two: Pertinent Literature**

For this project I have identified four key areas of inquiry. The first is looking at why creativity is important. This is required for my project to get the necessary buy-in during the implementation phase. I need to formulate a strong argument for the importance of creativity to be able to communicate the value of my program. I will explore the future of work and the skills considered to be highly in demand and necessary for our youth to enter the workforce. Next, I will examine the current state of creativity within the Australian educational sector. Finally, I will look at some external providers offering leadership training to schools and analyse what their training consists of and whether they include creativity as part of their leadership programs. Below I have explored the different areas and literature relevant to this project.

### **The Importance of Creative Thinking**

To successfully implement this project, I need to examine the literature that will appeal to my target audience. By looking at the compelling arguments related to the importance of creativity, it will allow me to frame and present the possibilities of the workshops not only in contemporary but also in a scientifically researched context.

Antonietti et al. (2011) make a compelling case for including creativity within the educational curriculum stating that in a rapidly changing world where people face new challenges on a daily basis, habitual behaviours are not appropriate and need to be challenged. To successfully respond to the complexity and ambiguity we face, “flexibility and imagination should be the qualities of the leaders of tomorrow”. Furthermore, times of crisis seems to specifically require creative action.

The authors also point out that teachers and employers often complain of poverty and lack of original ideas from students and employees, conformity to behaviour and group think, as well as a lack of personal reflection. Creativity challenges these positions as it requires individuals to express themselves by grounding them in their desires and dreams and then creating something to be shared with others. In other words, creativity requires individuals to become active agents and not just passive observers of their worlds (Antonietti et al., 2011).

Runco (Richardson et al., 2016) stated in an interview that creativity promotes qualities such as “intrinsic interest, autonomy, flexibility, different perspectives, original thought, divergent thinking, problem discovery, and self-expression”.

Another dominant factor supporting the importance of creativity training is the role it plays on the economy, ultimately resulting in higher employment as well as economic gain (Davies). This is quite important when considering the psycho-economics of education. Runco (2014) explains educators face a clear obstacle in designing creativity for education because schools have a great deal of accountability, requiring the curriculum to have a clear pay off.

Creativity by definition allows for imagination, open-ended tasks and often the benefits are uncertain and difficult to justify the costs/the investment of time. Runco (2014) uses the example of a student who studied traditional skills (engineering or maths) against another student who invested the same amount of time into his or her creative potential. As an employer, you would know exactly what you will get with the first person, but creativity is an unpredictable commodity.

Jagannathan et al. (2019) make an interesting argument regarding the distinction between education and training for employment, and education for employability. The authors argue that current education and training provide students with a set of skills to ‘be’ a qualified

professional. However, in the current climate and in the future, job skill sets are so complex and rapidly changing that training is no longer adequate to keep up with changing workforce demands. Therefore, instead of only teaching occupational skills, employers are now looking for ‘employability skills’ such as flexibility, trainability and teamwork.

In a 2010 paper Sardar eloquently describes the times we are currently living in as “all that was normal has now evaporated; we have entered postnormal times, the in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and nothing really makes sense” (p. 435). Even though this was written more than a decade ago, within the context of the swine flu pandemic, climate change, and at that stage the worst recession in history, these words probably ring more true today than when it was written. According to Sardar (2010) the inbetween phase of postnormal times is characterised by three c’s: complexity, chaos, and contradictions. How do we help our students function within such a world and prepare them for a future that will most likely only increase in complexity, chaos and contradictions?

### **The Future of Work**

One clear direction is identifying the skills that are crucial and in demand for the workplace and exploring the future of work. The World Economic Forum (2020) identified the top 15 in demand skills for the workplace in 2025 as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Top 15 skills for 2025

1. Analytical thinking and innovation	9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
2. Active learning and learning strategies	10. Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation
3. Complex problem-solving	11. Emotional intelligence
4. Critical thinking and analysis	12. Troubleshooting and user experience
5. Creativity, originality and initiative	13. Service orientation
6. Leadership and social influence	14. Systems analysis and evaluation
7. Technology use, monitoring and control	15. Persuasion and negotiation
8. Technology, design and programming	

*Note:* From: “World Economic Forum. The future of jobs report” by The World Economic Forum, 2020, p.36.

When examining the list, it is clear creativity and several skills associated with creative problem solving are key to the demands of the future. This is supported by research provided from LinkedIn where creativity has been rated as the most important skill in the world for three consecutive years (Petroni, 2018; Pate 2020). Another report released by PWC (2017) concluded that workers who are able to perform tasks that cannot be automated will be in high demand and this means “creativity, innovation, imagination and design skills will be prioritised by employers”. It further states adaptability is the key to the future and that CEO’s are already planning ahead by looking for particular skills when hiring employees and these include: “problem-solving, adaptability, collaboration, leadership, creativity and innovation [at the] top of the list”.



A Bloomberg report indicates the top skills valued by recruiters are creative problem solving, leadership skills, strategic thinking, and communication skills. The report further states that these skills are generally lacking in candidates (Levy & Canon, 2016).

### **The Current State of Creativity within the Australian Educational Sector**

Having established the importance of creativity and how it relates to the future of work, I will now examine the current state of creativity within the Australian educational sector. In Australia, the federal government develops a policy framework known as the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum) which acts as the minimum guidelines for the curriculum. The states and territories then develop individual variations of the curriculum based on the AC. Within the AC there is consideration for what is referred to as “general capabilities”. There are seven general capabilities identified and one of those capabilities is critical and creative thinking (Henriksen et al. 2018). Within the AC creative thinking is defined as

students learning to generate and apply new ideas in specific contexts, seeing existing situations in a new way, identifying alternative explanations and seeing or making new links that generate a positive outcome.

(ACARA, 2021).

When examining the AC it is clear that creativity has a high degree of visibility and prominence within the F-10 curriculum. However, as pointed out by Henriksen et al. (2018) the criteria and definition for creativity is convoluted, making it difficult for teachers to apply in practice. The most problematic issue is that creativity in the AC is rarely referred to by itself and generally framed in reference to other constructs. This begs the question, if it cannot be distinguished from other complex learning outcomes, then how is it expected to be taught?

This sentiment is underscored by Harris & Ammerman (2016) who argue that Australians are not alone in adopting definitions related to creativity and problem solving into their curriculum, yet fail at producing assessments for these ubiquitous creative skills. Henriksen et al. (2019, p. 8) further points out that although there seems to be a desire for creativity, the policy does not ground creativity within an educational context neither does it provide “specific, grounded language about what practices actually sponsor creativity”.

The Gonski report echoes that the current industrial approach to education in the Australian curriculum needs a drastic overhaul to prepare students for a complex and rapidly changing world. It calls for school leavers to require a higher level of skills such as problem solving, interactive, critical, and creative thinking (Gonski et al. 2018). As one of its priorities, the report calls for every child to be equipped as a creative, connected and engaged learner in a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, the report refers to the general capabilities as required by the Australian Curriculum and finds that “despite the attention and importance given to the general capabilities, teachers and schools are insufficiently supported to teach and assess them” (Gonski et al. 2018, p. 39). It also found that the general capabilities are treated as secondary aspects of learning and as a result it becomes buried in the delivery of content-based learning.

Therefore, despite the prominence given to creativity in the Australian Curriculum on paper, in practice there is clearly a failure to deliver on the intent. According to Harris and de Bruin (2018) the development of creative thinking is severely hampered

by inflexible curricula, teaching models that limit differentiation and creativity and stymied organisational leadership that limits teacher practices and de-incentivises schools as innovate environments.

It is possible to conclude that Australian schools are not meeting the creative thinking demands of the future skills required of students neither are they meeting the general capabilities requirements of the Australian Curriculum. However, it is also clear, that there is insufficient guidance and infrastructure for schools to meet this particular demand.

### **External Leadership Training Providers**

The next section of my pertinent literature takes a look at external providers offering leadership training programs to schools. Some of my previous modules within this degree afforded me the opportunity to interview teachers and get a glimpse of how different schools approach leadership development. As stated before, it is not regulated and therefore the different approaches differ vastly. However, one thing that most schools seem to have in common and that I have experienced firsthand with two of my own children in leadership positions in different schools, is that the majority of schools seem to prefer to outsource their leadership training. Some schools will opt for a combination of outsourced training with inhouse training, but it's seldom that a school will not have a minimum of one day of external training, usually more.

The purpose of this section is to examine the content on offer by external providers and whether creative thinking skills feature within the content. Furthermore, this serves to get a broad overview of the different types of programs on the market and is by no means an exhaustive list. The focus is on providers that delivered national training and I was able to find three namely Burn Bright, Grip Leadership Training and Turning Point Consulting.

Burn Bright is a not-for-profit organisation offering leadership training programs to schools ranging from year 5 to year 12. They offer a leadership program for intermediate school (year 7-9) and senior school (year 10 -12) and a separate leadership team training specifically aimed at students appointed into leadership positions (Burn Bright, 2021a).

They offer training to the following year groups: year 7-9, year 8-10, year 10-11 and year 11-12. The following is a summary of the content per year group as it appears on their website:

Year 7-9: “Leadership starts from within”

This is a full day face to face program. There is no description of activities other than an interactive reflection.

- Understanding influence and be challenged on how they are using that influence
- Identify the qualities of a good leader and recognise their own strengths and the strengths of others
- Improve their sense of self and enhance their self confidence
- Develop a capacity to overcome challenges and be resilient
- Seek to foster positive friendships and look out for each other to enhance a greater sense of belonging
- Understand the importance of service and start becoming a person who serves others
- Appreciate diversity and celebrate difference

(Directly quoted from Burn Bright, 2021a).

Year 8-10: “Influencing positively online”

This is a full day face to face program. There is no description of activities.

- Appreciate that we are never anonymous online and understand the consequences that can come from our actions.
- Build a foundation of character and values that can transcend all dimensions of our life.
- Deal with peer influence and recognise the importance of taking a leadership role in online space. We can be role models online and offline.

- Understand the impact and power of our words online, the power of gossip and rumours in online spaces and how we can resolve conflict effectively.
- Develop an awareness of others and the impact digital spaces can have on our relationships.
- Explore identity and the concept that we can still be ‘real’ not constructed people online.
- Become balanced and aware of our use of technology.

(Directly quoted from Burn Bright, 2021a).

Year 10 and Year 11: “Mindful and conscious leadership for others”

This is a full day face to face delivery. There is no description of the activities of this program.

- Understand that conscious and mindful leadership starts with an exploration of our own decisions, behaviours, actions, personal strengths and values.
- Seek to serve others and think win / win.
- Build genuine and trustworthy relationships and show appreciation for others.
- Allow students to realise the impact of their behaviour and influence and the opportunity they have for meaningful contribution to their community and the world around them.
- Take responsibility for their actions and the outcomes of those actions.
- Seek perspective, overcome judgements and celebrate others differences.
- Explore healthy decision making, the power we all have to make choice and the consequences of our actions.
- Understand the importance of communication online and offline.
- See the power of a vision for the future and finding something that you enjoy doing.
- Find things that challenge you and help you to grow.

(Directly quoted from Burn Bright, 2021a).

Year 11 and Year 12: “Authentic leadership. Using our influence. Serving others.”

This is a full day face to face delivery. There is no description of the activities of this program.

- Grow as authentic leaders who can role model positive leadership to the rest of the school.
- Understand how they can use their influence and impact of their leadership on their peers and the school.
- Appreciate the importance of investing in their relationships to build a healthy support crew.
- Understand the power of servant leadership and that service is often found in the little things we do every day.
- Understand that we need to practice our values and know how we use them in testing times.
- Build an intrinsic vision and grow their grit to motivate them for the future.

(Directly quoted from Burn Bright, 2021a).

#### The Prefect Leadership Program

This program is aimed at students who are appointed into leadership positions at school, specifically senior leaders.

- Empowered to strive towards being a more effective team.
- Build, foster and strengthen relationships within the team.
- Understand their role within the school and their individual role within their prefect team.
- Develop a vision for the year ahead.
- Develop ideas and projects for the year ahead with a clear understanding of how to successfully implement and communicate them.

- Leave with an understanding of service and motivation to be servant leaders.
- Enhance their understanding of themselves and those around them.
- Have the capacity to be resilient and navigate the challenges of Year 12 whilst balancing the prefect role with other responsibilities.
- Understand the differences in their team, the strengths others bring, resolve conflict, and recognise their own strengths in leadership.

(Directly quoted from Burn Bright, 2021b).

The next independent provider is Grip Leadership Training, who specifically focusses on school students and the educational sector. Their main format of delivery is leadership conferences. With regard to secondary school training, they only have one conference on offer for all levels of secondary students. The conference is a full day experience hosted at a large venue with many different schools attending. It is important to note that they change their content annually which would be expected for a conference format (Grip Leadership, 2021a). The content they offered for their 2020/2021 conference as per their website is as follows (Grip Leadership, 2021b):

#### Plenary Session: Time to lead

This topic acknowledges that being a leader is a privilege, but that a leadership role is not about the leader themselves. Being a student leader comes with the expectation of making a difference to the school community, but it doesn't mean that a leader should rush to create activity for the sake of it. This session guides students through a process of identifying the best opportunities to lead within their school.

These opportunities involve building on existing activities and identifying actual needs before moving on to create something new. A practical tool will be used to help students identify these opportunities within their own school.

(Grip Leadership, 2021b).

#### Morning Tea Optional Session: Time Management for Student Leaders

This is a short session assisting students with practical strategies on how to manage different responsibilities requiring their time.

#### Plenary Session: Time to take Responsibility

Being ‘responsible’ is more than just following the school rules. A leader should show responsibility in numerous ways and this session will use stories and video examples to focus on three key ways: doing what is right, putting others first, and following through on promises.

(Grip Leadership, 2021b).

Students then have the option to choose one of the following electives (Grip Leadership, 2021b):

#### Elective 1: Involving more students in your school events

This workshop provides students with practical strategies to attract greater involvement in school activities. It also draws on case studies from other schools to reinforce these principles.

#### Elective 2: Creative ideas for your school which aren’t events.

This workshop examines case studies from other schools to assist students in finding a variety of ways to positively influence their school and community.



In the final session of the day students once again have the option to choose from two electives (Grip Leadership, 2021b):

Elective 3: Improving something you feel is impossible

This workshop gives students skills to approach challenges in a positive way as well as practical strategies that “give the best possible chance of making a lasting improvement to the school”.

Elective 4: Keeping your team motivated

Practical tools to keep the leadership team motivated for the duration of their leadership period.

The last independent provider that will be examined is Turning Point Consulting. They specialise in educational programs as well as career coaching for students, teachers, and professionals (Turning Point Consulting, 2021a). On their website they list 5 courses on offer:

Empowered Leadership for Women (Turning Point Consulting, 2021b):

The workshop is offered to year 6-12 and runs 2-5 hours. The workshop is described as follows:

Well suited to girls from years 5-12 we will provide stimulating discussion and challenge perceptions of those around women in leadership. Focusing on success and the demand for resilience in all aspects, we urge girls to work together to support one another in their lives.

(Turning Point Consulting, 2021b).

Peer Mentoring Program

This program is also offered to year 6-12 students with a 2-5 hour duration. The workshop focusses on the mentoring of students and the application of wellbeing to different aspects of their lives (Turning Point Consulting, 2021b).

### Introduction to Scholarship and University Application

As indicated in the title, this workshop focusses on assisting students with navigating applications related to scholarships and university applications. It is suitable for year 11 and 12 and is one hour in duration (Turning Point Consulting, 2021b).

### Developing Positive Leadership Skills

Students from year 5-12 are encouraged to participate in this 2-5 hour workshop. The following topics are covered:

- Defining leadership today
- Personal behaviours and choices
- Interpersonal skills for collaboration
- Impactful communication
- Leadership in action

(Directly quoted from Turning Point Consulting, 2021b).

### Conflict Resolution and Communication Skills

This program is suitable for Year 10 to post school and typically runs for one to two hours. The program examines the following topics:

- Uncovering what is conflict
- Biological and psychological process of stress
- Identifying conflict resolution styles
- Benefits of proactive responses to conflict
- Communication: Learning the power of written and verbal communication channels to assertively convey a message

- Interpersonal Skills: Focusing on responses in individual and group scenarios to foster a healthy working relationship
- Attitude: Identifying everyday behaviours to demonstrate enthusiasm and diligence in the workplace
- Appearance: Importance of making a positive first impression through the use of dress and body language
- Resilience: learning to take ownership of feedback and engage in self-reflection to enhance self-awareness and self-development
- Technology: Acknowledging boundaries around technology use in a modern workplace

(Directly quoted from Turning Point Consulting, 2021b).

When examining the content of these providers it is clear that creativity is not a focal point of the content and is barely considered as a valuable skill for leadership. Within the Burn Bright program, it is only the year 7-9 program that mentions overcoming challenges and building resilience, relating to creative thinking. There is no detail on the specific skills or processes being taught in this regard. Grip Leadership mentions training students in approaching challenges in a positive way – a skill that is associated with creativity. Overall, it is possible to conclude to that there is a clear gap in this market when it comes to teaching creative thinking skills.

### **Definition of Creativity within the Context of this Project**

I think it is important to clarify the definition of creativity I am adopting for the purposes of developing this training program, specifically to frame expectations. Creativity scholars are familiar with the universally accepted definition of creativity as the ability to produce something

that is useful and novel (Sternberg, 2003, p. 89). For my purposes I am adopting the creativity definition as set out by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). PISA is part of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, which is an intergovernmental organisation consisting of 37 member countries aiming to stimulate economic progress and world trade. They define creativity as:

the competence to engage productively in the generation, evaluation and improvement of ideas, that can result in original and effective solutions, advances in knowledge and impactful expressions of imaginations.

(PISA, 2019, p. 8).

This definition is specifically aligned with ‘little c’ creativity to minimise “the importance of innate talent for performance” and thereby allowing a stronger focus on the adaptable quality of individuals to engage with the creative thinking process (PISA, 2019, p.9).

### **Section Three: Process Plan**

As mentioned in my opening section, my vision is to create a leadership training program with a focus on creative thinking skills, that I would offer to schools. However, there many opportunities to broaden this vision. There is the option to expand the curriculum into a second curriculum offering training to teachers to teach the content themselves. Then there is the possibility of teaming up with one of the external providers who already offers leadership development training to schools and offer creativity training as part of their courses or an alternative elective for schools.

The World Economic Forum (2020, p.35) has identified creativity, problem-solving, ideation and leadership as part of the top 15 skills for 2025. Creativity has been on the LinkedIn top ten list as the most important skill in the world, consistently since 2016. I feel it is not just important for students to be able to apply creativity to their work, but it's also an important life skill that will probably have a profound impact on their careers. Identifying and utilising every possible opportunity to transfer these skills will help better prepare our students for life and equip them to face a challenging future with the knowledge that they have the skills to navigate these challenges.

I will be creating lesson plans to deliver creativity training in face to face workshops within leadership training programs for high school students. In order to achieve this goal, I need to do research, reach out to other professionals, and create the product. Table 2 represents the timeline of the major milestones and deliverables of the project and Table 3 includes the project goals and their measurable deliverables.

Table 2. Project Timeline and Action Plan

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Hours to complete</i>	<i>Support Needed</i>
Concept Paper Development	February 15, 2021	12	Dr. S. Keller-Mathers
Concept Approval	February 18, 2021	8	Dr. S. Keller-Mathers
Conduct research and write up: section 1-3	April 6, 2021	40-60	
Discuss and identify possibly gaps in research and resources	April 15, 2021	5	Sounding board partner
Submit Section 1-3	April 23, 2021		
Create Curriculum outline. Create lesson plans for one of the modules of the Curriculum	May 17, 2021	40	
Discuss and make revisions to lesson plan	May 20, 2021	8	Sounding board partner
Submit sections 1-6	June 14, 2021		
Get feedback on lesson plans and workshop	June 3, 2021	15	Dr. S. Keller-Mathers
Project completion and presentation			Dr. S. Keller-Mathers
Complete the rest of the modules	Ongoing		
Run test workshops to gather feedback on the content	Ongoing		
Adjust content as needed	Ongoing		

Table 3 lists the goals and the deliverables that form the key evaluation for this project.

Table 3. Evaluation related to Goals and Deliverables

<i>Goals</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
Identify literature and examine resources supporting the importance of teaching creativity.	Collect and present literature and data associated with key findings.
Examine and compare existing leadership training programs in the independent sector to determine if and how creativity training is offered to secondary high school students	Analyse and compare the available data and identify possible gaps and opportunities
Develop a Creativity Skills Curriculum for Leadership training for high school students.	Develop an outline for a creative thinking curriculum addressing creativity skills within leadership training
Develop detailed lesson plans for one of the modules of the curriculum.	Create activities and resources for one of the modules of the curriculum.
Expand my own learning and development of creativity during this process.	Report through self-reflection on my own learning and development during this process.

#### **Section Four: Outcomes**

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum for high school leadership development with a specific focus on creative thinking skills. As the literature review revealed, the Australian Government is in favour of teaching creative thinking skills at school level, yet there is a lack of follow through in the classroom. One potential area to tap into is that of leadership development. An examination of independent leadership providers to schools also indicated that creativity is not taught in their programs.

To get a better understanding of how schools approach leadership development, I interviewed two principals, one from a state school and one from a private school. The state school has developed an extensive leadership development program that is accessible to all students in high school (year 7- year 12), regardless of whether they are appointed to a leadership position or not. They offer weekly leadership training during lunch break which is presented by either staff or guest speakers. The topics are not fixed. Apart from the weekly lunch break sessions, the school also work in conjunction with an external provider to deliver several leadership training sessions throughout the year. The school does not focus on creativity as part of their leadership training, and they do not perceive it to be a high priority.

The private school deems the investment in student leadership as part of their educational service, as critical. They also employ external providers for leadership training on an ad hoc basis while staff members assist with leadership training on a more regular basis. Students have weekly mentoring sessions with staff, and leadership training is only accessible to students who are elected to leadership positions. Although the school encourages creative thinking there is no intentional teaching or structure to facilitate the teaching of creativity.



This information corresponds with conversations I've had with teachers and my own experiences with my children in leadership positions. In summary, it seems the average school engages with an external service provider to deliver a certain number of hours on leadership training (the hours vary per school) and any training apart from external service providers, depends solely on the discretion of each school.

Based on my literature review and these interviews, it is clear there is an opportunity to embed creative thinking skills within a leadership development program. The only potential challenge I have identified is a perceived lack of interest in creative thinking skills. I have preempted this in my literature review, by discussing the importance of creativity and getting the necessary buy-in. Furthermore, I have taken this into consideration with the development of my curriculum. The curriculum is divided into four modules, one module per term and three workshops per module. Each module has a theme, and the workshops are curated accordingly, but they are also developed to be standalone workshops and can therefore be offered independently of each other.

The title of module 1 is Leadership Perspectives, and includes an overview of the concept of leadership, leadership styles, and risk and failure. Module 2 is entitled Leadership and Creative Thinking, with a focus on defining creative thinking, divergent and convergent thinking, and polarities. The theme of module 3 is Leading with Great Ideas, and this module will explore tools such as brainstorming, forced connections and PPCO (pluses, potentials, concerns and overcoming concerns). The final module is called Leadership and Teams, with a focus on the CPS model, FourSight for teens, and problem solving in teams.

For this project I fully developed one of the modules. It consists of lesson plans for three workshops and the duration of a workshop is approximately two hours. The lesson plans include detailed instructions related to what is expected of the students during each activity, what the role of the facilitator entails during each activity, a description of the aims and objectives of the various activities, as well as a detailed breakdown of all the resources required for every workshop. Each workshop has two to three activities following a debriefing session to discuss what students have learned from the activity and how it applies to them as leaders.

I have also created all the required additional resources such as PowerPoint presentations, student handouts and I have created a prototype booklet with reflective questions and activities for each workshop that students can use during the session and take home afterwards to extend their learning. Some of the activities listed in the workshop, I have created specifically to meet the aims and objectives for that particular activity, for example a prototype card game that students play in groups to teach them about risk taking and failure.

Now that I have explained the creation of the product, I will describe the process involved in developing the product. First, I had to determine the structure of the product i.e., how many modules, how many workshops and the duration of each workshop. This required clarification from schools on how they approach their leadership training, and I did two interviews with school principals. Once again it is important to reiterate that leadership training is not standardised in Australia, but there seems to be general trends. Both schools mentioned that their students would annually attend a one or a two day leadership conference over and above what the school has to offer. These conferences are typically six hour conferences.

The Australian school year is divided into four terms consisting of approximately ten weeks each. The average high school class period is 50min and often students will have a double period in most subjects with a 10min break.

I decided to create four modules – one per term with three workshops, which almost equates to one workshop per month. The duration of each workshop is approximately two hours. This corresponds to a double class period which means one workshop could be delivered in any of the double periods, but it also equates to the six hour conferences and will allow for a module to be delivered in a day.

The next step was identifying the topics to teach. I used the brainstorming technique to generate as many ideas as possible. Once I was satisfied with the quantity of ideas generated, it was time to converge and group the ideas together with similar themes. When my clusters were formed, I then grouped them together in a module and gave that module a title.

With the structure in place, it was now possible to start developing the lesson plans and content. For each lesson plan, I first identified the aims and objectives in order to guide the relevant activities and then applied the principles of the activity to students' leadership roles. Once the lesson plan was completed, I created all the additional resources required for each workshop.

When examining the process I just described, it's clear that I followed the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model as my process. First, I clarified the problem, followed by ideation and then development. The final stage, implementation, will take place when I have completely developed the full curriculum. After two years of studying Creativity, it is evident to me that the CPS process has now been ingrained as a natural way of approaching tasks. I can unequivocally

state that two years ago I would have approached this project completely different, and I am quite sure the results would be less successful.

I have also realised throughout this process that after two years of practising creativity skills I cannot declare that “I have arrived”. This process made me understand how much I still stand in my own way and just when I have learned one process, there are areas to improve.

### **Section Five: Key Learnings**

As I started writing this section, I was looking for a way to structure my thoughts. I have learned and grown so much through this process, but much of what I have to say seemed to be random. As an academic randomness does not sit well with me and although it often works for the creative process, this is ultimately an academic essay. I went back to my creative influences and remembered even before starting my studies, coming across the work of Mel Rhodes. I have developed a greater understanding and appreciation for the four P's of creativity that Rhodes identified in his search for a definition of creativity (Rhodes, 1961). The person, process, product, and press strand seemed to give the perfect structure to my learning experience, and I will use this model to outline my key learnings.

#### **Person**

Before I started this project, I had certain preconceived ideas of what I thought the product and the process should entail. I thought since I'm an academic and familiar with lesson plan development, this would be right up my ally. However, as it turned out, my habits as an academic sabotaged my creative process. As an academic I am used to working with learning outcomes and mapping activities and objectives, to students meeting specific learning outcomes.

During my earlier meetings with Dr. Keller-Mathers, we discussed the topic of learning outcomes and I expressed that I felt it necessary to determine learning outcomes for each workshop that are backed up by scientific research. This meant I had to identify a topic and identify appropriate learning outcomes relevant to that topic by researching the literature. I was very excited about my project but every time I thought about learning outcomes and mapping it to topics and activities, I felt deflated. I had so many ideas and possibilities to explore, it felt as if the learning outcomes were restricting my options.

And then it finally dawned on me. This is my project. I am setting the parameters. I am not trying to meet any qualification standards and students are not doing assessments. This is not an academic exercise! I needed to let go of my preconceived notions and let my creativity flow. Of course I want students to learn something through the workshops, but it doesn't have to be a rigid academic formula I follow. As long as I have objectives and goals and I can logically show how I arrive at those, then I do not have to abide by these self-imposed rules I'm setting. Therefore, I let the notion of learning outcomes go and it was a liberating creative experience to do just what I wanted to do. This made me realise how I tend to fall back on my habits and that I first need to assess whether those habits are conducive or restrictive to my creativity before utilising them.

### **Process**

As mentioned before, I used the CPS model as my process for this project. According to my FourSight profile I am a high Implementer. Prior to studying Creativity, my process would be messy. I would have approached this project by jumping in writing the lesson plans, creating activities on the fly, and guessing what the best structure would be. That would ultimately have resulted in several revisions not to mention the lack of quality ideas when it came to content and activities. By understanding my FourSight preferences as well as the CPS process, I have been able to reduce the confusion within my own creative process as well as improve the quality of work I produce.

I would also like to refer to specific tools within the process and how I applied it, as it directly affected the outcome of the product. Our cohort was the last cohort to receive CPS teaching face to face before Covid-19 changed the world as we know it. Having an understanding of CPS in both the physical and online realm is a big advantage.

When I did my brainstorming activity, I took out my Post-it notes and flipcharts and started generating ideas. There is just something about those Post-it notes going up on the flipchart that stimulates the brain during ideation. For the duration of my project, I kept all my notes and flipcharts on my walls in my working space and there were countless times that I referred back to ideas or notes I jotted down in clusters. I also believe seeing and reading those ideas daily, inspired more incubation time to fully realise the potential of each.

Another tool used with great success was forced connections. When I created the card game, the aim was to create a game that will force risk taking while weighing the options of failure and reward. I wanted to create something similar to the game *Deal or No Deal*, but it had to be viable within a group not just an individual context. I also liked some of the elements from the show *Survivor* and thought a combination of both would probably work well. I struggled for quite a while to make it work and couldn't crack it. Then I asked my process buddy for help. I explained what I wanted to achieve, we grabbed some flipchart paper and started working. Together we were able flush out the rules and set the parameters for the game.

This brought me back to another realisation, that after a year of Covid-19, working from home and much isolation, I have grown accustomed to working independently. This has its own advantages and disadvantages. Coming back to the CPS process and brainstorming as a tool, it reiterated once again the importance of the resource group. Generally, ideas are stronger when we build on the ideas of others. I have learned that to be more effective, I need to pay conscious attention to the smaller processes as well, and nurture a network that could assist in supporting and bouncing of ideas.

**Product**

My product has been discussed in detail in the previous section. I have developed one section of the overall curriculum as a steppingstone and blueprint for the rest of the workshops. Not only has this product afforded me the opportunity to learn and grow as an individual, but it also created the opportunity to apply what I have learned and share my knowledge in a practical and feasible way.

**Press**

The concept of Press refers to the relationship between the individual and their environment. A big part of this project was to keep it fun, enjoyable, and stimulating. One way of achieving this objective was consciously paying attention to my environment. I have a dedicated area set up for work and study. For this project I decided to not just confine myself to the one space. Our local library offers a weekly ‘rhyme time and storytelling’ to toddlers and I would often go and work there on these days to watch the children. Just experiencing their curiosity, disinhibition and spontaneity with simple instructions was very refreshing and uplifting. At one of these sessions there was a three year old boy that did not know the lyrics to one of the songs, but he desperately wanted to participate with the other children. He sang gibberish at the top of his lungs and didn’t care what anyone thought, he just enjoyed it. I was working on my workshop activities at that stage, and it felt as if it wasn’t coming together perfectly the way I wanted it to. Looking at that three year old, I realised I just needed to let go of my unrealistic expectations, have some fun and stop worrying about what others might think of what I’m creating.



## Section Six: Conclusion

This project was birthed out of my frustration with the lack of creativity being taught to children during their formative years at school. I also didn't want to shift the responsibility to teachers who understandably are already under the pump with high expectations and demands. Since starting this project, I came to realise there are many opportunities to work with schools to offer creativity within their existing scope of activities.

Besides leadership training programs another option to explore is school camps. Most schools in Australia offer a three day school camp for students starting year 5, continuing every alternate year. Private schools generally have school camps annually. These lesson plans could easily be adapted to work alongside schools to cover the themes and objectives for their camps.

Another avenue to explore is working with school chappies. School chaplains or 'chappies' as they are affectionately known, are employed by the school to look after the spiritual, social and emotional wellbeing of students. Chappies are often responsible for creating events or activities that will benefit the students and the community.

My vision for this project is completing all the lesson plans, testing the workshops to get feedback for improvement and then work towards implementing these. Currently the first option I'm considering is exploring the possibility to partner with an independent leadership provider. Should this not materialise I have listed several other contingencies to look into.

Despite the fact that I am not able to properly teach the principles and processes of creativity in my own classes, I remain the forever optimist. With every new class I teach, I dedicate an hour to create awareness about creativity and some tools amongst my students. Whether it helps or has a lasting impact, I do not know, but as I said I remain the forever optimist.

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