



“I want to teach differently!”

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Introduction

This research builds on the growing body of work which aims to **disrupt the traditional, teacher-centred approach** by accepting the challenge of new technology, and exploiting the opportunities it offers (Christensen *et al.*, 2011).

Based on Action Research, the project attempts to **uncover the processes that teachers go through as they adopt new pedagogies** and start to integrate technology into their teaching. This research is important as it can inform **professional development planning, and the coaching of teachers** through change processes, and ultimately it can lead to more creativity in the classroom. The research centres on **interviews conducted with three teachers** who had made the decision to explore creative uses of digital media.

The findings indicate that the **process of adopting a new pedagogical approach** is a complex one, and that it involves various stages and components. Important aspects are the **need for honest self-assessment**, an openness to **seeing the pupil's point of view**, and the **acceptance of collegial support** and collaboration. Confronting and **overcoming fears** is also important, as is the willingness to **relinquish authoritarian control** and cease to be a conformist. As teachers adopt a new pedagogy, so they start to discover their own creativity, and create space within which others, colleagues and pupils, can start to be creative too. Collaboration is an important characteristic of this space.

Research Questions

What factors encourage teachers to adopt new pedagogical approaches?

- Are boys in these teachers' classes encouraged to be more creative?
- Is there a sacrifice of academic rigour when a more creative approach is implemented?
- What is the role of digital media in assisting teachers to adopt a more creative approach?



Research Context

Hilton College is an independent, all-boys, full-boarding school, catering for Grades 8 to 12. There are 557 boys in the school, organised into 7 boarding houses. The school is one of the older schools in South Africa, having been founded in 1872, and as such has a rich set of traditions. As an all-boys school, there is a pervasive emphasis on sport. Much of what happens in the classrooms is fairly traditional, teacher-centred practice.

Participants

There are **three key participants** who form the core of this research. Through my work with the teachers, I came to see that they **wanted to be more creative**, and were in the process of **making a shift in their pedagogical approach**. I was interested to explore with them how and why this shift was happening. **Two groups of students were used as a means to achieve triangulation**. The aim was to find out from them the impact of a technology-rich project-based pedagogy on their learning experience.

The Research Action



“Creativity is looking to do something differently from the way you've always done it or how things are expected to be done.”

Data Collection

The main form of data collection was via **three semi-structured interviews**. This was chosen as an effective way to gather thoughts and feelings from the teachers, and to encourage reflection on the change process. The open-ended format also **made it possible for teachers to tell their story**, while the knowledge and involvement of the Action Researcher made the interviews richer and more meaningful. The specific teachers were chosen because of their **commitment to making changes in their approach to teaching**, and their desire to adopt new technologies. A second form of data collection was via a **survey sent out as an online form**. The benefit of the Google Forms tool is that it is completely anonymous, and in this instance voluntary. The aim with the survey was to corroborate the information gleaned from the interviews.

Data Analysis

The interviews were analysed using a process inspired by the existential-phenomenological method. This method is based on the idea that a quantitative, natural scientific method is inadequate for understanding human experiences, its aim being rather to allow for a qualitative richness and depth of understanding.

Key Findings and Discussion

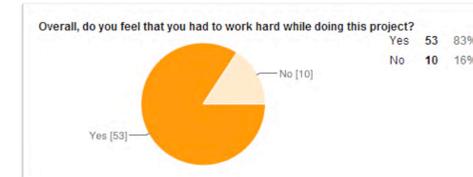
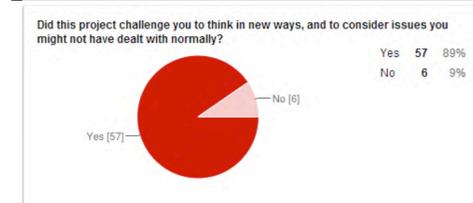
Themes: The Teacher's journey to embrace creativity

- **Perspective:** Start from the boys' view of the classroom experience, understand their boredom with traditional forms of learning, and see their excitement in using technology.
- **Challenge to self, colleagues and pupils:** Be prepared to challenge oneself honestly, and bring that same spirit of questioning to interactions with colleagues and pupils.
- **Challenge as opportunity:** See the challenges of technology as an opportunity to grow.
- **Openness to learning:** Be open to learning, and model this as an approach, rather than having to be the source of all knowledge; show that creativity is the result of hard work and is not innate.
- **Relationships/role modelling/respect for individuals:** Make the key focus the relationship with boys; be a role model, and see all boys as individuals.
- **Collaboration/ Facilitator role:** Become a facilitator, collaborating with colleagues and pupils to create learning experiences; promote collaboration in class.
- **Space vs Control:** Aim to create space within which pupils and colleagues can be creative by relinquishing control over the exact outcome of learning processes.
- **Courage vs Fears:** Be courageous by confronting and standing up for an alternative view of learning, and overcome fears of how this might be perceived.
- **Conformity and Authority:** Move away from the limits on creativity imposed by conformity and strict insistence on rigid authority structures.

“A highlight has been seeing boys come alive in different areas which the normal academic approach does not recognise”

Student Survey: The benefits of creative teaching

| I am more creative when... | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| I am working in a group | 36% |
| I am using technology | 39% |
| I get to do schoolwork outside of the classroom | 25% |
| My schoolwork relates to the real world | 38% |
| I am given a difficult task to complete | 16% |



Conclusions

- Context:** Digital media, social networking, information revolution, boys' needs.
- Challenge:** Teacher-centred pedagogy is outmoded and unworkable.
- Creative Response:** Embrace the pedagogical revolution.
- The Process:** A journey exploring alternative approaches; integration of digital media;
- Outcome:** Teachers rediscover their own creativity, and so pass that on to the boys in their classes.
- Hurdles:**
- Psychological barriers which need to be overcome.
 - Institutions' power to maintain the status quo.
 - Creativity undermined in favour of conformity.
 - Insecurities are covered over by compliance with the “normal”.
- Antidotes:**
- Individual courage and integrity.
 - Collegial support and collaboration.
 - Honestly assessment of teaching practice
 - Working to overcome their fears of change.
- Recommendations:**
- PD programmes need based on disruption of the normal.
 - Provide solutions and models of innovative pedagogies.
 - Demonstrate how digital media can engage the modern boy.
 - Show that academic rigour is retained or increased.



“There's a creative part in all of us, and I think that the changes that we've introduced have drawn me into being more creative.”

Key Readings

- Christensen, C. M., Horn, M. B., & Johnson, C. W. (2011). *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Gurian, M. (2010). *The purpose of boys: Helping our sons find meaning, significance, and direction in their lives*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hattie, J. A. (2003). *Teachers Make a Difference*. What is the research evidence? Keynote presentation at the Building Teacher Quality: The ACER Annual Conference. Melbourne: ACER.
- Kapur, M. (2012). *Productive Failure*. International Conference of the Learning Sciences. Sydney: ISLS.
- Mishra, P., & Koehler, M. (2006). *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge: A new framework for teacher knowledge*. *Teachers College Record* 108 (6), 1017-1054.
- Robinson, K., et al. (2013). *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*. National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education.

Further Information

The full report of this project and an online copy of this poster are available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>.

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