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Promoting Student Creativity at Tertiary-level Education: A Qualitative Investigation of Lecturers' Perspective

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Abstract

Though being more or less a cliché in the post-modern world, creativity, associated with new and novel, is the *sine qua non* of high quality education. Thus, creativity-fostering teachers enjoy a prestigious status on account of their several attributes including encouraging independent and cooperative learning, motivating learners to think divergently, and encouraging flexible-thinking and self-evaluation. As the concept is believed to merit much attention, and the field lacking a clear picture of the concept at the tertiary-level education needs a richer array of studies for a deeper understanding, the current qualitative inquiry was designed to investigate to what extent lecturers at tertiary-level education promote creativity, how they justify their attempts, and what they offer to foster creativity in higher education context. To this end, an interview inspired by the existing literature was reformulated and conducted with 5 voluntary lecturers instructing at an English Language and Literature department, in a north-eastern university in Turkey. The findings indicated high levels of reference to tasked-based creativity. Yet, the participants voiced several curriculum, student, and culture-related challenges of fostering this desired feature in education. Documenting their suggestions related to the features of creativity, the study ends with implications for practitioners and materials designers.

Keywords: *creativity, creativity in education, promoting creativity*

Introduction

The interest in creativity goes back to ancient times in that Cropley (2001) exemplifies this with the fact that in *Ion*, Plato touched on the importance of raising creative people for a society and the urgent need to foster this trait by the state. Later, as Cropley (2001) notes, the concept was commonly used by several creative art workers mainly to smarten their context, make their voice heard, communicate their idea, and understand others. However, recently it is associated with an area where technology cannot interfere. Throughout the history, creativity, mostly associated with the adjectives *new* and *novel*, has been viewed as a kind of innovative concept. Developed countries are trying to integrate creativity into their life as innovativeness

is the most required factor in the process of development in a country. Governments attempt to set the schedule in terms of creativity, try to make the society from the young to the old understand to what extent creativity is important. Particularly in the field of education the importance of creativity has reached its peak. Teachers are trying to foster creativity by experimenting on various classroom techniques and finding unique ways of doing so and are in the search for both internal and external sources of motivation towards fostering creativity.

In the existing literature, theoretical debates about the significance of the concept creativity in education have mushroomed, yet still there is much room for the depiction of reality. The scarcity of research on creativity in higher education context and incomplete understanding of the factors that affect creativity development and expression is well-documented (see, for instance, Alencar & Fleith, 2004; Egan, Maguire, Christophers, & Rooney, 2017; Jahnke, Haertel & Wildt, 2017). This paper should be understood as a response to the call of Alencar, Fleith and Pereira (2017) to conduct further investigations aiming to investigate university professors' and students' perception of creativity in university classes in an attempt to further the understanding of creativity (Orlando, 2012).Thus, the current paper aims at demonstrating whether reality at tertiary-level education is in tune with these debates fine in theory.

Literature Review

Conceptualisation

The concept creativity comes from Latin word "*creare*", meaning to produce something (Gaspar & Mabic, 2015, p. 599). The conceptualisation of the term creativity has been regarded as a challenging attempt, thereby having various definitions (Jónsdóttir, 2017). The term is difficult to define due to its "like all brain-based functions, ethereal and elusive" (Saebo, McCammon & O'Farrell, 2007, p.206) nature which has person, process, and outcome dimensions. Yet, two paradigms, i.e., originality and value are fundamental in its definition (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, as cited in Cheung, 2017, p.75). It is also associated with the ability to produce both novel and useful things (Amabiele, 1996, as cited in Pang, 2015, p. 122). In education domain, Rinkevich (2011) defines creative teaching "as a unique, customised, and meaningful exchange of knowledge all individuals in a learning context" (p. 219).

Although he accepts that the concept is uncertain, Cropley (2001) provides three common points in discussions over creativity in both education and psychology as follows: novelty, effectiveness, and ethics. The first should be understood as the attempts to create something new and original different from the others. The second one, i.e., effectiveness, refers to aesthetic, artistic, spiritual or financial effects of this production. The last one refers to the fact that creativity has nothing to do with negative behaviours such as selfishness, crime, and so forth.

In education, there are some dichotomies regarding the concept of creativity. For instance, one popular dichotomy is teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Jónsdóttir (2017) draws attention to the distinction between them, noting that while teaching creatively should be understood as the attempts to make the learning process more joyful and interesting so as to attract learners' attention, teaching for creativity refers to a pedagogy the ultimate aim of which is to enhance students' own imagination power and characteristic behavior (Jónsdóttir, 2017). Creativity is also associated with creative thinking that should be understood as "a thinking style which enables the individuals to produce new and authentic products, find new solutions, and reach a synthesis" (Özcan, 2010, p. 5850). Thus, a creative person is described

as "the one who searches for the new fields, makes new observations, makes new guesses, and proposes new implications" (Özcan (2010, p. 5851).

Importance of Creativity

The concept of creativity has enjoyed much popularity since the end of the 1990s in not only education but also society (Craft, 2003). It is regarded crucial for the 21st century (Egan et al., 2017). Gibson (2005) entitles creativity as a "hurrah word" in that the term is "widely used, full of promise, a tonic for some after a decade of national over-governance of the school curriculum, a glimmer of hope and a word with which everyone can agree" (p. 149). However, the exact nature of the term is not crystal clear. Creativity is described as "a mantra which is used by politicians, businessmen, employees, teachers, professors, students and others" (Gaspar & Mabic, 2015, p. 598), and this popularity comes from the fact that it is seen as the solution for problems from various domains, including society, economy, and education. Cachia, Ferrari, Ala-Mutka and Punie (2010) conceptualise creativity "as a transversal and cross-curricular skill, which everyone can develop" (p. 9). Saebo et al. (2007) list two reasons for this popularity as the need for more creative and innovative workers in an industrial world where jobs are outsourced and the potential of it to improve students' capacity to learn in various subjects.

Arguing in a similar vein, Cropley and Cropley (2009) regard creativity as a prerequisite for the solution of global problems. They argue that it is what fosters innovation. In this way, global problems could be solved, and people learn how to live peacefully together in an equal, peaceful, and affluent world. As a result, these help humanity in that the prosperity of not only individuals but also nations could be enhanced.

Fostering Creativity

The literature theoretical and exploratory in nature has documented that there are several elements vital in promoting creativity in classroom: mood valence, goal orientation, social modelling, reinforcement, classroom ecology, agency, virtual media, and teacher behaviour. To begin with, mood valence is related to motivation as having a good mood is seen directly related to having a creative mind, and it promotes the cognitive functionality of individuals (Isen, 1999):

> Positive mood contributes to the pool of possible ideas in three ways (1) a pleasant mood increases the number of cognitive elements available for selection or combination; 2) positive mood defocuses attention to allow more complex cognitive content, allowing recognition of a wider set of elements as relevant to the problem; and 3) positive affect increases flexibility making it more likely that diverse elements will be combined to produce creative ideas (as cited in Teske, Clausen, Gray, Smith, Subia, Szabo, Kuhn, Gordon, & Rule, 2017, p. 218).

Goal orientation is also vital in fostering creativity as individuals with a certain orientation attempt to develop themselves taking their qualifications into consideration. As Teske et al. (2017) note, "individuals with a learning goal orientation tend to have intrinsic interests in understanding complex tasks, which also support creativity" (p. 219). Social modeling is another consideration in promoting creativity. Soh (2017) argues that dramatizing or imitating the characteristic behavior of a teacher can serve well to be creative. Thus, teachers are expected to foster creativity by being a model in a behavioral manner. "Students, especially the young ones, model on people they have positive emotional ties with, or simply, people they like and admire" (Soh, 2017, p. 59). Reinforcement is also another important factor in that "Generally, behavioral modification is an application of operant conditioning widely used to

change behaviors which are usually problematic or undesirous in young children, and it has been applied in other contexts, including promoting creativity" (Soh, 2017, p. 59-60). Besides, classroom ecology is an important variable as creativity-fostering classrooms do not limit both teachers' and students' creativity and enable them to be flexible, rational, intuitive, inventive, to list but a few (Soh, 2017).

Agency is another element for fostering creativity. Individuals should be encouraged to have a saying on their own life and make their own decisions (Craft, 2000, as cited in Jónsdóttir, 2017). Virtual media also serves well in this promotion as it is assumed to contribute to people's daily creativity with its potential of "producing learners with a new profile of cognitive skills (e.g., reflection, inductive problem solving, critical thinking, imagination) (Greenfield (2009, as cited in Doron, 2017, p. 152). Lastly, teacher behavior is a determining variable in fostering learner creativity. Creativity-fostering teachers are highly valued who:

1. Encourage students to learn independently
2. Have a cooperative, socially integrative style of teaching
3. Motivate their students to master factual knowledge, so that they have a solid base for divergent thinking
4. Delay judging student' ideas until they have been thoroughly worked out and clearly formulated
5. Encourage flexible thinking in students
6. Promote self-evaluation in students
7. Take students' suggestions and questions seriously
8. Offer students opportunities to work with a wide variety of materials and under many different conditions
9. Help students to learn to cope with frustration and failure, so that they have the courage to try the new and unusual (Cropley, 1995, as cited in Soh, 2017, p.60).

Creative teaching requires "finding new ways to 'make learning visible', promote inquiry, engage learners and nurture their own creativity and stretch their capacity to develop original and high-quality work" (Collard & Looney, 2014, p. 351-352). Teachers are suggested to take the support of their school leaders and colleagues to nurture creativity via their classroom practices, for the use of new methods as a requirement of creativity and departure from what is expected from teachers regularly is regarded risky. This support could be achieved by encouraging teachers to take risks and adopt an imaginative and open attitude towards innovation, by providing them feedback and supporting them to promote their practices, and by encouraging collaboration among leaders, teachers, and creative professionals (Collard & Looney, 2014).

Challenges in Promoting Creativity in Classroom

Several challenges in this promotion have been documented in the related literature. For instance, among the challenges university professors encounter in fostering creativity, Alencar et al. (2017) touch on the importance of promoting "a pro-creativity culture" (p. 558). Teachers have rare chances to discuss their classroom practices and reflect on them in their institutions. Fostering creativity in conjunction with other skills is another challenge, and lack of professional development programmes that encourage the promotion of creativity in university courses is a real burden.

Cachia et al. (2010) conducted a large-scale study in Europe to find out how innovation and creativity are applied in primary and secondary level education and reported their findings. They identified problems in areas such as curricula, pedagogy and assessment, teacher training, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT, hereafter) and digital media. To begin

with, curricula are not efficient in that they do not clearly conceptualise what creativity means and how it could be treated in both learning and assessment. Regarding pedagogy and assessment, the researchers found that although the teacher participants claimed to have been fostering skills for creativity and innovation, their observations revealed that conventional methods were commonly used due to lack of skills and confidence, busy schedule, overloaded curricula, lack of support, and crowded classrooms. Also, traditional assessment practices are really common. In addition, it was found that there is a strong relationship between teacher training and experience as their tendency to trigger creativity in classroom is associated with their pre and in-service education. ICT use was also found problematic. The teachers were observed to use the Internet mainly to download and prepare materials rather than employ it as a way of collaboration and network, and students were not allowed to use computers freely although the number of these devices is high in schools.

Of similar mind, Craft (2003) lists four limits to creativity in education: terminological limitations, conflicts in policy and practice, curriculum limitations, and centrally-controlled pedagogy. The first one refers to distinct use of several related terms such as creativity, imagination, innovation, creative teaching, teaching for creativity, creative learning, and so forth. These terms distinct from each other refer to different things, and thus valuing one is definitely different from valuing another. The second limit should be understood as the control of curriculum and pedagogy which could be constraining for practitioners. However, limitations in curriculum organisation refer to limiting it to certain courses rather than across the curriculum. The last limit refers to limiting the approaches to pedagogy although creativity requires flexibility.

Rinkevich (2011) notes that assessment and evaluation may hinder both teacher and learner creativity in that when standardised testing and accountability are attached great importance, the importance of creativity naturally decreases. She also lists the factors documented in the literature as unqualified teachers, time constraints, status quo challenges, and the attitude to see creativity as extra.

Previous Research on Creativity

Recently, Jahnke, Haertel and Wildt (2017) conducted an explorative study with 20 university teachers from a wide variety of disciplines to find out teacher perception and conceptualisation of student creativity. The findings show that they conceptualised student creativity as self-reflective learning, independent learning, showing curiosity and motivation, producing something, showing multi-perspective, and reaching for original and entirely new ideas. The scholars, thus, conclude that creativity is not an objective term as it does not have a single conceptualisation.

In another study, Gaspar and Mabic (2015) aimed at finding out both teachers' and students' awareness of enhancing creativity in university. They were all found to be aware of its importance in education. However, they conceptualised it in different ways as listed below: generating new ideas, thinking outside the box, searching beyond the obvious, seeing the world in different ways, inventing, innovating and producing new things, adaptation of the things that someone else invented, doing things that nobody has done before, doing things that others have done before, but in a different way, combining different ideas, seeing unusual connections between existing things/concepts, being nimble, being curious, searching for novelty, exploring and discovering new and unknown, critically reflecting on the current world, adapting to the

existing frameworks, experiment, taking the risk, analysing, and synthesising (Gasper & Mabic, 2015, p. 604).

With a similar orientation, Alencar and Fleith (2004) conducted a large-scale study with 35 university professors and 874 university students to find out their perceptions of fostering creativity in university courses. The results showed that university professors were aware of the importance of creativity in higher education, yet they lacked enough knowledge and experience about how to employ teaching strategies to foster creativity in their classes. These instructional techniques were highly emphasised by students as the distinctive features of creativity-facilitating professors, though. The scholars observed that creativity in tertiary-level education has not been commonly fostered except for courses such as arts, architecture, and communication. Creativity is generally associated with writing an innovative paper.

Some scholars in Turkey have been interested in the issue. For instance, a questionnaire study with 110 English teachers working in primary, secondary, and high schools was conducted by Özcan (2010) to examine the contributions of English teachers' behaviours on students' creative thinking abilities. It was found that teachers' behaviours have positive contributions on students' creative thinking abilities. Also, a strong relationship was found between teacher experience and teacher creativity engagement in that the teachers in their first ten years were seen to contribute to students' creative thinking abilities much as they manage to use contemporary education concept and have higher education. Also, the participants with other work experiences were seen to promote students' creative thinking abilities. In addition, a relationship between their attempts and their weekly lesson hours were identified in that the teachers with less hours were more engaged in creative pedagogies. Similarly, a qualitative research was conducted by Yildirim (2010) to evaluate the Early Childhood Education Program for children 36-72 months of age and Teacher Guide Book regarding creativity. The researcher found the program sufficient as it includes clues for teachers about how to foster creative thinking and concrete classroom examples.

Methodology

The aim of the current study is to investigate the attitudes of lecturers towards creative pedagogy in general and to find out whether they foster creativity in their classes and they face any challenges in the process. The following research questions were devised for the study:

1. What are lecturers' attitudes towards creativity in tertiary-level education?
    1.1. How do lecturers perceive creativity in tertiary-level education context?
    1.2. Do lecturers regard creativity crucial for tertiary-level education?
    1.3. Are they engaged in creative pedagogy in their classes?
    1.4. Do they face any barriers in promoting creativity?
    1.5. To what extent do they see themselves as creative practitioners?
    1.6. What are lecturers' opinions about the nature of a creative task?

Setting and Participants

The study was undertaken in an English Language and Literature department at a north-eastern university in Turkey, where the medium of instruction is English and the educational duration is 1+4 years. B.A, MA in Applied Linguistics and English Literature and culture, and PhD in English Language Literature are offered in the department. The newcomers to the BA programme sit for an English proficiency exam focusing on reading, writing, listening, and grammar in the department, and those who take at least 70 and over from the exam become BA

students and they are offered with various linguistic and literature-oriented courses such as Language and Literary Texts, Translation Techniques, Ancient and Medieval English Literature, 16th and 17th Century English Literature, Introduction to Narratology, English Communication Skills, Research Skills, Language Teaching Methods, Introduction to Corpus Linguistics, English Drama, Applied Linguistics, to list but a few. However, the students who get a lower grade than 70 have to take a one-year preparatory education in the department, including several skill-based classes, namely writing, reading, listening, speaking, and coursebook (general English).

Non-probability sampling approach was opted for to select the participants of the current research, i.e., 5 staff in the institution where the researchers are working. As justified by Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight (1996), "if you are carrying out a series of in-depth interviews with adults about their working experiences, you may be content to restrict yourself to suitable friends or colleagues" (p. 81). The current small-scale case study was conducted with 5 lecturers working at this department. While three of them were male, two were female. Four of them graduated from Faculty of Education, and only one of the male participants graduated from Faculty of Letters. Their working experiences range from 9 to 20: participant 1 (female) with 9-year teaching experience, participant 2 (female) with 20-year experience, participant 3 (male) with 11-year experience, participant 4 (male) with 15-year experience, and participant 5 (male) with 13-year experience.

Research Design

The current study falls into the category of descriptive research as it aims at exploring five lecturers' attitudes towards promoting creativity at tertiary-level education. Descriptive research "aims at making explicit the significant effects within the context itself" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 45). Descriptive rather than intervention research was opted for the current study, for the existence of several confounding variables within education context makes it difficult for a researcher to control them all and thus attribute a result to a particular treatment, and isolated individual attempts cannot provide a fuller picture without their contexts they are embedded in (McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

The study adopts a qualitative stance. Simply, qualitative research should be understood as "research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 162). Its characteristics could be listed as follows: rich description, natural and holistic representation, few participants, emic perspective, cyclical and open-ended process, possible ideological orientations, and general and open-ended research questions and hypotheses generated as a research outcome (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.162-163), most of which are seen in the current study. A detailed description of the process and data are more important than quantification. Also, the perspectives of the individuals were investigated in their own settings, and artificial environments were not created to control contextual factors. In addition, the study could be described as intense with few participants, i.e., 5 lecturers, as generalisability was not the ultimate aim. Besides, a process-oriented framework was adopted as specific hypothesis were not set at the very beginning of the process. Rather, the ultimate aim was to observe the participants and investigate their understanding and perspectives present there.

A qualitative approach to the research was adopted based on the research problem, personal experiences of the researchers, and the audience (Creswell, 2003). Here as the aim was to explore the concept of teaching creativity in the minds of the participants, a qualitative

approach was opted for in that "if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach" (Creswell, 2003, p. 22). In addition, the researchers' personal training and experience play an important role in the choice of an approach, and here as the researchers are experienced in producing literary form of writing and conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews, they chose a qualitative approach.

The study could be entitled as an original and valuable study in that it carries most of the 13 features of good research McDonough and McDonough (1997) list: (1) the ones with the initiation and undertaking of research: interest, originality, specificity, and publication/dissemination; (2) the features of the design and methodology: sensitivity, objectivity, validity, reliability, and falsifiability; (3) the ones concerning the application to other situations: replicability, generalisability, and utility; (4) ethics. To start with, a good research must be interesting to the researcher. The interest in the current study is personal as it is based on the observation of the researchers, and it arose from the existing literature read, i.e., reading both the theory and implications of earlier related works. The current study could be claimed to be original as it resides in the new data gathered through interview, a recognised data collection method, in a new context, i.e., university context in a north-eastern city, and it aims at comparing and contrasting the findings with earlier ones and establishing generalisability. The study is also specific as it clarifies what creativity refers to in teaching and how the context is specified at the very beginning of the study. Also, the study could be publicised as it not only contributes to the existing research with its theory but also it is appropriate for dissemination through conferences and publications. The current study could also be entitled as objective as it eliminates any researcher biases, i.e., researcher emotions, desires, and so forth. The researchers analysed the data separately, and they avoided research fraud, and the presented the findings as they were. Also, data analysis of the study is reliable as the coding of the interviews was conducted by the researchers separately. Besides, the data which were accurately reported with all steps, techniques, and instruments allow its replicability, as replication "in a new situation on the basis of an explicit and complete report is itself a useful activity, and if the results are different, interest will be high" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 65). Utility is one of these features that make research good in that the findings are of value to practitioners and other scholars interested in the topic. Lastly, ethical considerations taken into account during the collection, interpretation, and publication of the research make the current study good. The participants were protected by ensuring confidentiality, the highest quality data were attempted to be gathered with in-depth interviews, the participants' agreements were taken for publication, to list but a few.

Data Gathering and Analysis

In order to conduct this mini-survey within the institution of the researchers (McDonough & McDonough, 1997), interview was chosen as the primary research tool in the study. Interviews were used to collect the data based on their several advantages as documented by Mackey and Gass (2005). First, it enabled the researchers to investigate the understanding and perceptions of the participants regarding teacher creativity, which are normally not directly observable. Second, this interactive dialogue allowed the researchers to gather self-explanatory, complete, relevant, and specific data. Also, the researchers thought that this mode, i.e., a dialogue/speaking rather than writing, could be a more relaxing option for the participants of the department who are usually busy.

Among three types of interviews, semi-structured one was preferred that should be understood as the one with an overall framework yet open to flexibility as it allows the researcher to change the order of questions and ask follow-up questions (Berg, 2004). In other words, the researcher can use "a written list of questions as a guide, while still having the freedom to digress and probe for more information" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173). As noted by McDonough and McDonough (1997, p. 184), this kind is "closer to the qualitative paradigm because it allows for richer interactions and more personalised responses than the quasi-automaton interviewer armed with entirely pre-coded questions". However, as the researchers are aware of the fact that no method is without caveats, they attempted to address the possible problems by encouraging open-ended discussions with probes such as "Anything else?", conducting the interviews at the offices of the participants where they naturally feel more comfortable, starting with simple questions and going on with the key ones, and repeating and summarising their answers to allow them to reflect on their answers and add more comments (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

The interview designed for the current study includes 6 main questions, two of which were taken from Cheung (2017): "What is creativity? Please give me some words that first come into your mind when you hear the word 'creativity'?", and "What kinds of pedagogic strategies do you think are best for developing creativity in your classroom?" (Cheung, 2017, p.77). The participants were also asked whether they promote creativity in their classroom, whether they have any challenges in doing so, and how a creative task should be designed.

Content analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data. Berg (2004) argues against conceptualising content analysis as "a reductionist, positivistic approach" (p. 269). Rather, he refers to it as "a passport to listening to the words of the text and understanding better the perspective(s) of the producer of these words" (p. 269). The steps suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005) were followed in the analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interviews. First, the data were prepared for coding. The oral data were transcribed verbatim and print-outs were prepared. After reading and revising the data in a written format, the researchers started to code the data. The researchers did not start with a coding scheme. Rather, this scheme emerged from the data. The researchers looked for emergent patterns and themes related to their research questions. Later, they categorised these codes under certain categories such as ways to promote creativity, challenges of promoting creativity, and suggestions related to the features of a creative task. This type of content analysis should be understood as a mixture of manifest and latent analysis in that the analysis includes not only "those elements that are physically present and countable" but also "an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data" (Berg, 2004, p. 269).

Ethical Considerations

From the beginning to the end of the research, several ethical considerations documented by Creswell (2003) were taken into account. At the outset, the researchers attempted to justify why they chose the particular research problem, why they thought that it was important, and how its investigation would benefit the participants and practitioners. Also deception was avoided as the purpose of the study was clearly described to the participants. During the data collection procedure, the participants were not done any physical, psychological, social, financial, or legal harm (Sieber, 1998, cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 64). An oral informed consent was taken from the participants, in that they were ensured that they had the right to be interviewed voluntarily and whenever they wanted they could withdraw. They were also informed about the research process and offered to share the results with them in the

end. During the data analysis and implementation procedure, to protect the participants' identities they were given numbers. Also the data were presented accurately in that the attempts of the researchers to paraphrase what the participants said during the interviews served as a kind of debriefing between the two participants to check the accuracy of what was told. Lastly, during the writing process, ethical considerations were also taken into account. The researchers used an unbiased language, and they presented the findings without "suppressing, falsifying, or inventing" (Creswell, 2003, p. 67) them. They also provided a detailed description of the research design so that the readers have an idea about the credibility of the research.

Findings and Discussion

As the aims of the study were to find out the participants' conceptualisation of creativity, their ideas about the nature of a creative task, whether they see themselves as creative lecturers, and whether they encounter any barriers in fostering creativity in their classes, the findings are provided theme by theme.

Participants' Conceptualisation of Creativity and Creative Tasks

In order to find out how the participating lecturers perceive creativity, they were asked what comes to their mind when they hear the term creativity. It was found that they attach great importance to creativity and associate it with production of new and novel things with limited sources (N=2), production of original ideas, realisation of one's potentials, having potential to bring the pieces together, and manipulating the pieces, and divergent thinking. Two participants voiced how they perceive creativity in education as follows:

> I mean if you are creative, you can do something more effectively and in a new and novel way. I mean you have some limited sources, but you really do different things out of these sources. This means creativity to me. I do not know, but maybe a kind of open mindedness comes to the stage here, and producing new and novel things , and doing new things with limited sources are creative, I think. [Participant 1, female, May 9, 2017]

> I would define creativity as creating divergent thinking skills, and even though this definition is quite narrow for its own sake, some further definitions of creativity could be handled. When we look at literature, there are several ways to approach creativity, some say that "Ok, creativity is thinking out of the box", some people say that "Creativity is something related to let's say extra ordinary thing, some say that "Creativity is assembling the pieces together, some might be … I mean people might have different definitions. I think my own way of thinking is similar to that one: having divergent thinking skills. [Participant 5, male, May 15, 2017]

The lecturer participants were also requested to provide their opinions about the nature of a creative task at tertiary-level education. Similar to their conceptualisations of the term creativity, they listed a variety of features that they associate with creative task: challenge, flexibility, fun, group work, focus on individual differences, technology integration, originality, uniqueness, authenticity, feeling of relaxation, lack of anxiety about being evaluated or graded by the teacher, and steps (process). This finding is in line with what Jahnke et al. (2017) and Gasper and Mabic (2015) found in their studies: the term creativity is far from a single conceptualisation as everybody has a different idea about its form in classrooms. Here, similar to what scholars argue in the documented literature, the fourth participant rightly reports, creativity requires a clear definition in education:

> I mean you should make a clear definition of creativity. If you are in a very strict culture, conservative culture, anything you do out of following the text-book, it can be considered as creativity, but if you are in a very open-minded class, or society, what you do and what you

> think may not be considered as a creative action I can say. [Participant 4, male, May 12, 2017]

Overall, as the findings indicate, in line with the existing literature, the concept creativity has various definitions, and finding an exact one on which everybody can agree is difficult (Jónsdóttir, 2017; Saebo et al., 2007). Craft (2003) argues that this terminological variety is one of the limits of creativity in education.

The Participants' Self-perceptions about Being a Creative Practitioner

The participants were also asked whether they see themselves as creative practitioners and they are engaged in creative pedagogies. The analysis shows that they tend to see themselves as creative practitioners. They listed several practices which they entitle as creative: encouraging students to produce new idea (N=2), asking them to work in groups, asking them to produce texts in which they provide their own ideas (N=2), turning them into independent researchers, asking them to produce flashcards, encouraging students to make connections between various cultures in a sphere of interculturality, asking students to design an original lesson plan as a course requirement, encouraging students to create their own definitions, asking students their opinions as a warm-up activity, and asking students to do self-reflection and put themselves in the shoes of a character:

> Well, yes. I hope they do produce something on their own. For example, if I ask them to read something. For example, today my students were supposed to read a … a text on different wedding ceremonies, hmm in different nations. We read nine different texts, and well I didn't ask them to question, for example, what the writer says in that part, and what the writer means in that part. Instead, I ask them to compare and contrast Turkish wedding ceremonies with the wedding ceremonies around the world, and make a kind of connection between them. I think this is a kind of creativity. [Particpant1, female, May 9, 2017]

> I try by asking questions. I try to prompt it, to provoke it into my student to participate in discussions, to share their ideas with us. For example, today in 18th century I began teaching Tom Jones. In the first page when our central character Mr. Allworthy is introduced there, and the writer says he had both of nature and fortune, because in the first open pages happiness, a happy life, how he is satisfied with his life. It is the narrator who says this to us. When, before teaching those two pages, I tried to encourage my students to provide their definition of happiness. What is a satisfying life like? I tried to use many different techniques and questions to prompt them, to encourage them, but unfortunately I couldn't get answers; there was not any answers. [Participant 3, male, May 12, 2017]

> I try to do that, but I am not sure whether I can really do that appropriately. How do I do? That is something related to the classroom atmosphere. For example … Let me start from the stretch. When we say creativity, some people think that there must be something really new, something really extra ordinary, something really out of the box. To me, creativity is not that. To me, creativity is having well hmm having potential to bring the pieces together, manipulating the pieces. I mean having the confidence to manipulate the things. For example, they can put themselves into the shoes of the characters, and they can consider the situational context in Turkey, and they can for example manipulate the data, and they can make it relevant to themselves. I think all these things are prompts of, or let's say count as prompts of creativity. I try to do it through self-reflection, and I usually ask people to put themselves into the shoes of character, or come up with something new instead of having the existing one, but if you just ask it all of a sudden, student might rarely come up with, you know, something creative. [Particpant 5, male, May 15, 2017]

As the findings show, the participants who voiced their uneasiness with the terminological limitations of the concept creativity reported having been doing various activities. Their awareness and positive mindset are similar to those in the study of Alencar and

Fleith (2004), who were aware of the importance of creativity in higher education, yet they lacked enough knowledge and experience about how to employ teaching strategies to foster creativity in their classes. Similarly, the participants in the current study were observed not to be sure whether these activities make them really creative practitioners. This unsure stance could be associated with the elusive nature of the concept creativity (Saebo et al., 2007).

Barriers in Fostering Creativity at Tertiary-level Education

The participants were also asked whether they encounter any barriers in fostering creativity at tertiary-level education. When their answers were coded and categorised, it was seen that they touched on concept-related, course-related, classroom-related, culture-related, curriculum-related, and student-related barriers. The concept-related barriers should be understood as the demanding nature of designing and conducting creative tasks at tertiary-level education as it requires the employment of several features together such as challenge above the existing level, flexibility, fun, and group harmony:

> I believe that a creative task is a demanding task. Is there anything that is very easy? It should be a little bit more difficult, and in psychology we call that "i+1". I mean you should hmm challenge the students not very easy. It should be a little bit above their level, so a creative task requires such difficulty I think. And I think creative tasks hmm should be flexible. There should not be just one way to reach the solution. I mean it should enable students to choose hmm different ways to go to the same result flexibly. And I believe that creative task should be enjoyable too. I think this is what makes them different that the usual tasks. Playful, enjoyable activities are creative at the same time. When students create something, they automatically have fun. Hmm. What else? Creative task… Well, I do not know whether this is correct or not. I believe that hmm creative task could be done much better in group work, not individual one. Because in group work, you need to manage time, you have to manage your social relations (..). So, all these things require creativity. Actually in a group work, students must work in harmony. Harmony is a kind of creativity I think. [Participant 1, female, May 9, 2017]

The participants also drew attention to the nature of courses at university that can allow or not allow the use of creative pedagogies. Theoretical courses that are taught at bachelor degree were argued not to allow creativity much; however, the participants argued that language skill courses such as the ones in preparatory programme serve as appropriate domains to foster creativity. Classroom-related barriers refer to the high number of students in classrooms. Participant 2 complained about crowded classes (N=2) in BA courses, noting that if there were lecture-type individual sessions, it could be easier to foster the creativity potential of students. She also touched on the importance of using computer programmes in education that could help fostering creativity as they both attract students' attention and add creativity and colour to the classroom pedagogies of the lecturer. This finding supports what Cachia et al. (2010) argue: ICT could be used as an important platform to promote creativity.

In addition to course and classroom-related barriers, one male participant drew attention to culture-related barriers in fostering creativity, noting that as Turkish culture values memorisation, creativity cannot found enough room in education:

> I do not know why, but creativity is something that is not supported in our culture, not appreciated I could say. Our culture is different than the Anglo-Saxon culture and the Aristotelian solecism culture is different from this Eastern culture, and in Eastern cultures I could say memorization is highly praised rather than analytical thinking, and obedience to the authorities is also praised in our culture, so I do not think that our culture facilitates or encourages creativity. Of course, there are some open-minded people in the society, but if you consider creativity from this respect, the majority of the society I think Western cultures

> appreciate and facilitate creativity more than the Eastern cultures. [Participant 4, male, May 12, 2017]

Curriculum-related barriers were also touched upon in that the promotion of creativity is not emphasised in the curriculum. Also student-related barriers were mentioned which should be understood as the tendency of students to copy each others' sayings rather than producing something new. Besides, one male lecturer complained about the fact that students are not reading enough, and this limits their creative thinking. He also voiced his uneasiness about lecturers' behaviour in that some do not provide enough space for students to be creative, only ask questions whose answers are already known by them, not design meaningful and life-related tasks, not encourage a wide variety of interactions in the classroom, and lower learner anxiety:

> Apart from all these, learners are offered limited space to be creative throughout the classes. They cannot make things relevant to themselves, it is because most of the time we are asking them to let's say, we are asking them questions whose answers are already known by us, and we are checking their knowledge, so knowledge seeking questions, but I think in order to promote creativity, we should be asking them something new from their own life. So, we should make the tasks meaningful, we should make exchanges meaningful in order to promote creativity; otherwise the interactions will be all teacher-initiated, and the interactions will not be guided by students, and the interactions will always be one-sided, always from the teacher, and there is answer or feedback in the form of praise. I think this does not trigger learners' creativity. In order to help learners promote their creativity, I think first thing to do is to design meaningful tasks. Meaningful tasks will help them, will help them to become creative, help them to become really involved, and will help them to be self-confident. Most of the time in English language classrooms, learners are in a different space, and in this new space they feel themselves lonely, vulnerable, and in the swarm of all these uncertainties, you cannot expect learners to be creative enough. I think first we should lower learners' anxiety, and they will feel safe and secured, and we will help them, we will assist them to be creative. That's the thing, we can, we could establish supportive environment. [Participant 5, male, May 15, 2017]

In addition to all these categorised barriers documented above, busy schedule/curriculum was also listed as one of the barriers in fostering creativity in higher education. The barriers documented as the result of the analysis are in line with the ones stated in the literature. As Craft (2003) found in his study, terminological limitations and curriculum are two limitations to creativity in education. The use of various terms synonymously to refer to creativity and the lack of a clear-cut definition perplex the practitioners in that they are not sure whether they are really creative practitioners. Also, curriculum may be constraining for practitioners when the concept is not valued and emphasised there. However, different from the ones in the existing literature, in the current study culture-related and student-related barriers as two related factors were frequently mentioned. As the Turkish society is portrayed as a group-oriented one which values memorisation and copying others' thought, Turkish students are complained to have a tendency to repeat each other and not to read enough, which definitely hampers creativity.

Suggestions and Conclusions

Although the scope of the present case study is limited to make grand generalisations, still useful insights for teachers could be offered.

One of the overall findings from this detailed analysis shows that lecturers were not sure whether they were really creative practitioners. This mostly results from the fact that creativity has diverse definitions. This terminological variety makes them hesitant to identify themselves as creative or not. Here, as a solution they could identify their exact location in the creativity

continuum by answering the following basic questions about whatever they have been doing in their classrooms. Fisher (2004, as cited in Saebo et al., 2007, p. 211) provides a list of questions that show whether a lesson has promoted students' creative thinking as follows:

- applying their own imagination?
- generating their own questions, hypothesis, ideas and outcomes?
- developing skills or techniques through creative activity?
- using judgement to assess their own and others' creative work?

As listed by Fisher (2004), these four questions could help lecturers to decide whether they are creative practitioners or not. Besides, lecturers at tertiary level education who have hesitations about integrating creativity into their classes mostly due to the lack of a clear definition of the term creativity could follow the practical suggestions offered by Cropley and Cropley (2009) to foster innovative/creative behaviours among their students in their attitudes, instruction, and assessment:

Table 1. Practical Advices for Teachers to Foster Innovative/Creative Behavious (Cropley & Cropley, 2009, p. 86)

WHO?	WHEN?	WHAT?
Teachers and Managers (Thought Leaders)	Attitudes to students and colleagues	Respect students and colleagues who produce novelty ("way out" questions or suggestions), providing they have a recognizable link to reality
		Respect students and colleagues who question or criticize (provided that criticism is informed)
		Regard students and colleagues as a valuable source of ideas, especially when they challenge your own ideas
	Instructional and leadership strategies	Encourage students and colleagues to work in unfamiliar settings, in unusual ways, or with unfamiliar materials
		Encourage trying the already known in new settings
		Invite multiple answers
		Watch for the wrong-approach barrier in your own work
	Assessing other people's work	Be open for novel solutions (even if you can see that they are wrong)
		Look for and respect unexpected combinations of ideas
		Respect the "inspired" error, and check possible latent creativity
		Provide feedback on novelty production, idea combinations, etc, not just accuracy and correctness

As is seen above, creativity could be fostered via attitude change, instruction, and assessment. For example, students who question whatever teachers bring to classroom and how they present them should be respected. Their challenge should not be viewed as a threat to

teacher authority. Besides, when teachers bring new materials in an unusual way and create different instruction atmospheres, learners could try to create way-outs. Lastly, creativity could be integrated into education via assessment. For instance, rather than solely emphasising correctness, teachers should value how they combine ideas in a new way.

Curriculum has been commonly found as a barrier to creativity in education in both earlier studies and the current one. Thus, in order to nurture creativity in education, an ear could be given to Collard and Looney (2014), who provide some suggestions for policy makers and researchers. They argue for the development of self-explanatory conceptualisation of creativity, for although most of practitioners accept the importance of creativity for education, they either have no idea about the true nature of creativity or have misconceptions about the concept. Also, curricula "rushing through subjects" (Collard & Looney, 2014, p. 359) need to be revised to integrate ways to nurture student creativity.

Although creativity at theory level has been well-documented, actual classroom implementations need urgent attention as the research niche. As Collard and Looney (2014) also voiced, there is need to conduct empirical research focusing on how to foster creativity both in and outside the classroom, including how various methods affect students' development. Particularly, the reports on actual classroom implementations could be a real eye-opener for practitioners, who are otherwise perplexed about the true nature of creativity and their stance as a creative practitioner.

Also as assessment is as important as classroom instruction, the traditional assessment practices need to be questioned. Creativity should not be solely associated with instruction. Collard and Looney (2014) argue for adopting a new approach to assessment. Teachers are suggested to assess not only academic achievement but also their creative tendencies and products. If there is a paradoxical picture between what is done in the classroom and how they are assessed, it is naive to expect long-term improvement.

However, what lies in the crux of the matter is teacher awareness. The participants in the current study were found hesitant about integrating creativity into their pedagogies although they were aware of its importance. Similarly, Cropley and Cropley (2009) have observed that although teachers seem to have positive attitudes towards creativity for more than 25 years based on research findings, it is not an encouraged trait in education in many different countries around the world. What complicates the matter even further is that teachers associating creativity with boldness discourage it and even show how much they hate those children who want to show how original they are (Cropley, 2001). Therefore, teacher mindset should be changed via both pre and in-service teacher education.

Thus, Rinkevich (2011) touches on the importance of teacher education in that the emphasis on creativity in teacher preparation programmes is necessary so as to integrate it in both lesson planning and instruction. In addition, positive attitudes towards creativity need to be fostered because it should not be seen as an extra effort that could be realised only by those who have innate creative capacity. Also, teachers should be encouraged to be willing to take risks rather than to give into the system pressure. As Collard and Looney (2014) note, teacher awareness needs to be increased to design student-centered rather than teacher-dominated classes, and in their own words, in these classrooms teachers should "take the role of 'guide by the side' rather than 'sage on the stage'" (p. 351). Also as argued by Hui, Chow, Chan, Chui and Sam (2015), creativity could be incorporated in not only early child education but also later

ones. Thus, the concept should be integrated into teacher education programmes aimed for not only younger but also adult ones.

Of similar mind, based on their findings, Alencar and Fleith (2004) suggest that professional discussions about how to foster creativity in university classes with professors would be productive for their professional development. Also they note that the misconception of creativity should be dismissed as they inhibit creativity in education. Besides, they argue that teacher awareness should be increased to help them understand that creativity is an integral part of individuals rather than a mysterious process, everyone is creative, and for this motivation and efforts are needed. This better understanding of the true nature of creativity and awareness about its nature are vital "to create conducive conditions for students to realise their creative potential" (Alencar & Fleith, 2004, p. 27).

One of the different findings of the current study compared to the existing ones is that lecturers drew attention to student profile as a limitation to creativity at higher education. They drew attention to student profile in oriental cultures where students tend to accept what is brought to them and regard questioning or challenging teachers as a violation to authority. Thus, students should try hard to change this picture and equip themselves with creative skills. Here, some practical advices for students to be innovative and creative while devising their self-image, learning, and doing assignments could be suggested (Cropley & Cropley, 2009, p. 87):

Table 2. Practical Advices for Students to Improve Their Creativity (Cropley & Cropley, 2009, p. 87)

WHO?	WHEN?	WHAT?
Students and Colleagues (Coalface Creatives)	Self-image	Be interested in your own unusual ideas
		Do not be afraid of your own impulses. Regard them as a valuable source of ideas
		Be aware of your preferred cognitive style and ascertain whether it facilitates or blocks generation of novelty
	Learning and work strategies	Let your imagination go
		Seek wide experience (marginally related classes, practical, assignments, etc)
		Look for links among pieces of information, especially unexpected links
		Look for relevant but remote associates
		Be willing to cross boundaries
		Try to build networks of related knowledge
	Assignments and work tasks	Transfer ideas from outside settings (including previous jobs) to new tasks
		Seek to go beyond the information given

		Avoid treating a new task as simply another example of the familiar (i.e., assimilating)
		Try to look at the new or unexpected elements of the task that make it different (accommodate)
		Try to find multiple answers
		Look for unexpected but supportable answers
		Ask yourself if you have generated effective surprise
		Be ready to defend your own ideas, even if they are unconventional

As is seen above, improving self-image is vital in that students should respect their ideas and feel courageous enough to question the content offered to them. They should also create associations between pieces of information via their imagination and try to see novel links. Besides, in their assignments and tasks, they should search for novel answers and outcomes rather than the expected ones, and find good justifications for their results.

Overall, it is impossible not to agree with what Cachia et al. (2010) suggest for fostering creativity in education. They argue that five major areas, including curricula, pedagogies and assessment, teacher training, ICT and digital media, and educational culture and leadership, need to be improved for creative learning and innovative teaching. To start with, curricula need to be revised to provide a clear definition of creativity and to guide teachers about how they can promote creativity with their classroom practices. The ways how they are integrated in teaching, learning, and assessment need to be clarified in these curricula. Pedagogy and assessment is another area that needs to be paid much attention. Teachers need to be provided with necessary skills, confidence, and support to feel encouraged to foster creativity. Besides, they should be encouraged to use alternative assessment practices such as presentations, group work, peer feedback, portfolios and so forth as "Changes in learning objectives cannot be implemented in practice if assessment for pupils and schools remain the same" (Cachia et al., 2010, p. 10). Teacher training is another important area that requires much care. These programmes should be revised to include various and innovative methods, techniques, and competences that ensure student creativity. Besides, ICT should be used as an important platform to promote creativity. However, rather than using it to get information and prepare teaching materials, teachers are suggested to use it to set up networks and create chances to collaborate. Thus, teachers need to be offered trainings to be equipped with skills to employ ICT for creative tasks. Finally, educational culture and leadership should be paid much attention in that other parties such as school leaders, policymakers, and parents need to be involved in these attempts. This joint dialogue is believed to play a key role in implementing change.

As a last word, it could be said that creativity is vital for higher education, for universities whose roles changed "from classical research universities ("ivory towers") to entrepreneurial universities in the way that they not only became autonomous in their decisions, but also in the way that they developed" and implemented new research and transfer relationships within their respective regions (Gaspar & Mabic, 2015, p. 599). However, as Cropley and Cropley (2009) rightly note, the attempts to foster creativity at higher education are insufficient. Yet, novelty, change, and innovation urgently needed by the world all require the development of creativity as a prerequisite. It helps people contribute to the solution of

global problems and be global citizens. Thus, particularly in higher education it is of utmost importance to encourage creativity.

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