

The creativity and character in Korea teacher education

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Abstract

Creativity is the ability of people to be innovative in their approach to problems, situations and life in general. Character is a person's moral standards. Creativity and character are two concepts that are essential in the teaching process. A teacher can influence their student's character and they can improve the student's absorption level through innovative ways of teaching. This study reports the implementation of an education programme for pre-service teachers in Korea and how the programme affected their creativity and character. It was a qualitative research that collected data from in-depth interviews with 13 participants from the programme. Pre-teachers indicated that they often distinguished clearly between the competence of creativity, an example of its occurrence in the classroom and what feature of that example made it creative to be self-developed. The implementation of the programme encouraged student teachers to inter-communicate and share ideas among others within the classroom.

Keywords: Creativity, character, German daily life, German university life, Korea, teacher, education.

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1. Introduction

The role of the teacher in preparing the future generation through education is not a new phenomenon (Harris & Ammermann, 2016). In order for teachers to adequately build their students, teachers need to have the right character and be creative (Sternberg, 2015). Most teacher trainee schools have adopted special educational programmes that can build teacher's creativity and character (Chon & Kim, 2017). This is important since it takes a well-equipped teacher to build a well-equipped student.

Hallaert (2019) defined creativity as idea and action which are new and valuable caused by interaction of peoples' values and sociocultural context. Creativity may include playing with ideas, structuring processes in a way that encourages ideas formation, making time and preparing for opportunities to fill in the gap (Hallaert, 2019; Onal, 2019; Stewart, 2020). Creativity is a concept that is necessary in every aspect of human life and most researchers have studied creativity in various fields of study such as psychology, marketing among others (Al Hashimi, Mahdi, Al Muwali & Zaki, 2019; Doyle, 2017). In a research by Tan, Lee, Ponnusamy, Koh and Tan (2016), it was discovered that creative teachers had the ability to awaken creativity in their students, apart from the removal of high-stake examinations which also had a considerable influence on students' creativity. This assertion was supported by Patston, Cropley, Marrone and Kaufman (2017). In their research, however, Patston et al. (2017) further asserted that the challenges of the 21st-century classroom required the teachers to be creative enough to meet the growing demand of the students, since the 21st-century students were exposed to more information and have a different learning pattern.

Character, especially moral character, is necessary in order to have a peaceful and secure society (Turan & Ulutas, 2016). Arthur, Kristjansson, Harrison, Sanderse and Wright (2016) explained that teachers need to have a strong character in order to have an influence on students' characters. This assertion was corroborated by the research findings of Lian, Kristiawan, Primasari and Prasetyo (2020), who also explained that teachers are role models to students and that students learn from teachers, especially when they are much younger.

New attempts of creativity and character education through course forum are centred on the idea that various course attempts are suggested harmoniously (Mola & Kelkay, 2020; Namaziandost, Imani & Ziafar, 2020; Soh, 2017). The lecturer is not a messenger, but a mentor of the course and it leads students' academic motivation by independent course implementation on the basis of autonomy. To improve autonomy of students, positive mutual feedback exchange (positive interaction) was encouraged among the students in this course. Furthermore, the process of field experience should be emphasised in the forum.

In the current research, there is an awareness of the necessity for teacher's seminar programme about creativity and character needed to prepare their students who then determine the success or failure of the future society (Jenset, Klette & Hammerness, 2018; Lewis & Ponzio, 2016; So & Hu, 2019). Educational professionalism based on seminar programmes have been investigated by several researchers and its necessity, recognition and improvement have been suggested on the basis of teacher's opinion for expanding education of creativity and character (Sedghi & Najafi, 2018; Stewart, 2020). In addition, strategies that include content reinforcement, information dissemination, promotion and increasing participation rate of teacher's seminar programme were studied. Engaging teachers in the practical field during their educational phase is one of the commonly used educational programmes that is believed to improve teacher's performance.

Teachers' professionalism for expanding education and improving creativity and character is emphasised continuously in previous research that targeted cities, provincial education offices nationwide and employees of educational institutions, as well as elementary and high school teachers (Chon & Kim, 2017; Harris & Ammermann, 2016; Kim, Bae, Choi, Kim & Lim, 2019). Therefore, a teacher's professionalism, followed by education process of 2009, should be conducted under the creativity and character education, multicultural education, as well as world citizen education widely.

Most researchers focus on either creativity or character of teachers (Hamdan, Isik & Jallad, 2019). Very few researches have combined the two (Alkan, 2020; Kelkay, 2020). The aim of this research, therefore, is to enhance the current knowledge on how creativity and character of Korean teachers can be built through educational programmes. To guide this research, the following research questions were set:

RQ1: Does the implementation of educational programmes have an effect on the character of pre-service teachers in Korean universities?

RQ2: Does the implementation of educational programmes have an effect on the creativity potential of pre-service teachers in Korean universities?

RQ3: How does creativity and character of pre-service teachers influence their students?

2. Method

This study is a report on the implementation of teacher training model among university teacher-trainee students. This research which was a qualitative study used an experiment method and interviews to arrive at the data for the study. A total of 13 students participated in the course. Two students were exchange students from Germany and 11 students were pre-service teachers. Before the course began, there was a survey about creativity and character education targeting them, and all the 11 pre-service teachers answered that the previous teaching method was unilateral rote learning.

According to the guidelines of the education process and demand of the times, two courses, namely 'German University Life' and 'German Daily Life', were established in the first semester of the 2012 academic year, and were managed by German pre-teacher students of KNU. These courses targeted the freshman of our department and the main purpose of these courses was to improve their understanding of culture, creativity, character ability, as well as logic and empathic ability for language acquisition which are a prerequisite before they start to study major compulsory courses. In other words, these courses are the major compulsory courses which are certainly needed before the students are permitted to take the German original language course. Moreover, this course follows that pre-service teachers try to understand the course-subject themselves without accepting the old version of the learning method.

The programme which is based on learner-centred education was introduced since 2009 and it comprises 'German University Life' and 'German Daily Life' which are major basic courses taught by the author. The course named 'German University Life', which is among the two courses that will be dealt with in this research, is progressed with subtopics including tradition and modern times of German university, German university life, career of undergraduate students and vision of undergraduate students. Especially, the main purpose of this course is to compare the entire German university life and Korean university life based on the perspective of exchange student programme or internship programme. As a result, students compare and analyse German university life and then the main object of the experience in the course. The course consists of watching videos about German universities, university field experiences and information from the exchange students from Germany. In addition, students have a mutual discussion with exchange students in the course.

2.1. Course implementation

2.1.1. Requirement analysis

When the learning content was implemented with mutual communication as the main factor which impacted or enhanced students' learning motivation and course participation rate, students seemed to master the course contents. When students have a first-hand experience in the course, course effectiveness is improved especially with foreign language courses. Therefore, this course identifies that the new approach is needed based on the aspect of various cultural understanding and cultural acceptance that pre-service teachers faced.

2.1.2. Creativity and character education; strategy reinforcing core competence of teachers

– Re-conceptualisation of the aim for the course

The aim for this course suggests two purposes as follows: first, this course leads students to have various perspectives for German culture, not to accept or understand unilaterally, as compared with overall campus life of Germany based on intercultural perspective. Second, this course focuses on matching the contents and structure with a new teaching method including creativity and character education of German pre-service teachers. This re-conceptualisation is caused by the interchange of each individual's active experiences.

– Reconstitution of contents and development

Perception reinforcement of pre-service teachers was emphasised mainly in this course by suggesting various definitions rather than change of the basic outline of the approaching method for reconstitution of contents and development of creativity and character education. Therefore, paper and video materials were utilised for course subject introduction, and creativity and character education. There were some changed processes due to students' opinion, but the entire course was basically followed by the proposed syllabus.

2.2. Overview and purpose for the course

The basic purpose of this course is the creative approach of students and their understanding of German university life through various perspectives. Moreover, the course's purpose includes strengthening of creative and character education ability of pre-service teachers through diverse attempts of a creative teaching method.

Course implementation included subtopics such as employment and career of German university students. The notable target of the course included building teacher trainees' experiences in the course by comparing and experiencing German university actively, improving creativity and character education through videos that covered few German universities, German university field experience and information from German exchange students.

The following highlight the purpose of the course:

- Experience story and interview of exchange students from Germany;
- Video material from exchange students who study in Germany;
- Designing and giving a presentation of assignment by each student;
- Group discussion;
- Writing course criticism report.

The following plans and guidelines were followed:

- Subject of the course might be changed depending on the case;
- Course criticism paper about the subject should be submitted as a fixed amount;
- Students' writing should be displayed anonymously, and consultation meeting is always possible in terms of writing skill and presentation;
- Think together about the culture of the university;
- Think about the similarities and differences between German and Korean universities: intercultural differences;
- Feature of the German university life and *abitur* – self-study of exchange students from Germany.

2.3. Application of a creativity and character education model and new teaching method

A creativity and character education model which was utilised in this course is based on the mutual interchange and field interview of the students. This model motivated students to have practical knowledge and the ability to gain a cultural understanding which enabled them to possess creativity

and character education which is a necessity for every pre-service teacher. Therefore, the new teaching method in this course deeply considered substantive processes concerning the subject of German university life.

2.4. Evaluation strategy

Evaluation elements consist of midterm examination (30%), final examination (30%), assignment and presentation (30%) and attendance (10%). Total participants were only 13 students; so there is advantage that all the students could have an opportunity to participate in the discussion and presentation. Therefore, all the students could express in a different way by planning and designing the subject that they chose. This course led students to design the subject presentation a week prior. They evaluated and complemented themselves through interim in-depth interviews and various materials. In addition, the importance of writing and presentation was emphasised by displaying course criticism papers by each student before the course.

Course evaluation was conducted based on the presentation of the course subject and outline, application of creative and character education in the tutorial discussion and understanding of mutual culture, as well as expressiveness of culture understanding. Course feedback is processed by the submission of the course criticism report and reviewing paper after the course presentation and discussion. The course criticism report (feedback) and reviewing paper were written not exceeding an A4-sized paper and they led to an increase in logicity and validity of the course subject. An original course criticism report was displayed anonymously so that students could experience all the well-constructed prototypes.

3. Results

Achievement through the survey and in-depth interviews in this course was that the attitudes of the students (11 out of 13 students) were changed. There is self-improvement and there is an enhancement in the recognition of creativity and character education. In addition, students were able to interact through uninhibited presentations and they exchanged ideas in an atmosphere of freedom. Self-experience of pre-service teachers in this course lead them to improve their capacity in creativity and character education.

There was an in-depth interview of 10 students and 5 students were asked to have a self-examination diary on the course achievement during the course of the semester. These informational materials about the course achievement were collected and analysed. Students had a hard time by factor of creativity and character education at the beginning of the semester, but they were interested in unique course content and better methods of course implementation after the experiment.

According to the analysis of the range of course satisfaction and acceptance as shown in the course evaluation result by KNU, 11 participants out of the 13 student-participants responded as follow: many of assessment items that were evaluated showed a higher than average performance. Especially, four out of seven high scores were marked for the assessment item which is 'Course was interested in a variety of examples and creative way' and four out of five scores were marked for 'The professor led students to have proper motivation and respected opinion of other students'. Even though most of the students began to learn the German language at the same time, they were extremely active and autonomous. In addition, they respected the differences in opinions of their colleagues on the reasonable basis and it positively affected the satisfaction of students.

Besides, students submitted the evaluation of the course in writing so they could express their subjective satisfaction or related opinions about the course. Especially, it was encouraged that students should have a high level of motivation for their major with exchange students from Germany by using common languages, both of English and German. It was a great opportunity to exchange and share the various experiences regarding German university life using a Germany language.

4. Discussion

One main benefit of the teacher's programme was that the attitudes of the students towards creativity and character were changed. The participants of the experiment were more conscious of the necessity of their character and creativity and how it would affect their students. As previous literature outlined, the teacher is a role model to students, and students subconsciously model after their teachers (Islami 2016; Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016; Lian et al., 2020). When teachers are more conscious of the necessity of character and creativity, they put in extra effort to make sure that their character is worth emulating by their students. They also create room for students to be creative when they are conscious of their role in building their students' creativity.

Another important result of the programme was how it awakened the pre-service teachers' interest in exploring different contents and how they could improve their teaching methods when they started working on the field. Creativity is about exploring better ways of providing solutions (Amirova, Iskakovna, Zakaryanovna, Nurmakhanovna & Elmira, 2020; Baris, 2019). Creativity calls for ideas and deliberation on those ideas to provide a 'modified idea' that causes an improvement in the lives of humans and various situations. Previous literature has explained that the more knowledge an individual has, the more likely they are to have ideas that are creative (Montag-Smit & Maertz Jr, 2017; Popescu, Ceptureanu, Alexandru & Ceptureanu, 2019). The interests of the pre-service teachers to explore different contents would benefit them in the long run since their knowledge would be increased. This would help them to be more responsive to their 21st-century students in a more advantageous way. This finding from the research corroborates with the research of Hana and Hacene (2017) and also that of Tang, Zhang and Reiter-Palmon (2020).

The introduction of 'German University Life' and 'German Daily Life' courses into the course syllabus of pre-service teachers of KNU opened the students up to be more tolerant towards the views and ideas of their colleagues. As the research of Tasdugen, Tekin, Kaya and Gunel (2020) rightly asserted, creativity is present whenever ideas are shared and then deliberated on. Whenever individuals are opened to listen to the views of ideas, they tend to learn more and then correct their mistakes, which help them in building a stronger character and more refined knowledge.

5. Conclusion

This course 'German University Life' was evaluated on the basis that freshmen could have an opportunity to do the simulation in advance in the intercultural perspective, by dealing with the overall German campus life. In this context, students could improve their capacity in tolerance, self-development and creativity which are the basic capacities of creativity and character education in terms of intercultural perspective. This course suggested understanding the basic knowledge of the course and fundamental frame of the course's purpose. In addition, re-conceptualisation was newly conducted in order to implement various educational approach methods creatively about the course subject by utilising both German and English. Especially, exchange students from Germany participated in the 'German University Life' programme so the course process was much suitable for the students. To develop realism for the course, interviews and communication videos on the subject was collected from exchange students who studied in Germany, and they were utilised in the course as well.

Moreover, the creativity and character education model which was applied to this course induced students to learn to improve themselves as pre-service teachers. Every student shared and exchanged ideas about what teaching methods are creative and what circumstance is defined as character education, so the entire course was being much active. According to students' daily diary, which was implemented during the course of the semester, some difficulties were found about the creativity and character education conducted in the short time. Practically, it is difficult to derive maximum capacity of creativity and character education through the course for just one semester. Nevertheless, the

most important achievement of this course is that every student empathised about what creativity and character education was and how it was applied in this course for the semester.

The implementation of the 'German daily life' and 'German university life' courses into the syllabus of Korean universities' teacher trainees proved to have a positive effect on their recognition of character and creativity, their appreciation of its benefits and it improved their tolerance levels as well. The participants appreciated the essence of giving people the opportunity to express themselves which was one of the main aims of the implementation of the programme. This research, therefore, recommends that other Korean universities implement this programme or provide similar programmes that could help their pre-service teachers acquire these basic skills that are needed to help them perform better on the field.

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