

# Creativity in Early Childhood

## The Creative Mind: Nurturing Children's Creativity



"Think left and think right  
and think low and think high.  
Oh, the thinks you can think up  
if only you try!"

- Dr. Seuss

The Characteristics of effective learning:

- Play (Doing and exploring)
- Active learning (Engagement)
- Creating and thinking critically

Creativity and Critical thinking

**Having own ideas** - focuses on creativity – generating new ideas or ways of doing things across all areas of learning and development. By being inventive and creative, children can find new challenges or problems to solve and can come up with their own unique ways of solving these.

**Making links** - Using what they already know to learn new things As children grow older, their thinking becomes more conscious as concepts are developed and linked together. They begin to finding meaning in sequence, in cause and effect, and in the intentions of others.

**Choosing way to do things** - and finding new ways, is all about how children learn to approach goal directed activity in organised ways by making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks – planning what to do, and being able to change their approach if necessary. There is some evidence to show that when children were asked to explain how they had solved a problem, they learned more than when they were simply given positive feedback. Explaining errors seems to lead to more lasting learning than explaining why something is correct. This suggests that understanding the processes of how problems are solved is more important than simply getting the right answer.

The Creating and thinking critically characteristic of learning is all about thinking. We are aware that babies and young children are thinkers who make sense of their experiences through perceiving patterns and developing concepts. As children engage in all the different activities which take place in the early years setting, they actively think about the meaning of what they are doing. Over time they will begin to become more aware of their own thinking – we call this metacognition. This awareness of oneself as a thinker and learner is thought to be a key characteristic of a successful learner.

### Creating and thinking critically

**Having their own ideas** covers the critical area of creativity – generating new ideas and approaches in all areas of endeavour. Being inventive allows children to find new problems as they seek challenges, and to explore ways of solving these.

**Possible lines of enquiry:**

- Does the child generate new ideas during activities?
- Does the child adapt, refine or make changes when previous ideas were unsuccessful or could be developed?
- Is the child inventive in solving problems, using and synthesising knowledge and skills across areas of learning?

**Using what they know** to learn new things refers to the way in which children develop and link concepts, find meaning in sequence, cause and effect and in the intentions of others through both narrative and scientific modes of thought.

**Possible lines of enquiry:**

- Does the child talk about or explore the idea of cause and effect through actions?
- Does the child use acquired knowledge and skills to explore new learning across and within areas of learning?
- Does the child offer ideas of why things happen and how things work or show this in exploratory play?

**Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways** involves approaching goal-directed activity in organised ways, making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks, planning and monitoring what to do and being able to change strategies.

**Possible lines of enquiry:**

- Does the child explore ways of solving new problems including trial and error?
- Is the child able to plan and monitor what has been done?
- Can the child change strategies when appropriate?

## Defining Creativity, Creative thinking and Critical thinking:

Creative thinking and critical thinking are two sides of the same coin, and an understanding of these two key features informs the current approach to learning and teaching. These combined thinking processes lead to creativity.

The relationship between creative and critical thinking is close, almost symbiotic in as much as creativity needs the ground that is prepared by critical thinking in which to grow. They then interchange with each other throughout the creative process as ideas are formed, developed and reflected upon.

### Creativity:

**Imagination with purpose** – imaginative activity directed at achieving an objective. It's all about ideas.

**Originality** – original in relation to their own previous work and output. This element of novelty is where self-expressions come into play

**Value** – Creativity is about output – either as a product or solution. So it has to be of value in relation to its original purpose – it satisfies what the children set out to achieve

### Creative thinking:

This is the process we use to develop ideas that are original and useful. It is the ability to think of original and diverse ideas and to elaborate ideas. It includes the process of exploring multiple avenues of action or thoughts which is sometimes referred to as divergent thinking – thinking of multiple alternatives/options. But it is also playing with the ideas. Thinking in possibilities, being flexible and playful and thinking new connections/combinations. Creative thinking encompasses open-mindedness, flexibility and adaptability.

### Critical thinking:

The objective analysis and/or evaluation of an issue in order to develop a judgement.

Mode of thinking, where the thinker improves their understanding by converging thoughts.

- Ability to think clearly informed by experience/ evidence/ observation/ reflection/ communication
- Ability to understand logical connection between ideas ( +memory/recall )
- Ability to understand and explain ideas, analyse, synthesise and evaluate
- Ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking

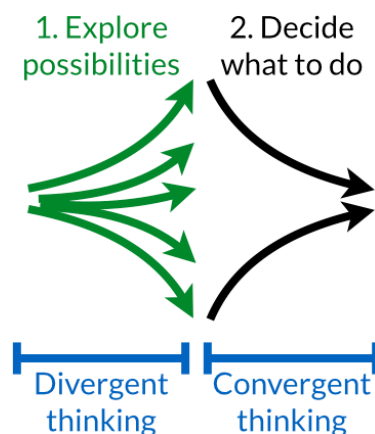
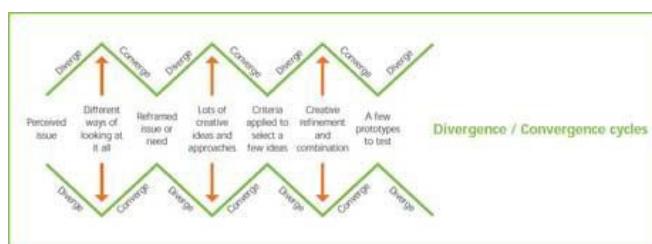
Leads to: Ability to apply new info /ideas in a new way = leading to creativity

Creative thinking: Expanding the options/ including divergent thinking

Generating multiple ideas Playing with possibilities Deferring judgement Enlarging perspectives Seeking out the unusual Combining/ integrating elements Visualising Imagining options Build on others ideas Many right answers Using intuition/ haunches Playful	Generative Divergent Lateral Possibility Suspended judgement Hypothesis forming Subjective Open ended Associative Yes and ...
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Critical thinking: Narrowing the options/ including convergent thinking

Clarifying Selecting Making judgements Categorise Refining Make decisions Hone in/focus Make sense of Connecting Analysing	Analytic Convergent Vertical Probability Judgement Hypothesis testing Objective Linear Reasoning Logic Yes but...
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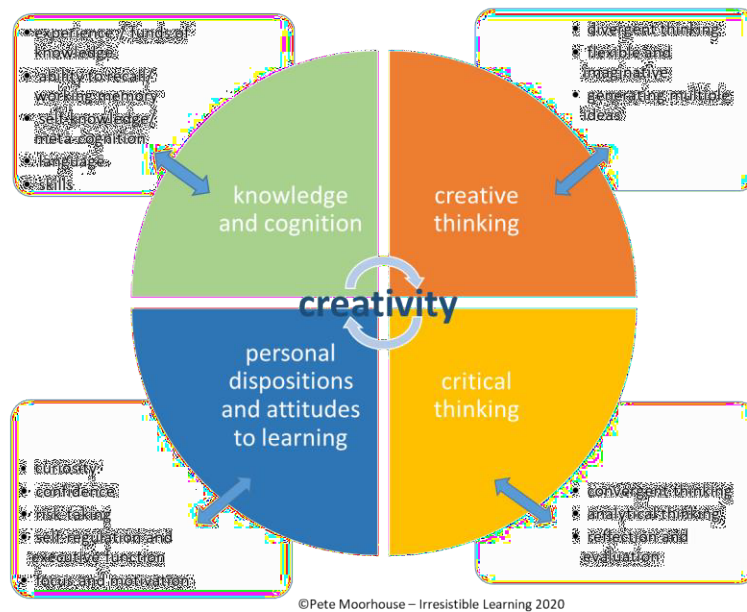


## Holistic Model of Creativity (Moorhouse 2020)

4 internal domains leading to creativity

Enabling individual factors...

Creativity is a way of operating that we all have capacity for



Personal dispositions and attitudes to learning:

- Curiosity - wondering
- Motivation – eagerness to investigate and explore
- Focus/ engagement/ managing distraction (persistence)
- Perseverance – sticking with difficulty
- Social: empathy and ability to work with others, listen, share.
- Resilience – comfortable with mistakes/failure
- Risk-taking – courage - willingness to risk being wrong
- Tolerate ambiguity, open-minded, flexibility
- Self-regulation and executive function
- Confidence and self-esteem ( well-being)
- Humour and fun – playful relaxed approach

# Encouraging Creativity

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## Adult role: in extending children's thinking

The role we play is extremely important, asking/ offering the right words (including non-verbal communication) at the right time. (often less is more so the children keep their "flow"). This work builds on ideas of how to develop sustained shared thinking by Dowling 2005.

Tune in	Observe and Listen Encourage Show sensitivity Show genuine interest Be sensitive to their needs
Development	Respect children's decisions and choices Allow children freedom to plan and express their plans Invite to elaborate Recap Offer personal experience Encourage children to ask questions Open questioning to extend thinking Scaffolding children's thinking effectively Giving children enough space and time Offering encouragement – use specific praise Adding a commentary Making links with previous learning, Remind Clarify ideas Help children to think collaboratively Encourage sequencing and ordering of information, sorting and classifying Encourage children to analyse, identify relationships, compare/contrast Encourage relating cause with effect Encourage the separation of fact from opinion Introduce challenge and extension
Creative	Offer open ended resources Model creative thinking Allow freedom to make mistakes Encourage risk taking Encourage to think of different solutions, take time. Offer alternative viewpoints Encourage prediction/ speculation/ to make hypotheses Encourage imagination/ generate new ideas Accept conflict/ ambiguity of ideas
Reflective/ Planning	Encourage reflection. Make time for this. Encourage self-assessment Introduce challenge for planning next steps Promote critical discussion Help children connect their reflections their original plans Welcoming children's commentary, giving children time to talk Build on previous thinking to inform new thought Allow time to revise plans and ask new questions Counterfactual – reflecting on outcome if things had been done differently



## Examples of open questions – to develop children’s powerful thinking

The right question/comment at the right time

Encouraging children to explain or elaborate

“Could you tell me more about.....”

Can you tell me what’s happening? Can you explain your thinking?

Repeating back and recapping to ensure understanding

“so...you think.....”

Encouraging planning

What do we need to find out?

“What could you do first? How could you make it stronger?.....”

“What could we use for a.....”

Making connections to previous learning/ experience

“Do you remember when.....This reminds me of...”

Offering your own ideas/ thinking out loud

“I wonder whether.....” “What if”- modelling creative thinking

Clarifying ideas

“So you think that.....” How do you know this?

What is the same about these things?

Encouraging children to speculate

“What do you think will happen next.....”

“How do you think ....feels about..”

What do you think will happen if?

Extending children’s thinking

“What do you think about....”

“Do you think it’s fair that.....”

How could you know what to do next?

Do you think this is the only way?

Reviewing/ evaluating:

How have we solved the problem? How can we check if it works?

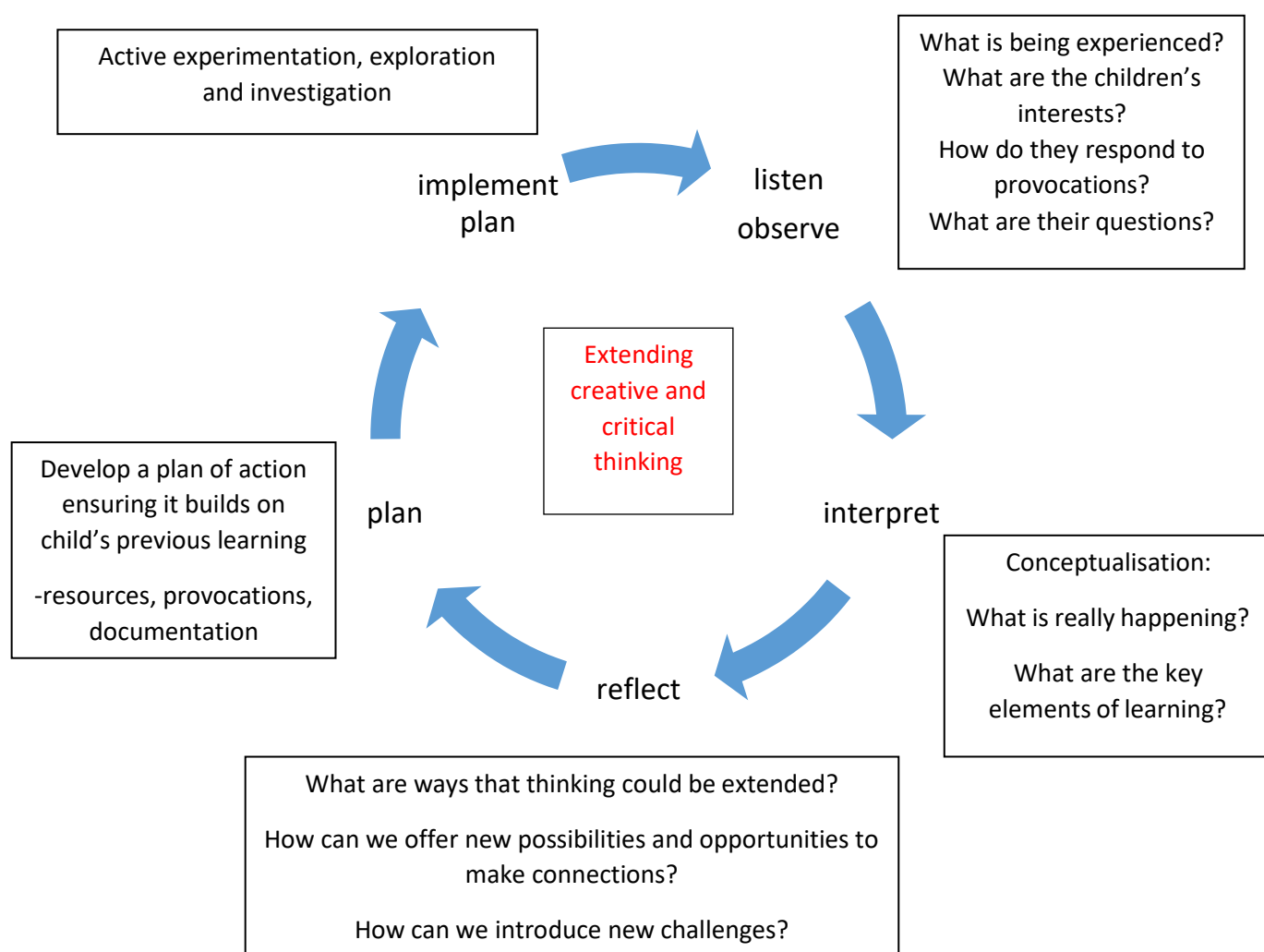
Do you think this was the only solution? Can you share what has happened?

Would you change anything next time?

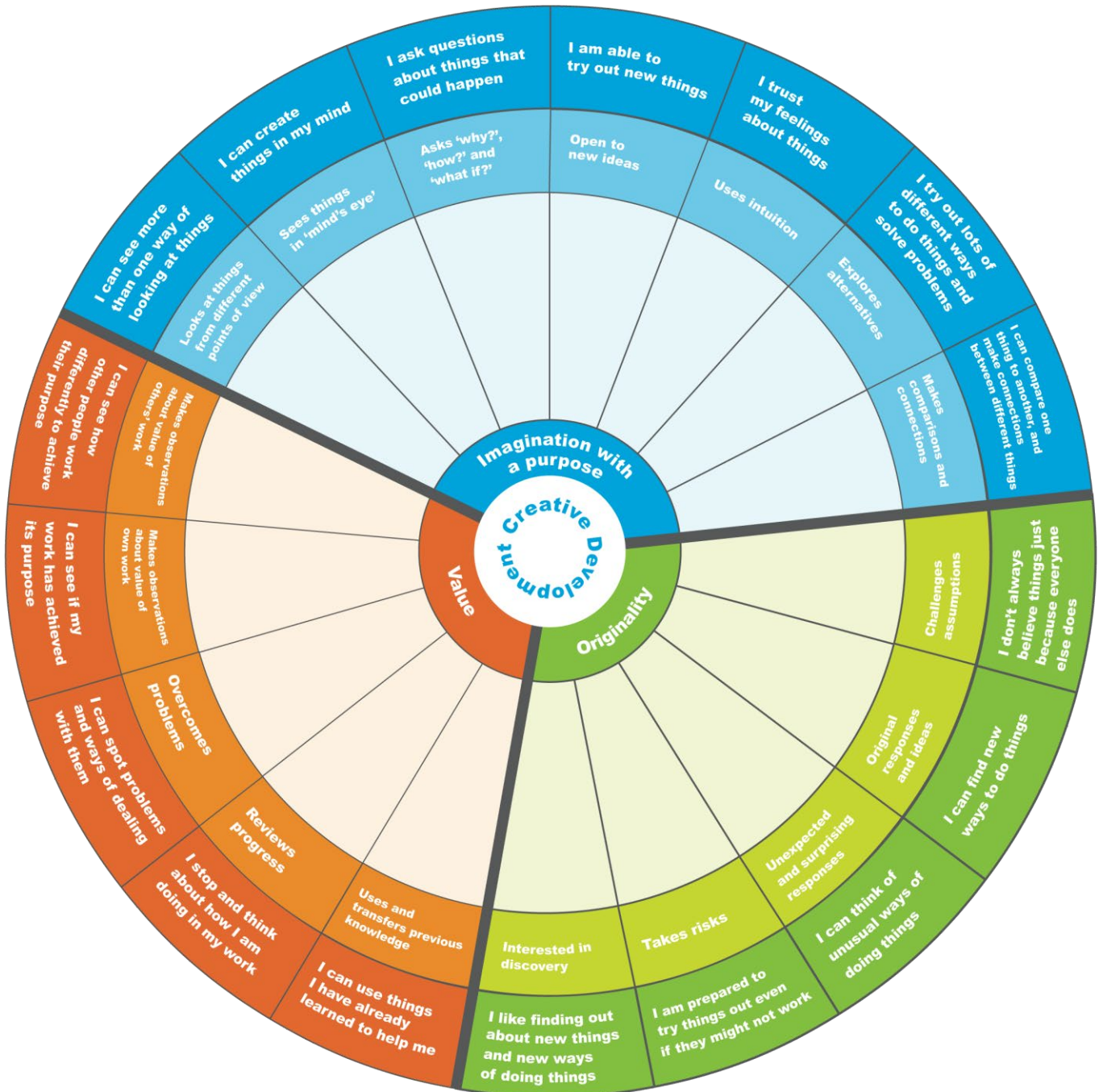


## Appendix 1

Reflective practice based on Kolb experiential learning cycle:

**Adult role in reflective practice responding to interests and extending thinking**

The Creativity wheel was created by Creative Partnerships in 1998



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Scotland resources

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The care Inspectorate – our creative journey

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Creativity Portal

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