

# Exploring Creativity in Development : Creating a Narrative from #LTHEchat43

*Norman Jackson*



**Simon Lancaster** @S\_J\_Lancaster ·  
#LTHEchat has created  
529 Tweets  
135 Re-Tweets  
77 Users  
20 HashTags

In this article I draw on a selection of the 500 posts to illustrate some of the most important themes emerging from the Twitter conversation together with responses from an online questionnaire survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FQVQX82>. 37 people completed the survey and the results can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.net/results/SM-CHVZV52Q/>



**LTHE Tweetchat** @LTHEchat · Jan 20

Hello and welcome to the #LTHEchat the topic Norman will be discussing with us in a few minutes will be: Exploring Creativity in Development

## Q1 What does being creative mean to you in your work as a teacher, developer or other educational practitioner?

For these participants being creative in the context of their work involves thinking in imaginative ways, using their thinking to find solutions to problems, combining ideas/things to produce something new, taking risks, thinking into the future, experimenting and discovering new and novel ways of teaching, being open to new ideas, being flexible and adaptive all of these things in the context of engaging learners and capturing their imaginations.



**Kyle Charnley** @KMCharnley · Jan 20

#LTHEchat A1 creativity is - facilitating learning in a way that captivates all of your learners in new and meaningful ways



**Kandy Woodfield** @jess1ecat · Jan 20

A1. #LTHEchat pushing at the edges, trying new approaches, testing out alternative ways of thinking or doing, having some fun ;)



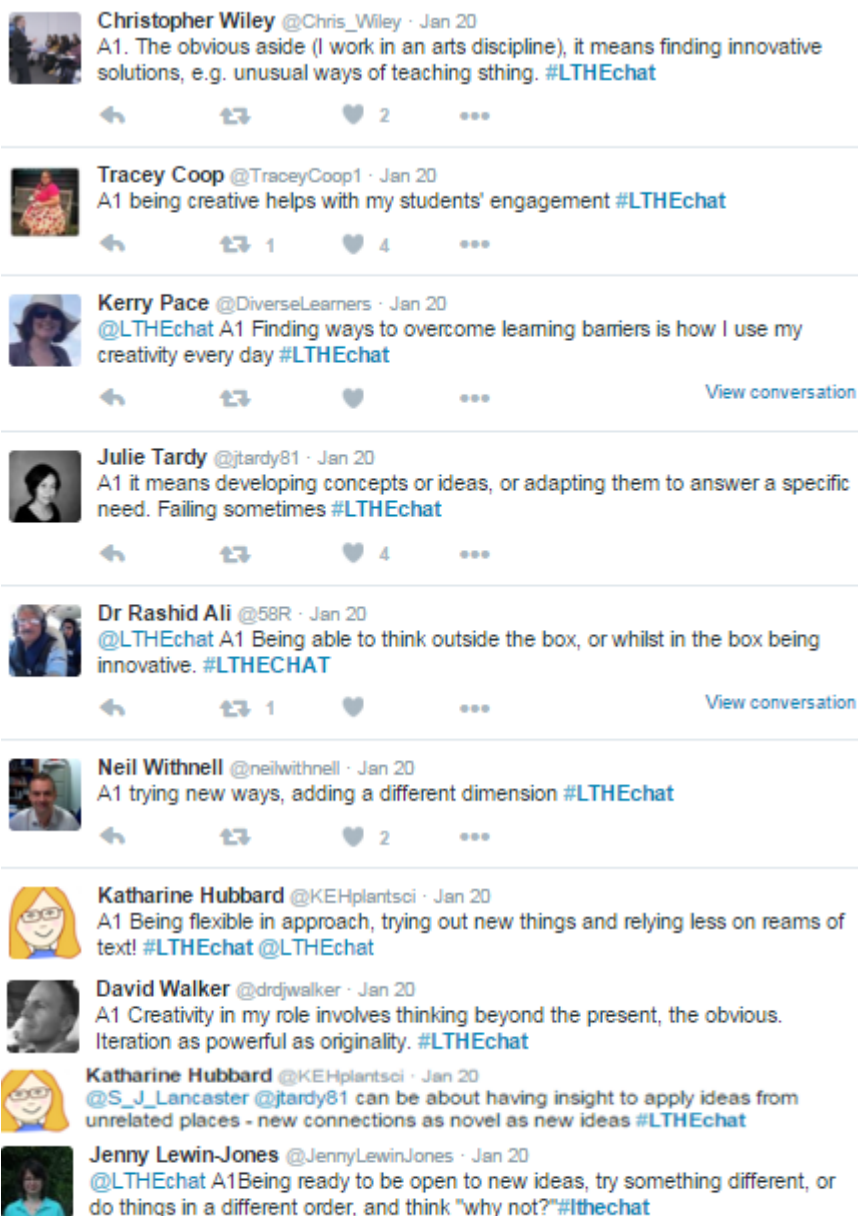
**Gill Ritchie** @gsritchie · Jan 20

A1 Coming up with novel solutions. having fun, doing things differently, taking risks #LTHEchat

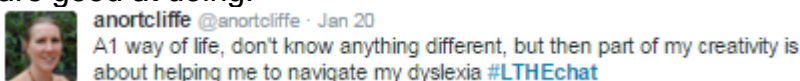


**Simon Lancaster** @S\_J\_Lancaster · Jan 20

A1 I am chemist., Creativity is synthesis: combining known elements to make some new and possible better then evidencing it. #LTHEchat



It can also be thought of in terms of helping an individual to deal with something that hinders them or conversely enables them to exploit what they are good at doing.

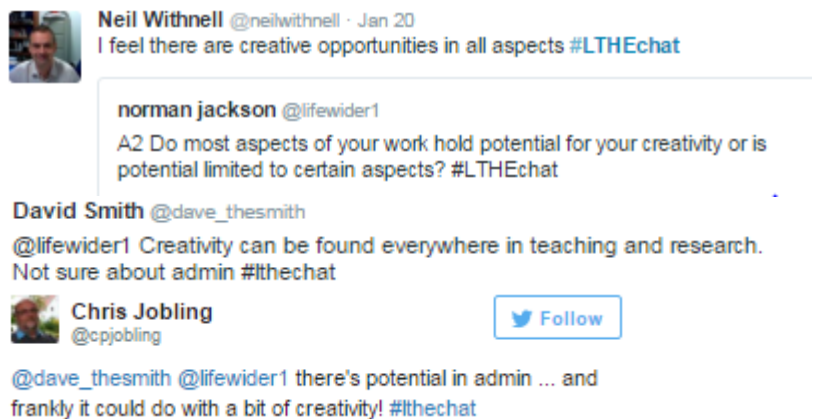


The survey showed that being creative in the work context means many different things. All 14 items in the checklist provided in the questionnaire were considered to be relevant with average scores of between 3.7-4.2 on a 5pt level of agreement scale. Presumably all these things could feature in a development process!

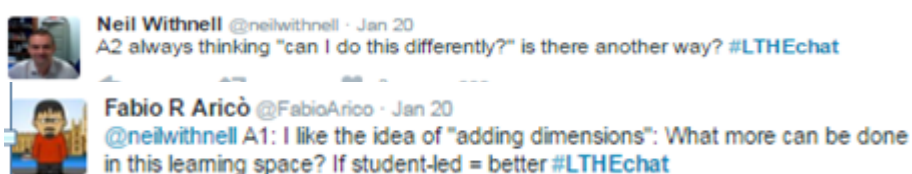
In the context of your work please indicate your level of statements about what being creative means to you agreement with these (n=37 1.0 strongly disagree - 5.0 strongly agree)	Average
using my imagination	3.89
having ideas that are new to me	3.97
having ideas that are new to the contexts I am working in	4.11
changing my understanding	3.70
adapting existing ideas for the contexts I am working in	4.11
doing things differently	3.73
making new things	3.69
making new things happen	3.89
seeing situations from different perspectives	3.92
going beyond what has been done before in a particular context	3.86
being able to look at new concepts and ideas and put them together in different but personally meaningful ways	4.22
generating something new in response to an educational need or aspiration which matters to me	4.16
solving problems and overcoming barriers	4.16
improvising when I have to	4.19

## Q2 What sort of things do you do in your work that requires/inspires you to be creative? Where is the most creative potential?

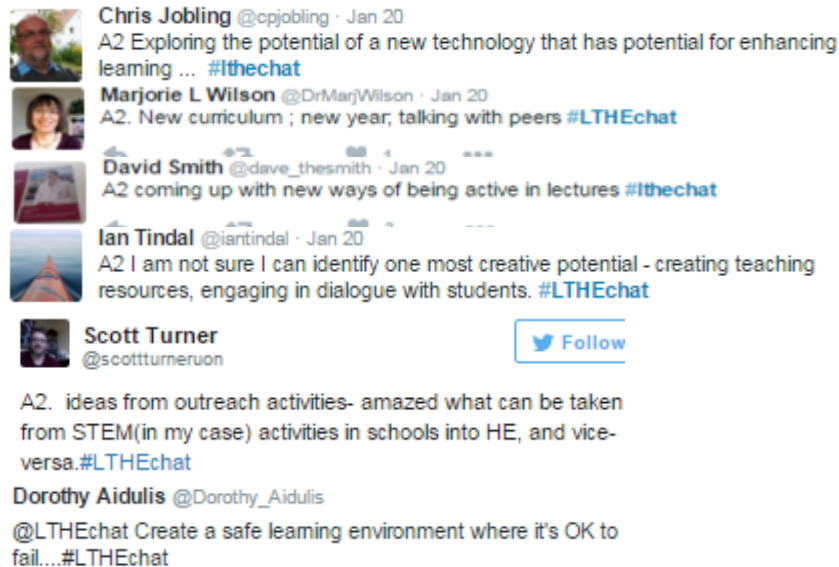
The survey revealed that most participants believe they are either often creative in their work (43%) or creative in most aspects of their work most of the time (35%) suggesting that affordance for creativity in professional work environments in higher education is high and that people working in teaching or development roles both recognise the affordance and are able to realise it.



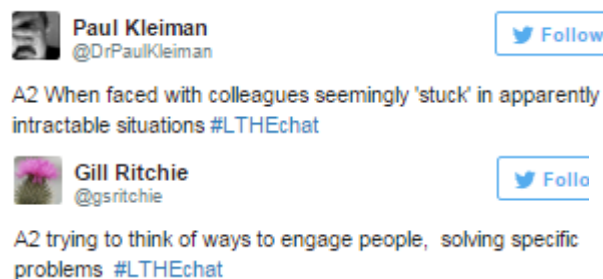
There are several driving forces for our creativity. The first is the self-actualising force that drives individuals to try develop/improve themselves and the work they are doing.



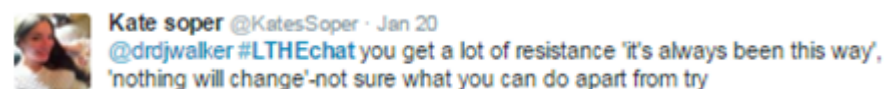
A second driving force derives from the need/desire to help other people. In the context of higher education this includes eg students, colleagues and peers and people involved in partnerships outside the institution. There are many different contexts in which higher education professionals can make use of their creativity.



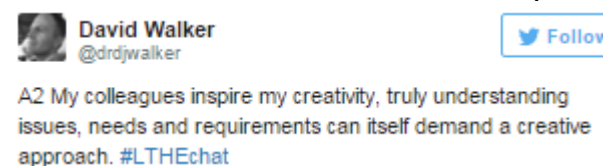
A third force is simply necessity. There is a problem to be solved or issue to be overcome so we enlist our creativity to help us.



Creativity is also used in overcoming resistance and barriers [to different ways of thinking/behaving?].





A significant number of participants recognised that their creativity is also connected to their collaborations and partnerships with students or peers.






@iantindal Some of the best ideas arrive after conversations with students who present a problem that needs addressing

 **Kyle Charnley** @KMCharnley · Jan 20  
#LTHEchat A2 - being able to talk with colleagues helps me bring new ideas to light & the sharing of each other's skills

 **Kate Soper** @KatesSoper · Jan 20  
@drdjwalker #LTHEchat you get a lot of resistance 'it's always been this way', 'nothing will change'-not sure what you can do apart from try


 **Kandy Woodfield** @jess1ecat · Jan 20  
#LTHEchat A2. Collaborating with colleagues, new contacts, students often fertile ground for creativity, challenges your own mindset.




@lifewider1 #thechat I agree - for me creativity and inspiration lies in collaboration with students as well as staff.

### Q3 Think of a particular educational or professional developmental project - at what points did your creativity emerge within it?


Many different views were expressed. The first theme is temporal - creativity is associated with the early stages of a development project when excitement, motivation and energy is high and new possibilities are being generated. Or, in the middle stages of a project when ideas are applied to specific contexts and situations.

 **Tracey Coop** @TraceyCoop1 · Jan 20  
#LTHEchat A3 I tend to get overexcited at the beginning & write all ideas down to see what could work and what was creative overexcitement

 **Fabio R Arico** @FabioArico · Jan 20  
A3: In the middle of it: when the idea is applied in the classroom and student response helps to improve it and make it effective #LTHEchat

**Sara Houston** @SaraPMHouston  
@drdjwalker me too I think, though definitely at the beginning and always when I have the most energy & enthusiasm #LTHEchat

A second theme relates to points when new connections are made - ideas collide, dots are joined up.


 **David Smith** @dave\_thesmith · Jan 20  
A4 the clash of ideas, current issues with past experience. Joining dots between the two seemingly unrelated events #LTHEchat

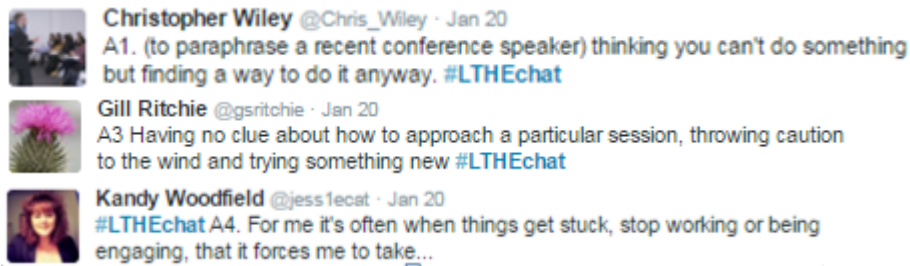
A third theme when people take stock of a situation and challenge themselves to think differently about a situation.



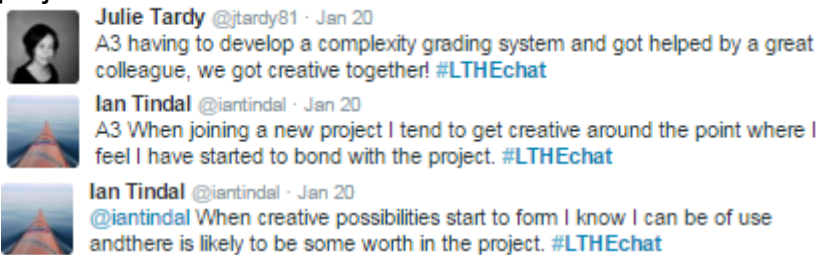
A3. I guess it was when I stopped following other people's ideas and started having my own. #LTHEchat

A third theme was creativity is needed when its needed eg 'when you get stuck' and / or when you need to improvise.

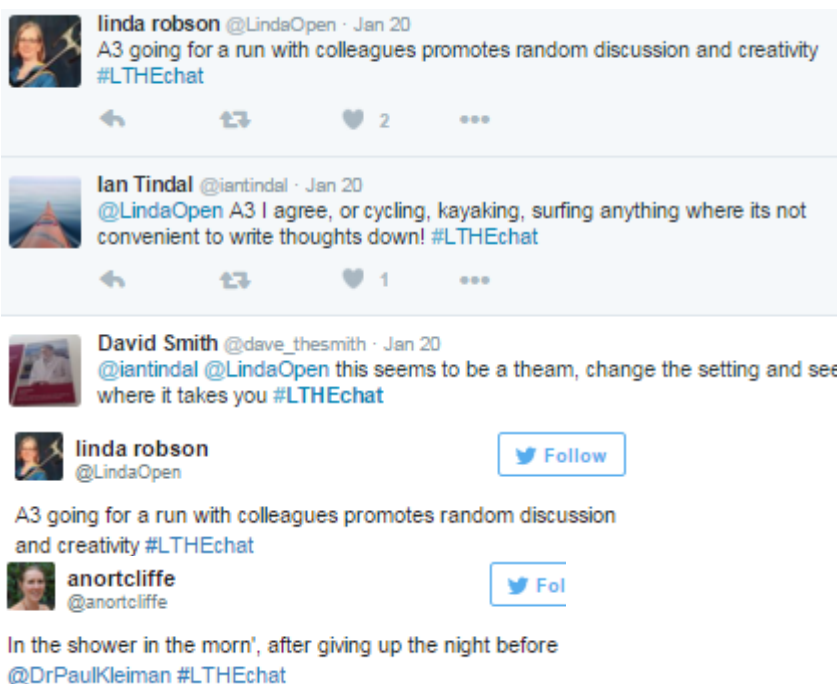
 **Katharine Hubbard** @KEHplantsci · Jan 20  
A3 Creativity needed at the point I get stuck or frustrated - 'easy' tasks more prone to taking the 'obvious' #LTHEchat @LTHEchat



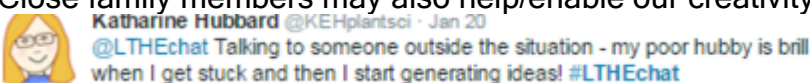
A fourth theme involves relationships. Creativity emerges when people interact and help each other and form relationships with their developmental project.



Relationships also extend to situations outside the work context where people interact socially or with a particular pastime that may have nothing to do with work but which provides the thinking space within which new thoughts can emerge.



Close family members may also help/enable our creativity.



Finally, there is a view that there is no particular point in a development project.: creativity can and does emerge and fizzle out at any point.



David Walker  
@drdjwalker

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A3 Struggling to identify a point. For me ideas evolve over time. They come, go, develop, fizzle out, reemerge. All have merit.

And we are at our most creative when our desire (need/purpose) and our motivations connect.



David Walker @drdjwalker · Jan 20

A4 Desire. Drive. When these fall into line for me I am at my best. #LTHEchat

#### Q4 What circumstances caused your creativity to emerge in this particular developmental scenario?

Responses to this question reveal a wide range of circumstances. They include:

Negative situations when people are dissatisfied with the status quo, or are bored and/or frustrated.



Julie Tardy @jtardy81 · Jan 20

A4 angst of pursuing a dull project for a year? Creativity is fun #LTHEchat



Kate Soper @KatesSoper · Jan 20

#LTHEchat A4 usually out of frustration! Cant keep trying the same things&expecting different results-discussions &explorations of new ideas



Linda Robson @LindaOpen · Jan 20

A4 wanting to extend engagement needs creativity when the status quo isn't working #LTHEchat

Having to deal with situations that are unknown or unfamiliar and /or complex.



Gill Ritchie @gsritchie · Jan 20

A4 Having to deal with the unknown (that sounds cryptic) #ltthechat



Linda Robson  
@LindaOpen

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@lifewider1 @neilwithnell @gsritchie complexity often forces creativity as we look for paths round obstacles #LTHEchat

And situations when you just have to use your creativity.



Simon Lancaster @S\_J\_Lancaster · Jan 20

A4 "necessity is the mother of invention" #LTHEchat

For example when you encounter a barrier which inhibits or stops progress or get stuck



Christopher Wiley @Chris\_Wiley · Jan 20

A4. Hitting a roadblock where I had to tread a new path to progress. #mixedmetaphors #LTHEchat



Kandy Woodfield @jess1ecat · Jan 20

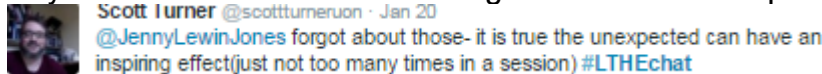
#LTHEchat A4. For me it's often when things get stuck, stop working or being engaging, that it forces me to take...



Santanu Vasant @santanuvasant · Jan 20

.@LTHEchat A4 Difficulties, barriers, difficult problems that needed different thinking, ideas and new ways to deal with problem #LTHEchat

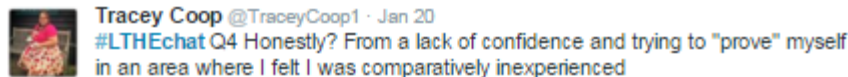
Or you have to deal with something that was not anticipated - the unexpected!



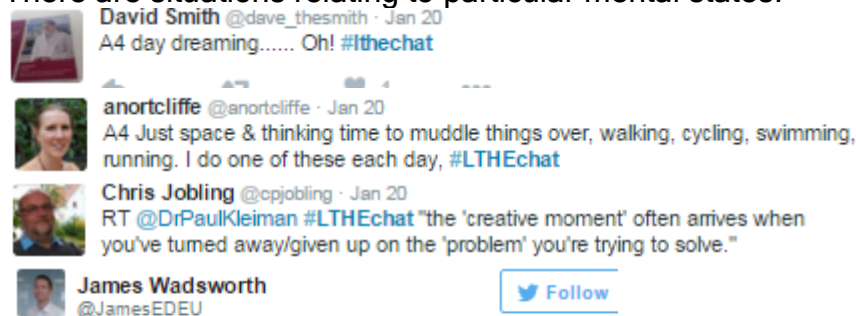
Or you are severely constrained by a resource like time.



Then there are personal factors relating to self-esteem and the need to prove oneself [and implicitly develop oneself]

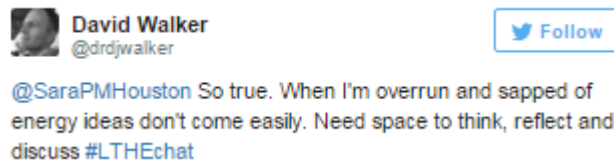


There are situations relating to particular mental states.

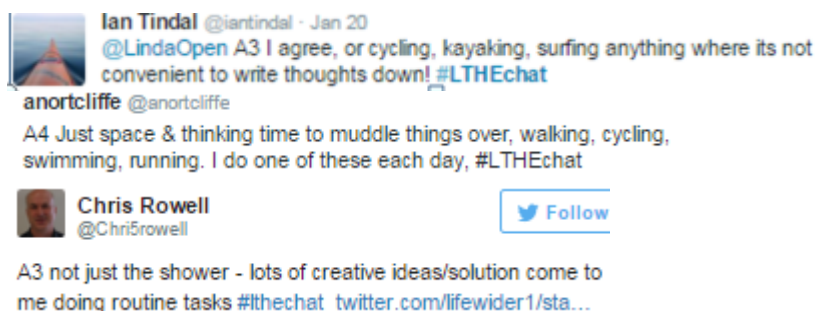


#LTHEchat A3 most creative not at the time of conversation or planning but in the moments of quiet and "brain in neutral"

And some mental states are just not conducive to being creative.

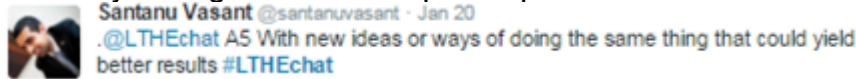


They also include situations other than work when your mind is open to ideas for example when you are in the shower, out walking or running, or pursuing a sporting activity. Several respondents identified this situation and it seems to be quite common. This is particularly interesting as it links our creativity in a professional development context to a developmental ecology that is lifewide rather than job-wide.

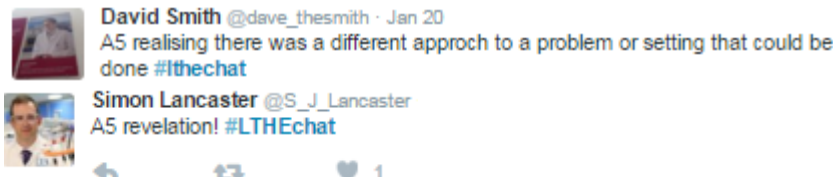


## Q5 How did your creativity express itself in this particular developmental scenario?

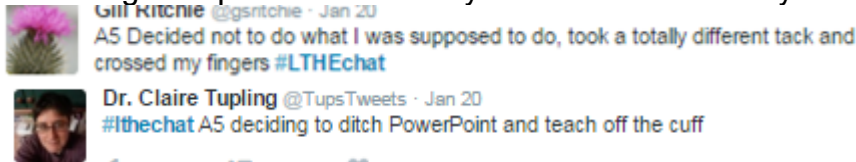
New ideas about how to accomplish something are essential to the way creativity emerges in a development process.



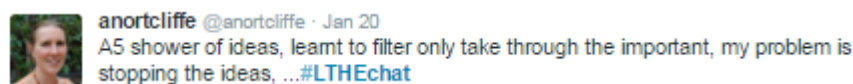
Several participants identified a moment of realisation or perhaps a change of perspective or understanding as a way in which creative ideas emerged from their circumstances.



A second scenario is when a person decides to abandon their plans and 'wing it'. Having to improvise is one way in which our creativity emerges..



One respondent identified a process of filtering a lot of ideas to focus on the most useful.



## Q6 What are the implications of the way creativity emerged for encouraging student/staff creativity in your work contexts?

It's often difficult to extract meaning from a conversation when you are still in the conversation. This question forced participants in only 10mins to reflect on the perspectives that had been shared, to make sense of it and draw out some general conclusions that might be applied to their own teaching and/or professional development contexts..













One of the main themes to emerge was that creativity cannot be forced. It requires teachers/developers to establish certain conditions that encourage, nurture and facilitate individuals' and groups' creativity. Engaging colleagues/students in new novel experiences ie take them on a developmental pathway with which they were unfamiliar.

Perhaps also colleagues/students could be presented with incomplete solutions to problems that they can complete.

The everyday constraints on creativity featured and the need think creativity to get around the problem of lack of time and space for interaction. Staff and students need time and space to think and encouragement to use their own

courage to take risks. The need to change the culture so that if people tried something [that was risky/difficult] but they did not succeed they would not be penalised, rather they would be rewarded for their courage.

Perhaps the teachers'/developers' role is to model their own creativity encourages others and gives them permission to try things for themselves.

-  **Julie Tardy** @jtardy81 · Jan 20  
A6 got colleagues to engage, noticed more engagement with students. Reason also is content can be showcased in a sillier way too #LTHEchat
-  **David Smith** @dave\_thesmith · Jan 20  
A6 you can't force creativity to happen, you can foster it. #ltthechat
-  **Simon Lancaster** @S\_J\_Lancaster · Jan 20  
A6 I can see where this question is going. But there isn't a recipe for creativity. We can just encourage and facilitate. #LTHEchat
-  **Jenny Lewin-Jones** @JennyLewinJones · Jan 20  
@LTHEchat A6 Must think creatively to get around the problem of lack of time and space for interaction #LTHEchat
-  **Tracey Coop** @TraceyCoop1 · Jan 20  
#LTHEchat A6 engagement from colleagues in new/novel approaches and change including the use of technologies
-  **linda robson** @LindaOpen · Jan 20  
@Chris\_Wiley @chrissinerantzi it has to solve the problem, trying something which fails or makes things worse is not rewarded! #LTHEchat
-  **Chrissi Nerantzi** @chrissinerantzi · Jan 20  
@LindaOpen @Chris\_Wiley but can/should we learn from it? How can we enable this? What is required? #LTHEchat
-  **Neil Withnell** @neilwithnell · Jan 20  
creativity emerged? A6 created surely #LTHEchat
-  **Santanu Vasant** @santanuvasant · Jan 20  
@LTHEchat A6 Having half done solutions or ideas for staff to get a head start to things, that's a challenge. #LTHEchat
-  **Katharine Hubbard** @KEHplantsci · Jan 20  
A6 Being visibly creative gave others 'permission' to also try new things - create! culture of thinking outside the box #LTHEchat
-  **Christopher Wiley** @Chris\_Wiley · Jan 20  
A6. Implications - staff need to be given space & time to think, and courage to take risks & experiment. #LTHEchat
-  **anortcliffe** @anortcliffe · Jan 20  
A6 new approaches help others learn and engage, moving pedagogy forward for next generation #LTHEchat

## Closing remarks

As one person remarked, and I have observed in many similar conversations about creativity, where creativity is concerned there is a huge convergence of beliefs. We are in fact dealing with belief systems that are embedded in a culture and this culture is widely shared amongst higher education teachers and developers all over the world.

The really interesting thing for me is how many different ways and in different situations people get their ideas which they see as creative ideas, and similarly the many different contexts in which people are able to act creatively. People see the affordance in their working life and they use their developmental processes to realise the affordance. The one aspect of creativity I think was generally omitted from the conversation is the way we use our reflective skills to make sense of our experiences and draw deeper

meaning from them. I believe that this is an essential aspect of our creativity which often goes unrecognised and unappreciated.

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement on the value of these definitions when considering creativity in the context of developing something. (1.0 not useful 2.0 useful 3.0 very useful)</i>	<b>Average</b>
Creativity is the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain (Amabile 1996)	<b>2.11</b>
Creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. It involves two processes: thinking then producing. (Naiman 2014)	<b>2.19</b>
I define creativity as the entire process by which ideas are generated, developed and transformed into value. It comprises what people commonly mean by innovation and entrepreneurship (Kao 1997)	<b>2.25</b>
Creativity is the desire and ability to use imagination, insight, intellect, feeling and emotion to move an idea from one state to an alternative, previously unexplored state (Dellas and Gaier 1970)	<b>2.31</b>
Creativity is 'the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life' Rogers (1961).	<b>1.78</b>

One final comment relates to the value of different definitions of creativity when considering creativity in the context of developing something. Five different definitions were offered in the questionnaire. The definition considered to be of most value was that proposed by Dellas and Gaier (1970) with a weighted average of 2.31 on a 3 point scale. This is perhaps not surprising given the importance of ideas in the academic domain. What is surprising to me, given the perspectives shared in the #LTHEchat conversation, is that the definition considered to have least value is that proposed by Rogers' (1961). As the LTHEchat demonstrated creativity does not just happen in a vacuum, individual's creativity is deeply connected to their uniqueness as an individual and the circumstances of their lives and where our relational products might be our ideas, the material or virtual objects we make, the processes we invent to achieve something through which we also develop, and the practices we perform.



norman jackson @lifewider1 · Jan 20

This chat has been really energetic and I look forward to reading everything again - lots of great stuff - thank you so much #LTHEchat

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to all the participants in the #LTHEchat and all the respondents to the questionnaire survey. Thank you very much for sharing your perspectives. I welcome comments and additional perspectives based on the #LTHEchat. A version of this article will be published in the April issue of Creative Academic Magazine. You can read my reflections on my own development process for #LTHEchat at:

<http://www.normanjackson.co.uk/scraps-of-life-blog>

<http://www.creativeacademic.uk/magazine.html>

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