Developing a Creative and Innovative Organisational Culture: Experiences from Continuous Embodied Creativity Training

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Abstract
This study aims to explore the impact of continuous embodied creativity training on organisational creative and innovative culture in 5 Danish organisations. The study finds that trainees experience less resistance towards organisational change, stronger sense of community with colleagues, and a higher level of energy at work. The study also finds a hot-or-not attitude towards the training between trainees and non-trainees colleagues in the organisations. The paper presents examples of creativity training exercises used by the organisations and discusses the findings in relation to creative and innovative organisational culture.

Keywords
Creativity Training, Organisational Creativity, Innovative Culture, Continuous Training

Introduction

Creativity training is a human activity with the purpose of enhancing creative abilities. Since the 1960's the interest in studying creativity training has been increasing. The focus of these programs range from training motivation (Hennessey, Amabile & Martinage 1989), improvisation (Karakelle 2009), self-efficacy (Mathisen & Bronnick 2009), imagination (Lalemi 1991), analytical abilities relevant for creativity (Osburn & Mumford 2006), the creative process (e.g. Parnes 1992), technique (e.g. Osborn 1963), tools (e.g. Gordon 1961), communication (e.g. de Bono 1985), horizontal knowledge application (e.g. Hansen and Byrge 2013) etc.

Some of the creativity training programs have been relatively reflective oriented (Birdi, Leach & Magadley 2012; Clapham and Schuster 1992; Conninham and MacGregor 2008; Ridley & Birney 1967; Osburn & Mumford 2006; Jausovec 1994; Cropley & Cropley 2000; Feldhusen, Bahlke & Treffinger 1969; Byrge & Hansen 2013, Baer 1988; Burke & Williams 2008; Robbins & Kegley 2010; Hennesey, Amabile & Martinage 1989; Davis & Bull 1978) and others have been relatively embodied oriented (Ridley & Birney 1967; Miller, Russ, Gibson & Hall 1970; Burstiner 1973; Houtz & Feldhusen 1976; Cliatt, Shaw & Sherwood 1980; Khatena 1971; Memmert 2007; Glover 1980; Zachopoulou, Trevlas & Konstadinidou 2006; Karakelle 2009; Kangas 2010; Karwowski & Soszynski 2008; Parker 1998; Lalemi 1991; Mathisen & Bronnick 2009; Gilbert, Prenshaw & Ivy 1996). Embodied oriented creativity training is an activity for becoming more creative. This is

opposed to the reflective oriented training where focus is on developing an understanding of creativity.

No previous study has studied a reflective or embodied training program that has been continuous. Most training programs take between 10 minutes and a couple of days and only few take more than a week. The training program under study in this paper is continuing and thus is meant to be a lifelong activity. A trainee continues training until deciding to stop. Hereby, continuous creativity training share similarities to other kinds of training like training related to singing, fitness, soccer, etc. Continuous embodied creativity training can be used to improve personal creative abilities in an organisational context. Creativity in organisational contexts may relate more to everyday idea generation/development rather than to the development of historical inventions (Sternberg & Lubart 1999). On the job creativity training may relate mostly to little c (little originality) (Simonton 2011), mini c (imagination) and professional c (socially accepted but not eminent) (Kaufman & Beghetto 2009) rather than big C (eminent, disruptive and socially accepted) (Simonton 2011).

Continuous embodied creativity training is a new phenomenon in Denmark and is now taking place in both public organisations, in private companies and in educational institutions. The aim of this paper is to report on some trainees' experiences when implementing continuous embodied creativity training in an organisational setting. The paper will describe a neglected effect of creativity training program in organizational context: its impact on improving the creative and innovative organizational culture.

Research Method
The research uses an experimental-case-study setup, which is explained in the following.

Subjects
The subjects were 148 employees from five organisations: in elderly care (Gentofte Municipality), in general gymnastic and sport association (DGI), in central administration (Vejle Municipality), in adult teaching and training (AOF), and in children schooling (Mellervangsskolen).

Manipulation
The second author held 1-2 meetings with each of the five organisations in September of 2012. At the meeting key personnel from the organisations were introduced to the notion of continuous embodied creativity training and they decided to start up training among their own employees. In November 2012 the second author organised an introduction day for the organisations. Here the trainees were introduced to the notion and practice of continuous embodied creativity training. This introduction was conducted in 6 hours. They were also provided with a set of training exercises for at least 6 months / 13 hours of training. A follow-up day was organised for all organisations by the second author in March 2013. This follow-up day was primarily focused on sharing experiences of training across the five organisations. A new set of training exercises for at least 8 months / 16 hours of training was provided to the trainees.

The training exercises were categorised into eight areas of focus. These were exercises either focused on training originality, fluency, flexibility, elaboration, horizontal thinking, no-experienced judgement, task focus or parallel thinking. Below you will find three examples of training exercises that were handed out to the trainees.

Example A
Name: I Hate this Chair
Training: Flexibility
Time: 5 minutes
Stimulus: Word Training Cards

1. Get up and come into the middle of the floor.
2. Close your eyes and think of a thing from a bathroom (20 seconds). Open your eyes and find the person who thought of the same thing as you. Sit down on two chairs opposite one another.
3. (Hand out a Word Training Card - one to each trainee). You are now to generate ideas as to why you hate the chair you are sitting on. You should use the words from the cards as inspiration for generating ideas. Use only one word at a time. Try to come up with as many different reasons for hating the chair as possible.
4. Demonstration: (Sit down on a chair with a Word Training Card). My first word is tape: Hmmm, I really hate this chair because every time I sit in it, I feel like it sticks to me and I cannot get up from it again.
5. Take turns to generate ideas for why you have the chair. The person with most jewellery on starts now.
6. Please stop the exercise now.

Example B
Name: Restaurant
Training: Originality
Time:5 minutes
Stimulus: none

1. Get up and come into the middle of the floor.
2. Close your eyes and think of a restaurant chain (20 seconds). Open your eyes and find a person who thought of the same chain as you.
3. You are to think of: "What if" sentences with regard to a restaurant. For example "What if… there was no menu?", "What if… there were tables on the sealing?" or "What if… there were no waiters?" Every time you generate a 'what if' sentence, you must try to developing 1-2 ideas for what might actually happen in such a situation.
4. Demonstration: What if there is no menu? What might happen is that the customers bring their favourite recipe and the chef will cook according to that recipe. The concept may be called "your recipe - our perfection".
5. Please start now.
6. Please stop the exercise now.

Example C
Name: World History
Training: Task focus
Time: 4 minutes
Stimulus: none

1. Get up and come into the middle of the floor.
2. Go into pairs with a person wearing the same colour of socks as you.
3. You have now two minutes to narrate the world history. Be as detailed as possible. You must start by generating ideas about what happens just a minute ago. Then go on generating ideas of what happens just before that, and just before until the moment the world is "born". Remember you only have two minutes to do it.
4. (Make a demonstration like "just a minute ago I went to the toilet. Before that we had a en financial crisis that affected the entire world".
5. Please start now.
6. Please stop the exercise now.

Implementation
In November and December 2012 the organisations started implementing continuous embodied creativity training into their workdays. The implementation methods were different within and between the five organisations.

The majority of trainees started training in groups where one of them acted as a facilitating trainer reading aloud instructions and making demonstrations for the others. Group training has been implemented as formal session on Monday morning, Wednesday afternoon etc. It has also been implemented as less formal sessions like being used as kick off exercises for weekly staff meetings or similar. In some of the group training sessions there has been a clear intention of introducing continuous embodied creativity training to other colleagues in the organisations. Some of the employees that participated in the introduction day and the follow-up day were instructed to function as a motivator and a trainer for other colleagues that had not participated in these days.

A few trainees started training individually or in groups of two. In one of the organisations we saw that one of the trainees created a Christmas calendar with one training exercise for each day up till Christmas. This Christmas calendar was sent to the other trainees in the same organisation.

For most of the trainees the training was implemented as a 5 - 20 minutes a week program.

Data collection and analysis
This study has two sources of data. The first source of data was collected through formally organised semi structured interviews. Nine interviewees were interviewed individually and four interviewees were interviewed in a group interview. Each interview lasted between 10 minutes and 45 minutes. Total interview time was 4 hours and 25 minutes. All interviews were conducted in June 2013. The second source of data was collected through less formally organised continuous email, telephone and face-to-face communication with the trainees and key personnel in the period between September 2012 and June 2013. The data was treated in a conceptual analysis.

Results and Discussion
The analysis revealed four concepts that were related to the continuous embodied creativity training program. One concept is related to the motivation for participation and the three other concepts are related to the output of training. The concepts are presented in the following.

The attitude towards the continuous embodied creativity training program: Hot or not
The motivation towards participating in the continuous embodied creativity training in the five organisations has been divided into two dominant groups. One group found the training to be "hot". They think it is fun and experience positive output during and after training. Another group would rather "not" be part of it. This latter group did not want to participate in the training and some even thought it a waste of time. There was no evidence for at an intermediate group. No one expressed themselves moderate about the training.

One explanation for this strong division may be due to the "out of context" nature of the training. There are no direct links between the individual training exercise and the real work activities in the five organisations. This missing link is contrary to most modern work related activities where efficiency and task orientation are valued high.

A second explanation may be that the training exercises are focused on breaking away from the ordinary and logical. Hereby employees in favour of logic may have difficulties understanding the rationale of the training and they may even find the content of the exercises as an attack towards logic. On the contrast, employees in favour of creativity may enjoy the exercises.

A third explanation may relate to the experience during the first training exercises. One trainee reports, "at first it was a big challenge, to try to work this way (...). This way about just keeping on and be aware and to let go of the habits". This illustrates part of the challenge that these trainees experience during the first exercises. They sometimes felt that they were moving on the edge of their comfort zone. During such experiences it is natural that some trainees may choose to skip the training completely while others would like to try it again and again. Among the trainees that find the training to be "hot" are reports that the training was characterised by playfulness, humour, chaos and fun. However, it was not only the experience during training that was positive for these trainees. One trainee reports excitedly about the training that "what we really are doing here ... is implementing a culture of innovation". This shows that the goal of changing the organisational culture is evident among some of the trainees.

The strong division in perception of the training is interesting. One method to approach this division is to relate the training to personality. If this is possible here may be a need for developing training programs that fit various types of personalities. Alternatively organisations may have to accept that only certain employee personality types like to perform this kind of training with potential consequences of divided cultures within an organisation. It may be that this division creates a balance between creativity and logic in an organisation; however, further research is needed for understanding this as part of creative and innovative organisational culture.

In all of the five organisations the training had management support but no employees have been forced into continuous participation in the training. It is not possible to identify who participated in the continuous training from November 2012 to June 2013; however, it is assumed that the primary participants were those who were part of the "hot" groups. Therefore the following results relate primarily to these trainees.

Less resistance towards organisational change
A major part of the training exercises are focused on developing, accepting and elaborating on illogical and disruptive ideas, thoughts and perspectives. This focus in training seems to be directly transferred into a general ability in everyday work. Trainees report that colleagues to a higher degree are contributing with ideas for everyday problem solving. They report that confidence in expressing and sharing knowledge, ideas and perspectives has increased. At the same time the acceptance and usage of ideas developed by colleagues have also increased. A trainee reports that "(we) become more open and receptive to each other". A second trainee reports that "(colleagues) are more open towards new situations in the everyday. If you are in the middle of various problems then people are much better at helping". A third trainee reports, "I have improved my ability to think differently and out of the box".

Trainees relate this effect to the almost "in-existence" of hierarchical and social structures during training. It seems that the curiosity and the task focus (as opposed to person focus) that dominates the training performance is easily transferred to other activities outside of training.

Some trainees report that small challenges and changes were often met negatively before the training. As an effect from the training they report that there is now a more positive approach to "make new" and stronger willingness to approach challenges with a positive mind. In one of the organisations a major organisational change has taken place during the period of the study and they found primarily positive reactions among employees and one trainees reports, "(...) this I think is because we are use to do training and practicing of change".

Stronger sense of community with colleagues
An effect that was evident across the trainees is the strengthened sense of community with colleagues. The tendency was clear from all trainees that the training had a large impact on this matter. One trainee that did not participate in the introduction day and did not participate in the follow-up day reports, "(the training) makes it easier to greet each other and it opens up for some relationships which otherwise would not exist. And we find some other sides of each other". Another trainee reports that "It is really good for the team spirit and for the well-being." and continuous "It adds a value, which may not be measurable, but means a lot for an organisation". This shows that the value of continuous embodied creativity training may be found as a social impact rather than the production of highly innovative output.

Another example of the strengthening of the sense of community is of a newly created department that is a merger of two existing. The division between the two merged departments was strong - especially due to the one department primarily consisting of younger employees while the other consisted of an older group of employees. One trainee reports, "we were two very different

departments (...) and it has been cool, that we've had this training, because it has worked as team building and brought us together and we get to know each other in a completely different way". Another reports, "it has been a blast to have been able to bring together groups (...) it is not divided in two parts as it very much was before. (Before) you would not ask the others for help, you would do that now. We are one large group (now)." The training seems to have a strong effect on the community development inside an organisation.

A strengthening of the sense of community makes knowledge sharing and cross-disciplinary work more likely to happen, which is so important for creativity and innovation in an organisational setting.

Higher level of energy at work
In relation to the level of energy the training seems to have an effect. Trainee's report that the energy level rises both during training and outside of training, and they report that this rise is a core benefits from the training. A leader reports about the trainers in one of the organisations that "on the locations where they have had training for some time, they (the trainers) experience that it gives lots of energy". The same seems to be the experience among trainees and for that reason several have decided to start every week with a Monday morning training to kick-start the level of energy. One trainee reports, "it is a good start to the week" and continuous "the energy always rises".

The increase in level of energy may be related to efficient creativity as one trainee reports it, "I think that the efficiency, wow, you can generate a lot in 90 seconds. It optimises the performance. No doubt about that". It may be that creativity training not only makes you more creative, but also makes you efficient in your creativity.

Other effects
This study presents a number of trainee experiences from continuous embodied creativity training. Other experiences may be found by using other research methods and extending the period of training may result in different experiences. Currently the authors of this paper are conducting on-going research on 18 organisations in Denmark that are currently implementing continuous embodied creativity in their everyday in order to develop a creative and innovative organisational culture.

Conclusion
The study found that continuous embodied creativity training seems to have an effect on a number of aspects of creative and innovation organisational culture. These findings are concluded in the following.
- There is an indication that the training creates a more positive and open mind towards organisational change. Also the ability to use ideas from colleagues as well as contribute to ideas from colleagues is also increased.
- There is an indication that the training strengthens the feeling of community and thus has a positive influence on knowledge sharing.
- There is an indication that the training enhances the level of energy. Hereby the everyday tasks are approached with a more energetic attitude and efficiency in creativity becomes higher.

Besides, this study also found that the motivation towards participating was divided into two distinct groups: one group that found the training as hot and another group that did not like the training. No intermediate groups were identified. It suggests us in the future study, the relationship between trainees' personality and their attitudes towards embodied creativity training program should be analysed.

Taken them together, the continuous embodied creativity training is a potential effective approach to enhance organizational creativity. However, more empirical studies are needed before we learn better about effective designs for continuous embodied creativity training for organisational settings.

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