

# USING CoPs TO SOLVE EDUCATIONAL OBSTACLES IN THE CLASSROOM

by Tania Ham, Global Teachers Institute



This resource is based on a workshop on an interactive experience at the GTI Axis Summit where participants were equipped with knowledge of how they can use Communities of Practice (CoPs) as a tool to solve educational problems such as content delivery, creativity in the classroom, and using group working as a tool to develop student leadership.

### **Creativity in classrooms**

Students should be grouped together according to learning areas that they understand better to collaborate and share ideas on how to assist each other understand the content and educators should be grouped together according to the content they understand better in various learning areas to share ideologies and methodology on how to speed up the content coverage.

Reflective activities provide students with an opportunity to absorb information more deeply, enhancing their creative and contextual understanding of the content. When reflective learning exercises are displayed visually in the classroom, they become of benefit not only to those who share them but to every student in your class.

Within your school term, your students will be working between group projects, completing solo assessments, listening to presentations as well as many other activities. In order to keep the creativity flowing between these learning set ups; the key is to keep your classroom layout adaptable and allow it to be easily reorganized.

### **Encourage discussion**

Avoiding chatter and meaningless conversation can be a difficult task as a teacher. But on the other hand, channeling meaningful discussions can provide students with an arena to express new ideas and voice their opinions.

#### **Reasons why discussions can be productive:**

- It gets students thinking more critically about the material.
- It challenges them to listen to other students' opinions and think critically about their contributions and ideas.
- It gives them the opportunity to challenge each other intelligently and build off of each other's ideas.



Collaborative working spaces help students see themselves as co-constructors of knowledge, rather than subjects of teachers. Without hierarchical front to back row seating, every seat is the best seat in the class, and students are always at the center of learning. Maintain structure in less traditional ways by creating zones for different parts of the learning process, such as reflection and brainstorming.

Empowering creativity through leadership is an extremely effective learning strategy. For students who have mastered the content, being tasked with teaching a peer encourages them to come up with creative ways to reframe the content.

Extension tasks are more open-ended than regular tasks, meaning the project task sheet will include the goal but relies on the students' creative and critical thinking ability to come up with a process.

Creativity is a big deal in the 21st-century classroom. Many countries include it as a core aim for their students in national curricula and even countries such as Singapore that come top of world education league tables are recognizing the need for more of it in their schools. This surge of interest in creativity among teachers, school leaders, academics and governments is partly driven by a growing belief that a fast-paced global economy requires workers with the flexibility of mind to adapt to constant change rather than follow a traditional career path.

We live in a world where increasingly complex problems require creative solutions and where individuals' lives can be enhanced by a greater sense of agency that comes with having opportunities to explore their own creativity. It is often common to hear that good teachers are imaginative. These teachers show mental flexibility that permits them to present a subject in a new and engaging way that supports students to be creative and enjoy learning.

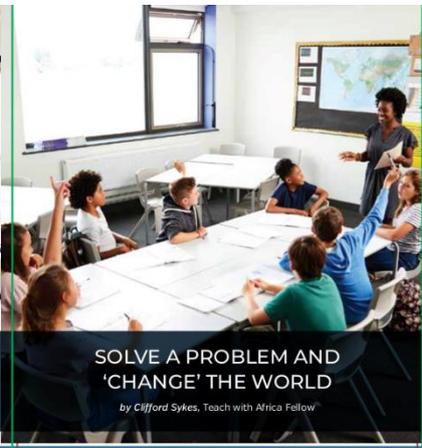
Philosopher Mary Warnock studied imagination and referred to it as the 'chief aim of education and that 'we have a duty to educate the imagination'. Many would argue this statement; however, I believe that imagination enhances creativity and only through this can we bring our ideas into realization. Imagination helps to realize our full potential; therefore, teachers have an essential responsibility to educate imagination. In order for imagination to grow there has to be resources to stimulate it.

The more experiences pupils gain the greater their imagination, so pupils must have the resources they need to be creative. I have chosen a few teaching strategies that I consider to be effective ways of stimulating imagination in the classroom.



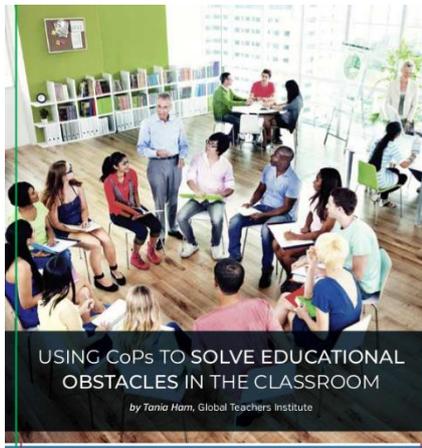
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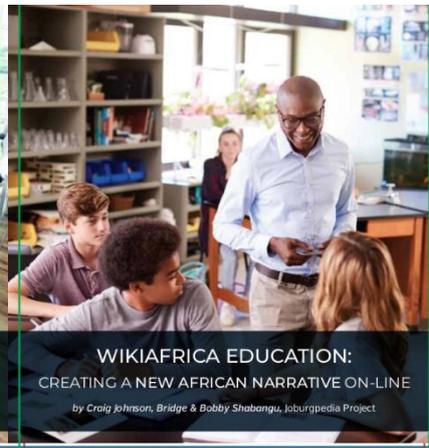
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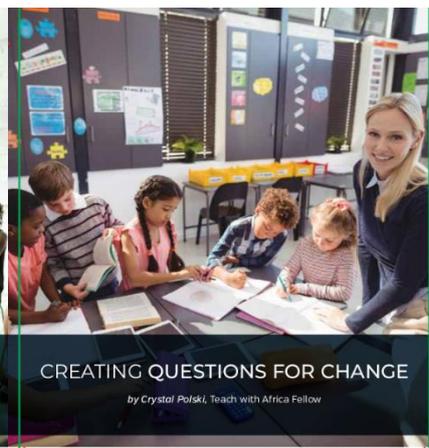
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## ABOUT GTI

The Global Teachers Institute [GTI] is a teacher development network of educators, schools and organisations committed to developing high quality teachers through school based initial teacher education programmes, international exchanges and collaborative platforms.

Our mission is to develop reflective, empathetic, socially responsible master teachers for high-need African schools through projects and interventions for replication and scale.

## THANK YOU

With your contributions in the 2019 GTI Axis Summit, you've demonstrated your commitment to our work of teacher development. Your support has repeatedly played a key role in getting us a step closer to our vision of training quality teachers facilitating learning that creates a just, equitable and inclusive world.

## PRESENTER



### Tania Ham

Tania Ham is the Regional School Coordinator for the Future Leaders Programme and LEED Project Coordinator in Limpopo for the Global Teachers Institute.

She has a BA Human Ecology Degree from the University of the Western Cape and a Postgraduate Certificate In Education from UNISA.

## PRODUCER



### Teboho Makhoabenyane

*'I believe that indigenous Knowledge Systems should be prioritised in the South African education system. South Africa needs to move towards an independent route when it*

*comes to literature and the curriculum that is being offered. I am a candidate for a masters in Town and Regional Planning. I have a Geography background with skills in Remote Sensing (RS) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).*

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