Teacher students' Perception of Creativity – why should this matter and what can be done about it?
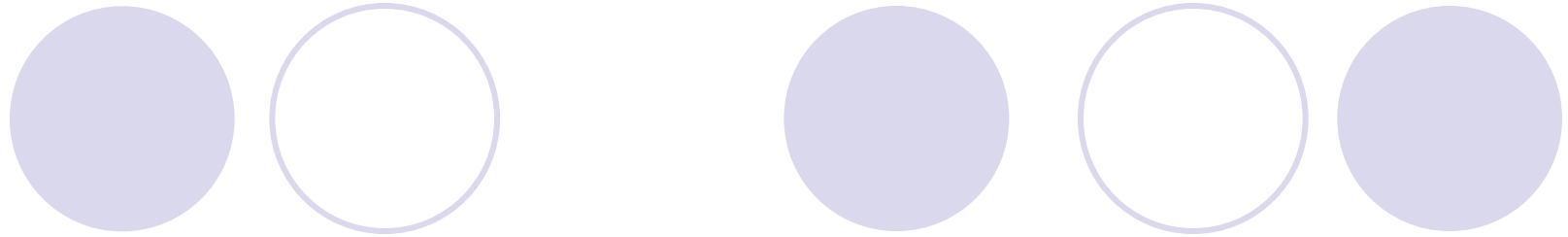
Gita Lestarini Rachayu

Creativity is needed in almost all aspects of life (Davis, 2004). Furthermore, creativity is not an inherited talent but an ability that can be learned and taught (Esquivel, 1995; Millar, 2002; Colvin, 2008).

Basis for creativity education

The need for critical thinking and creativity in higher education has been emphasized by UNESCO (1998).

National education purposes in Republic of Indonesian Laws Number 20, 2003 regarding the National Education Systems Chapter II Point 3.

- Educational institutions, schools, students' creativity. The paradox is, schools can become institutions where student creativity is killed.
- Teachers hold an important role in developing students creativity.
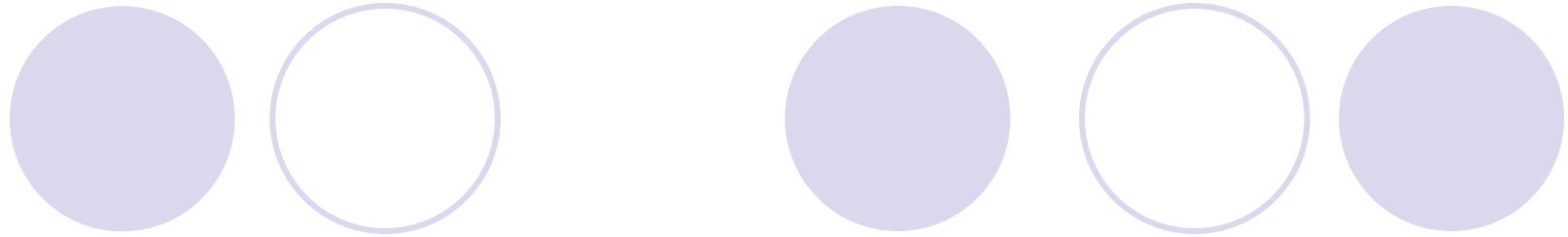
- Selection and training of prospective teachers in creative thinking and teaching skills are necessary to develop creativity in future generations (Slabbert, 1994 as cited in Oral, 2006).

- Based on the research by Man, Susanti and Indrajaya (2007), creative thinking can be effectively taught and learned in the Indonesian context.
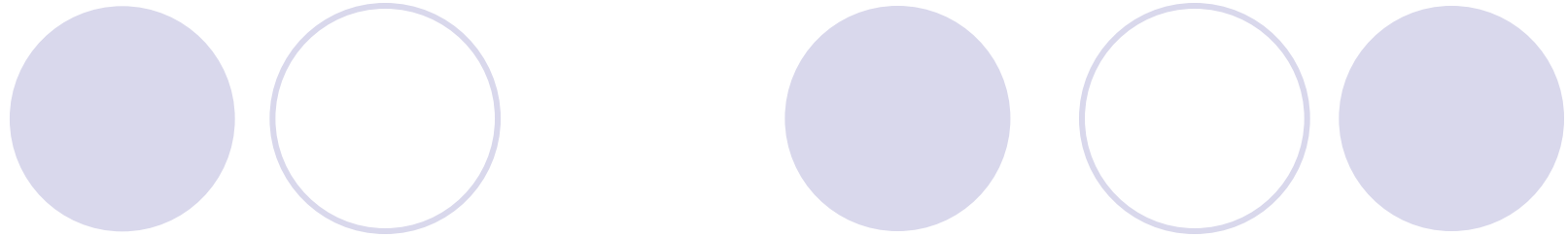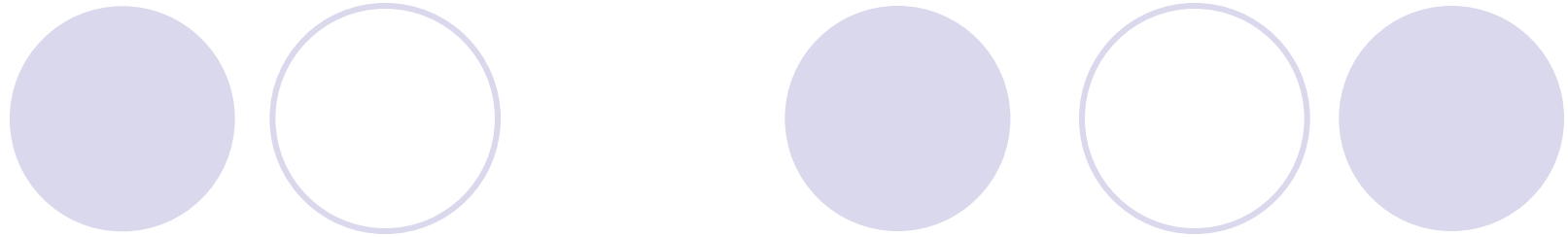
What are the teacher students' perception of creativity for themselves as individuals and as teachers? How do these teacher students perceive their own creativity? What is the connection between this perception and the perceived role of creativity in a teacher's profession? Can creativity training have a positive influence on these perceptions?

Methodology

Study involved a group of 27 undergraduate students affiliated to a large national university in Bandung, Indonesia.

The teacher students were led by two experienced instructor external to the university. The training session was 3 and half hour per meeting. There were 2 meetings per week with a total of 12 meetings. The training included pre-training survey, teaching of creative thinking and post-training survey.

To investigate teacher students' perception of creativity for themselves as individuals and as teachers, pre and post-training surveys were administered to examine participants' (a) awareness, beliefs and perceptions about their own creativity, (b) definition about creativity, (c) their attitude towards it as teachers, intended teaching strategies to teach creativity (if any); and to assess whether creativity training can have a positive influence on these perceptions, post-training surveys also examined (d) the effects, influences and benefits of training for the participants.

Awareness, Beliefs and Perceptions about Personal Creativity

- From the pre-training survey, 55% from 27 participants believed they were creative. They had different reasons for this perception of themselves. 45% of the participants thought they were uncreative. The reason are also different.
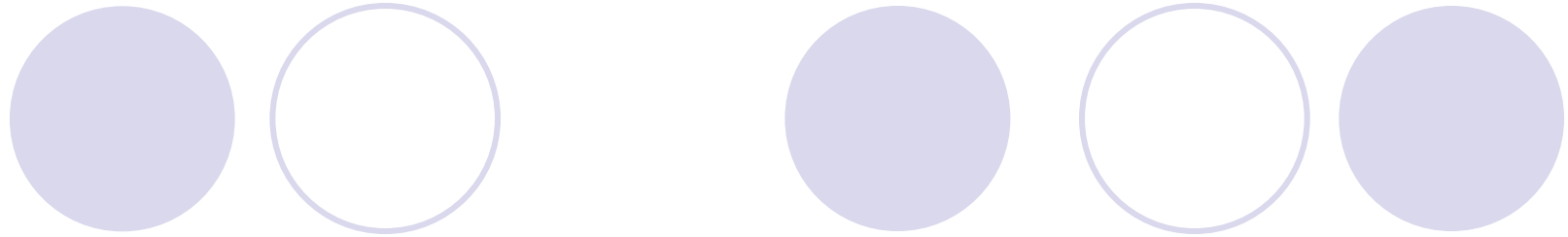
- All of the participants believed that they could be more creative. Strategies included: gaining and practicing knowledge on creativity (82%), always trying to create something new and different (4%), holding the principle that everything can be done according to logic (4%), networking with creative people (4%), and acknowledging humans have strength and weaknesses (4%).

From the post-training survey, 89% of the participants believed they were creative. The 11% participant who still felt uncreative after training explained that they hadn't yet found new ideas and needed to improve their ability on producing ideas.

Definition about Creativity

- Participants defined and associated creativity with a range of responses, 44% of the responses related creativity as a thinking skill, 33% of the participants associated creativity as a product, 12% defined creativity as an attitude in the willingness to share ideas and seeing things from others' perspectives. The remaining 11% defined creativity as a process.

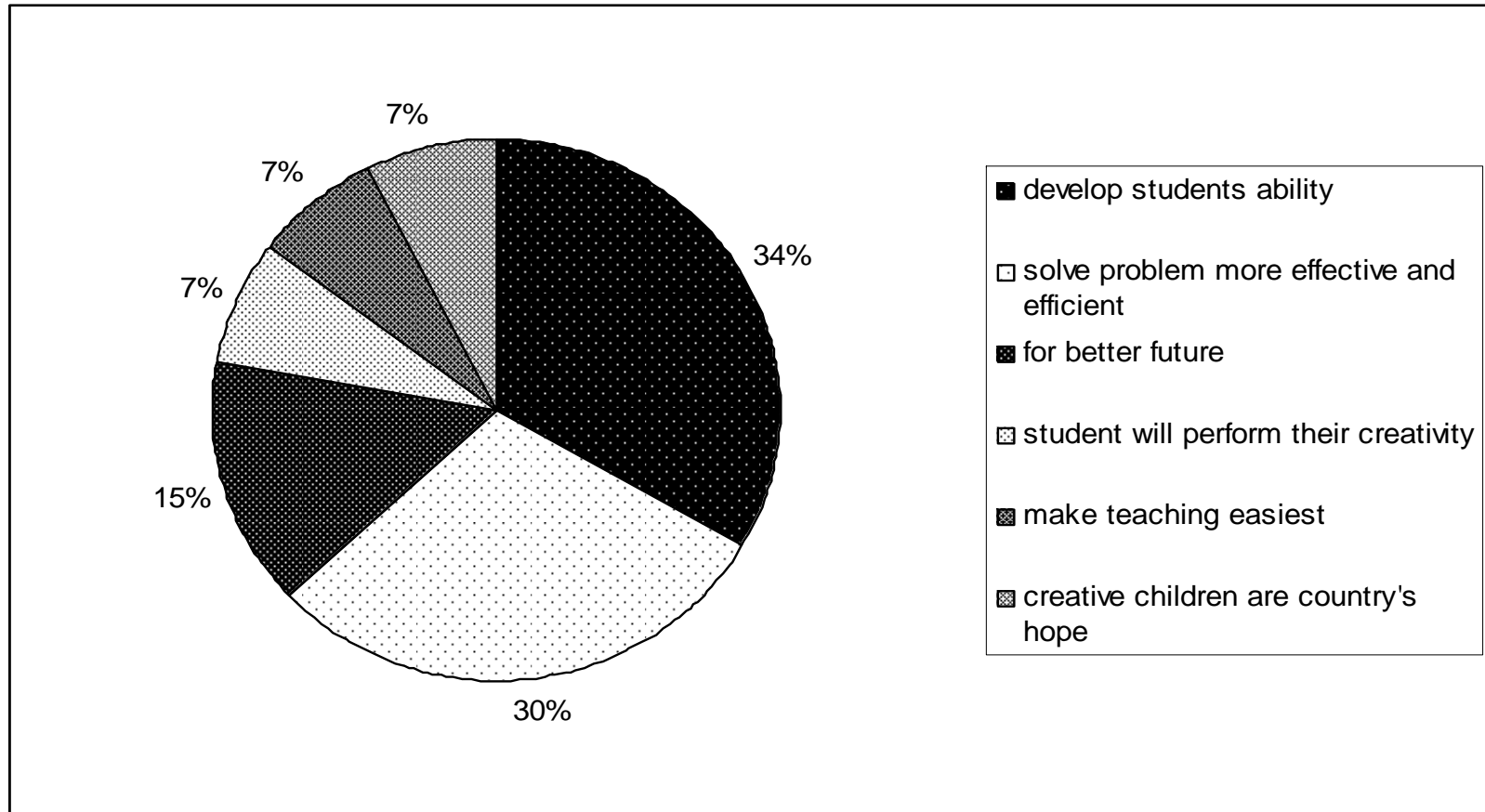# Attitude Towards Creativity as Teachers and Intended Strategies to Teach Creativity

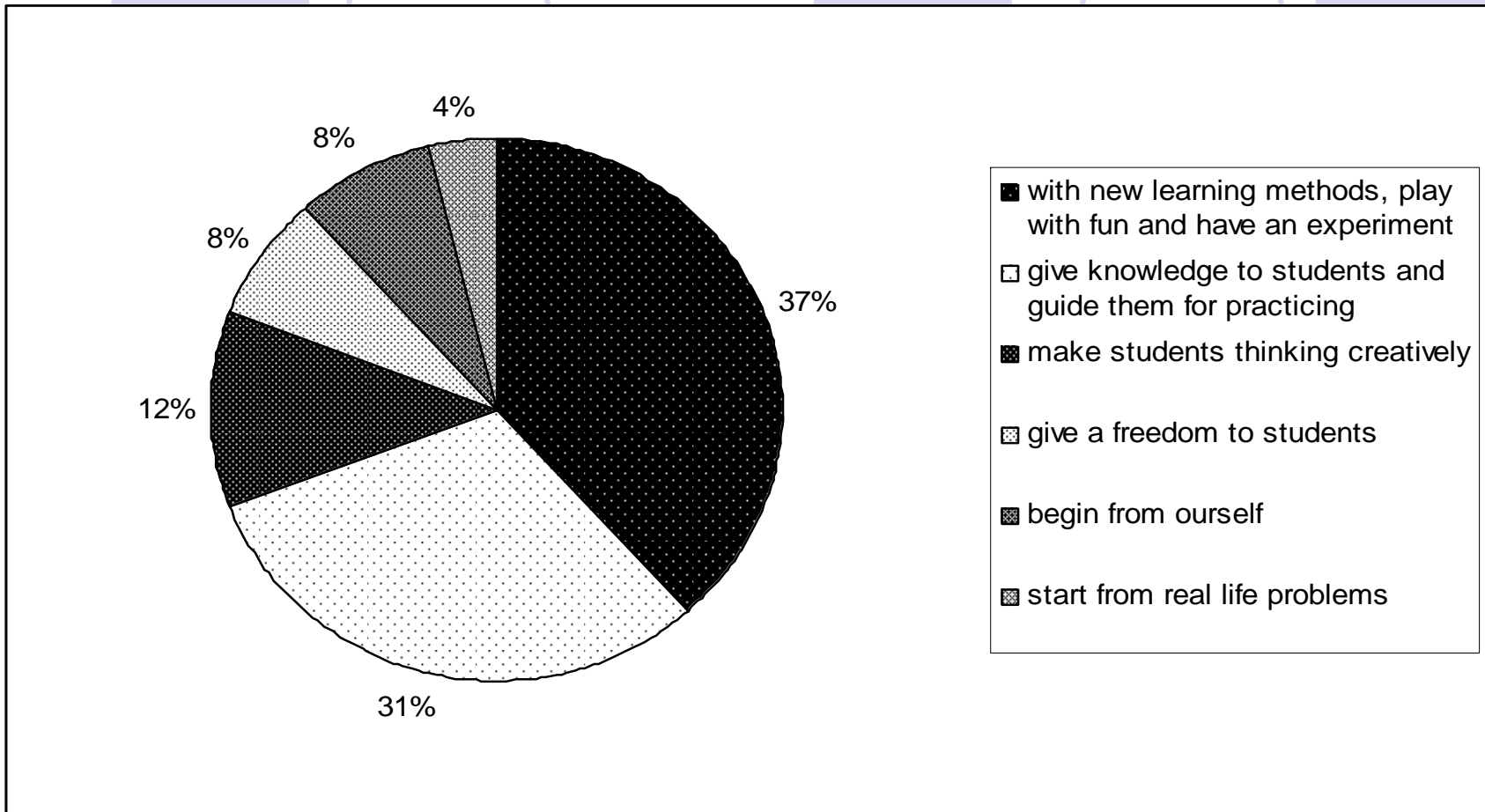Figure 1. Participants' Responses: why is it important for your students to be creative?

Figure 2. Pre-training responses on teaching strategies to teach creativity
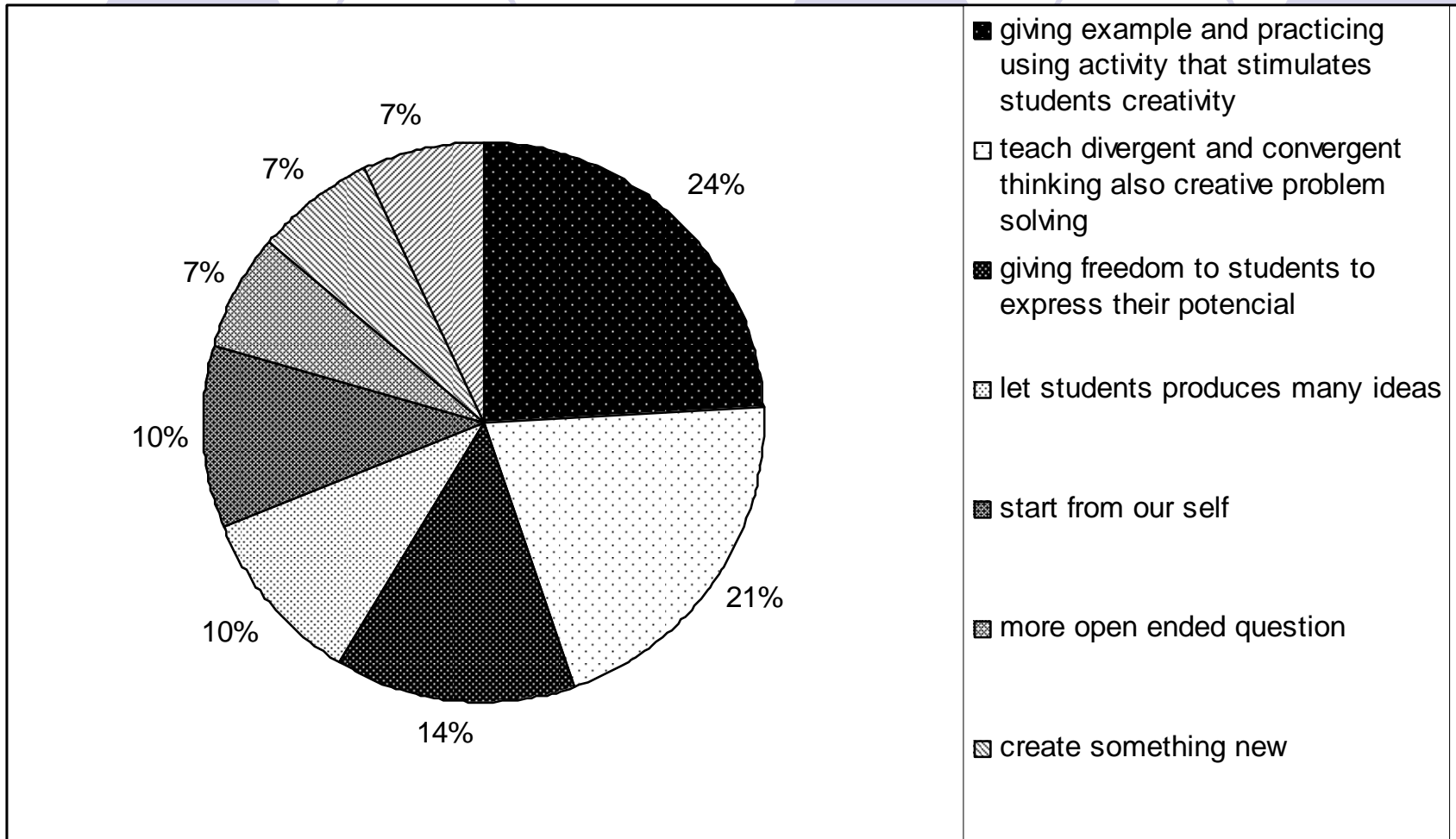
Figure 3. Post –training responses on teaching strategies to teach creativity

Legend:
- giving example and practicing using activity that stimulates students creativity
- teach divergent and convergent thinking also creative problem solving
- giving freedom to students to express their potencial
- let students produces many ideas
- start from our self
- more open ended question
- create something new

Values: 24%, 21%, 14%, 10%, 10%, 7%, 7%, 7%

- before teachers can develop their students' creativity, they must first believe they are creative and indeed be able to think and behave creatively in order to be role models for their students on how to think and act creatively.
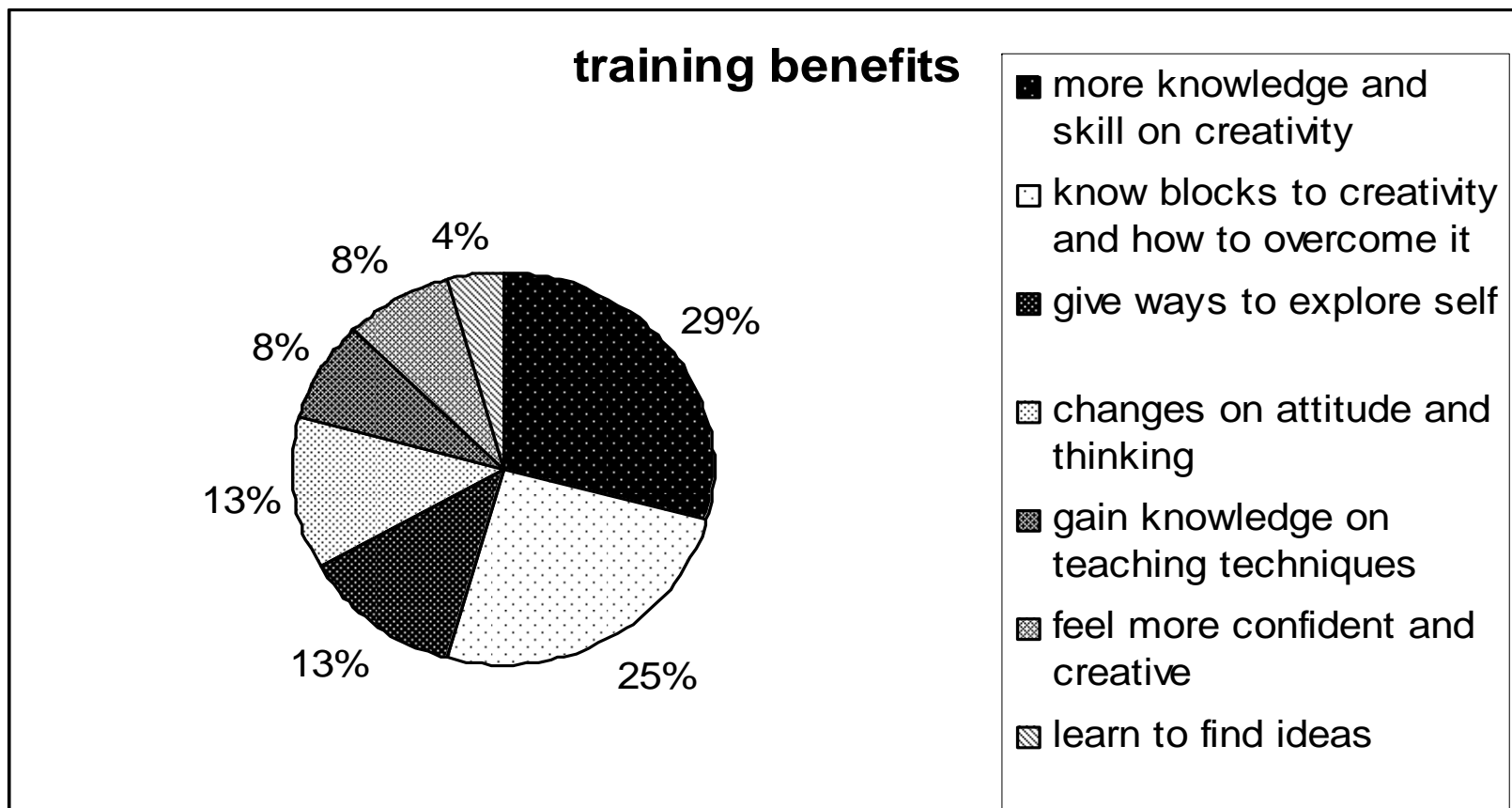
Influence of Training and Benefits Gained

- 89% of participants benefited from the training.

training benefits

■	more knowledge and skill on creativity
□	know blocks to creativity and how to overcome it
▨	give ways to explore self
▨	changes on attitude and thinking
▨	gain knowledge on teaching techniques
▨	feel more confident and creative
▨	learn to find ideas

29%
25%
13%
13%
8%
8%
4%

Conclusion

Findings from the investigation indicate that teacher students lack readiness to be creative teachers but that creativity training can address some of the issues, specifically:

- Teacher students lack self-confidence in their own creativity but creative ability is perceived to be important for creative teaching.
- Teacher students have intention to teach creativity but are not well equipped with know-how.
- Creativity training can build self-confidence in one's creativity and a positive attitude on problem solving.
- Creativity training provides teacher students with specific ideas on how to teach creativity.

Suggestion

- The most appropriate time to help teachers take control of their individual creativity and to gain knowledge in creativity in order to be able to teach creativity effectively is during pre-service teacher training courses.