Chapter 5
Creativity in the Schools: Educational Changes Lately?

Daniel Fasko
Bowling Green State University, USA

ABSTRACT

J.P. Guilford in 1950 inquired as to why American schools were not producing more creative people. However, this is not just an American issue. There is increasing interest and work in this area internationally. In fact, Craft (2005) pointed out that policy makers, educators and researchers globally see the teaching of creativity is important in education. This chapter presents a review of past and current research and practice here and abroad on developing creative thinkers in our schools from the primary through secondary grades. Relationships will be described between creativity and learning, motivation, personality, insight, metacognition, and academic achievement. Techniques for developing creative thinking will be emphasized and elucidated. Study of the development of creative thinking in our schools is important because it will help educators determine how to improve P-12 students’ skills and dispositions to become the innovators and entrepreneurs of the future. The chapter will end with a discussion of implications for future research and practice.

INTRODUCTION

In J.P. Guilford’s (1950) seminal inaugural address to the American Psychological Association (APA), he inquired why American schools were not producing more creative people. However, this is not just an American schools issue. There is increasing interest and work in this area internationally. In fact, Craft (2005) pointed out that policy makers, educators and researchers globally consider the teaching of creativity to be crucial in education. This chapter presents a review of past and current research and practice in the United States and in several other countries on developing creative thinkers in our schools from the primary through secondary grades, which will be here-to-for referred to as P-12. Relationships will be described between creativity and the following topics: learning, motivation, personality, insight, metacognition, and academic achievement. Techniques for developing creative thinking will be emphasized and elucidated (e.g., Davis, 1982; Feldhusen & Treffinger, 1980; Rauth, Koppen, Jobst, &
Meinel, 2010; Sternberg & Williams, 1996), as well. Examining the development of creative thinking in our schools is important, because it will help educators determine how to improve P-12 students’ skills and dispositions to become the innovators and entrepreneurs of the future. The chapter will end with a discussion of implications for future research and practice.

BACKGROUND

Definition

There are many definitions of creativity, however, for the purposes of this chapter I will use one developed by Cropley (1999a). He stated that it is “an aspect of thinking, as a personality constellation [i.e., pattern], and as an interaction between thinking, personal properties, and motivation” (p. 511), concepts which will be discussed further later in this chapter. (See Fasko, [2006] and Kaufman [2009] for other definitions of creativity.) In this chapter, the term creativity is used synonymously with the term creative thinking. That is, creativity will not be referring specifically to skills and abilities, say, in just the visual and performing arts.

According to Perkins (1984), creative thinking consists of patterns which involve several components. He suggested that these creative thinking components can be classified into six general principles, which are:

1. Creative thinking involves aesthetic as much as practical standards.
2. Creative thinking depends on attention to purpose as much as to results.
3. Creative thinking depends on mobility more than fluency.
4. Creative thinking depends on working at the edge more than at the center of one’s competence.
5. Creative thinking depends as much on being objective as on being subjective.
6. Creative thinking depends on intrinsic, more than extrinsic, motivation (Perkins, 1984, pp. 19-20).

Perkins suggested that the more you use these principles, the more your creative thinking will be enhanced. He does note, however, that “Not all the principles specifically reflect creativity as much as intellectual competence or motivation in general” (p. 20); for example, one’s capacity to understand the nature of a problem quickly is an attribute of accomplished problem solvers.

Goal of Education

According to Guncer and Oral (1993), developing creative thinking skills in students should be the main function of education. Unfortunately, this is not often the case. For example, Agarwal (1992) noted that schools seem to be unconcerned with developing students’ creativity. Interestingly, about 10 years later, Sternberg (2003), in his theory of successful intelligence, stated that there are three abilities: analytical, creative, and practical that are important in the schools. However, he expressed concerns, as did Agarwal (1992), that schools prioritize memory and analytical skills over the other abilities. He asserted that creative and practical skills are just as important to “success in life” as are the others (p. 325). With regard to success in the future, Scott, Leritz, and Mumford (2001) wrote that “the ‘good’ jobs available in modern information-based economies stress creative thought” (p. 361). Given the reports above, it appears that