

**Matthew Sprague**

## **The Role of Creativity in Education**

The role of creativity in education is something that educators are finding to be more and more important in students being able to develop their ability as inventive risk takers throughout their lives. More and more this is leading to new approaches in educating and learning to help prepare students for the ever-changing world.

Early on psychology research would closely align genius and intelligence with creativity. Since that time the “genius-myth” has been debunked with only what could be considered a loose relationship between genius and creativity (C.B. Kandiko, 2012). The idea that everybody if put in the right environment is capable of being creative is commonplace however some still do not agree with the broader perspective on who and how someone can be creative (C.B. Kandiko, 2012).

Bringing forth the idea that everybody can be creative, some research is now suggesting that the average person does not truly believe that they are living up to their creative potential (Grigonis, 2018). It also draws correlation between people who are creative living happier lives, making more money, and creating new ideas in any industry (Grigonis, 2018). This is an interesting thought when we think about the role of creativity in education. If we follow this idea that most do not believe that they are living up to their creative potential, we can also infer that deep down many people feel that they have either not been exposed to or found the right source to foster their creativity.

Developing a creative mind has several benefits including enhancing our problem-solving skills. This helps makes us better in subjects like math and science through logic (Pear Tree Education Inc., 2013). In education the traditional way of dividing subjects would suggest that creativity be left to subjects such as arts and music and more straight forward logical thinking be left to subjects like math and science (problem-solving). Fostering creativity in students can help make for better math and science minds through problem solving.

In literacy we are seeing creativity being more widely supported in many ways. Many teachers are now adopting the use of something like a writer's notebook. The concept behind a writer's notebook is something that can be approached at a very young age. As early as grade 3 students are provided with an empty notebook and are encouraged to write whatever comes to mind (whether real or fiction.) The number one rule to a writer's notebook is to keep the pencil moving. This is just one example of how creativity is being fostered through literacy in many grades throughout the educational system.

In history classes students are often involved in the use of creativity through imagining the experiences of people in the past. Orange shirt day is an example of how history in the classroom often fosters creativity through imagination. In many schools' students at all grade levels are given an age appropriate description of what the residential school experience would have been like. Often these descriptions include asking students to reflect on their current experiences as students versus how it may have felt to live as a student in a residential school setting. This use of reflection through imagination calls on the student's ability to be creative.

Many people view the education system as something that has been built to create humans that are incapable of creative thought when they enter the work force. There is a common theory that the modern-day educational system or model has not changed since the structure was first put in place at the beginning of the industrial revolution. The system was created with a focus on structure and obedience. As noted above, this still exist today in subjects that tend to be valued, like math and science and literacy. When governments, schools and members of the public are looking at the curriculum often times the focus still seems to be on making sure we take care of those subjects and if time permits, focus on things more specifically related to the arts where one could argue real creativity occurs.

In a TED talk that is perhaps one of the most watched TED talks posted to youtube, Sir Ken Robinson says “our education system has mined our minds in the way that we strip-mine the earth for a particular commodity, and for the future it wont serve us.” (Sir Ken Robinson, 2007). This idea is interesting in reference to something Sir Ken Robinson points out towards the beginning of that very same TED talk. Sir Ken Robinson identifies that we are unable to predict the future in the sense that the children currently going through the educational system will have long careers spanning many years and we have really no way of know what the world will look like over that extended period of time. In taking this view on education it can be hard to argue that the appropriate approach to education would be to educate students on how to perform specific tasks. With that focus how can we possibly know what to educate for? This is where focusing more on giving students the opportunity to explore their creativity makes sense. Focusing on creative thinking that can develop through the arts, through life experiences and giving students the opportunity to think outside the box.

In another note Sir Ken Robinson points out “if you are not prepared to be wrong, you will never come up with anything original” (Sir Ken Robinson, 2007). He argues that so much focus throughout the education system is around the negativity of being wrong and by the time kids become adults they have lost the capacity to take risks. This idea of being wrong is wrong is woven deeply within the fabric of the more traditional testing

This idea of more focus needing to be on the arts to promote creativity and original thinking is not without its own concerns if we look more specifically at the role of creativity within Art education itself. We must look at art programs themselves with a critical lens to see if they truly value creativity and original thought. Merriam-Webster simply defines art as “skill acquired by experience, study or observation.” When lesson plans are developed within an art program, that strict definition of art may not specifically promote creativity. A classic example of where art has given the opportunity for students and children to create “art” is paint by numbers. Often students are able to produce beautiful works of art but have not had a chance to tap into their creativity and have simply developed the skill to reproduce a version of something that has already been created.

foster an environment of true learners is becoming a more popular approach when looking beyond the traditional “art class” and into other subjects like literacy and math.

When taking a closer look into the values shared publicly by the Government of New Brunswick in document titles “New Brunswick Public Education: A Shared Responsibility” they identify their vision for the education system. In this vision three goals that reflect the “fundamental stages children will pass through on their journey in, and through, the K – 12 education system.

These three goals include: “1) Every child will arrive at kindergarten ready to learn. 2) Every child will leave grade 5 having mastered the tools to learn – reading, writing and numeracy. 3) Every child will graduate from high school having had the opportunity to discover their personal strengths and to find something they love doing.” These goals clearly define the need to have students master reading, writing and numeracy but absent in these goals or anywhere else within the document is anything specific in relation to creativity.

The omission of creativity being specifically identified within the Vision for the provincial education system can be telling of the priorities within the system. One possible answer is the focus on creating tangible markers of assessment, an example of this would be through standardized testing. Many government systems have created value in standardized testing as a tool to benchmark or rate their students.

Standardized testing has not traditionally been formulated in a way that would be conducive to evaluating art, however there has been some pilot projects in the United States with to create a common “test” often in the form of a project that can be given to different students in different areas (Sarah Butrymowicz, 2016). It will likely take the adoption of such a “test” or the move away from standardized testing prior to creativity playing a key role in the values identified by the provincial government.

In conclusion, the role creativity has played within education is fascinating. There are many examples where creativity has been identified as an important aspect to the education system but has not been actioned as a fundamental skill being focused broadly throughout the world in education. Often institutions, educational systems and governments seem to have a desire to

be progressive and forward thinking and not be constrained by more traditional methods.

Putting these perspectives into practice can be a complex and time-consuming action that we have seen fall short time and time again. Just the sheer pace society moves and changes is not reflected in the adaptation of these ideas and values through the educational system.

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