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**The importance of creativity in academic performance in the 21st century**

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**THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVITY IN THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In today’s world where borders are continuously and rapidly expanding, creativity has emerged as one of the most important attributes in various sectors, particularly the academic performance of students. Moreover, creativity enables human beings to cope with, assess, and seek out impressive answers to their challenges while developing analytical and evaluative skills on various issues, in addition to improving their mental capacity. Dr. Scott Barry Kaufman, who is known for his work as a psychologist and researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, expounds on this sentiment when he maintains that “creativity can be found not necessarily in the arts alone but rather in the ability to think outside of the box and solve issues.” (Kaufman, 2013). Moreover, the report was published by the National Centre for Education Statistics reported that students engaging in creative related activities generate higher academic standards as well as higher motivation levels (NCES, 2012).

**II. DEFINITION OF CREATIVITY**

From my perspective, creativity refers to the capacity to put together unconnected things, recognize significant patterns and thoughts, and think outside the boundaries of what is generally acceptable to create or improve upon something of value. In addition, this ability means looking at things in different aspects and finding things to do across the boundaries along with risk-taking to bring something new into existence. According to Robert E. Franken, a professor of psychology, argues creativity is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others (Human Motivation, 3rd ed., 1994). Dr. Swayer and Henriksen, who authored their book Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation, which will be published in December this year, define creativity as the forming of creative ideas and turning them ‘not just’ but also valuably for a particular social group. This perspective of creativity as a phenomenon assists in communicating the importance of understanding the range of creativity found in many things including problem-solving, speaking and writing, self, work, and study.

**III. CREATIVITY IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

The importance of creativity in academic performance is also very complex and long-reaching. For students, the process of studying the details of their chosen field, and the ability to generate novel ideas is an important correlational factor that defines accomplishment. Defining creative potential as a subsidiary skill is incorrect because it is rather incorporated and cemented within the carrying out of tasks that involve learning, enabling the learner to come up with solutions to problems, express themselves coherently, and understand difficult concepts more effectively. Understanding this encourages the teacher in the quest for the goals which would create an atmosphere that regards achievement as a form of intellectual adventure and hence, better performance and experience within the educational framework. This part explains the concept of creativity as one of the factors in academic performance and its relation to critical thinking, knowledge retention, and communication, and well-being in general.

**III.1 Enhance problem-solving and critical thinking**

The creative aspect of thinking is one of the most important qualities that should be used for problem-solving. This is because students are encouraged to tackle more difficult situations with different strategies and ways of thinking. In a study conducted by some researchers from Harvard University, they assessed the importance of the ability to solve a problem creatively which includes the skill “to produce many options and then assess which one is the best and develop it further (Plucker & Renzulli, 1999). As a result of this attitude, the students can come up with solutions that are different from the usual ones, safe for more advancement of these processes in areas such as mathematics and science where creative problem solving gives rise to revolutions.

In addition, creativity contributes tremendously to the enhancement of critical thinking because it helps the students otherwise capable of understanding and voicing their views to question and defy known facts and beliefs. With creative thinking activities, students are more likely to be open-minded, analyze various aspects of the issue in question, and look at the evidence more critically on a higher level. This type of approach is very importantly needed in subjects like language arts, history, or social studies where critical objective appreciation of complex ideas is very vividly required. For example, by enhancing the traditional critical thinking practice with a creative dimension, teachers can help students with a more discriminating analysis of the information presented to them, thus encouraging more reasoned decisions and more convincing arguments.

**III.2 Improved learning and memory consolidation**

The use of creative methods has been proven to facilitate learning in that it encourages students to interact with the content beyond the usual surface engagement. Psychologist Scott Barry Kaufman claims that the imagination plays a role in learning and remembering. When one is imaginative or creative, it increases how one encodes and retrieves the information (Kaufman, 2013). As a result, by extending the learning process to include creative tasks, teachers can facilitate more meaningful learning than rote memorization of difficult concepts. For instance, a student who is tasked with drawing a diagram to illustrate a particular principle of science will learn and remember more of that principle than a student who only reads about it. By encouraging creative learning, teachers enable students to explore better and more dynamic ways of learning which positively changes the overall academic performance of the students.

Taking part in creative endeavors can greatly facilitate the process of memory consolidation, which is one of the most important cognitive processes that enable the retention and retrieval of information. Dr. Shelley Carson, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, states that “Studies indicated that the effective use of creativity in healthy and compromised recall is a possibility,” (Carson 2010). In addition, Dr. Daniel Schacter, Scholar in Residence in Psychology at Harvard University, claims that “Imagination is a basic way of bringing together disparate memories into a single whole and, therefore, an important device of memory” (Schacter, 2001). Encouraging such creativity helps individuals build neural networks in their minds, which helps them recall memories and decrease the chances of any deterioration. “Creativity is not an ability that one is endowed with at birth; it is a competence which develops through effort,” maintains Dr. Ellen Langer, Psychology Professor at Harvard University (Langer, 1989). Therefore, if we introduce different forms of superficial art in our day-to-day activities, we will be able to use memory more and improve our rate of thinking.

**IV. STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING CREATIVITY**

The shift in the current educational structure has revealed that creativity, a hallmark of many personalities is essential if academic goals are to be met. Students can gain a competitive edge and attain their educational ambitions by going beyond the normal routines, generating fresh ideas, and looking at issues from different perspectives. Notably, there are numerous ways in which students can boost their creativity through interactive whiteboards, gamification, flexible learning environments, and mixed modes of lesson delivery. As a result, they will be able to maximize their potential, love learning, and prepare themselves for the world which is always changing.

**IV.1 Improve learning outcomes with Interactive Whiteboards**

Several studies have corroborated the benefits of Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) when added to the arsenal of resources available to learners. The facts are that IWBs have been found to enhance student engagement, motivation, and understanding, which boosts academic performance. In a referred journal under the Journal of Educational Computing Research, it is noted that ‘classroom application of interactive whiteboards has been associated with remarkable improvement in student performance, especially in mathematics and reading’ (Gopinathan & Loyalka, 2022). Additionally, The National Center for Education Statistics observed, ‘Technology such as interactive whiteboards can help to enhance students’ engagement or motivation, especially for underachievers’ (NCES, 2020).

**IV.2 Reduce stress and create flexible environments in classes.**

Creating flexible learning environments is essential for reducing stress and promoting academic success among students, especially increasing creativity. As highlighted by Kizilcec and Cohen (2017), stressors in class can be lessened by promoting flexible modes of instruction. Pediatrician and adolescent medicine expert Kenneth R. Ginsburg states “Learning to be flexible comes naturally to children; equally, any teacher aiming to relate to and teach the children will require it” (Ginsburg, 2015). In addition, Patall et al. (2010) undertook a study that revealed that offering students in the classroom the opportunity to make choices enhances their motivation, engagement, and performance. By generating affordable learning spaces where the principles of student welfare and autonomy come first, the teachers empower the learners to learn how to cope with challenges and difficulties in today's world.

**IV.3 Foster students’ creativity**

In the era of internationalization, enhancing students’ creativity for their academic achievements and development as individuals is significantly important. Therefore, teachers can enhance a culture of innovation and creativity in the classroom by giving chances to investigate and share their thoughts. Experts have also pointed out that “it is associated with higher levels of creativity and motivation when students are allowed to make decisions and choices, and take risks” (Kizilcec & Cohen, 2017). Besides, studies indicate that students’ motivation and performance can improve the creative activities and projects in the curriculum (Rovai, 2002). When students are provided with the right resources and the environment to nurture their creativity, the teachers play a great role in helping them acquire the skills and assertiveness needed to face a dynamic world.

**V. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, when education systems encourage creative engagement with students, it is easier for them to acquire the necessary skills and value to operate in a dynamic world. Creating such an enabling environment for students makes them responsible for their learning and hence improves their academic performance and levels of fulfillment in general. Moreover, creative activities and assignments also encourage critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and cooperation among the students, and enhance their agency and self-esteem. Finally, promoting creativity in the classroom is important for the students to attain achievements in academic performance and well-rounded development.

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