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## Mining the Gap! Fostering Creativity And Innovative Thinking

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### Abstract

Current educational strategies limit us to teaching from a sterile model without the nurturing of creativity beyond creative necessity. This we believe is due to the un-enlightened understanding and use of 'creativity' as a tool within teaching practice. We all think we know what creativity is but if we were to challenge the convention and deconstruct the process of what we think and understand creativity to be we would realise that creativity is so much more. The boundaries of its definition are and always have been subjective and in being so become blurred. We need to 'pull-focus' on creativity to enhance the value of such a precious commodity. We have the unique opportunity to develop and inspire beyond functional learning and help create a more purposeful, innovative synthesis for both teacher and student. Creativity is a way to expand the learning opportunities through the lens of something that inspires us. With an original approach to fostering creativity our conclusion will address how creativity can direct education to allow fulfilment of the needs of an ever expanding world but more importantly give individuals the stimulation to ignite their imaginations and foster their confidence to actually conceive what they can perceive.

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## 1. What exactly is Creativity?

Project your world to 30 years from now, imagine the new thinkers coming to the table of design, full of inspired creative passion, ambitious aspirations and positive emotions on how they imagine the next 30 years could evolve to maintain flourishing futures. Perhaps you have a sense of who is there? How the conversations could flow and the fragrance of the creative energy igniting the air around that table. A great vision, and who are the best people to unlock and develop the creative minds of that future?

The British Secretary of State for Education recently made a speech at the launch of an education campaign that wanted to promote the subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). In her speech, she implied that the choice by students to study ‘creative’ subjects such as humanities and the arts, would “*hold them back for the rest of their life!*” [1] Something she had to readdress 10 days later in similar speech to the American Enterprise Institute on closing the skills gap. The Secretary of State’s comments are the most recent in a long line of confusing statements made by politicians and some prominent educationalists regarding the nature and value of creativity and the significant part it has to play within the progress of our global society.

We do all know what creativity is, don’t we? Creativity, creative and creation are all words that are common place within everyday conversation. Used loosely to denote the act of producing something new or of a passionate individual who has an artistic/eccentric bent in breaking new ground in an otherwise conventional society. However, if we were to challenge the assumed convention and de-construct the process of what we think and understand creativity to be, into its micro constituents, we would understand that creativity is about the mind crafting sense from chaos than being seen as an uninspired metaphor or a presumed physical act or object.

Creativity is something that can be valued highly or not valued at all as there is no common objective consent as to its meaning, even though it has a wide designation. We can agree that its understanding is totally subjective, dependent on individual experience, shared knowledge, as well as relevance within its demographic context. It could be said that creativity is the most valuable asset that we possess for our continued evolution. It is how cultures and societies can positively progress. However the boundaries of definition have become increasingly blurred. We need to ‘*pull-focus*’, to use a filmic term, and enhance the remarkable features of such a precious resource, to inspire a more intuitive and enlightened existence. If we can achieve this it would offer a more meaningful and stimulating educational experience for all.

### 1.1 Inside the Box

It seems that educational systems throughout the world have journeyed down the road that favours factual knowledge acquisition over creative exploration. Factual knowledge is often equated with intelligence. The more facts a student can acquire, recall and reapply the more they are seen as intelligent. Conversely, a creative perspective requires the departure from learnt facts and introduces an emotional and intuitive element to finding new ways of applying knowledge and understanding. This process presents the opportunity of making new connections and in turn augmenting meaning, establishing a new language as well as value, but the greatest part is the discovery of the unexpected possibilities within. This in essence should be the primary objective of teaching and learning and ‘*creative ability*’ should be recognised as a formative pathway to intelligence rather than that of only pure knowledge.

### 1.2 Conformity

We are witnessing an age where conformity and compliance are flourishing. Objectivity is the guiding principle that is supported by the proliferation of statistical studies, tick boxes and where students are perceived as numerical data and not as individuals with a creative imagination. Subjectivity is viewed with suspicion and distrust when it should be championed as a creative tool that inspires innovative growth and development. In some societies to go against the received wisdom, in whatever context, often means isolation and demoralization, creating a negative rather than

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