

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF LIMITATIONS ON STUDENT CREATIVITY IN COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE COURSES

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INTRODUCTION

- Forbes lists creativity as the skill of the future (Powers, 2018).
 - » Creative potential of students impacts individuals and society
 - » Creativity is encouraged through many universities' mission statements (Edwards, McGoldrick, & Oliver, 2006)
- Incorporating creative thinking and learning is critical in agricultural fields of higher education (Intarachaimas, 2012; Jackson, 2006).
- Encouraging and assessing creativity remains difficult due to varied interpretations hindering teaching and application practices (Beghetto, 2005; Hancock, Gibson, Meyers, & Irlbeck, 2016).
- This study sought to explore the factors restricting creative growth and expression in students within courses throughout the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) at Texas Tech University (TTU).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Social constructivist theory suggests social activities and interactions encourage learning and engagement (Kim, 2001).
- The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) connects cognitive processes and social contexts to promote learning environments and enhance creative development (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978).

METHODOLOGY

- 7 courses were purposefully selected
 - » Based on inclusion of creative components evaluated from course descriptions and syllabi
- One-on-one, semi-structured interviews with professors representing each department of the college were conducted
 - » Audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Data was analyzed using NVivo with open and axial coding (Creswell, 2013).

FINDINGS

- Student Fears and Personal Judgment
 - » Students' get in their own way to successfully access their creative mind due to their fears of judgment, self critique, and anxiety.

A general fear of what other people will think, not wanting to take risks that would out me as, you know, a weirdo. - Dr. Kristen

Oftentimes we were such harsh critics of ourselves...we undervalue so much what we're actually capable of doing. - Professor Kent

People perform poorly and they're not going to be creative if they're anxious. - Dr. Jack

- Desired Grade
 - » Students place more importance on GPA versus personal development

It's really hard to get beyond that mindset of getting the grade, even at the graduate level. It's really hard to get people to see beyond that - the stated objectives - to get the creative piece of who you are...so when you have that as particular student goals, it seems to block the creative flow in my thinking. - Dr. Kristen

There's a lot of stress in our culture today...tests and academic performance provide a lot of anxiety for people in general. - Dr. Jack

- Life Experiences
 - » Personal history and experiences can stimulate or reduce creative potential

Life experience causes people to be limited. So, people with more life experiences, we expect them to be more creative. - Dr. Grant

You have people who come from all these different experiences... and so you just have all of these rich experiences that come out, and people began to be authentic and they share. - Dr. Kristen

CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS

- Previous educational experiences and encouragement and judgment of creativity from previous interactions were found to be factors limiting creative potential in students.
- The fear of criticism, from themselves or others, remains a strong factor limiting students' creative thinking.
- The current education system has taught students to limit their creative effort and focus more on their intellectual growth (Sternberg, 2006), as many students are focused solely on achieving specific grades.
 - » Overcoming these fears and anxieties may be the first step toward promoting creative development in students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For Practice:
 - » Address the evolving anxiety of students to incorporate creative thinking opportunities when addressing evolving industry challenges
 - » Facilitate an environment that encourages creative growth to prepare students to implement their innovative abilities in future problem solving conditions.
- For Future Research:
 - » Determine the optimum ways to combat anxiety issues in education as the stresses students face continue to grow.
 - » Understand the limits on creativity caused by fear to promote creative thinking while fostering academic performance.

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