

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).
- Most students' creative potential impacts individuals and society with creative encouragement through universities' mission statements (Edwards, McGoldrick, & Oliver, 2006).
- Incorporating creative thinking and learning is critical in agricultural 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, & Irbeck, 2016).
- This study sought to explore the factors restricting creative growth and expression in students throughout College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' (CASNR) courses at Texas Tech University (TTU).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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

METHODOLOGY

- 7 courses selected purposefully throughout CASNR at TTU
- Selection Criteria: Inclusion of creative components evaluated from course description and syllabi to enhance data collection
- Interviewed 7 professors representing each department of the college in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Data analyzed using NVivo with open and axial coding (Creswell, 2013).

FINDINGS

- Student Fear and Personal Judgment:
 - » Students' get in their own way to successfully access their creative mind due to their fears of judgement, 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:
 - » Importance students point 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...And 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

- Factors limiting creative potential in students were their previous educational experiences and the encouragement and judgment of creativity from their previous interactions.
- The fear of criticism remains a strong emphasis for students to limit their creative thinking, whether the criticism comes from themselves or others.
- 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.
- There is a need to promote creative thinking in the world as the challenges we face evolve daily, especially in the agricultural industry (Intarachaimas, 2012).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Courses in higher education should address the evolving anxiety of students to find ways of incorporating creative thinking opportunities when addressing evolving industry challenges.
- Facilitating an environment to encourage creative growth will prepare students to implement their inventive abilities in future problem solving conditions.
- Further research should determine the optimum ways to combat anxietal issues in education as the stresses students face continue to compound.
- Further research is needed to understand the limits on creativity caused by fear in order to promote creative thinking while fostering academic performance.

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