Chapter 29
Using Theory-Based Research in Supporting Creative Learning Environment for Young Children

Amanda J. Muhammad
Bowling Green State University, USA

Gloysis Mayers
Zayed University, UAE

Deborah G. Wooldridge
Bowling Green State University, USA

ABSTRACT

A supportive creative environment for young children is viewed as an essential element toward facilitating their creative thinking. Creativity requires imagination, insight, problem solving, divergent thinking, the ability to express emotions and to be able to make choices, thus we created a supportive learning environment to nurture creativity in three to four year olds. In this chapter creativity theory is discussed and how to apply to the early childhood educational setting. The Reggio Approach and creativity-provoking methods are discussed. Application of the theory relates to how children are immersed into activities encourages problem-solving, exploration, creativity and the learning supported by play based experiences for children. Examples are given as to how one child development center has provided curriculum, arranged the indoor and outdoor spaces, and integrated the artist in residence concept into the setting.

INTRODUCTION

Providing quality experience during the early years is viewed as crucial to a child's later success in school. Creativity is defined as the ability to generate ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that can assist in solving problems and communicating with others (Franken, 1993). Creativity is viewed as a foundational skill that should be fostered during the early years (Craft, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2005). According to Sharp (2004), creativity fosters in children the ability to make connections across curriculum areas thereby extending their learning experiences. Mayeskey (1998) writes that "creativ-

ity is a way of thinking or acting or making something that is original for the individual and valued by that person or others" (p. 4). Mellou (1996) proposes that education settings can nurture young children's creativity through fostering an environment that places emphasis on providing a creative setting for learning, having creative teachers and providing a variety of supportive programming. Prentice (2000) asserts the need for a supportive classroom environment and the children's active involvement in the learning process as a crucial factor towards promoting creativity. The environment in which the child lives can encourage or discourage expressing creativity (Mayeskey, 1998; Singer & Singer, 2005; Tegano, Moran & Sawyers, 1991). The result of creative thinking can be found in the arts, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through a stimulating environment, well-delivered curriculum and opportunities for play in the early years of learning (Weinstein, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Schools are now looking at how to implement creativity into the classroom, since creativity has been identified as a 21st century skill for graduates (Jaquith, 2011; Kay, 2010, Pink, 2006; Singer & Singer, 2005; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). This paper highlights creativity theory as it relates to the development of young children. In this chapter, the authors tie the theory to practice by discussing the learning environment and how to develop teaching learning environments which enhance the creative experiences of children as well as tie the creative experiences to literacy, math and science outcomes (Craft, 2005; Vygotsky, 2004). A description of unique programming implemented into the school setting for young children will be shared, examples of implementation of creativity through the studio art concept will also be discussed and recommendations for future research will be provided.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CREATIVITY THEORY

Daily lives are ever evolving and becoming more complex. The complexity is evident not only in our cultural evolution but also in our biological evolution. To better function in an environment where complex change is the norm requires people to use and apply creative solutions to everyday problems. Creativity is necessary for understanding, problem solving, and developing flexibility in every life (Runco, 2004). Our contemporary society is the result of creative thinking not only in the artistic domain but also in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Weinstein, 2014). Children are of no exception to this need for the ability to respond creatively (Runco, 2004; Russ, 2004). In fact, creativity in youth is even more essential than ever before because the world that they will encounter as adults will present more variations in technological advancements, cultural diversions, social opportunities, and environmental changes.

Creativity is a natural resource that can be studied scientifically. Studies and theories related to creativity are numerous and expanding. Such a wide perspective is not inherently a negative thing since a broad perspective can reduce the chances of bias and assumptions, while capitalizing on the possibilities for application. The most often used scheme for creative research as presented by Rhodes (1987) delineates creativity research into four core areas of person, process, press, and product. Person refers to research completed on personal characteristics or traits attributed to creative people. Process research refers to behavior characteristics which are influenced by outside forces such as experts in the field. Press is defined as the relationship between the person and the environment, such as family, culture, and traditions and other cultural elements within ones

Related Content

The Counterproductive Effects on Learning Achievement and Intrinsic Motivation for Ludicization as an Online Learning Pedagogy Involving Game Elements
Qi Zhangand Zhonggen Yu (2022). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 1-18).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-counterproductive-effects-on-learning-achievement-and-intrinsic-motivation-for-ludicization-as-an-online-learning-pedagogy-involving-game-elements/309080

Testing the Impact of Social Isolation on Students' Acceptance of Learning Management Systems After the COVID-19 Crisis Using a Modified UTAUT Model
Alaa M. Momani (2023). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 1-17).*
www.irma-international.org/article/testing-the-impact-of-social-isolation-on-students-acceptance-of-learning-management-systems-after-the-covid-19-crisis-using-a-modified-utaut-model/322780

"Nobody Really Does the Reading": Rethinking Reading Accountability Using Technology Tools
Chelsey M. Bahlmann Bollinger, Sarah M. Lupoand Brian A. Sullivan (2020). *Handbook of Research on Integrating Digital Technology With Literacy Pedagogies (pp. 433-455).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/nobody-really-does-the-reading/238440

Integrative Learning Process to Enhance Competencies for Sustainable Development
Rungarun Rojrattanadamrong Chaisri (2024). *Effective and Meaningful Student Engagement Through Service Learning (pp. 165-187).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/integrative-learning-process-to-enhance-competencies-for-sustainable-development/344284

Impact of the Digitalization Level on the Assessment of Virtual Reality in Higher Education
Álvaro Antón-Sancho, Diego Vergaraand Pablo Fernández-Arias (2023). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 1-19).*
www.irma-international.org/article/impact-of-the-digitalization-level-on-the-assessment-of-virtual-reality-in-higher-education/314153