

Chapter 3

What Stops Creativity?

ABSTRACT

As demand for creativity increases globally the role of education is crucial to prepare future workers to deal with changing expectations of the workforce. Educational institutions should reflect intentional support for development of creativity and innovation. There is a conflicting paradigm of demands for success in the global community and the measures of academic achievement in many schools. Educational systems influence creativity and innovation through environments, socialization, and reward systems. Some specific points of interest about creativity and innovation include research on teachers' interactions and beliefs about creative students, the possible impact of a high stakes accountability system and admission requirements for teacher training.

INTRODUCTION: THE ANIMAL SCHOOL

Once upon a time the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of a “new world” so they organized a school. They had adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all the animals took all the subjects. The duck was excellent in swimming. In fact, better than his instructor. But he made only passing grades in flying and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to stay after school and also drop swimming in order to practice running. This was kept up until his webbed feet were badly worn and he was only average in swimming. But average was acceptable in school so nobody worried about that, except the

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duck. The rabbit started at the top of the class in running but had a nervous breakdown because of so much makeup work in swimming. The squirrel was excellent in climbing until he developed frustration in the flying class where his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of the treetop down. He also developed a “charlie horse” from overexertion and then got a C in climbing and D in running. The eagle was a problem child and was disciplined severely. In the climbing class, he beat all the others to the top of the tree but insisted on using his own way to get there. At the end of the year, an abnormal eel that could swim exceedingly well and also run, climb and fly a little had the highest average and was valedictorian. The prairie dogs stayed out of school and fought the tax levy because the administration would not add digging and burrowing to the curriculum. They apprenticed their children to a badger and later joined the groundhogs and gophers to start a successful private school (Reavis, 1940).

This story was written when George Reavis was the Assistant Superintendent of the Cincinnati Public Schools. He was concerned with the decisions made in schools, which while well intended, often tried to mold students to fit expectations of the average or norm. His story illustrates the effect of curriculum and schools which often presume that students should become what educational systems consider a good fit for social or educational norms.

Socialization

It all starts with our education systems, which influence how the future workplace is set up as well as how companies are run and what value is placed on creativity. The first place outside the home environment where children go to share their creative thinking is school and this is where the stage is set for the future expectations of work. What happens there determines the future of economic systems through the socialization of students, which identify acceptable thinking and interactions between groups of people. Few would argue that schools are the place children go to learn, not just academics, but the sociocultural values of the governing political and economic systems.

In this chapter the authors will provide information about how schools influence creativity and innovation through environments, socialization, and reward systems. Some specific points of interest about creativity and innovation include research on teachers’ interactions and beliefs about creative students, the possible impact of a high stakes accountability system

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