

Credne 1.3

Why is creativity important?

Why exactly does creativity matter? Why should we be trying to foster it amongst our students – and in ourselves?

A vital question

The “why” of creativity is an exciting and vital question.

In this handbook, we explore the different facets and domains of creativity. We address the person, the process, the environment (“press”) and the product. We also provide a variety of tools and strategies to help foster creativity within teaching and learning. But before going any further, we need to consider why creativity is so important in the first place. This requires us to consider many different impetuses and motivations.

There are **personal reasons**: what motivates a person to be creative, and why does a creative person do what she does? There are **economic and societal factors**: globalisation, competition, pandemics and rapidly changing economic factors produce new challenges that require fresh ideas and the ability to adapt – in short, creativity. But there are also **factors related to a person’s welfare and well-being**. The story of creativity can be narrated not only from the economic perspective. **Problem-solving, critical thinking, resilience, openness and adaptability** are required not just for economic growth, but also to preserve the **mental health** of our society.

It has been noted that historically, societal changes have tended to occur slowly, relative to the lifespan of an individual. But change in our own era is fast and global, with multiple dramatic transformations taking place during an individual lifetime. This demands of all of us the **ability to cope, adapt, and create**. As Tina Seelig puts it, without creativity **“we are not just condemned to a life of repetition, but to a life that slips backwards”** ([Seelig, 2012, p. 4](#)).

These are some of the proximal reasons that make creativity necessary. But there is another level of reasons, somehow deeper: bringing to consciousness the deep motives for fostering creativity provides us with the fuel to ignite our own inner motivation to pursue the path towards creativity.

The central point is this: **creativity is important because it provides individuals with the ability to adjust and become an agent of change.**

Individuals need to be able to adapt to the rapidly changing world, both for the good of society at large (on economic and cultural levels) as well as for their own well-being, building resilience, tolerance and adaptability in the face of changes. These are desirable qualities, and calls for more creativity in society are well-established. Arguably, the place where these qualities should be addressed and strengthened is within education, at all levels.

But again, **why is creativity important?** Because evidence suggests that creative thinking is a multi-dimensional concept best described with words such as competency, competence, attribute, and disposition. Creativity has an **transversal quality** that makes it unique. When creativity is appropriately fostered, a certain range of characteristics are strengthened:

- **A lifelong love for learning**, paired with **curiosity** and **autonomy**.
- **High mastery of specific domains**, and high ability to develop interconnections between different fields.
- **Deep learning** as opposed to “surface” learning (the acquisition of facts).


Those with such characteristics are likely to be a productive and healthy member of society.

Further reading

Do you want to explore it further? Here are some suggestions for engaging reading material on the importance of creativity.

Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: Update to “the social psychology of creativity”*. Westview press.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1991). *Flow : the psychology of optimal experience / Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* [Book]. New York : Harper Perennial, 1991, ©1990.



Hennesey, B. A., & Amabile, T. M. (2011). The Condition of Creativity. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *The nature of creativity: Contemporary psychological perspectives*. (pp. 11-38). Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, K. (2001). *Out of our minds: learning to be creative*. Hoboken N.J. : Capstone, 2011.

Seelig, T. (2012). *inGenius: A crash course on creativity*. Hay House, Inc.