

**Crying Out for Creativity**

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**Abstract**

This is an examination of how our world is seeking creative thinkers and how our current school systems are failing to produce these individuals. By investigating creativity in children and the lack thereof in graduates, this article deconstructs the need for global, dynamic thinkers and how we can foster creativity by cultivating visionary leaders to change our present educational systems.

**Teaching Notes**

This article was developed as a contribution to the educator community. This analysis brings awareness to the lacking creativity used in education systems, which is resulting in graduates who lack necessary creative skills needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century professions. By considering new, innovative leaders, this exploration describes how such leadership can change and inspire education.

**Keywords**

student creativity, educational reform, innovative technology, creative thinking, standardized testing, creative skills, visionary education, transforming education

### **Introduction**

Creativity can be defined as producing your own original ideas through engagement of your imagination. These processes generate thoughts and artistry as well as broaden understanding of various subjects. Root-Bernstein (2001) explains that it is “imperative that we learn to use the feelings, emotions and intuitions that are the bases of the creative imagination; [this] is the whole point of gourmet thinking and education” (p. 13). Yet, matters are changing in world education systems; there is a shift to move away from creative teachings and a tendency towards lackluster instruction per federal/state standards. This results in students who fall away from imaginative engagement, educators who are scripted and leaders who are barren of innovative ideologies. In this examination, I will expose how society seeks revolutionary thinkers and how current school systems are failing to produce these individuals. Furthermore, I will describe visionary leadership and how it can inspire and cultivate creativity in youth.

### **Children and ineffective education**

The functionality of our world continues to transform. Bleedorn (2003) explains, “the information age, with its dramatic developments in technology and communication systems drives and demands constant change” (p. 72). Society is drawn to visionaries. Such individuals create new paths; the minds of Steve Jobs and Bill Gates transformed the way in which we function in our daily lives and we seek to find others who can provide “new scientific recipes, new ideologies [and] new control systems” (Postman, p. 23). Despite that we flourish in fruitful creative environments, molding individuals towards an illuminating future is floundering. The root is education; we no longer see students who can tackle or connect to current global matters due to uninspired teachings and instructions.

There is a population that can tap into these connections – kids. Youngsters look to discover. They conjecture, hypothesize, speculate and suppose. They are an imaginative group who embraces their ability to be creative, critical thinkers. However, as we push our youth to be innovative, we place them into an educational system full of tiresome homework and monotonous testing. This impairs the young mind, molding them to recycle the same ideas and are not given the opportunity to explore their own original thoughts or unique capabilities. As a result, Robinson (2006) explains that we are currently “educating people out of their creative capacities,” losing individuals who may have had the ability to become skilled, dynamic thinkers. Robinson (2009) explains further:

“Education is the system that is supposed to develop our natural abilities and enable us to make our way in the world. Instead, it is stifling the individual talents and abilities of too many students and killing their motivation to learn” (p. 16).

### **Graduates and equivocal education**

There appears to be an unclear, uncertain future to education as the dialogue of reform continues. We are losing sight of being creative, a key element to successful functioning in various future careers. Schools are falling away from innovative thinking and growing an emphasis on academic ability. Robinson tells us “we’re living in times of massive unpredictability ... we need every ounce of ingenuity, imagination and creativity” (Azzam p. 24). We utilize new technologies and resources in the classroom; however, many educators fail to integrate them into teaching or to instruct students to make use of such advances. As Postman (1995) describes, “technology may have entered the schools but not technology education” (p. 189). Instead, the recurrent requirement is to place importance upon meeting standards and passing federal exams. Students are leaving their high school life and end up struggling to meet the benchmarks that define excellence to colleges and employers. Bleedorn (2003) explains, “a new awareness, public expressed, sees the failure of educational systems in the world to produce graduates who can think at the levels demanded by ... new global realities” (p. 60).

Students are sitting in classrooms being fed a dated menu of reading, writing and arithmetic and are not being given the opportunity to become the philosophers and leaders we seek for future generations. The education they receive pushes for conformity (students of the same age are in the same grade, share the same teacher and wear the same dress code) thereby significantly decreasing creativity in youth; stifling students of their passions and their desires to learn. With continuous testing and mundane assignments, it is apparent that there is lacking enthusiasm in the classroom as many great teachers are forced into instructing what the State has required them to. Robinson (2009) tells us “we place tremendous significance on standardized tests, we cut funding to ‘nonessential’ programs, and then wonder why our children seem unimaginative and uninspired” (Robinson, 2009, p. 16). This further drains the powers of creative thinking from young generations exiting high school, which strips them of a necessary commodity needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century careers.

### **Leadership to inspire educational change**

Children begin their lives ready to utilize their creative mind, yet we suffocate these abilities by placing them into dated educational systems. These students then graduate, unable to polish their creative thinking skills which is a key characteristic needed for future careers. If this proves to be true, then how do we foster higher levels of innovative thinking? As we look to change this, we pinpoint educational leadership. Bleedorn (2003) explains, “the quality of leadership created during the schooling experience” must be reshaped (p. 69).

This reshaping demands someone imaginative; a visionary, just like the graduates we hope to produce from our school systems. The leader who can visualize and see beyond the mind's eye should bring forth creative skills towards reforming education. An ideal leader would be one who is innovative to look beyond current educational challenges, work side by side with teams of teachers and provide creative insights to reconstruct classrooms and coursework requirements. These abilities are “the most important attributes a leader can have to be successful... to think outside the box by developing their own creative skills and cultivating creativity in others” (Sousa, p. 34). It is crucial that the professional understands the dynamics of integrating voices of the teaching team to create the best pathway towards reform. Sousa (2003) explains, “for meaningful change to occur in schools, staff members need to be empowered so they can make choices, feel committed, take appropriate risks, be imaginative, and get involved” (p. 42).

Change in schools can occur by creating an alliance of instructors who are already present in educational systems and by utilizing new, creative skills from the individual in the leadership role. This leader will have the ability to present a persuasive and valid case against the prescribed “testing” menu of our school systems by displaying how we currently fail to produce graduates who can meet the needs of becoming global, dynamic thinkers. As leadership changes, so does teaching and the way in which we work with children. Creative leadership can bring successful motion towards reforming education and integrate engagement, excitement and creativity back into the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

Education is in a position “to both develop quality thinking and learning and support the learner in the independent quest for growth” (Bleedorn, p. 84). However, multitudes of schools have lost the characteristic that brings inspiration to youth. Absent imagination in the classroom leaves children with lacking skills and abilities to become the creative thinkers we need for our future. In order to change and transform our skewed system, we need to seek individuals who are revolutionary leaders; those that have the expertise in “enlightened universal education” that can “foster learning that will produce planetary leadership talents” in our children (Bleedorn, p. 11).

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