Frameworks for Creativity

Creativity has always been a prized attribute in public and private life, but teachers have struggled to understand creativity in the context of strategies for teaching and learning. Several educators and psychologists have developed frameworks that explain the components of creativity that inform classroom practice.

Sir Ken Robinson

This course uses the framework proposed by Sir Ken Robinson, an internationally respected educator, who advocates for the transformation of schools to meet the demands of 21st century life. His model of creativity describes basic characteristics of creativity:

- Creativity is both a part of and dependent on critical thinking.
- Creative ideas are original and have value.
- Creativity is a process, not a single event of inspiration.
- Creativity requires a keen evaluative sense, an ability not only to determine whether an idea is worth working on, but also to analyze how to improve upon it.

In an interview for PersonalLifeMedia, Robinson describes his views on education and the changes he thinks are necessary to prepare 21st century students for success.

Sternberg and Williams

Robert Sternberg and Wendy Williams, psychologists who have studied intelligence and creativity, present three abilities necessary for creativity:

- Synthetic ability to generate novel, interesting ideas
- Analytic ability to evaluate ideas to decide which ones are worth pursuing
- Practical ability to turn ideas into reality

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In their article Teaching for Creativity: Two Dozen Tips, Sternberg and Williams describe specific classroom strategies that teachers can use to foster creativity in students. The following is a sample of their suggestions:

- Teach students to question assumptions about how things work, to think about when they need to understand an environment and work within it and when they can try to create a new environment.
- Encourage students to connect subjects and disciplines. When students use art to understand science or mathematics, or to think about literature, they generate new ways of thinking.
- Create a classroom environment where students must learn to tolerate, even embrace, ambiguity, where they develop strategies for moving forward when the path is not clear.
- Teach and expect self-direction and self-management.

E. Paul Torrance

E. Paul Torrance is a psychologist who spent his career studying creativity. The Torrance Center at the University of Georgia in the United States has promoted the study of creativity in education and the workplace since 1984. Torrance describes the skills essential for four stages of creative endeavors:

- Sensing difficulties, problems, and gaps in information
- Making guesses and formulating hypotheses about deficiencies
- Evaluating, testing, and revising guesses and hypotheses
- Communicating the results

Torrance discusses the role of theory and research in the study of creativity in Understanding Creativity: Where to Start.

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