DOES STANDARDIZATION AFFECT CREATIVITY?

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Questions

- Does the standardization movement impact the creativity of students? In what way?
- How do university students perceive their own creative abilities?
- Can creativity be taught or is it an innate ability?
- Is there a difference between Gifts and Talents and what are those differences?
- How do university students assess their gifts and talents?
- Is giftedness or talent related to creativity?
- Does the need to be creative impact frustration level?
- Does a student’s major affect their outlook on creativity?

Research Methods

We passed out surveys to ask students on our campus regarding their beliefs about creativity and standards. Based on those surveys we have decided that there is no black and white answer as to how standards affect students’ creativity. Our data was gathered with 285 surveys from the Stephen F. Austin State University (SFAasu) student and faculty population. Therefore, the following data is only applicable to institutions of higher education in the broadest sense and the SFAasu population in the most specific sense. In addition, while an extensive number of surveys were gathered for the time allotted, 265 surveys may not be a large enough sample to yield statistically significant results. In addition there were some questions left unanswered accounting for the results that do not equal 100%. The following were the questions asked, the results, and our interpretation of those results. We also gathered background information from experts in the fields of education, standardization, and creativity.

Further Research

The following are questions that have emerged from this research. We feel these questions will help develop a deeper understanding of how standardization and creativity are related. In addition, further research is needed in how academic backgrounds effect creative outlooks.

- Are these higher education students/professors comparing themselves to each other from within the same narrow population or are they taking into consideration the general population which includes non-college educated individuals?
- Are the low rankings of Science and English possibly due to the way academic subjects are viewed and taught in comparison to artistic subjects?
- Is encouragement given in a different manner in academic subjects than artistic subjects?
- Do the views regarding whether creativity can be taught correlate to the views regarding whether creativity has been restricted to meet preset standards?
- In what ways can educators meet imposed standards without limiting the education of their students?
- Why do students report lower frustration levels when supplied with easier assignments than when asked to be creative while meeting preset standards?
- Why does the science community seem to have such a pessimistic view of creativity?

Activity

The following activity was used to demonstrate that while standards may inhibit creativity, they can also be used appropriately and encourage creativity. Follow these directions to the best of your ability.

- Get a blank sheet of paper and something to write with
- draw a triangle
- draw two circles on each side of the triangle
- draw a square under the triangle
- connect the circles with a line
- draw a sun in the corner
- draw a ball
- write a title at the top of your paper.

As seen, many of the people we surveyed saw their creativity level as above average. What does this say about standards? It says that we can, that we have the potential. In other words, when asked to be creative, most students identified themselves as having above average creativity. We also gathered data about what skills fall under the designation of “talent.” The most common answers were along the lines of art and sports. It is not surprising that Art is on this short list since art majors identified themselves as having above talent.

Findings

Do You Think Your Major Requires You To Be Creative?

Even though the majority of the population believed they were required to be creative in their individual major, there was a surprisingly high number (18%) who believed their major does not require creativity. 30% of Science majors and 18% of English majors answered “no”. If our up-and-coming doctors and writers do not see a need for creativity in their profession, there is a large problem, either in the education system or among the students themselves. 8% of professors also answered “no”. This indicates that a significant portion of higher level educators do not believe (and perhaps do not encourage) creativity.

How Creative Do You Feel You Are?

Because the overall average of this scale is 3.0, each segregated population (as well as the combined populations) indicated a sense of creativity well above average. However, with all of the averages being between a 3.5 and 4.12, this is quite a bit lower than the researches had expected from the population of an institution of higher learning. By definition, this population should be higher performing than the diverse general population. As expected per the previous question, Science students believed themselves to be significantly less creative than those of other majors. After looking at the majors of the random sample, many of these students were also science majors, which may have been the cause for such a low score in that category.

How Frustrated Do You Feel When Asked To Be Creative?

The following activity was used to demonstrate that while standards may inhibit creativity, they can also be used appropriately and encourage creativity. Follow these directions to the best of your ability.

- Get a blank sheet of paper and something to write with
- draw a triangle
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