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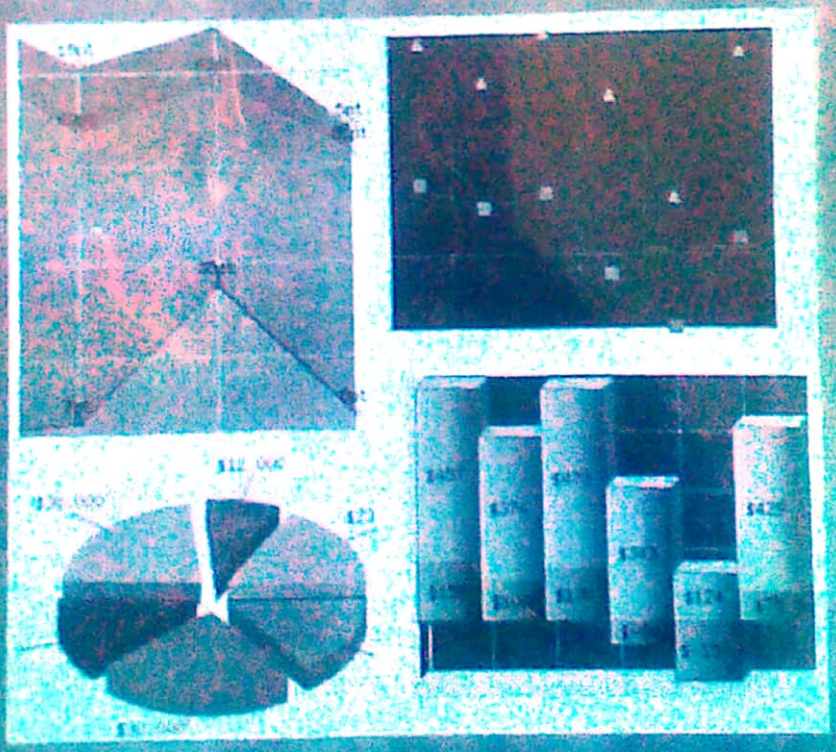

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Application of Creativity in Higher Institutions of Learning in Malaysia

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Abstract

Creativity is vital to national economic and technological sustainability. Hence, continued efforts should be made to foster creativity among students of institutions of Higher Learning as emphasized by Malaysian Education Blueprint. A successful fostering of creativity among students of higher institutions of learning can however be achieved when the problem of incorporating creativity into the school curriculum is first looked into and thereafter, the relevant application of creativity is taken into consideration by the management and other stakeholders. This paper therefore focuses on the need for creativity in the Higher Institutions of Learning in Malaysia, problems of incorporating creativity into the school curriculum and how to apply creativity in the institutions.

Keywords: *Creativity, Higher Education, Malaysia*

Introduction

Creativity plays a very important role in the development of society and the nation (Storm & Storm, 2002).Creativity according to Gardner (2008) is the novelty that is involved as the outcome of an idea. The concern of the advocators of originality in creativity perspective therefore is how novel a particular problem has been solved.

The needs for creativity during the learning process cannot be denied (Yorke and Knight, 2006). McWilliam and Haukka (2008) argued that creativity is very valuable economically to communities and organizations. For internationally competitive workforce, the students will not only need to have the skills and knowledge but they also need to have a high creativity in order to be able to solve the increasingly complex problems in their jobs (Lee, 2002).

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For many generations, one can say that creativity is a mysterious characteristics which affects the public. It is also regarded as one of the elusive art that must be borne by itself and at the same time, can be taught (Haring-Smith, 2006). Craft (2002) stated that creativity is not without skills and knowledge. Therefore, before an individual can handle creativity in any knowledge domain, they must have developed an understanding of the domain.

Peterson & Harrison, (2005) stated that creativity is the basis for the development of technology. Tan, (2013) added that creativity leads to human development, innovation, civilization, inventions and discoveries. This is coupled with Malaysian Education Blueprint 2010 which gives emphasis to the development of creative human capital to meet the needs of the country in the 21st century (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2006).

Creativity In Institutions of Higher Learning

Creativity has received serious attention in Higher Education Institutions recently (Lowry-O'Neill Theatre, 2011). Universities realize that graduates who have the ability to solve problems creatively and novatively are needed by the employment market (Lowry-O'Neill, 2011). This is further amplified by Donnelly (2004) whostated that creative graduates have excellent opportunities in the world world of work.

Institutions of higher learning have to look at the important roles played by creativity in preparing students for the world of uncertainty and increased complexity. The world needs people who are creative and capable of analyzing situations (Jackson, 2006). However the application of the value of creativity in Institutions of Higher Learning faces a lot of challenges. Many students and educators in Institutions of Higher Learning don't seem to see the importance of creativity because the non-exixtence of syllabs often acts as barriers to push creativity structured (Henry, 2002).

Although the management of Higher Education Institutionsextensively support the idea of creativity in teaching and learning, but when educators try to introduce into existing curriculum, they are often met with conflicts (Martin, Morris, Rogers, & Martin, 2009).

Problems of Incorporating Creativity in Institutions of Higher Learning

The problems of incorporating creativity in the institution of higher learning are found to include:

1. lack of curriculum for inplementing creativity;
2. lack of awareness;
3. poor assessment techniques and
4. absence of creativity framework.

Lack of Curriculum for Implementing Creativity

The curriculum is an important aspect of creativity (Park, Lee, Oliver, & Cramond, 2006). Traditionally, educators at the Institutes of higher education are focused on delivering

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content knowledge rather than figuring out how to implement the values of creativity for students (Gibson, 2010). Educators are not clear about the structure of the instructions to enhance or encourage creative thinking on the part of their students (Baker, Rudd & Pomeroy, 2002). Many lecturers teach a class of about 100 students and thereby facing huge pressure on their time(especially in the current climate of higher education) to inculcate creativity in teaching and learning (Gibson, 2010).

Lack of Awareness of Lecturers and Students

When teachers try to instill the concept of creativity in their practice , they sometimes feel uncomfortable in teaching creativity (Joubert, 2007). Despite the high motivation of their profession in the application of the practice of creativity, problems appear when they are trying to be creative. (Aljughaiman & Mowrer-Reynolds, 2005; Fryer, 1996).

Wenning (2005) stated that learning at the Institution of Higher Education has resulted in reproducing what one has learnt without encouraging students to think. Whereas, in creative studies, concepts should be taught as a non-permanent and ever-changing (Banaji, Burn, & Buckingham, 2010).Burnard (2006) was of the opinion that increasing an individual's creative work to grow up from exploration of personal choice can be determined by external factors, such as curriculum, time and measurement constraints.

Poor Assessment Techniques

According to Yorke (2002), assessment of aspects of creativity in the subject is a major problem in fostering creativity amongst students. The scholar identified some dilemma in the assessment of creativity that include: the unrealistic assessment carried out by lecturers on the creative works of the students; the results of creative active assessment carried ot by other students in thesame discipline; formative assessments carried out by the lectureres which do not necessarily represent the creative work of the students

On students' creativity self-assessment, Clouder, Oliver and Tait (2008) expressed that students rarely play a role in determining how they will be assessed, hence such method of evaluation is rarely integrated into the learning process.

Absence of Framework for Creativity

Some students expect that teachers should provide a framework for creative works because they see the framework as that which makes provision for a number of activities (Caroline Walker & Alan Gleaves, 2008). Many students are in a dilemma to try ' new thinking ' or ' radical ' ideas because of the fear of not meeting the necessary requirements set up by the lecturers which can eventually affect their scores in the subjects (Caroline Walker & Alan Gleaves , 2008). Consequently, students in institutions of higher learning are not comfortable holding the professional autonomy of their own because they are reward-compliance (Gibson, 2010).

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Application of Creativity In Institutions of Higher Learning

Creativity can be easily applied in the higher institutions where the following are taken into consideration:

1. Integration of creativity into the school curriculum;
2. Creation of enabling environment which can promote creativity;
3. Motivation of students to think;
4. Application of appropriate teaching techniques;
5. Use of brainstorming;
6. Stimulation of creativity awareness among lecturer and teachers.

Integration of Creativity into the School Curriculum

Researchers and theorists have found similarities in the study of the elements of creativity and natural talent. They therefore concluded that the two elements though go hand-in-hand, but cannot be equated (Hennessey, 2004). However, according to Craft (2005), creativity can be nurtured with the curriculum, knowledge and pedagogy in learning and teaching. The assertion was supported by Wilson (2005) who stressed that the cultivation of creativity should be given focus on "curriculum and pedagogy".

Creation of Enabling Environment which can Promote Creativity

Mihai-Yiannaki & Savvides (2012) opined that institution of Higher Education should be an example to the community in creating a learning environment based on creativity. Bardin (2006) expressed that creativity requires different psychological aspects that can accumulate in cognitive factors such as intelligence, knowledge, cognitive style (intuitive, sensitive, global way to information processing); cognitive factors (motivation, emotions, personality characters) and environmental factors (cultural, professional, social, economic context).

Motivation of Students to Think

Sternberg and Lubart (1999) suggested that creativity requires knowledge or thinking ability. Hence Grainger et.al (2004) identified a number of themes related to creative thinking teaching in Institutions of Higher Learning namely: style and way of teaching; the confidence of educators and the ability of educators to inspire, evaluate and s and encourage students to think about their own learning. Sternberg and Lubart (2007) stated that Institutions should learn motivate students more intrinsically. Prabhu et.al (2008) confirmed that intrinsic motivation is also nature-lasting personality which has a positive relationship with creativity.

Application of Appropriate Teaching Techniques

Cole, Sugioka, and Yamagata-Lynch (1999) reviewed environment that supports creativity in the institutions of higher education with a focus on the role of the instructors. They

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found that strategies, such as remembering the name of each student and call students by their names will make students more comfortable with instructors and help them to share innovative ideas in a fun atmosphere. Therefore, part of the teaching strategies used in the course is to remember the names all of the students and interrract with them outside the classroom. It is hoped that this strategy will give students more confidence in developing ideas and innovative products of their own. Hence they will be less depending on the comments of others about their work. In addition, one of the ways to instill creativity in institutions of higher learning is that the evaluation scores must take into account the elements of job creativity (Caroline Walker & Alan Gleaves, 2008).

Use of Brainstorming

The various faculties in the institutions of higher learning could adapt brainstorming, group, and team project debates as main teaching styles instead of lectures. It is believed that this will help in achieving the goal of developing creativity groups (Chen & Chen, 2011). In order to instil the characteristics of creativity, Mika & Ashwin (2013) recommended that the management of institutions of higher learning should: cultivate a culture of creativity in all aspects of the program; encourage the students to have a creative attitude and developed in the students a desire to have lifelong and higher pursuit of creativity. If universities want to be the center of creativity, the best thing to do is to maximize the opportunity for the pedagogical students to practise what they create (Jackson, 2006).Therefore, it was recommended that institutions of higher learning should provide online education to enhance creativity among students (Poutanen & Parviainen, 2013).

Creating Creativity Awareness

Creating unawareness on the importance of creativity at present is the first step the institutions of higher learning can take to develop programmes which can increase the creativity of the students (Zampetakis, Tsironis& Moustakis, 2007).Sheridan-Rabideau(2010) stated that students have been given a limited career path channelled through their curriculum. They are so busy and so, don't have time to think deep, let alone to explore careers that will bring together their own unique talents. Hence they do find it difficult to see a wider value to become a creative thinker.Thus creativity has not been made part of daily discourse of academic education in institutions of higher learning, despite the fact that creativity can provide a good opportunity for future students (Paul, 2008). In order to get support from friends and teachers, it is recommended that schools should motivate the students to be more creative (Madjar et al., 2002, Oldham and Cummings, 1996)

Conclusion

Continuous efforts should be made to encourage creativity among students in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. The success of these efforts is very dependent on managers,

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lecturers and students in institutions of higher learning. Although universities are aware of the importance of creativity and the need to support the development of creativity, but there are obstacles to these. The obstacles include: awareness of lectures and students on the importance of creativity; constraints in terms of curriculum and problem of carrying out the normal assessment on creativity. Therefore, the cooperation of all parties is needed so that the cultivation of creativity in institutions of higher learning are carried out to enable the graduates of institutions of higher learning in Malaysia compete favourable in the labour force with their peers globally.

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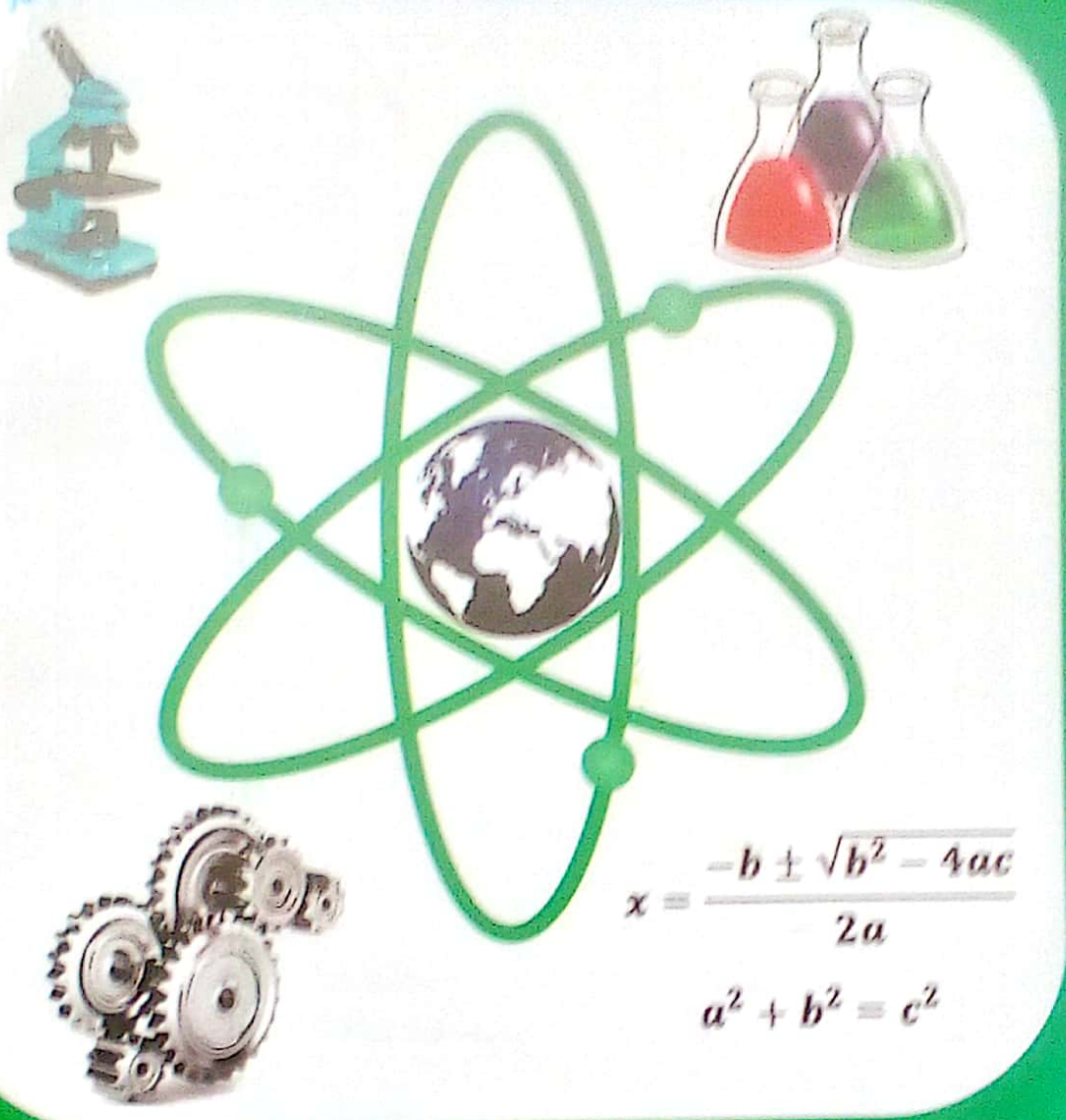

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