

THE CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS
OF FORM SIX STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the creative thinking skills of Form Six students. The survey method was the research design used to examine the following research question: What are the creative thinking skills of Form Six students? The variable described in this study was the creative thinking skills of Form Six students. The instrument used to address the above variable was the Minnesota Tests of Creative Thinking. The test was comprised of three sections; namely the Circles Test, Ask and Guess Test and Unusual Use of Tin Test. The test was administered among 40 Form Six students, drawn from two schools: SMK Tawau and SMK Kuhara, Tawau, Sabah. The participants were chosen by Random Sampling Procedure with fair components of male and female respondents. The results were analyzed and computed for frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, which were then presented in narrative, tabular, and graphic forms. The analysis revealed that there was a wide range of creativity among Form Six students. The overall creativity level of Form Six

students varies in all tasks of ideational fluency, flexibility and originality. Not surprisingly, the students' creativity was best in ideational fluency, but, lower in ideational flexibility, and originality. The findings also indicated that the students' creativity, in terms of figural flexibility was higher than their ideational flexibility; and so does figural originality, which was also higher than their ideational originality. Hence, it can be concluded that the instrument used in this study was successful in describing the creative thinking skills of the Malaysian Form Six students.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The late 1950s and 1960s saw the beginning of the rise of creativity as an issue of importance. The phenomenon was termed by Cropley (1992) as the 'creativity wave.' During that period, Cropley regarded creativity as associated with intelligence and high academic achievement. The research continued further in the 1970s. During that period, Torrance (1973) believed that creativity can be taught. The research was renewed again in the 1980s. Then, creativity was viewed as an integral element of giftedness (Cropley, 1992). This meant that creativity was seen as gifted talent available to certain individuals only.

Today, however, the ideas of giftedness and the relation of creativity to intelligence have changed. The contemporary period brought back Torrance's (1973) notion that creativity is teachable. Starko (1995), Fryer (1996), and many other researchers in the modern days believe that as a form of higher-order thinking skills, creativity can be coached and taught effectively. This same notion is shared by the former Director of Education of Malaysia, Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Wan Mohd Zahid Mohd Noordin, who asserts that;

“Thinking is a skill and it is not a natural talent. Intelligence is a potential. This does not mean that one who is intelligent has acquired thinking skills, if one does not master the skills” (Wan Mohd Zahid Mohd Noordin, 1993, page 163).

Thus, he emphasizes the importance of developing ‘cognitive competence’ among members of the future generation in order to enable them to cope with the challenges of the future. According to Dr. Wan Mohd Zahid, it is the responsibility of the teaching profession to develop thinking skills of the society. This can be done through reflective inquiry, whereby;

“Teachers must engage in reflective inquiry...transmit knowledge, attitude, skills....They should develop thinking skills. The students should not only be taught to answer questions but also to question answers and to question questions” (Wan Mohd Zahid Mohd Noordin, 1993, page 115).

This assertion shows Malaysia’s move toward higher-order thinking skills in education.

The need and awareness for higher-order thinking skills to be inculcated among the Malaysian citizens was, in fact, realised as early as 1979 (Raman, 1995). The idea was materialised by the inception of the National Integrated Curriculum for primary and secondary schools. The nation’s goal toward higher-order thinking skills, such as creative thinking skills, is clearly mirrored by YAB , Dato’ Seri

Dr. Mahathir Muhammad, the Malaysian Prime Minister. In his pursuit for human resource development, he stresses human talents, skills and creativity as pictured below:

“...it is blindingly clear that the most important resource of any nation must be the talents, skills, creativity and will of its people...” (Abu Bakar Nordin, 1994, page 264).

Thus, the skills are found to be crucial for the Malaysian society that has potential to progress extensively (Abu Bakar Nordin, 1994). Henceforth, the National Philosophy of Education that was officially gazetted in 1987 aspires;

“...towards further developing the potential of individuals in a wholistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced....Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent....capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being.....” (Abu Bakar Nordin, 1994, page 134).

The above philosophy portrays the nation's aspiration in developing creative society whose members are competent, possesses the ability and capacity to achieve not only self-development, but also for the great purpose of nation building as a whole.

Such an awareness and enthusiasm, has brought into the National Curriculum the incorporation of higher-order thinking skills.