THE CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY: DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES

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INTRODUCTION

Creativity is regarded as one of the most complex of human behaviors. It can be influenced by a wide array of social, developmental and educational experience that leads to creativity in different ways in a variety of fields (Runco & Sakamoto, 1999). Opinions about the origin of creativity vary, and none of them explains the creative process completely. Creativity can be seen as the following: a divine quality, serendipitous activity, 'planned luck', endurance and 'method' (Cook, 1998a: p.6). Petrowski (2000: p.305) stated that "creativity research belongs to the baby-boom generation, beginning in earnest when Guilford directed the American Psychological Association in his 1950 presidential address to focus on this important but neglected area". The existence of creativity as a modern term emerged from the results of the pioneering efforts of Guilford (1950) and Torrance (1962, 1974). Guilford and Torrance were psychometric theorists and they attempted to measure creativity from a psychometric viewpoint (Sternberg, 2006).

CREATIVITY DEFINITION

Creativity is a complex and mysterious concept, and therefore it is difficult to define creativity because of the ambiguity about the concept and no accepted definition for it in general (Andriopoulos, 2000). The earliest definitions of creativity were based on the concept of creative individual, when Guilford (1950: p.444) defined creativity as "the abilities that are most characteristic of creative people". That definition became dominant during the 1950s and it is popular among creativity researchers (Amabile, 1996: p.21). Although each individual has a different creativity, the real payoff appears when the creativity process is leveraged in an organization at the organizational level (Cook, 1998a). Creativity has been defined in various ways. Creativity is defined in as "the production of novel, appropriate ideas in any realm of human activity, from science, to the arts, to education, to business, to everyday life", thus the ideas have to be new and appropriate to the opportunity or problem presented (Amabile, 1997: p.40). It can be defined as "a domain-specific, subjective judgment of the novelty and value of

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an outcome of a particular action" (Ford, 1996: p.1125) or as "the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain" (Amabile et al., 1996: p.1155) and as "the generation of novel ideas, without too much regard for their usefulness" (Cook, 1998a: p.4). Whereas, Drazin et al. (1999) defined creativity as an engagement process in creative acts regardless of whether the outcomes are creative, novel and useful or not. A similar definition suggested by Dewett (2007: p.198) termed creativity as "the production of novel and useful ideas, processes, or products by a person or group". Consequently, there is an agreement among researchers that creativity means "something is both novel and valuable". Creativity is commonly regarded as the production of novel and useful ideas or problem solutions (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999; Dewett, 2004; Amabile et al., 2005; Woerkum et al., 2007)

Some definitions focus on intellectual activity and thought processes that create novel ideas to solve existing problems. A group of meanings concentrates on individuals' intellectual abilities and personality traits and other definitions center attention on the products themselves regarding creative outcomes and qualities (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). However, creativity has been perceived in different ways as a mental ability, a process and a human behavior (Andriopoulos, 2000).

CREATIVITY CONCEPT

Creativity includes two dimensions. The first dimension is the novelty notion; it is a phenomenon in everyday life and therefore anyone can be creative as an essential aspect of his/her contribute to the business environment and everybody has to be involved in creative processes. The second dimension is the usefulness notion which refers to material or practical methods of assessing the usefulness of novel ideas (Shalley et al., 2004).

Although there is no an agreement about where creativity is situated in a process, a product, or a person, there is agreement about creative work involving both the concepts new and useful (Petrowski, 2000). Creativity means a belief in new ideas and making them into reality in the forms of new products or services providing by organizations in the marketplace (Kilroy, 1999). It is based on novel and useful ideas, regardless of the type of these ideas, the reasons behind their production or the commencing point of the process (Unsworth, 2001). Creativity can be seen as a mental process which produces novel and useful concepts or ideas, or it could be innovative relationships between existing ideas or concepts (Houran & Ference, 2006).

The importance of creativity because of its ability to yield novel and proper ideas to solve complex problems, to increase efficiencies and to enhance overall effectiveness (Diliello & Houghton, 2008). Creativity includes two principles 'problem finding', and 'problem solving', and creativity needs several skills and talents. Thus, creative thinking is not conventional and requires modifying or rejecting existing ideas (Herbig & Jacobs, 1996). Similarly, Dewett (2004) identified that individual creativity has two general facets which are creative efforts and creative outcomes. Individual creativity can be defined as "a person's ability to think beyond the obvious and produce something novel and appropriate" (Nayak, 2008: p.421).

Creativity can be divided into three types and they are: creating something new, combining things together, and improving or changing things (Mikdashi, 1999). It is regarded as a principal term in various fields ranging from the fine arts

and architecture, to psychology, sociology, economics, science, engineering and lastly management. The application of creativity in marketing can provide added value to services or products, further than the tangible aspects or clear characteristics of these products or service (Sadi & Al-Dubaisi, 2008).

CREATIVITY THEORY

Amabile (1997) suggested that the componential theory of creativity indicates every individual has the capacity to engender at least slight creative work and some factors such as working environment and time may impact creative behavior level and its frequency. Based on this theory, individual creativity consists of three major components, each being necessary for creativity in any situation. They are: expertise or domain skills, creativity thinking skills and intrinsic task motivation. Creativity occurs when individuals' skills coincide with strong intrinsic motivation and this will lead to higher creativity when based on the higher level for each one of the three elements. Furthermore, individuals show differences in the level of the components of individual creativity (Amabile, 1996). Although personality plays an important role in intrinsic motivation, the social environment can also impact on the level of intrinsic motivation of individuals at any time (Amabile, 1997). Hence, creative individuals are those people who generate new methods to carry out their work by coming up with innovative ideas or novel procedures, and by reconfiguring existing ways into new alternative ways (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003).

Individuals may have high creativity if they have the personality traits of creative people. For example, intrinsic motivation of individuals includes satisfaction of curiosity, pleasure, personal challenges, self-expression and interest (Amabile, 1993 & 1997). Intrinsic motivation refers to the main trait of creative people, and therefore creative people tend to follow intrinsic motivation, while extrinsic motivation tends to hinder creativity (Runco, 2004). Expertise is knowledge: intellectual, procedural, and technical. In addition, expertise is considered as the basis of creative work, and therefore creative people do not create novel ideas from nothingness, but those new ideas start from domain-relevant knowledge and a set of developed skills (Simonton, 2000). Expertise in any activity is an essential element for producing new ideas, opposed to existing ideas and that requires preceding knowledge of that activity. Cognitive style means how individuals determine problems and provide the solutions for those problems and their ability to merge existing ideas to produce novel amalgamations (Kirton, 1989). Thus, cognitive style indicates the level of individuals' imagination and their flexibility in facing problems (Munoz-Doyague et al., 2008).

CONCLUSION

The relevant literature indicates that there is no agreement about where creativity is located in a process, a product or a person. Creativity can vary from a slight change to total change. It is commonly regarded as the production of novel and useful ideas or problem solutions. Individuals may have high creativity if they have the personality traits of creative people and therefore creativity has been perceived in different ways as a mental ability, a process and a human behavior.

Al-Ababneh

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