



Study of the effect of home and school environment perception on the creativity of ninth grade children

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Abstract

Creativity is a potential ability and a potential ability means an ability which can be fully developed, if and only if, certain conditions are fulfilled. If the apparently creative student's home and school environment did not fulfil these necessary conditions, his potentiality would not be able to develop fully.

Keywords: school environment, perception, creativity, potential ability

Introduction

A developing country like ours needs men of creativity who can think up solutions to the varied problems baffling the country. In fact, historical records provide evidence that cultures have collapsed because of the failure to utilize "intelligent, imaginative methods for solving their problems". Arnold Toynbee's observation seems to be correct that "to give a fair chance to potential creativity is a matter of life and death for any society. This is all important because the outstanding creative ability of a fairly small percentage of the population is mankind's ultimate asset and the only one with which man has been endowed..... If society fails to make the most of this human asset, or if worse still, it perversely sets itself to stifle it, man is throwing away his birth right of being the lord of creation and is condemning himself to be instead, the least effective species on the face of this planet" ^[1]. Schools by providing education to young children share the major responsibility of developing creative potentials. Our education is neither child-centred nor life-centred. It is examination centred. Our examinations are simply a way of rating our student population in terms of ability to memorise and reproduce information. The cumulative effect of these educational sine is the production in great numbers of educated persons in various disciplines, a majority of whom fail to carry creatively the comprehension of the subjects studied into their lives. Thus investment on the education of this type is a wastage.

We believe that educated manpower with creativity constitutes a priceless material resource, the chance development of talents is risky. Then accurate identification, appropriate education and effective use of different kinds of creative talents is the need of our time. Hence a massive commitment to productive change in India's education at all levels is mandatory.

Role of environment in the development of creativity

Creativity is a psychological uranium. It is a potentiality and therefore the limits of its development in an individual will be set by nature while the environment will determine the extent to which his potentiality shall be realized, the specific forms in which it shall be developed, and the directions in which it shall be utilized. Just as a seed with potentiality to develop and grow into a plant germinates into a seedling which grows into a plant only when suitable environmental conditions exist, in the same way if a congenial environment conducive to the development of creative potential is not available, the potential is bound to be smothered and our nation and culture will fail to withstand the danger of extinction. India has bitterly failed in her moral duty to her members by setting herself to neutralize this ultimate human asset' which has not usually been given free play. K.S. Misra ^[2] observes: "This valued potentiality is being neglected in India. If our society fails in giving up its business to stifle, stunt and stultify the potential creativity by the prevalence of adverse attitudes of mind and habits of behaviour, we, the Indians, are bound to live a tense, sad, pessimistic and charmless life".

Thus, creativity is like the seedlings, destined to grow, to fill out, if given an environment in which this is possible.

So far as environment is concerned, both home and school environment will largely contribute to the development of creativity. Environmental influence starts very early in life time i.e. during pre-natal development of child. The process of birth brings the individual into an environment which is much wider, much more complex and demands active transaction on the part of the infant to some degree. In Freudian language, from now on, the sense of omnipotence has gradually to give way in the face of reality principle and the process of reality testing. The reality itself is nothing but the environment in its different forms- physical, social, direct, indirect, immediate, and remote. It is in this field of reality that the child has to develop, and whether he is a normal or abnormal child (with reference to creativity) depends on the way that specific realities impose

themselves on him. The most important part of the child's environment is the home. According to young and McGeeney "The child is in the home and the home alone for the first vital years of his life and after he goes to school, he is only there for a part of his time". If we were to calculate how many days are spent by a child in a school in U.P., we come across that he is in the school only for about 200 days in a year. He studies there only for about six hours and the rest of the time is spent by him at home, in the street, or where-ever he take recreation.

Williams (1967) ^[3] observes: "Creativity may be developed during the very early life of the child through attitudes of both parents and teachers ^[3]. He also found that "The influence of parent in preschool years is perhaps greater than that of teachers in the years to follow".

Thus, we see that home and school environments are the most important environments that should influence child development in general and growth of creativity in particular. Systematic research into home and school environment which are conducive to creativity is very much needed in the prediction of creative functioning. Though this issue requires intensive and extensive study by a team of research workers, working steadily over a number of years, yet the investigator has taken an humble venture to find out the relationship of some of the aspects of pupils' home and school environments with their creative behaviour. The problem to be investigated may be stated as follows:

"The effect of home and school environment- perception on the creativity of ninth grade children".

The present study is intended to answer the following questions

1. Are home and school-environments associated with creativity.
2. Which environmental characteristics are associated with creativity and in what manner?
3. What are the possible combination of home and school- environment characteristics, intelligence and S.E.S. on which prediction of creative functioning can be made at the highest level?

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are

1. To find out the extent to which home environment is related to verbal and nonverbal creativity.
2. To find out how school environment affects verbal/ non-verbal creativity.
3. To find out how far these variables (home environment as well as school environment characteristics) contribute to the prediction of creative behaviour.
4. To find out the best combination of home and school environment characteristics, intelligence and socio-economic status which contributes to the prediction of creative behaviour.
5. To find out the relationship of home environment with verbal/Non-verbal creativity, when intelligence is held constant.
6. To find out the relationship of home environment with verbal/non-verbal creativity, when S.E.S. is held constant.
7. To explore relationship between school environment and verbal/ non-verbal creativity when intelligence is held constant.
8. To investigate the existence of the relationship between school environment and verbal/non-verbal creativity when S.E.S. is held constant.
9. To find out the extent to which home environment characteristics are related to creativity when intelligence and S.E.S. are held constant at a time.
10. To explore existence of relationship between school environment characteristics and creativity when intelligence and S.E.S. are held constant.
11. To find out difference in home and school environment characteristics of high creative and low creatives.

Freud's Psychodynamics of Thinking

The possibility of drawing upon psychoanalysis in studying the psychology of thinking was brought strongly to the fore by the appearance of a larger volume, assembling papers on the organization and pathology of thought.

A fundamental distinction within the psychoanalytic theory of thinking is that between primary process thinking which is impulse driven and largely irrational, seeking immediate gratification of all costs even by way of hallucinations, and secondary process thinking, which is patient and logical, willing to postpone gratification for future gains. Adult thinking falls somewhere between these poles, either oscillating between the two modes or combining in some manner.

Creativity may be assumed to be the function of environmental factors and the personality of the individual child. Writers on psychoanalysis often stress that it is a genetic (developmental) as well as a dynamic theory (Hartmann & Kris ^[4] 1945). That is continuities in the life of the individual deriving from the past must always be taken into account along with what is happening in the present. Creative behaviour may be learnt and as creativity is a personality variable, this theory suggests that the influences to which the young child is susceptible unusually will leave a permanent mark on his creativity. While the problems have not been formulated clearly in terms of learning (i.e. why and in what manner the results of childhood learning are more permanent than later learning), there are some kinds of evidence supporting the gross facts of consequences in adulthood of early childhood experiences.

The authoritative parents are dominating and show insufficient respect to the youngsters as individuals. Such parents have no room for the child's free expression of his feelings of hostility towards parents. One of the most impossible things for such parents is to listen to a new idea from their children. They make certain rules to control the behaviour of their children and these tight controls "often exacerbate the dependency authority syndromes" of the child and these tight controls of the child and either impede creative responses or channel creativity into rebellion". On the other hand, if parents permit children opportunities for democratic participation in home and they are given a measure of confidence and support by parents, such conditions will be created in which children initiate, feel responsible for this process and feel free to create their own goals.

Gowan's ^[5] examination of two theories of creativity viz: "Creativity as sound mental health", and "Function of the child's oedipal response to the affectional approach of the opposite sexed parent theory" lends support to this answer.

Creativity-As Sound Mental Health

This view of creativity, which owes much to Maslow, sees creativity in terms of complete character integration or lack of barriers between the conscious mind and its preconscious areas.

While it is incumbent upon the child to develop emergent synthesizing abilities at higher actualizing levels, it is incumbent upon society to see that his prior needs are satiated to the extent that he can devote his energies to intellectual tasks. The child who is insecure about love and safety needs is too pre-occupied to apply himself.

Creativity: function of the child's oedipal response to the affectional approach of the opposite sexed parent theory

The above function is a final and somewhat original theory of creativity. According to this theory, boys who were close to their fathers during the period from four to seven will become more creative than others. The child, at this time enchanted by the warm affect of the opposite-sexed parent responds to this in the only way he can by the creative manipulation of his immediate environment, and by an enlargement of the bridge between his fantasy life and his real world.

Piaget's Theory

The central assumption in Piaget's (1967) ^[6] analyses of cognitive change is his belief that development depends a continuous interaction between organism and environment-an interaction which involves, on one hand, environmental forces (people, objects, events) acting upon the child and on the other hand, the child acting selectively upon the environment. Piaget thinks: "The human being is immersed right from birth in a social environment, which affects him just as the physical environment", Society, even more, in a sense than physical environment, changes the very structure of the individual because it not only compels him to recognize the facts, but also provides him with a ready-made system of signs and it imposes on him an infinite series of obligations. It is, therefore, quite evident that social life may affect creativity as it affects intelligence through the three media of language (sign), the content of interaction(values), and rules imposed on thought (collective logical or prelogical). Piaget's position can be summarized by his acceptance of Durkheim's theorem that all social realities values and processes- are created by men ^[7]. The social and ideational world represents no entity without man. Such a world is the reflection of the socialization experienced by each individual in his cognitive development. The mechanism of intellectual progress, Piaget believes, consists of assimilation. That is, reality data (environmental stimuli) are modified to enable them to be incorporated into existing structures. Piaget sees the adaptive interaction between organism and environment as involving the complementary process of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation names the process whereby the organism utilizes something from the environment and incorporates it.

Hypothesis

General hypothesis have been formulated in null form

A: Home Environment and Creativity

1. There is an significant correlation between home environment and verbal/non-verbal creativity.
2. The relationship of home environment with creativity does not exist significantly when intelligence is held constant.
3. There is no significant relationship between home environment and creativity when S.E.S. is held constant.
4. The relationship does not exist between home environment and creativity when intelligence and S.E.S. are held constant at a time.

B: School Environment and Creativity

1. There is an significant relationship between School environment and creativity.
2. No significant relationship exists between school environment and creativity when intelligence is held constant.
3. The significant relationship does not exist between school environment and creativity when S.E.S. is held constant.

4. There is no significant correlation between school environment and creativity when intelligence and S.E.S. are held constant.
- C. Each home environment characteristic as well as aspects of school environment when combined together do not predict significantly to the creativity.
- D. There are some factors like S.E.S., intelligence, home environment, and school environment which do not predict significantly to Creativity.
- E. The high and the low creative boys do not differ significantly in their home and school environment.

Definition of Important Terms

Many technical terms have been used in the present study and it is necessary to define them so that further discussion might be understood in proper context.

Creativity

There is no universally agreed upon definition of creativity, any more than there is of intelligence. A great deal of most surrounds the word creativity. Since a person can behave creativity in numerous different ways, it is not strange that we have many definitions of creativity.

It involves a response that is novel or at least statistically infrequent. But novelty or originality of thought and action, while a necessary aspect of creativity is not sufficient. If a response is to lay claim to being a part of the creative process, it must to some extent be adaptive to, or reality. It must serve to solve a problem, fit a situation, or accomplish some recognizable goal.

The creative arrangement is marked by coherence, by a striving for higher forms of organization; not through arbitrary or set patterns but through arrangements which are both economical and appropriate to the individual work.

To Stein (1953) ^[8] creativity is that process which results in a "novel work that is accepted as tenable, useful or satisfying by a group at some point in time".

E. Paul Torrance (1966) defined creativity as "a process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge missing elements, disharmonies, and so on; identifying the difficulty, searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies, testing and retesting of these hypotheses and possibly modifying and retesting them, and finally communicating the results". The present investigator thinks of creativity as defined by Torrance because it is equally useful in all areas of the curriculum in mathematics, science, language, arts, social studies, art, music, psychology, physical education and human relations.

Socio Economic Status

Considerable controversy has developed among sociologists regarding the use of the term as well as the question of class. Moore quotes the following definition of class from a text by Sutherland and Woodward- "Classes are inclusive, loosely organized groupings whose members behave toward each other as social equals and toward outsider as social superiors or inferiors, and who as individuals either stay in group to which they are born, or rise or fall to different levels depending upon the way their social attributes correspond to the values around which the particular class system is organized. In some societies, family, religion and some other factors are the principal determinates of socio-economic status. Super has adduced much evidence to show that occupation is the best single index of status. Kuppuswami has regarded occupation, income and education as the factors in socio-economic status. His S.E.S. scale has become outdated.

Under the present Indian conditions, the investigator has chosen to use Dr. S.D. Kapoor and Jalota's socio-economic status scale questionnaire.

This tool seeks information about the following component variables

Father's or Guardian's education

1. Parent's or guardian's Income.
2. Parent's or guardian's Occupation.
3. Type of house in which the child lives.
4. Household material possessions.
5. Expenditure on magazines and books.
6. A cultural sub-factor.
7. Education of the child's brothers and sisters.
8. Level of aspiration.
9. Concept of Social prestige.
10. Belief in caste.

The combined scores of all these eleven areas constitutes the concept of socio-economic status in the present study.

High Creative's

The term 'high creatives' for the purposes of the present study refers to the subjects earning a composite average scores on creativity tests which is above + 1 for the score distribution for creativity.

Low Creatives

The term 'Low creatives' refers to the subjects receiving a composite average score on creativity which is below mean-1 for creativity score distribution.

Environment Perception

'Environment Perception' term refers to a "product of active commerce with the environment. The individual's perception of and action in an environment are inextricably related processes. How we behave in a setting is a function of how we perceive it". How one perceives an environment depends on both what a person does in particular setting and what the setting has to offer him by way of available information. Environment perception provides the means whereby we can establish environments within which to carry out our purposes, environments that will accommodate the range of behaviour as we have chosen to enact and which are likely to provide the consequences to our actions which we anticipate.

Home Environment

Parental Child-Rearing Behaviours provide an index of the quality, and quantity of social, emotional, and cognitive support that has been available to the child since early childhood within the home. This index will be provided by subject's composite scores on "Home Environment Inventory" which will be prepared by the investigator.

School Environment

'School Environment' implies a measure of the quality and quantity of the cognitive, creative, emotional and social support that has been available to the subjects during their school life in terms of teacher-pupil interactions.

Significance of Teachers

If some students have suffered from the influence of their home environment, then all that can be done for them is to try and improve their conditions in future and try to compensate in their present schools for the deficiencies of the past. But this could be made possible only when home environmental factors conducive to the development of creativity are known to teachers. Present study will lead to identification of home environmental characteristics which are conducive to the development of creativity. Then teachers, through parent-teacher associations, will be able to convince parents to improve adverse home environment conditions. They are in the school, will also be able to make up for the deficiencies of home.

Significance for educational administrators

One cannot produce creativity, in this respect our institutions have to take steps to ensure that creative minds continually rise to the top of the organization, otherwise, organizations will show the effects of the time in the form of aging and in the form of diminishing total effective creative mind power, so that they will grow old and die as many corporations and organizations do each year. An organizational programme that will optimize creativity is a nascent need and with the help of the findings of this study, such an organizational structure and a learning environment can be established in our institutions as will be the most ideal for the development of creative potential.

Schools with the help of findings of this study will be able to act according to Ruth Strang's advice i.e. to know the child's home environmental factors conducive to creativity, recognize the good features of parent's behaviours and practice and build on this foundation.

When we know the socio-emotional characteristics of home environment under which creativity flourishes best, we will be able to create these practices in hostels of residential schools.

Significance for creative students and counsellors

Every individual has, within himself, an inner urge toward self-realization, self-direction and positive health, counsellor helps him in the liberation of this urge. After having identified the highly creative students, the counsellor can explain to them what type of home and school environment will lead to the best development of their potentialities. Findings of the present investigation will assist him in this action. Then with the knowledge of environmental characteristics which are conducive to creativity, students will be able to guard themselves and they will not become a victim of those practices of parents as well as teachers which are proved to stifle creative potential.

Significance for Parents

The climate of home is important, too whether stimulating or dull, work-oriented or dedicated to relaxation. Some homes are so drab and lifeless that the child is little better off than the laboratory mouse confined in his cage.

Not only in the home but throughout society, adults manipulate the environment in all sort of ways that modify children's perceptions.

Conclusion

The findings of this investigation will help parents in deciding about-what type of environment should be created by them in their homes so that their children may be able to develop their creative potentiality to the maximum limit; and in which school they should send their children to have their education.

Findings of this study will lead to formulation of a theory that will explain the role of home and school environments' perception by children in the development of creative potential. Thus an environmental theory of creativity may emerge.

This study is limited to a random sample of 400 students of class IX of city areas of district headquarters of Agra region. The results might not be the same if the sample had included the rural areas and city areas of other regions and states.

This investigation is confined to male students only. Girls are not the subjects of the study. This was done to eliminate sex differences in creative behaviour of children, otherwise the combined results would not have been valid.

Study is also limited with regard to design. Several other designs which could have been used e.g. factorial design, factor analysis, analysis of variance or analysis of covariance are not to be used.

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