

To be creative and to have creativity: A search for meaning over misunderstanding

Wendy Sherwood MSc

At the inception of the theory of creative ability, the term 'creativity' was recognised as an abstract construct which is difficult to explain (du Toit 1970). Du Toit recommended 'that we confine ourselves rather to the use of the more specific and functionally significant terms, creative capacity, creative response, creative participation, creative act and creative ability' (du Toit 1970, p2). However, emphasis on 'creative' without explaining its meaning in relation to 'creativity', means that 'creative' and 'creativity' are subject to being mistakenly associated with common associations of imagination, artistic flair or talent.

A small scale review of the literature was undertaken to identify the meanings of 'creative' and 'creativity' to:

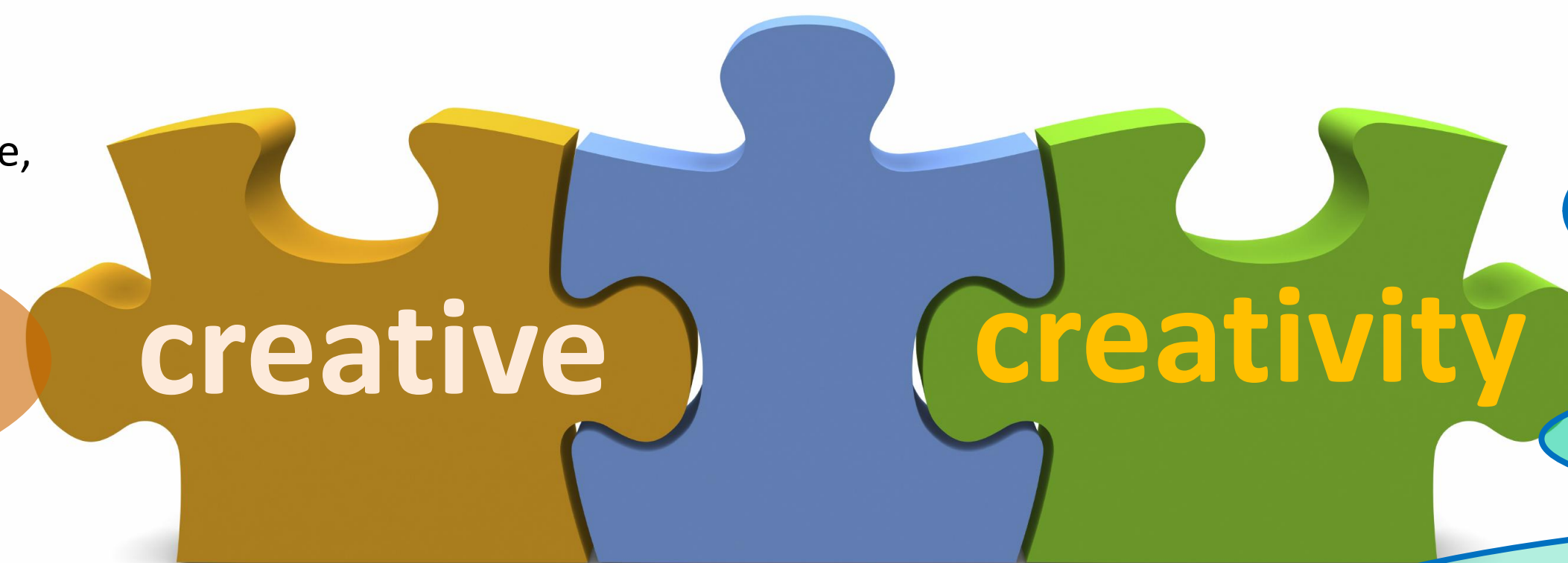
- Clarify whether the meanings of these constructs in the theory of creative ability differ or are similar to meanings used elsewhere
- Develop definitions of 'creative' and 'creativity' to stimulate discussion of the need for definitions within future editions of the Vona du Toit Model of Creative Ability

The literature explores creativity far more than what it means to be creative, as to be creative is to have the ability for creativity. Literature on creativity was found within the fields of philosophy, the sciences: (psychology, cognitive science, nursing, OT), education, business and to a lesser extent, the arts. Representative definitions of creativity are presented from each field and associated to the most frequently described characteristics evident in a person who is creative or has creativity.

Findings: Creativity is more narrowly understood within business which is driven by generation of solutions, products and innovation, and cognitive science ('borrowed' by business) which identifies thinking processes for finding new solutions. Education follows a similar line but balances this with broader personal development and discovery, and this expands with movement towards the arts. It is the association of creativity with finding solutions and new (imaginative, original) products (in blue) that is commonly misunderstood as the meaning of creative and creativity within the theory of creative ability, although its founded on more philosophical and holistic understandings (in green). All agreed that the environment influenced creativity.

Originality, innovation, imagination, fantasy, unpredictable, emotional, open-minded, flexible, positive, curious, aroused

Marked by the power or ability to create; given to creating



The occurrence of a composition which is both new and valuable (Henry Miller, writer)

5 levels of artistic creativity: primitive, technical (learning skills), inventive (experimenting), innovative (original), genius (Wilson 2007)

Product development

Conscious / unconscious?

Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value (in relation to achieving an objective); can be developed (UK National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education)

Thinking or behaving imaginatively; directed towards achieving an objective

The ability to make new combinations of social worth (John Haefele) (business entrepreneur)

Problem-solving, convergent and divergent thinking/flexibility, product / solution development
Thinking skills (exploring, generating, evaluating) + styles, intellectual skills, complex learning and expertise (knowledge) + motivation (decision, determination, perseverance)

Conscious

A higher cognitive process of the brain...that discovers a new relation between objects, attributes, concepts, phenomena and events, which is original and useful (Wang 2009) (Cognitive science)

A process that occurs in response to a need or desire and generates a unique outcome; without conscious effort or with focused thought; recognised by the product produced therefore creativity may be developed (Fasnacht 2003) (nursing)

The process by which new objects and new ways of doing things come into being (Csíkszentmihályi 2003) (psychology)

Flow: when both challenges and skills are high and equal to each other; fully engaged and intrinsically motivated

The true creative act is the product of an encounter of intense and whole hearted commitment

The process of making, of bringing into being; an encounter between person and environment (May 1959) (psychoanalyst)

The emergence of a novel, tangible product (something that may be experienced, seen, touched or heard: concrete structure or an aspect of a relationship or new formings of one's personality), growing out of the uniqueness of the individual; (Rogers 1959) (psychology)

The process of bringing something new to birth, bringing something into being that has never before existed in quite the same shape or form; central to human life and development and lies within the potential of every human individual; the essence of life itself (Perrin 2001) (occupational therapy)
A process, taking place over time, which is characterised by originality and has some value to the individual and/or society; the emergence of a new and tangible product from the uniqueness of the individual and the materials, events, people and circumstances of her/his life; the capacity to meet and engage fully with the environment, making of it something that is uniquely personal (Creek 2002; Perrin 2001) (occupational therapy)

Inventiveness, initiative, doing, adaptation, readaptation, problem solving, change, risk taking, reasoning, lateral thinking, fulfilling potential, engagement with the environment; evident within a therapeutic relationship

Derives from inner conditions: attitude of wonder, ability and resolve not to avoid conflicts but accept as a source of wondering and deal with them out of one's capacities, total absorption in the here and now, a willingness to be born everyday (Fromm 1959) (psychiatry)

By one's own intensely experienced action, something arises which was not there before (Buber 1947) (philosophy)

Conscious / unconscious?