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FOSTERING CREATIVITY AT THE CLASSROOM LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the core element that creativity isn't something that can be taught to students. It is a way of life: a way of being, that can empower an individual- not just to succeed and fare well in examinations and assignments at university but through the journey of life itself. Certain tools and techniques can aid in the process. Students need to be mentored on where to look, but not on what to look for. Telling them what they need to look for defeats the purpose of providing stimulus to students to identify their unique creative pools. Creativity is the art of creation. It arises from the domain of thought. If an individual masters the art of creating the right thought, he can manifest anything that he wants, within the constraints of time.

Implications

Scientific goals of this study discuss the physical level at which creativity occurs on the brain and neuron level. It discusses practical exercises that individuals can take up in order to enhance the process of creativity and bring results that can be measured and evaluated. Ethically or spiritually the paper discusses questions the morality of using creative techniques to believe the self to be the ultimate controller or creator of life.

APPLICATIONS

- At school/college/organizational level- for individuals to bring clarity to the process of thinking and chart out goals at an individual/team level
- At a personal level- Self Actualization for inner awakening and rediscovering the joy of living as opposed to mere existence

Keywords: *Creativity, Neurons, Vibrations, Meditation, Neuroplasticity, Neurorigidity, Homeostasis*

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INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on three main areas:

i. Creativity and the Brain
ii. Techniques to support neuroplasticity of the brain which is integral to creativity
iii. Spirituality and creativity

Creativity is the art of doing things differently to attain maximum impact. It gives a whole new dimension to problem-solving by looking for alternate feasible solutions to problems that may not have mainstream solutions. It is all about creating the right thoughts that can impact the outcome.

The brain (Dispenza, 2014) is composed of millions of nerve endings called neurons. When a thought is created, electrical impulses are transferred from one neuron to the other via synapses. The brain is basically semi-solid matter suspended in an aqueous environment. It is made up of 75% water. When a particular thought is generated, a neural path is formed. When the same thought is generated repeatedly, the neural pathway lights up repeatedly and soon it becomes an automated response that doesn't require much deliberate thinking activity for the body to understand a command has been issued. For e.g. learning how to walk- when a toddler first learns how to walk, basically the brain signals the body and new genes are activated in the process, over a period of time, the adult need not even think about the dynamics of walking or balancing the body. The existing neural pathways have already signaled the body subconsciously. When a student repeatedly thinks the same thoughts, it will not yield any new results. However, if the student is encouraged to think unconventionally, new neural pathways are formed in the brain and new genes are activated, causing the student's brain chemical composition to literally change. The more unconventional or different the ideas generated, the more creativity it signals. Neurorigidity, or, when the brain thinks the same thought on a regular basis- results in a routine- with very little enthusiasm for the classroom. Neuroplasticity (Hampton, 2015), or deliberately doing things differently, is going to light up new pathways, signaling new genes and the student is literally shaping his own destiny. Neuroplasticity is basically the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections. Just as muscles are formed by repeatedly exercising a particular part of the body, even the brain needs to be exercised, in order to remodel itself. A mentor's role thereby in the whole process is clear. Conventional teaching processes will not help in fostering creativity. The teacher/mentor should be able to elicit new responses from students, thereby causing them to use the brain for active thought generation.

This is basically helping students to literally‘re-wire' their brains promising new experiences and actually improve everything in their lives- not just scholastic performance. The mentor here truly becomes a life coach if he/she is able to teach the students how to engage in neuroplasticity, as, then, he/she has given students the gift of enthusiasm and manifestation. Anything can be changed just by thought alone. If a student realizes the power of his thoughts and the way he or she can create thoughts that can generate new solutions to old problems he is literally rewired for life.

There are some stimuli that evoke the same conditioned response from the brain, for example, a particular set of events causes the brain to light up the same part of the brain that elicits the same response – could be anger or boredom or irritation. For instance, a student may not be particularly interested in a particular topic being taught in the classroom, this may signal the same neural network being lit up for this- ‘just focus enough to clear the examination' or ‘this is boring, engage in other activities'. Similarly, there are automated neural networks to brush teeth, speak a particular language or play a particular musical instrument. However, if the mentor is able to elicit another response from the student, she has just helped his brain to signal new genes and move from a neuro-rigid mode to neuroplasticity. Basically, neurorigidity over a period of time implies that the brain is hardwired for the same response.

The teacher may here feel, that she has time constraints which compel her to work within boundaries set by the university or the curriculum. But this may merely be an execution issue. The institution might need to work out possibilities where the teacher may be able to engage in such activities

without falling prey to the vultures of time pressure for examinations. After all, if a student is able to master the art of rewiring his brain, he is empowered for the rest of his life; which is the better outcome here-? Passing an examination for a degree or passing the examination of life itself?

How can the mentor help students' access neuroplastic change for creative responses and positive change?

In the classroom:

- Get students to do things differently
- Encourage new experiences for the students while teaching
- Motivate the students to give responses other than their regular, conditioned responses.
- Create changed environments for students
- Encourage brainstorming sessions that elicit unconventional responses

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM:

- Motivate students to engage in meditation or mantra chanting (Baluja, 2016) sessions outside the classroom, wherein they can access their subconscious minds. "The data showed that in the back of the brain in the area of the Cerebellum – which is associated with fine-tuning and balance, and is under more automatic activation – there was more control and more stimulation after chanting," he explains. Vinaya Gauracandra (Baluja) says that the findings also correlate with the model Lord Krishna gives in the third chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita, where He says "one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence."

This process helps the brain attain homeostasis, which basically means that the brain activity is coherent and synchronized on a single thought, instead of being incoherent and chaotic with multiple issues demanding attention. Most of the times, a student's brain will be preoccupied with many distractions. In this situation, the different parts of the brain do not work together; instead, the brain is in survival mode where it cannot focus on any one thing effectively. For true creation to take place, the student needs to move from 'survival' mode where most of his brain activity is consumed by passing examinations, finishing assignments on time or getting a degree followed by a job. Meditation can help the student move from this zone of survival into the zone of the unknown where true creation can happen. Once the different parts of the brain start working in tandem, in a holistic pattern, it will have better and more coherent responses.

A meditation session early morning, just after waking up or at night just before sleeping will help the student access his subconscious mind much more easily. It not only helps relax the brain, that has probably been working on overdrive the whole day long, or, much more commonly observed phenomenon these days:- students facing depression or suicidal tendencies, due to constantly operating in a survival or stress mode. Once an individual is able to access his or her subconscious mind he can program his brain to neuroplasticity, simply by choosing different responses that will enable him to move out of depression/stress. fMRIs have proved without a doubt that meditation assists the brain to move to homeostasis or coherent patterns much more easily and if practiced over time can cause lasting changes in the brain that can move an individual out of anxiety, depression, hyperactivity disorders, low attention spans, and other such commonly faced issues.

Spiritually or ethically does all this brain changing perspective override the concept of the creator? No, certainly not, it only reinforces that surrender to a power much greater than the self can help individuals seeking the ability to create positive change for themselves. When the brain operates out of the unknown, it can attract the infinite possibilities of the quantum to create positive experiences for itself. Moreover, it can help the individual to operate calmly in moments of stress without the survival instinct that forces the brain to constantly be in a mode of analysis, logical deduction, and comparisons.

CONCLUSION

Hence, fostering creativity at the school level will have immense benefits for students, not just from the education point of view but also in

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order to help them emerge more balanced with improved creativity levels by voluntarily turning of brain activity intermittently. Achieving homeostasis in brain activity with more synchronicity in neuron interaction can help the student manifest a creative approach to problem-solving. Teaching this to students involves taking up a comprehensive approach wherein students are trained with a holistic approach focused not just on completion of school curriculum but also creativity inducing practices like mantra meditation or other forms of meditation, chanting etc during which brain activity is voluntarily slowed down and actual creation can take place.

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