Introduction to Applied Creative Thinking: Taking Control of Your Future

Blythe, Hal; Sweet, Charlie; and Carpenter, Russell
New Forums Press, Inc., 2012

Book Review

Tags: applied creative thinking | media and technology | pedagogical theories

Reviewed by: Rob O'Lynn, *Kentucky Christian University*
Date Reviewed: January 19, 2015

Creativity and pedagogical competency are paradigmatic phrases in the ever-changing arena of academics. With the advent of online learning and degree-completion programs, traditional academic institutions have found themselves scrambling to meet the educational needs of diverse populations. For in-seat programs, the most fundamental yet also foundational change has occurred in how faculty view themselves in the classroom. A host of questions arise as faculty wrestle with their own teaching identity. Are we lecturers? Are we project facilitators? Do we allow the students to guide the curriculum? How do we promote academic competency while also honoring cultural diversity? As the designers of the Applied Creative Thinking program and Noel Studio at Eastern Kentucky University, the authors of this volume see their work not as the evolution of a new theory, such as social learning theory or distributed cognition, as much as the genesis of "an emerging creative literacy" (viii). They firmly believe that we have the ability to be creative established within us, and that we "get better applying creativity the more practice [we] have doing it" (xi). Therefore, this book is built on an argument that "creativity is a set of learnable skills" (xi).

Designed as the student manual for a course in creative thinking, this volume can be divided into three major sections: theory, strategies, and implementation. The first section consists of the first five chapters. In it the authors define four major perspectives of creativity − process, person, press, and product − and introduce the concept of recursiveness. This opening section provides the foundation for the subsequent chapters in which the authors address additional issues related to creative thinking, such as whether creativity can be taught and some common myths regarding creativity. The next major section (chapters 6 to 14) describes various strategies for developing creativity (such as piggybacking, collaborating, and using

metaphors). The final section (chapters 15 to 21) discusses how to develop a creative environment, including chapters on developing a creative strategy and creative uses of media and technology. The volume is composed more like a workbook than a textbook, and each chapter includes a concept list, creative exercises, and a bibliography for further reading.

One might expect this volume to be written for faculty interested in becoming more creative in their teaching discipline or who are interested in integrating creative thinking strategies into their curriculum or course design. It took reading only the first lines to realize that this volume is, in fact, oriented toward students who are either involved in a course focusing on creative writing or contemporary leadership strategies (or are simply interested in becoming more creatively competent). Once I recognized that the volume was student rather than professor focused, I found it to be quite helpful for reflecting on how creativity is a process that must be engineered by the student, and how to implement the strategic parameters of creative thinking as a professor. As an instructor interested in developing my creative competency, I was elated to discover that the authors, along with Shawn Apostel, published a companion volume for instructors in February 2013, titled *Teaching Applied Creative Thinking: A New Pedagogy for the 21st Century*.

https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/introduction-to-applied-creative-thinking-taking-control-of-your-future/