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Exploring Creativity in Development

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Commissioning Editor's Introduction

The most important challenge facing all human beings is fundamentally a *developmental challenge* focused on the question of how we learn to deal with and make the most of the situations and opportunities in our lives. Development holds the possibilities for our very existence since it is through a multitude of developmental processes that enable mankind to pool and combine his ingenuity to solve the most intractable problems. Exploring how creativity features in development is therefore worthy of exploration.

Our development as a person

The natural tendency is to develop from a child to an adult in ways that enable us to deal with greater complexity and uncertainty. The *development of a person* therefore involves progression or movement from a simpler or lower state of being to more advanced or complex forms of being. For the person involved in development it always involves the process of becoming different which invariably means learning new things by adding to existing knowledge or skill, or replacing something which I already have. In this way development is integral to our daily project of perpetually becoming.

The concept of development can be applied to ideas, processes, people, objects, teams, communities and organisations.

Development is about *creating difference*. It involves change along a trajectory in which the amount of change may be the result of the accumulation of many small incremental changes or it might be the effect of one or more significant changes, or a combination of smaller and larger changes. But the end result of development is either that something is quantitatively different to what existed before and/or something new has been brought into existence.

Motivation for creating difference or newness is grounded in the continuous search for something better which improves what exists or does something which currently can't be done. The desire to improve ourselves so that we achieve our ambitions and goals, and / or improve some aspect of the world we inhabit, are the universal motivational forces underlying our personal and professional development.

Development seems to provide a good conceptual explanation for many of the things we get involved in. We start with a problem or a situation and have to work with it or at it to understand and resolve it. All the stuff we do between the starting and end points can be called development although this seems to imply tangible and quantifiable things which might

not be the case. The challenge, when faced with complex and / or uncertain situations requiring new development needs, is to know what to do and in such situations we often don't know what we need to do beyond trying to move in a certain direction.

Where is creativity in development?

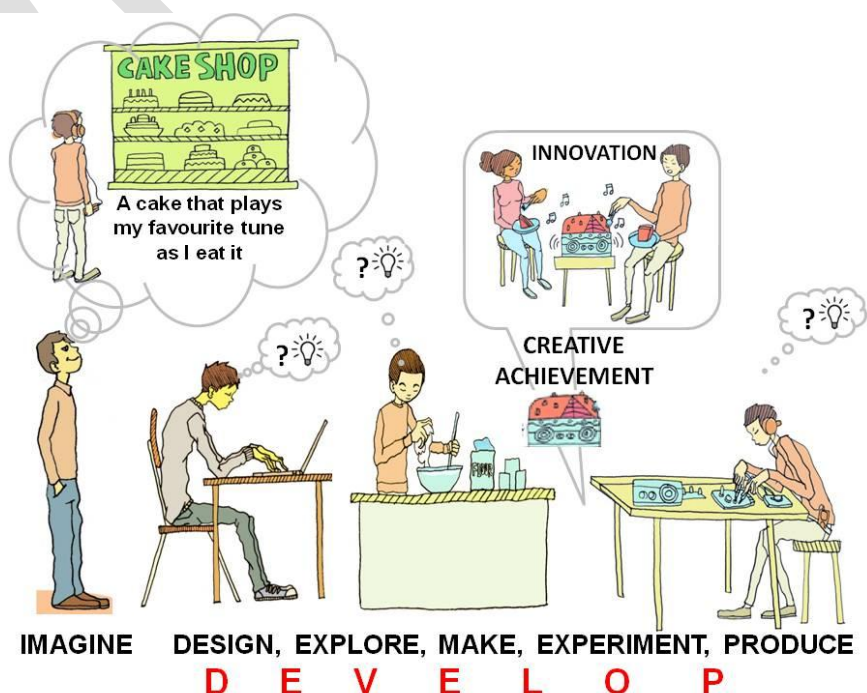
Any discussion of development with its intended purpose or unanticipated consequence of creating difference, transforming something that already exists or inventing something new must necessarily involve the idea of creativity since creativity is the concept we use when we talk about bringing new ideas, material or virtual objects, or practices and performances into existence. But where is creativity in development? This is the question we have set ourselves to explore in this issue of Creative Academic Magazine.

Is creativity a quality of persons, processes or products? According to Teresa Amabile^{1:3} it is all three. Persons can have, in greater or lesser degrees, the ability and inclination to produce novel and appropriate work and, as such, those persons may be considered more or less creative. Processes of thought and behaviour may be more or less likely to produce novel and appropriate work and, as such those processes may be considered more or less creative. Products (new business plans, scientific theories, artworks, articulated ideas, dramatic performances and so on) may be more or less novel and appropriate and as such, those products may be considered more or less creative.

This proposition, that creativity can be everywhere, seems to offer a useful starting point for our examination of the idea and the developmental narratives and reflective commentaries offered in this magazine can seek to identify whether creativity resides within the person who is developing and becoming, within the circumstances of their life and the process(es) she/he orchestrates to develop their idea and/or achieve a goal, or within the product or service that is being fashioned through the developmental process.

Illustrating creativity in a developmental process

We might illustrate the way creativity features in a 'well structured' developmental process with a narrative describing the imaginary invention of a musical cake. A young man who enjoys listening to music and eating cakes is standing in front of a bakers shop looking at the

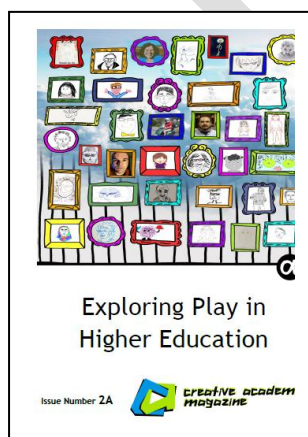


cakes while listening to his favourite singer on his ipod. As he looked at the cakes and listened to his music, he had the novel, idea of a cake that plays music while you are eating it. The idea is new to him and although other people may have thought about it before, no musical cake has ever been brought into existence. This part of the story illustrates the initial creative thought that emerges in the mind of person whose interests and circumstances cause him to have this thought.

The young man sees the value and opportunity in his idea and becomes motivated to try to make a musical cake with little regard for the technical difficulty of doing so. He is convinced that he could make such a cake and sell it. So he sets about *developing his idea* and investing it with practical meaning. Using the resources he finds on the internet, he explores the possible ways in which he might create the music mindful of the costs and the potential health risks of integrating electrical devices into a cake. He hits on the idea of putting a small edible chip which he has read about, in the base of the cake, which sends a pre-recorded message or tune to a mobile phone which then plays the tune.

He starts designing and making his musical cake. It requires much experimentation and involves many set- backs. He enlists the help of the local bakery and a small electronics company. People in these businesses liked his idea and are willing to help build a prototype which can then be pitched to potential investors. The whole developmental process involves continuously solving problems and seeing opportunities in which the young man's creative and analytical thinking comes into play. Every new idea or possible solution is evaluated and judged in the search for possible right answers. Creativity flourishes in a developmental process where individuals and groups are inspired to bring something new into existence and they work together sharing an innovation if it is significantly different to anything that has existed before.

While the initial idea might be truly original the hard work of creativity is to turn an idea that inspires you into something real – whether it be a process, product, virtual object or performance. This normally requires a process involving much uncertainty through which ideas are questioned, problems are solved and obstacles are overcome. This development process provides much scope for creativity in order to bring something into existence that did not exist before. If it is valued by others then it will be recognised as an innovation.



Our Magazine is the result of a developmental process

It might start with an idea drawn from our imaginations but the idea is given meaning and substance through the imaginations, writings and illustrations of everyone who contributes to it.

TO BE DEVELOPED AS THE MAGAZINE DEVELOPS

Sources:

1 Amabile (1996:3).

2 Jackson, N.J. (2014) The Developmental Challenge: An Ecological Perspective. In N J Jackson (ed) Creativity in Development: A Higher Education Perspective. Available on line [http:// www.creativityindevelopment.co.uk/e-books.html](http://www.creativityindevelopment.co.uk/e-books.html)

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