

Exploring the Meaning and Significance
of Creativity in Education:
A Narrative Inquiry of Saudi Female Graduate
Students' Experiences in a Canadian University

By

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to explore the concept of creativity through the narratives of Saudi female graduate students in the Faculty of Education at a university in Eastern Canada. In-depth interviews reveal the participants' perspectives on home life, culture and educational environments, and the impact these have had on their creative expression and development. Specifically, this study focuses the Saudi female graduate students' perceptions regarding the definition of creativity, the factors that nurture and hinder creative development and expression, and the role of creativity in education. The participants offer reflections on how certain aspects of their lives—including their education, family, and cultural context—have facilitated or restricted the development of their own creativity and learning process. The data findings reveal that the experience of studying abroad, and observing different cultural contexts and various approaches to education, has offered the participants a unique opportunity to reflect on the interconnections of culture, pedagogy, creativity and learning. The participants describe the impact of culture on their home and school environments, and they describe having limited opportunities and encouragement for creative expression, which they explain has affected their creative development and by extension, their learning processes. Through reflecting on their past and present experiences in Saudi and Canadian education systems, they have gained greater awareness of the significance of creativity in education and why creativity needs to be encouraged within the Saudi home and school environments. The study aims to contribute to the scholarship in the field of education that is developing a better understanding of the importance of using pedagogy in the teaching and learning process that nurtures students' creativity.

Keywords: Saudi female students' experiences; creativity; motivations; narrative inquiry; autobiographical and biographical approaches.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Women's education in Saudi Arabia has overcome many obstacles. In the past, women in Saudi Arabia have faced a limitation on their professional development (Hamdan, 2005). Girls' education in Saudi Arabia started in 1960s with restricted teaching and learning in Islamic religion (Hamdan, 2005). Later in 1963, King Faisal's wife, Iffat Al Thunayan, advocated for change in women's education and as a consequence women's access to different subjects, such as foreign languages and sciences, increased (Hamdan, 2005, p. 49). The education of women in Saudi Arabia has seen some positive change, and the government has begun to send talented women to study abroad in high standard universities in the world (Hamdan, 2005). This offers an opportunity for women to have the opportunity to integrate with other cultures' education systems, extend their skills and increase their knowledge.

I am one of the few chosen Saudi Arabian women who have gotten this chance to study abroad. This opportunity to have a cross-cultural experience has helped me to observe and distinguish different education styles, and various personal beliefs and epistemologies that formulate ideas about the learning processes and the pedagogies that inform teaching methods, curriculum, and educational environments. Specifically, I have had the opportunity to observe differences in teachers' perspectives and practices within Canada and Saudi Arabia.

Since I arrived in Canada, I have frequently heard the word "creativity" and have been introduced to the significance of creativity in teaching and learning. I have observed that interest in "creativity" or "creative thinking" is growing and it is considered an important concept in different fields within the Canadian context. Most of the people I encounter endeavour to encourage creativity and creative thinking in their children and, if they are teachers, in their

students through the learning process. For example, I have observed that university professors in Canada explicitly work to build students confidence by giving them opportunities to ask questions and formulate their own answers, by leading them in collaborative projects, by providing a variety of activities in the classroom, and by supporting their achievement with positive feedback. I began to come across the word creativity regularly within the literature I'd been given by my professors as well as throughout the discussions I was participating in with my colleagues in the graduate program at a university in Eastern Canada, and even in daily conversations I was having with others outside of the university community. The concept of creativity was introduced not only as topic of discussion within my studies on theories of education but as a fundamental factor in the development of the activities that were available for students within the schools and within daily homework assignments. Within my own studies in education, I have engaged in discussions regarding how schooling should avoid becoming more about obtaining the highest grade than about teaching students how to think critically, be creative and how to learn independently.

This contrasts with my observations of the teaching methods I was exposed to in Saudi Arabia, which focused mostly on a transmission model of teaching and rote learning methods, such as memorization. It seemed to me that the educators in Saudi Arabia believed in a notion of “giftedness” that defined what it meant to be “creative.” This meant that only the especially “gifted” students were seen to have creative characteristics, and the encouragement of creative expression was limited to only these few students.

In order to better understand my experience, I began to read the literature that explains the history and context of education in Saudi Arabia and the theories that attempt to articulate the

differences I was witnessing during my cross-cultural experience as a student from Saudi Arabia now studying in Canada.

The Saudi Arabian government has invested a lot of resources into education so as to begin to meet the global standards of education. This investment is described by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Information Office Washington, DC:

Saudi Arabia views its citizens as the most essential element of the nation's development. To support the Kingdom's continued growth and to meet the needs of a burgeoning youth population, the government allocates about 25 percent of its annual budget to educational initiatives. Today, Saudi Arabia's educational system comprises more than 30 public and private universities, and more than 26,000 primary schools. (p. 3)

Despite the recognition of the importance of educating its citizens, Saudi Arabian culture still remains conservative, according to Assaad & Roudi (2007), who refer to the *Arab Human Development Report* when they point out that education in countries located in the Middle East and North Africa (the MENA region) "often fail to teach students to analyze information or think innovatively" (p.7). In addition to this, traditional roles are gendered and discrimination against women is strongly enforced: "women's employment options have been limited to a small number of socially acceptable occupations and professions, such as teaching and medicine" (Assaad & Roudi, 2007, p. 2). As Sadaawi (2010) explains, the ministry of education of Saudi Arabia controls the teachers and "the curricula, which lack rigor, content, and performance standards" (p. 6). Teaching has become "a process of disciplining and controlling students so that they can learn what the experts have stipulated" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 745). Teachers are discouraged from making any departures from the mandated curriculum and prescribed teaching practices. This prevents teachers from trying innovative approaches to teaching or from presenting subjects through alternative materials or mediums. It forces teachers to follow the rules regarding subject matter and teaching methods, and prohibits any adaptation

by individual teachers, regardless of whether or not the unique needs of each classroom is being met.

It is true that more recently a lot of change has occurred in Saudi Arabian education to provide and prepare the generations with skills that can build the future of the country. The goals of the country are now to improve individual minds, ideas, and skills so as to make the people and the country more productive. There is a trend toward decreasing the country's economic dependence on oil production and, through multiple other means, increasing the economic prosperity of both individual citizen and the country as a whole. According to Al-Darwish et al. (2015)

[E]conomic diversification is very important for Saudi Arabia for at least four reasons. First, it would reduce the exposure of the economy to volatility and uncertainties in the global oil market. Second, it would help create the jobs in the private sector that are needed to absorb the young and growing working age populations into the workforce. Third, it would help increase productivity and sustainable growth. Fourth, it would help put in place the non-oil economy that will be needed many years down the road when oil revenues start to dwindle. (p.77)

The ministry of education is trying to reform school curriculum to include more modern ways of teaching and learning. As the Saudi Arabian Mission to the U.S.A (2006) reports,

Saudi Arabia recognized that the development of human resources is a key element in a nation's march to progress. The educational institutions it has established have produced many young professionals, both male and female, who are filling positions in the work force in a wide range of fields. (p. 1)

These reforms have seen some benefit to the social status of Saudi women, who, according to the same report, are experiencing an increase in the level of education and the types of occupations that are now available to them:

[W]omen in Saudi Arabia pursue higher education and professional careers. Thus, the number of working women is increasing. In the public sector, they are university professors, mathematicians, scientists, teacher, administrators,

nurses, doctors, media personal and social workers and a lot of other fields.
(p.1)

It is possible to see, therefore, that despite the many social and political forces that hinder women's position in Saudi Arabia, their ambitions to study at university in various disciplines (in the country and abroad) have resulted in the rise of some successful women in a number of fields (Hamdan, 2005). There is, however, a continued need to extend and promote women's creativity, especially through education, because such promotion enables women to achieve greater independent and equality, and to play a more significant role in their country. Women's positions in Saudi Arabia have been limited in general but, during the period of King Abdullah's reign, women positions had changed. For example, Saudi women have become members of the Shura Council and Municipal Councils. The King Abdullah Scholarship Program gives women a chance to study abroad and to earn post-secondary and graduate degrees in various disciplines where there is a need for such expertise in the workplace.

The expansion of opportunities for women's higher education presents a challenge to the majority of Saudi families, who remain conservative about allowing their girls to work outside women section. Traditionally, creative, intelligent, and ambitious women have been hindered in pursuing their creative and occupational interests because of the absence of cultural awareness about women creativity and ability. There have been studies done on women's economic position, employment status in the workplace, and career opportunities available to women (Rajkhan, 2014; Riedy, 2013; Asad Sadi & Al-Dubaisi, 2008). However, these studies have not considered how Saudi women conceptualize creativity nor what they believe about their own creativity and the cultural, social and/or educational factors that have hindered or supported the development of their creativity.

Education can play a crucial role in improving the lives of Saudi women by giving women the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills, and thus opening up the range of opportunities available to them outside of traditional roles. Education is the key to nurturing and developing conscious minds and increase individual knowledge, but only if it encourages the critical thinking and the unfettered examination and experimentation of ideas, which enable individuals to self-reflect, critically examine issues or problems, and imagine new approaches, and solutions or strategies that bring about improvement.

If an individual develops a passion for school because of a positive teaching approach—one that encourages creativity—that person will be enthusiastic and motivated to explore their individual interests and talents and make their unique contribution to their chosen field, which will not only enrich their own life but also benefit the larger society. Effective pedagogy helps to extend an individual's awareness of their own self-potentiality and active teaching pedagogy provides an opportunity for the learner to imagine their own future. It assists learners in developing their skills and in reaching their goals by focusing more the encouragement of creativity and on the search for alternative ways of solving problems, coming up with new ideas, and producing innovative projects. It increases personal desire for acquiring knowledge; it establishes an environment that fosters a love of learning because it encourages personal creative expression.

I chose to make creativity the focus of my study because I believe that every student has creative potential, and I want to understand other educators' conceptualizations of creativity and its significance in their teaching and lives. Through my own firsthand experiences in Saudi Arabia, I observed that the notion of creativity was not something teachers were aware of or considered important. The concept of creativity was not a part of the discourses of education

within Saudi Arabia. This contrasts sharply with my observations of education within the Canadian context. It was while studying education in Canada that I began to think about the significance of creativity and the concept grabbed my attention. I began to think about how the teacher plays an important role in supporting a student's creativity. For example, I observed that, while there are guidelines in Canada regarding subjects and learning outcomes, teachers have significant flexibility within their own classroom to use teaching strategies like collaborative work and interdisciplinary approaches so as to support the individual creativity of their students. I began to wonder how much the student's environment, at home and at school, influenced whether or not he or she becomes a creative person. Creativity enables the development of uncommon or novel ideas. Finally, I thought about how teaching methods in schools and the use of curriculum content can be either supportive of or restrictive to an individual's creativity.

I explored these observations further by conducting narrative inquiry of my own experience and that of two Saudi women graduate students studying in the Faculty of Education at a university in Eastern Canada. The cross-cultural experiences of these students is important to explore not only because it acknowledges the validity of their lived experiences but also because it offers a unique opportunity to reflect on different cultural contexts and the perspectives that arise out of those contexts. By doing a rigorous narrative inquiry, I explored what creativity means to me and to the participants, and how we think of our culture back in Saudi Arabia as an influence or an effect on our understanding of creativity. Furthermore, I considered my own perspective and asked my participants about their personal perspectives on the meaning of creativity, and whether or not they perceive it as an important factor in education, and if they perceive the difference in teaching practices between Canada and Saudi Arabia.

This thesis, therefore, explores the following research questions: *How do Saudi female*

graduate students who are studying in Canada perceive the concept of creativity? How do they understand the significance of creativity in relation to their learning? What are the factors that they think facilitated or hindered the development of their creativity?

Through an exploration of these main question, other related questions considered include: What factors influence the participants' own understandings of their creativity? In what ways do cultural practices and beliefs facilitate or hinder creativity? Were the participants encouraged to explore their creativity within their field of study while a student in Saudi Arabia? Were they encouraged to be creative as a student in Canada? How does a school curriculum in Saudi Arabia incorporate the ideas of "creativity"? What are the particular challenges for developing a positive concept of creativity for these Saudi graduate students who are studying in Canada? Do my participants think creativity needs to be encouraged and, if so, why and how?

Ultimately, the objectives of my study gains through narrative inquiry a deeper understanding the meaning of the creativity and the factors—personal, educational, and cultural—that either support or hinder its growth and development.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter I discuss previous studies that have been done on the subject of “creativity” and their relevance for my research. This literature review informs my study of the role of creativity in education as it has been observed and experienced by Saudi female graduate students who have studied and worked as educators in Saudi Arabia and who have had the opportunity to pursue higher education in a Canadian University. I begin by demonstrating how the term creativity has proven challenging to define within the literature, and how it is variously defined, based on individual perspectives and within different disciplines. Then, I review the literature that examines the concept of “giftedness” and the way in which this is different from an understanding of creativity as an innate sense of wonder or curiosity that can be nurtured and developed in ways similar to a skill. After this, I present the literature that considers role of culture in defining creativity, and how culture can either encourage or hinder the development of creativity. Finally, I review various sources in the literature that consider the implications for teaching and learning.

Creativity as a Complex Word to Define

The exact meaning of the word creativity remains ambiguous throughout the literature, and most researchers find it to be a complex, mysterious, and difficult process to define the nature of creativity. Compton (2007) explains that the word creativity is often used in English education and throughout other facets of society, but does not have a clear meaning (p. 109). Mahender (2005) states that the subtleties and nuances of meaning signified by the word creativity results in multiple and varied understandings, which are too complex to contain within one, succinct definition (p. 1). He explains that, because the definitions of creativity vary across

the research, as well as across personal perspectives and discipline, we are without a clear meaning, which makes understanding and discussing of the concept of creativity even more complex.

Creativity has ambiguous meaning and is variously used in multiple domains, and is not restricted to theories of artistic endeavour, as might be assumed. Limiting the definition of creativity to the field of Fine Arts through the assumption that this field offers greater opportunity for creative expression is based on a conflation of different types of creativity. Such a limitation does not recognize “cognitive creativity,” which is connected to human cognition and epistemology, and refers to curiosity and the development and furtherance of knowledge.

Welling (2007) explains the meaning of cognitive creativity:

A creative cognitive operation that is often mentioned in the literature on creativity might be identified as application: the adaptive use of existing knowledge in its habitual context. Creativity is required for fitting reality into an existing conceptual format. This operation consists of the creative adaptation of existing conceptual structures to fit normally occurring variations. The most obvious instance of application is everyday activity. Seemingly repetitious activities such as walking, driving, the use of language, and calculus all imply the application of known rules in a creative fashion. (p. 167)

In other words, the notion of cognitive creativity refers to those moments in life when, as we go about our daily activities, we adapt existing knowledge and rules so as to accommodate slight variations that arise, even during our normal routines. For example, when we drive to work, we often take the same route, but what if one day the route we usually take is blocked by construction? Or what if suddenly a cat runs out in front of our car? The way we adapt our existing knowledge by figuring out an alternative way to get to work or by slowing or swerving in a way that avoids an accident becomes a moment of cognitive creativity. Creativity can happen in simple things, such as everyday activities. Welling’s articulation of creativity is

therefore much broader in scope than an understanding of creativity as strictly artistic expression.

Contrary to this imposed limitation of the notion of creativity to the field of Fine Arts, numerous researchers have shown that creativity is not restricted within specific fields but can be present in different fields (Andiliou & Murph, 2010). Andiliou and Murph (2010), for example, found that creativity contributes to many different skills such as “language acquisition, imaginative play, adaptation, innovation, problem solving, planning, and decision making. [As well as] economic competitiveness, social cohesion and individual well-being” (p. 202). They made an interesting observation, however, about the limitations of what teachers perceive as creative activity:

Teachers’ examples of creative outcomes focused on artistic products resulting from ‘hands on’ activities such as drawing, painting, and constructing or outcomes resulting from writing and acting. In essence, teachers’ consolidated creativity to artistic domains and art-based or art-influenced products. Interestingly, even when teachers acknowledged that creativity could be manifested in any domain, they tended to limit creative thinking to literary and artistic tasks rather than identifying the tasks indicative of creative thinking in a particular domain. (p.215)

As Lubart and Sternberg (1998) describe, creativity exists in everyday life and in many different domains, such as the visual, literary and performing arts, but also in the sciences, business, and education (p. 66). They argue that creativity refers to novel and appropriate work that solves a problem or fulfills a need. Creativity can therefore arise from within all domains. It is utilized in a wide range of disciplines, and in each discipline, there might be a specific term or perspective that represents the notion of creativity in that field. As Weston (2007) explains, creativity “can be found in many areas such as cognitive psychology, social psychology, organization theory, group dynamic, and adult learning” (p. 422; see also Lubart & Sternberg, 1998). Krop (1969)

also states that the meaning and the performance of creativity are different from subject to subject.

For instance, Reid and Petocs (2004) offer examples that demonstrate how creativity is understood within different learning domains:

In music, creativity is interpreted as a negotiation between Individual teachers and students, their combined experiences of music making and the needs and responses of the listening audience. In hospitality and tourism, creativity is seen through a shared interpretation of their practice and service-oriented discipline. Statisticians see creativity manifested in the representation and interpretation of data, whilst designers can define creativity as an aspect of group processes that lead to a creative production. Each of these examples explores aspects of what creativity means within their specific learning/teaching environment. (p. 59)

Because of the variation in how creativity is understood from field to field, misunderstanding the significance of creativity can occur. Consequently, this can lead to a misrecognition of creative expression and difficulties in evaluating it. Reid and Petocs (2004) points to this particular difficulty:

[I]n education [creativity] is called “innovation,” in business it is “entrepreneurship,” in mathematics it is often equated with “problem solving,” and in music it is “performance” or “composition.” A creative product in different domains is measured against the norms of that domain, with its own rules, approaches and conceptions of creativity. (p. 45)

Reid and Petocs state that creativity is a phenomenon that exists in all fields, with similarities in the process but differences in expression and product, which leads to the use of different meanings for creativity from one field to another and from one perspective to another.

Robinson (2009) states that all people have the capacity for creativity, and education policies need to enhance this capacity for all students. Osho (1999) agrees that all people, from an early age, have the capacity for creativity. Children are born with the ability to be creative but, over time, this creativity can be diminished or destroyed (p. 94). Osho also states “[e]very person

comes into this world with a specific destiny, he has something to fulfill, some message has to be delivered, some work has to be completed. You are not here accidentally. You are here meaningfully. There is a purpose behind you, the whole intends to do something through you” (p.101). Both Osho (1999) and Robinson (2009) therefore claim that every individual has creative potential, which they describe as the individual’s unique attributes and perspectives, and how she or he selects one’s own path that is different from others.

The list of synonyms that reflect the notion of creativity within these various disciplines can reflect a variety of terms. Sir Robinson (1997) defines creativity as a process that consists of critical thinking, imagination and innovation (p. 23). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) defines creativity as “any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transform an existing domain into a new one” (p. 28). Compton (2007) articulates a notion of creativity within a theory of education that contains the four traits of “imagination, purpose, originality and value” (p. 110). Bohm (1998) defines creativity as a state of being “open to learning what is new, to perceiving new differences and new similarities, leading to new orders and structures, rather than always tending to impose familiar orders and structures in the field of what is seen” (p. 144). Definitions of creativity contain any number of similar words—imagination, idea, product and deep thinking—that readily come to mind when attempting to define what creativity means.

It is easy to see why it is difficult to define creativity, and yet it is important to recognize that the concept of creativity is significant within the field of education. For example, educational policies in Europe reflect a recognition that the reason behind the misunderstanding of creativity is the lack of a clear definition. Without a clear definition, teachers are unaware of the need to support and encourage creativity in the classroom, and they do not have enough knowledge or training in how to assess it when it arises in the classroom (Cachia, Ferrari, Ala-

Mutka & Punie, 2010). This is the real problem that students face in school. When the teachers and educators have inadequate knowledge about creativity and alternative pedagogies that will help in guiding and supporting creative students, the students lose their sense of being a creator at early ages because they are not supported enough to flourish in their creativity. However, as Robinson (2009) suggests,

Teaching creativity [can be done through the] teach[ing of] generic skills of creative thinking, just in the way we can teach people to read, write, and do math. Some basic skills can free up the way people approach problems-skills of divergent thinking, for example, which encourage creativity through the use of analogies, metaphor, and visual thinking. (p. 26)

Contemplations of the meaning of the creativity in relation to the education include two very important streams of thought: (1) the assumption that creativity is either an attribute a person is born with, as in “giftedness,” or a quality that start with a sense of wonder or curiosity that can be developed through education, as akin to a skill; and (2) the role of culture in defining creativity and either encouraging or hindering the development of creativity.

Differences in the way in which creativity is defined leads variations in understanding of the significance of creativity and to the development of different perspectives on its role in our daily pursuits, and in teaching and learning. How we define creativity influences how we respond to creative ideas and could hinder creativity. Certain definitions, for example, might lead a teacher to judge some student as more creative than others, or to misrecognize creativity as “not following the instructions”; whereas, other definitions might lead a teacher to encourage students to “break the rules” of grammar, for instance, a write stream-of-consciousness prose that encourages the student to learn more about their topic and about creative expression.

A review of the literature reveals that while theorists do indicate that there is a wide range of definitions, one predominant theme does arise: creativity refers to the development of an

unusual idea and the bringing of that idea into existence. When creativity is defined in this way, teachers encourage multiple skills in the classroom, even those skills that may not appear to be directly related to the expected learning outcomes. They employ approaches to teaching that do not strictly focus on the assessment of student learning based on a few points in the check list, but that better meet the needs of the students. This means allowing the curriculum to be flexible, and introducing new materials that are relevant to the students' interests, as opposed to recycling old curriculum that no longer reflects students' lives outside of school environment. It means encouraging assessment for learning and self- assessment. Tan (2011) explains the importance of assessment for learning in developing education:

Assessment for Learning can be valuable as a catalyst for transforming the direction and value of education. To reframe 'Assessment for Learning' as if learning were important, it is critical to recognise that assessment is bounded by, and therefore can act as the pivot for, the different forms of learning and understanding that a holistic education can bring about [...] Assessment for Learning may then be said to be primarily for emphasising and ensuring the planned and needful learning for students. (p. 101)

So as to develop creativity within their students and better prepare them for the future. How we define creativity directly affects the approaches teachers take with their students. Fundamental assumptions regarding creativity—such as whether or not creativity arises out of “giftedness,” which is the privilege of some, or out of an innately human sense of curiosity that can be developed or dampened—will determine the types of teaching practices we employ. It is important, therefore, that we consider the meaning of “giftedness” and the notion of a developed curiosity and recognize the consequences of embracing one definition over another.

Creativity as Giftedness or as Developed Curiosity

Creativity and giftedness can be considered two different concepts, and yet they are often conflated. This correlation between creativity and giftedness has a long history (Fliegler and

Bish, 1958). The term “giftedness” can imply certain innate abilities; it can refer to high intelligence and to special characteristics that some people are born with and others are not. By comparison, creativity seems to imply an inherent ability that all human beings are born with, such as wonder or curiosity, and that can be developed or encouraged. As Osho (1999) suggests that creativity is an innate human characteristic (p.94). Often, however, the two terms are conflated or are only subtly distinguished. The following review of theorists writing on the notions of “giftedness” reveals the complex relation between these two terms.

Gow (2000) identifies two notions of creativity that make different assumptions regarding the nature of the human mind. The first notion equates creativity with “giftedness.” This notion assumes that creativity, or giftedness, is something a child is born with. Here the human mind does not adapt or change: “This type of creative mind doesn’t conform to rules and may or may not result from preconscious mechanisms” (p. 33). This notion of creativity occurs when “the mind must engage[s] life from a different point of view” (p.33). Gow refers to this as a “white moment” or “flow” and he explains that the “[c]reative moment in this notion is free of habit and free of choice. Usually it occurs after a good night’s sleep or when we have a fully relaxed mind and body” (p.33). The second notion considers creativity as habits:

The word *habit*, as used here, means any repetition of mental activity. You and I are little more than the bundle of these mental habits that have built up over a lifetime, habits that influence almost all of the activity of the creative mind. Our mental habits include the ways in which we chose what we desire, believe, think, feel, see, hear, taste, smell, etc. In short, we have unconsciously conditioned our minds to react to the environment in familiar patterns. And we may or may not be aware of the influence of habit on our creativity. (p. 32).

This type of creativity can be learned, which suggests that creativity can be developed through practice and over time: “[It] is what we teach in our classroom and encourage in our students, a result of the methods, practices, and processes that we as educators have developed” (p. 32).

Also, this conceptualization of creativity, which holds that creativity can be affected by teaching and learning, seeks the “restructuring of traditional methods, or the creation of new, habits of the mind” (p. 33).

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) differentiated talent and creativity, and he uses a unique term that express creativity genius. He argues that some people can improve their talents through practice and continued learning, but they cannot develop creativity. According to Csikszentmihalyi, creativity is an insight that “genius” people can have and genius is something that is only acquired naturally. However, every individual is born with unique skills or talents, and with experience and practice the individual will develop creative side in his or her personality. We do not call those people geniuses, but we call them creative, because they know how to exercise their creativity. To quote Csikszentmihalyi (2014),

The location of genius is not in any particular individual’s mind, but in a virtual space, or system, where an individual interacts with a cultural domain and with a social field. [...] The attribution of genius is not based on any precise criterion; it depends on a consensus of peers. Generally, genius is attributed to a person who can perform with ease feats that even the experts in a given field can achieve only with great difficulty. (p.100).

Csikszentmihalyi further explains the relationship between creativity and genius. He states that “genius not as an intra-psychic phenomenon, but as a historical process which takes place in a social and culture context... Although not all geniuses produce creative works, and not all creative achievement involve genius, the overlap between these two concepts is large enough to treat them as closely related” (p. 100). He states that a person can be creative without being a genius and the successes of creativity will not exist without mastery of skills in the domain and that mastery will be achieved by practicing and training under the guidance of teachers and educators.

Csikszentmihalyi (1998) states the notions of creativity and genius are socially constructed. He argues that we seek to identify individuals who are special or extraordinary; to do this, we single out people with certain, enviable characteristics or skills, and based on these attributes, we deem them to be 'genious' (p. 101). From his point of view as a psychologist, Csikszentmihalyi points out that there are psychological factors that play a main role in individual personality; for example, autonomy helps an individual work by himself or herself, and supports the expression of creativity and the development of new ideas. He explains that the creative individual who has the ability to persist in expressing his or her idea or view can have the same traits that geniuses have.

Csikszentmihaly (1997) also explains that the notion of creativity refers to two crucial processes, namely "knowledge" and "skill." Every person has the potential to be creative, if they utilize their ability well and have been encouraged to do so from their surrounding environment. Like Csikszentmihaly, Krop (1969) argues that the level of creativity is different for everyone, which suggests that all people have creative ability but that some are more creative than others. Creativity, according to Chan and Yuen (2014) and Miller (2012), is linked to a person's skills and knowledge, which refer to cognitive skills.

Miller (2012) argues that there are various theories of giftedness that include a notion of creativity. Miller elaborates on this conceptualization of creativity as an essential component of giftedness within any domain. He explains, for example, that according to the theory presented by Joseph Renzulli, "giftedness" is a combination of three attribute: above-average ability, task commitment, and creativity" (p. 94). As Miller explains,

The interaction among the three clusters of ability, commitment, and creativity is often presented visually as three overlapping circles, and giftedness is said to be found in the center section where all of the circles overlap. (p. 95)

All three attributes must therefore be present in order for someone to be considered “gifted.”

The consequence of this is that, while an individual may be creative, without a commitment to their pursuits that individual will not be considered “gifted”. In other words, creativity is linked to giftedness but creativity does not “guarantee” giftedness (p. 95). As Thomas Edison (cited in Csikszentmihaly, 1997) said, “creativity consists of 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration” (p. 80). There is a strong relationship between creativity and intelligence because both generate new ideas after brain storming. However, intelligent people develop a new idea by building upon prior knowledge or information, while creative people bring about unusual and new ideas that have never arisen or happened before. Creativity is developing a new way of doing things but intelligence leads to an elaboration of an already established paths. Sternberg and O’Hara (as cited in Roy Horan, 2007) identify the different ways in which the relationship between creativity and intelligence might be considered. They delineate five potential ways in which to explore this relationship:

1) creativity is a subset of intelligence 2) intelligence is a subset of creativity 3) creativity and intelligence are overlapping sets 4) creativity and intelligence are essentially the same thing (coincident sets) and 5) creativity and intelligence bear no relation at all to each other (disjoint sets).

Sternberg and O’Hara conclude that creativity is separate from but is involved with intelligence as innovative ideas arise and are followed through into practical changes. In other words, creativity is an aspects of intelligence and is involved within the initial stages in which an idea first emerges, and then again when the idea assessed for value and quality, and finally, when the idea is fully articulated and can be demonstrates to others (Horan, p. 187-188).¹

¹ Sternberg and O’Hara identify the various aspects of intelligence as three stages: the “synthetic” aspect of intelligence, which refers to the initial stage of development of an idea; the “analytical” aspect of intelligence refers to the evaluation stage, wherein the idea is assessed for its value; and the “practical” aspect of intelligence, which refers to the formulation of a way of effectively communicating those ideas and persuade others of their value.

Creativity can be seen as a primary source for innovation and the Council of European Union provides a clear definition of creativity as such:

[creativity] is seen as a process of generating ideas, expression and forms, which can, in essence, amplify knowledge and lead to new ways of using the knowledge” (Council of European Union as cited in Cachia, Ferrari, Ala- Mutka & Punie, 2010, p. 13).

Similarly, Osho (1999), Robinson (2009) and Csikszentmihaly (1997) define creativity as an inspiration and as the development of new, original or novel ideas for the way to solve a problem. Osho (1999) states that “creativity means the new, the novel, the original. Creative means the fresh, the unknown. You have to be open for it, vulnerable for it” (p. 144). Robinson (2009) stated, “creativity is a process of having original ideas that have value. A big part of being creative is looking for new ways of doing things within whatever activity you’re involved in” (p. 22).

Creativity is also considered a problem-solving ability. Some researchers define creativity in similar ways based on a notion of ingenuity in connection with appropriateness in social contexts. For example, Runco, Illies and Eisenman (2005) explain that “[o]riginality is very strongly related to creativity. Creative behaviour, creative person, and creative products each display originality. It may be complete novelty, or just some degree of unusualness, but without originality, there is no creativity” (p. 137-138). Watson (2007) states that “the concept of originality includes novelty, new ideas, and previously undiscovered constructions. Fit includes ideas such as appropriateness, value, subjective acceptance, social usefulness, or appeal” (p. 424). All the above mentioned theorists consider creativity as a process that consists of both

“originality” and “fit”. “Originality” can be described as introducing something novel, like a new idea, into the social domain; this idea will be new but it will have value and social usefulness, meaning it must “fit” within its social context. Although creativity has to be original and appropriate, simultaneously, and it is a challenge to differentiate between these two concepts, “it is difficult to demonstrate that originality and appropriateness are themselves related. Logically, creativity requires both originality and appropriateness, but that does not mean that originality and appropriateness are unambiguously related to one another” (Runco, Illies & Eisenman, 2005, p. 146).

Watson (2007) defines creativity based on three aspects, namely flexibility, originality and fluency. This definition is supported by Shively (2011), who states that

[a] shared vocabulary and lens for creativity helps teachers and students know what it means to ‘be creative’ and where to start. J. P. Guilford’s FFOE model of divergent thinking from the 1950s offers four dimensions to describe creativity: fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration (p.10).

Watson goes on to explain that “fluency” refers to the generation of free flowing ideas that stimulates the creative process, whereas “flexibility” refers to the ability to understand a topic or problem from multiple vantage points; “originality,” he explains, is the capacity to come up with innovative ideas or products that are completely new, and “elaboration” refers to the process of addressing gaps or embellishing upon an idea or completing it (p. 12-13). Creativity leads to innovative and extraordinary ways of doing things; it is defined here as the qualities of curiosity and the potential to bringing of new things into existence, so as to discover and develop extraordinary ways of doing things (Robinson, 2009; Osho, 1999). Csikszentmihaly (1997) clarifies that a creative person learns what others know, and upon discovering the weaknesses or gaps in that knowledge, becomes dissatisfied and endeavors to make improvements (p. 90).

Based on above literature review, in spite of the intellectual differences over the meaning of the word creativity, it is possible to argue that creativity has certain attributes and features including originality, appropriateness, fluency, flexibility, and elaboration. It is possible to see that, while there are subtle differences between the various definitions, there are important similarities and there is an assumption of a flexible process of development. The plasticity of the human brain enables it to change and develop through nurturing and training, and thus increasing knowledge and creative ability. Creativity is a skill that everyone can develop by following their own unique, personal path so as to express their passion in life. Creativity is an idea, feeling and situation. By dealing with different situations and taking risks to solve problems and by feeling that there is no one except you to solve the problem, creativity can manifest both mentally or physically. It is possible to define creativity in words: it is the practice of individual skills so as to find answers through wonder and curiosity. Creativity is original, valuable and unique ideas that emerge through the practice of personal skills that bring new things into existence or that change a traditional path. Every human being is capable of being creative because we are here to question, to ponder, and to seek answers. Creativity is an adventure and risk taking that support human beings to express their personal message.

How is Creative Potential Helped or Hindered?

Creativity has been clearly defined by some researchers as an aspect of individual personality and a process of self-discovery. It can be nurtured and developed, and this is possible because of the flexible nature of the human individual. As Lubart and Sternberg (1998) state that creativity consists of reimagining what is assumed to be fixed and true

about the world; it is a process of self-discovery in which the act is more important than the outcome (p. 66). Reworking to transition “traditional truths” into truths based on “self-discovery” requires an environment that supports creativity for each generation and that encourages individuals to think and discover the world in her or his own way. In other words, creativity may be thought of as akin to a skill that can be learned and developed, and that its development depends on factors that either support or hinder it. There are many factors that affect creativity.

Creativity is considered to be a developed curiosity and learning opportunity that inspires a person to use their intellectual and personal skills to develop either a new idea or inventions. Creativity is a concept separate from but related to intelligence; it is an aspect of intelligence. It is not the result of a “gifted” mind, which only a select few are born with, but arises out of mental, personal and social factors that enable the emergence of innovative thinking within many different fields. There are differences among individuals, and each of us has our own personal skills and characteristics; however, curiosity is innate to us all and creativity is the result of our innate curiosity being nurtured. As the above literature shows, the opportunity to access different domains and use different sources will help to bring about greater innovation. And as all of us have creative potential, it is important to understand, the degree to which we express our creativity can be affected by the familial, social, cultural and educational conditions within which we as individuals have been immersed.

In the following section, therefore, I elaborate upon the above theories through an explanation of how culture and an individual’s social environment, such as home life and schooling, effect the development of creativity. Finally, I will consider the implications

of the effects of culture and social environment on teaching pedagogy and the role of creativity in teaching and learning.

Culture and Social Environment

Culture has been considered a core element in the development of creativity in people. Several studies have revealed that cultural differences and conceptions as key elements for either enhancing creativity or hindering it (Zhou, Shen and Wang, 2013; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states that “creativity results from the interaction of a system consisting of culture that contains symbolic rules; person who bring novelty into the symbolic domain and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation” (p. 6).

When a culture encourages people to appreciate creativity in individuals, and thus provide people with the space to practice their creativity and to do what they love, and appreciate the results, other factors such as personal traits, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, curriculum and learning pedagogy can be considered as secondary factors in developing the level of creativity in that person. Culture can be considered the fundamental factor in developing individual creativity because the beliefs of a culture determine what qualities within individual are deemed significant and therefore are encouraged (or conversely, insignificant and therefore discouraged). Culture also affects the interactions between individuals, such as between parents and their children, teachers and their students, etc. Culture and creativity are primary factors that determines how “to achieve the kind of world we consider human” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 317).

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) explains that in order for us to improve on what we have, in order to progress, creativity is necessary. Improvement and progress require breaking away from the pressures of social conformity, generating and recording new ideas, and teaching others how

to implement a new way of doing things that differs from tradition. Individuals who are capable of shifting conventions are creative and, according to Csikszentmihalyi, “culture is their creation” (p. 317). Culture affects the development of creativity by influencing the ways in which people think and express themselves and the types of interactions we have with each other. The kind of world we live in—one that fosters creativity and thrives, or one that does not—is determined by our cultural goals: “there is no question that the human species could not survive, either now or in the years to come, if creativity were to run dry. [The] future is in our hands; the culture we create will determine our fate” (p. 317-318). Value, belief, behavior and knowledge all these arise from and influence our culture, which is at the core of making us creative. If our cultural values the ideas that individuals have, all aspects of our culture—such as the activities of our home and school educational environments, and social interactions—will reflect this respect for individuality, but if our culture does not support and respect individual divergent thinking, then all other factors will also ignore the value of that individuality.

Lubart and Sternberg (1998) also argue that creative endeavor is strongly impacted by cultural barriers. They state that cultural factors such as economic, political and social elements can have a significant effect on the levels of creative potential, and on how creativity is evaluated. Hence, the reduction of creative thinking is related to the lack of supportive factors that meet an individual’s need to build self-esteem and problem solving skills. When the supportive factors support the individual’s confidence and skills, the individual can assume responsibility for making a change and solving a problem by taking risks and applying different strategies. A lack of support often leads people to look to others to solve problems or to accept conditions as they are without attempting to make changes; a lack of support discourages

creative thinking and prohibits solving problems in innovative ways.

Lubart and Sternberg (1998) maintain that culture also influences the domains of creative expression and the nature of creative activity for different social groups. They state that creativity is both cognitively and environmentally dependent and the creative act emerges out of an interaction between these two factors. Here cultural factors are seen as a core element that influence creative ability, which means that the sense of freedom provided an individual by their culture plays a significant role in the extent of their creativity: “The place, or setting for creative activity, can be described through a set of interrelated context, which include the physical setting, the family, the school or workplace, the field of endeavour, and the culture” (Lubart & Sternberg, 1998, p. 66). The reduction of opportunity to practice different activities destroys an individual’s creative sense. Limiting individuals’ activities in school or at home destroys this sense of wonder and creativity at the age when brain is developing by learning and practicing new activities. In contrast, giving individuals at school and at home the opportunity to practice, to wonder and explore, and to try different ideas will lead to the development of their creativity. By opening the space for people to think and be curious, without restricting their questions, the home and school environment can support the discovery of different things, because the nature of human beings is to be curious and whenever this curiosity is released it becomes creative.

Various researchers have also argued that the culture surrounding individuals is considered the most important factors in fostering people’s creativity. As Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states, “[The individual’s [e]arly background has a significant effect. Interest and curiosity tend to be stimulated by positive experiences with family, by a supportive emotional environment, by a rich cultural heritage” (p.327). A study by Kharkhurin and Motalleebi (2008)

offers a comparison of the nature of creativity, as it is understood by three student perspective from different culture, the American, Russian and Iranian. Based on their study, Kharkhurin and Motalleebi explain that while “creativity research assumes originality as an important trait of creative behaviour ...the value of this potential requires further investigation as it might be cultural specific” (p. 409). They found that

Americans and Russians have superior abilities to consider a problem from different perspectives and to generate original solutions to a problem. The performance differences on the originality measure of the representatives of the Western and Eastern countries calls for the possible revisions of the traditional definition of creativity as a construct emphasizing originality in thinking. Although originality and innovation are inherent properties of creative behavior in the Western thought, it might have lesser value in the East. (p. 404)

They conclude that “[n]o doubt creativity is inherent in all cultures and earns recognition in all areas of human enterprise. However, the manifestation of creative potential might be culture specific” (p. 409).

Numerous other studies concur with Kharkhurin and Motalleebi. Watson (2007), for example, argues that creativity is the cognitive processes of individuals’ minds and is impacted by their environment (p. 436). on Lubart and Sternberg (1998) also argue that “[c]ulture is shown to influence the definition and expression of creativity, channeling creativity into certain task domains or social group. The quantity of creative activity can be further affected by cultural features such as the value placed on conformity” (p. 59). The influence of culture on the development of an individual’s “personal imagination” is significant and therefore determines whether or not that individual is able to imagine alternative ways of thinking and acting outside of what has already been determined and accepted by their culture. Culture can play a part in inhibiting individual’s imaginations, either because that person wants to fit within their expected

cultural role or because they accept without question the beliefs of their culture as fixed and definitive truths.

Authority and power in some cultures restrict the expression of individual creativity. The institutions of a culture, such as its schools, workplaces, sports and entertainment centers, and community organizations can have rules and regulations that reward and punish certain types of behaviours and activities. In *Creativity Under Pressure: Artistic Freedom of Expression in Azerbaijan*, Baku (2014) writes,

Film, television, and theater workers are another category of artists who experience pressure if they express opinions critical of the authorities or perform works considered to be critical. They face interference from the authorities, dismissal from their jobs, and other forms of pressure. In November 2012, actor Ilgar Jahangir was fired from his position with the State Theater of Young Spectators in connection with his criticism of the government, in particular President Aliyev and Minister of Culture and Tourism Albufaz Garayev. Prior to his dismissal, Jahangir had made comments to the media such as “Our minister is so engaged in tourism that he has forgotten culture,” and “I want to see my people educated and brave. (p. 26-27)

Often schools, for example, require students to sit quietly at their desks for extended periods of time, or test students for their ability to remember facts or use logical reasoning, and teachers reward those students who can do these things well and often single out students who cannot by chastising them for the “bad behaviour” in front of whole class or by giving them low marks. This assertion of authority and power that can enhance and develop individual consciousness or it diminish it. In his book, *Curriculum as Meditate Inquiry*, Kumar (2013) discusses contemporary education and how it is influenced by a fear of authority.

“Contemporary educational institutions,” Kumar argues, “contribute to making students as well as teachers fearful of the authority of nation-states, the market, society, and exams” (p. 59). They reinforce the ideologies and practices of the dominant culture, and thus participate in shaping and moulding, even “distorting” the perceptions of the students (p. 59). As Kumar explains,

More often than not, educational institutions cultivate fear through the imposition of discipline and authority; condition delicate minds by means of ideological, religious, and market propaganda; instill ambition and competitiveness; and fragment a child's being by overemphasizing on the cognitive aspect at the expense of emotional, bodily, creative, and spiritual dimensions. In short, contemporary educational institutions, in most cases, are responsible for negatively affecting the development of creativity, intelligence, and understanding among children, and do not provide ground for self-transformative teaching and learning. (p. 75-76)

The conceptualization of creativity in some cultures, therefore, includes what Osho refers to as the difference between creativity and manufacturing. Manufacturing is a process of repeating tasks over and over in an assembly-line fashion. The manufacturing mode contrasts with a notion of creativity that means to bring new things into reality (Osho, 1999). This notion of creativity emerges from within a culture that encourages a belief in the individual and considers creativity as an implicit factor in developing personal skills.

Kumar (2013) also identifies educational institutions as playing a significant role in “propagate[ing] the mind-set that is in consonance with the existing system” (p. 29). Referencing philosopher and educator Jiddu Krishnamurti's 1953 publication, Kumar explains that,

Through conditioning, we “protect” our children and “shape their ways of thinking and feeling” by molding them into established patterns of society [...]. Thus, present-day educational institutions do not “encourage the understanding of the inherited tendencies and environmental influences which condition the mind and heart and sustain fear” (p. 64).

In contrast to the role that schools have thus far predominantly played, Kumar explains, drawing upon James Macdonald's ideas (1995), that the purpose of schooling is much more than passing on information; schools should promote students' individual sense of discovery and creativity (p. 100). Kumar writes:

The basic goal of a reality-centered school and its curriculum is founded upon the principle that children are self-actualizing. It sets learners free to explore, seek, search, discover, invent, and experiment. The teacher's role in a reality-centered school is to guide, clarify, help, and support the children. The reality-centered school is an “open”

school where children are seen as self-actualizers and creators, and the goal of learning is primarily to develop their capacities of “openness” and “responsiveness.” (p. 100)

Living, Kumar (2013) explains, is a continual process of learning, and one’s quality of life is a reflection of the quality of one’s learning (citing curriculum theorist James Macdonald, p. 100). The role of schools, therefore, is to foster a “perspective understanding of how one lives, thinks, feels, and act[s]” (p. 100). This, he argues, constitutes true learning, as opposed to the mere absorption of information (p. 100).

Like teachers within the school, parents within the home can be figures of authority that either engage their children in ways that reinforce the mind-set of the existing system or can view their children as “self-actualizers and creators” and encourage them with support and guidance to question and discover their own answers, and to realize their own creative potential.

Dai, Tan, Marathe, Valtcheva, Pruzek, and Shen (2012) point out that highly educated parents tend to involve them in a various intellectual activity that encourage their individual development and personal expression, which stimulates their creativity (p. 192). They also state that “stable individual differences and long-term developmental changes and differences may play an important role in how social and educational experiences shape development of creativity” (p.197). These authors suggest that personal characteristics as well as social and educational environments play a role in developing creativity.

Dai et al. (2012) categorize creativity into two types: (a) divergent thinking and (b) personal traits (p. 192). Divergent thinking and creativity are often considered to be synonymous (Hong & Kang, 2010, p. 823). Personal traits are motivational factors that enhance personal characteristics (Dai et al., p. 192). According to this theory, creativity

depends on an individual's personality that leads one to engage, to learn and discover.

This idea is supported by O'Hera and Sternberg (2000- 2001; Sternberg, 2006) who argue that creativity is a personal choice or decision. They state,

Creativity, according to the investment theory, is in large part a decision. The view of creativity as a decision suggests that creativity can be developed. Simply requesting that students be more creative can render them more creative if they believe that the decision to be. Creative will be rewarded rather than punished. (p. 90)

These researchers articulate a notion of creativity as an individual skill and do not consider the influence by culture as a factor that can affect the independence of the individual's decision-making ability or the level of the self-esteem. However, being in an environment that restricts and ignores personal decisions can strongly influence the creativity level in the individual. In other words, while Dai et al. (2012) and O'Hera and Sternberg (2000- 2001; Sternberg, 2006) articulate a theory of creativity that emphasizes personal characteristics over environment, these theorists also consider how culture and environment interact with personal characteristics and affect the development of creativity.

My own position is that culture is a major factor in the development of the way people think and behave, and it influences whether or not individuals think independently and make choices that diverge from what is predominantly accepted by their culture. Personal behaviour and decisions are strongly shaped by culture, and everything we learn and do will be assessed by others in our culture and be either accepted or not, based on cultural values and beliefs. Yet, even though some theorists, such as Dai et al. (2012) and O'Hera and Sternberg (2000- 2001; Sternberg, 2006) emphasize personal characteristics over environment, they come to the same conclusion that people need more space to extend their imaginations and creative thinking so as to problem solve and to think in ways that are different from others.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) and Collard and Looney (2014) also contemplate both the notion of individual traits and the effects of culture in their theories of creativity. They theorize creativity in two ways. One definition refers to the process of how an individual learns from surrounding area, which is culture. The second definition refers to the process of how an individual brings about change through the contribution of new ideas, which might be described as the “Aaha” moment. This second definition identifies how people’s minds are not shaped by environment, but rather, the creative moment depends on personal traits and how that creative moment shapes the culture.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), a creative person has a “complex personality” and is “able to express a full range of traits” (p. 57). They Show tendencies of thought and action that in most people are segregated. Having a complex personality means being able to express the full range of traits that are potentially present in the human repertoire but usually atrophy because we think that one extreme is “good,” whereas the other extreme is “bad.” (p. 57). In other words, creative people are often seen as “rebellious and independent,” and yet, as Csikszentmihalyi explains,

It is impossible to be creative without having first internalized a domain of culture. And a person must believe in the importance of such a domain in order to learn its rules; hence, he or she must be to a certain extent a traditionalist. (p. 71)

For Csikszentmihaly, creative people are a bit of a paradox: “*traditional* and *conservative* and at the same time *rebellious* and *iconoclastic*” (p. 71). When a person only internalizes the rules of a domain, he or she does not create change; however, without understanding the rules of the domain, any changes that occur are rarely recognized or adopted as innovative or novel approaches within that domain (p. 71).

The culture has a significant role in whether or not creative activities arise and/or are accepted and adopted within that culture. As Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argues, “[s]ometimes it is not the person who chooses the place to further his or her knowledge: The opportunities for learning that a place offers capture the person’s interest” (p. 128). Here, two factors in relation to creativity are identified: personal traits and culture. On the one hand, he explains that a creative person can be creative if he has strong and complex personality. On the other hand, he explains that culture influences and affects the development of creativity. In other words, even if the individual is considered as capable of bringing about change within their culture through self-discovery and creative activity, the culture and surrounding environment are still important factors that can hinder and discourage the creative sense. Csikszentmihalyi goes on to explain that, “most of us deep down believe that a person who is creative will prevail regardless of the environment. *Even* the greatest genius will not accomplish anything without the support of society and culture” (p. 330).

Creative innovation is possible when an individual, who is capable and motivated, brings about new ideas within a cultural environment that is encouraging and open to adopting new ideas. Indeed, the individual’s creative characteristic cannot arise without encouragement from external factors, such as the society and environment. This means that personal characteristics and cultural environment both have an impact on developing the degree of creativity within people.

There is a link between intrinsic and extrinsic factors that help to develop individual creativity, and some researchers believe that personal creative potential is influenced mostly by environmental factor. In the study about creativity among Chinese students, Niu (2007) points out that the “intrinsic elements” of an individual refer to intelligence, personality, motivation,

thinking styles and knowledge, and the “extrinsic motivation” relates to environmental factors, such as family, school and society. Niu argues that the social component is the only factor that predicts the variance in creativity. Niu concludes his study with the following statement:

The foremost implication is that societies in general, and families, schools, and workplaces in particular, could work actively to create an environment that protect and nurture individuals’ sense of autonomy, on the one hand, and discourage blanket conformity, on the other, in order to enhance creativity. Contrariwise, any direct or indirect attempt to restrict freedom or induce uncritical obedience from the individual could stifle creativity” (p. 171)

Based on the cross-cultural study involving China, Germany and Japan regarding the conceptualization of creativity and how the culture beliefs about creativity increase or decrease the individual’s ability to be more creative, Zhou, Shen, Wang, Neber, and Johji (2013) explain that “for teachers from the three countries, creativity was a plastic ability that mainly depends on divergent thinking and has relevance to academic performance” (p. 244). This study shows that while the teachers in all three countries agree that, when defining creativity, novelty is more important than appropriateness, they differ in their evaluation of the significance of plasticity (rated low in Japan), divergent thinking (rated high in China), and academic performance (rated low in Germany) (p. 244). Zhou et al. conclude, therefore, that “cultural differences have several implications for creativity cultivation” (p. 239).

Extrinsic motivation is considered the fundamental supportive factor that emerges in advancing the intrinsic characteristic behaviours of creativity. Amabile (1998) explains the importance of socialization, work techniques, and working environment as extrinsic elements that should be oriented so as to foster creativity. He argues that while it is important to set strategic goals, people will exercise their creativity more when they are given freedom to determine on their own how to accomplish those goals (p. 81). In other words, extrinsic factors

are the essential stimulant to the intrinsic factor; consequently, without extrinsic support the individual might not be able to achieve and develop creativity.

Several studies have indicated that the surrounding environment of an individual—such as their family, school, society, political context and culture—has the ability to structure and shape the individual’s creativity or to restrict their conception about creativity. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states that

[T]he institutions one works for and the events of the wider society in which one lives provide powerful influences that can redirect one’s career and channel a person’s thinking in new direction. Indeed, if we look at creativity from this perspective, personal experiences and domain knowledge may pale in comparison with the contribution of the social context to determine which problem one tackles.” (p. 90-91)

Dai et al., (2012) likewise find that “[t]he distinct difference found in favour of the high-SES (which is social and educational environment) schools provide clues as to how school, home, and neighbourhood environments might have impacted the development of creative potential in term of fluent, flexible, and original ideation during adolescence” (p. 196). Their study examines the socio-economics of school neighbourhoods and education levels of students’ parents and demonstrates the effects of these two factors on the students’ development of creative potential (p. 196). They determine that a “creative gap” existed between students who go to school in socio-economic privileged neighbourhoods (such as in upper-middle-class suburban areas) and those live in less advantaged neighbourhoods (mixed lower- to middle-class suburban areas). They argue that while there was no direct correlation between level of parent education and the students’ creative potential, there was a connection between the socio-economics of the schools’ neighbourhoods and the level of parent education (p. 169). They conclude, therefore, that there is a synergistic link between parent education and creative development, though this link has not

been directly proven. Watson (2007) presents comparable conclusions on the relationship between the work environment and creativity. He argues that an individual's environment has an impact on their motivation to invent, to vary resources in different domains, or to innovatively manage practices or skills (p. 430).

Sousa (2009) argues that the brain of human being is constructed to reflect the environment and will respond to repetitive activity and stimulation. Human brains develop within a learning environment, so the intrinsic characteristic can be altered by extrinsic factors. Encouragement and stimulation can totally change a person's behaviour and mind, and lead them to be optimistic or pessimist about themselves. Hence, the surrounding environment can create successful and creative people or it can create the opposite. Some creative people strive to fulfil their goals despite a culture that is oppressive and discouraging to individual creativity. As described above, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argues that a creative person's personality is complex (both "traditional" and "rebellious"); this description of the creative personality type can be compared to what analytic psychologist Carl Jung defined as the "mature personality" (p. Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 75). Carl Jung thought that

[E]very one of our strong points has a repressed shadow side that most of us refuse to acknowledge. The very orderly person may long to be spontaneous, the submissive person wishes to be dominant. As long as we disown these shadows, we can never be whole or fully satisfied in life. Yet that is what we usually do, and so we keep on struggling against ourselves, trying to live up to an image that distorts our true being" (p. 57).

In reference to the creative individual, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) explains the following:

It is often necessary for creative individual to be ambitious and aggressive. Yet at the same time, they are often willing to subordinate their own personal comfort and advancement to the success of whatever project they are working on. Aggressiveness is required especially in fields where competition is acute, or in domains where it is difficult to introduce novelty. In George Stigler's words: Every scholar, I think, is aggressive in

some sense. He has to be aggressive if he wants to change his discipline. Now, if you get a Keynes or a Fireman, they are also aggressive in that they want to change the world, and so they become splendid public figures as well. But that's a very hard game to play. (p. 69)

When contemplating how an individual's environment fosters or motivates creativity, there are different considerations: creativity from socio-psychological perspective, which is motivation, considers as a basis for an individual's creativity both extrinsic and intrinsic factors, and each of them functions differently in supporting creativity (Amabile, 1998).

Accepting the notion of extrinsic factors in the development of creativity encourages teachers and families to inspire a sense of creativity in their students and children. Teachers and parents can stimulate the potential for creativity in children by providing the appropriate environment for thinking about things differently and experimenting with new ways of doing things. Studies have shown that creativity in most people is typically developed within their environment, which consists of a supporting family and an intellectual school atmosphere, so as to encourage self-esteem, independence, flexibility, and self-exploration (Dai et al., 2012; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Besançon & Lubart, 2007). Furthermore, in order to encourage a child's creativity, teachers need to respect children's differences. Kumar (2013) explains that "the demand on the part of teachers and parents for conformity and obedience from children without having any respect for them also bring[s] about fear." (36). As Krishnamurti states, "When the showing of respect to elders is required of children, it generally becomes a habit, a mere outward performance, and fear assumes the form of veneration" (cited in Kumar, p. 63). Kumar explains that,

When teachers and parents demand respect from children without having any respect for them, the obvious consequence is the prevalence of indifference and disrespect among children for their elders. Moreover, there is no real respect for others when there is a reward for it, because the bribe or the punishment becomes far more significant than the inward feeling of respect. If we have no respect for children, but merely offer them a reward or threaten them with punishment in order to get them to behave

respectfully toward others, we are encouraging acquisitiveness and fear. (p. 63)

In conclusion, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are both essential. Intrinsic motivation supports the individual to make attempts toward his or her goals, and bolsters their activity, even when it is challenging, until she or he reaches their ultimate goal. Human characteristics and behaviour are associated with multiple needs and motivations; for each characteristic and behaviour there is a goal to be achieved if their needs are to be met. For example, to achieve his or her ends, an individual fuelled by internal motivation might apply different activities and try multiple strategies. It is the internal motivation that moves the individual to think deeply and try new things in order to achieve creative things. Extrinsic motivation is also essential. Extrinsic motivation refers to the stimulating factors in human behaviour. The relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is determined by individual behaviour with the community. Belonging motivation arises out of the sense of attachment and belonging one feels about the place where she or he lives. This feeling of being a part of a community motivates the person to contribute to the community in positive ways. If this feeling is lacking, a person might not be motivated to contribute to his or her community. For instance, if the individual is a productive person, this reflects the positive and motivating factors of the place in which she or he lives and works; conversely, if the opposite is true, this again reflects how the extrinsic motivation of their environment controls the intrinsic motivation of the individual. Belonging motivation is developed from both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; the individual can reach the goal without fear whenever the belonging motivation meets the extrinsic motivation and both support the development of creative behaviour.

In this section, I focused on the internal and external factors that support or hinder individual creativity. Multiple external factors determine whether or not one becomes a creative person or

not. Even if the person has a strong inside creative sense and self-confidence the outward implementation could change that creative sense. Extrinsic motivation such as using effective strategies at home, schools and work will prepare individuals to meet future goal. Flexibility in using different strategies to improve personal knowledge can come from different surrounding factors. The informal learning that a culture and community can provide outside of school can motivate and lead to the expression of creative potential or it can diminish such expression.

Implications for Education

Many countries recognize the importance of creativity, specifically in education, but the degree of importance given the notion of creativity differs from one country to another. For example, as Cheng (2011) states,

“[r]ecently, government of Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, Israel and other Asian countries have imposed curriculum reforms, which emphasized creativity development in their primary and secondary schools. One common feature of these countries is that they all recognize the importance of creativity across the curriculum, such as science, language, arts and so on” (p.67).

Because education is central for supporting students’ creativity, it is an important domain that potentially leads the individual toward developing their personal curiosity and finding their passion in a particular field of interest.

In a study by Zhou et al. (2013), which involved three different countries (China, Germany and Japan) and examines teachers’ conceptualizations of creativity, it was shown that differences in creativity can be explained by a variation in school policies and educational curriculums, whereby creativity is enhanced in some countries more than others. These researchers have claimed that intellectual freedom, as well as teaching pedagogy, arouses curiosity and imagination. Diversity in educational resources and

training stimulates the developmental traits of creativity among students. With freedom and resources, individuals are more capable of expressing creativity in various ways, as compared with members from a society where intellectual freedom is discouraged (see also Jellen & Urban, 1989; Niu & Sternberg, 2001). Offering a chance for individuals to achieve stimulates creativity. As Csikszentmihalyi (1997) explains, it is not that creativity is strictly determined by an individual's environment; rather, an individual's potential to achieve their creative aspirations are greatly hindered or even prohibited if their environment is not supportive (p. 330). The conditions that make creativity possible, Csikszentmihalyi continues, arise out of a social milieu that has "seven major elements": "training, expectations, resources, recognition, hope, opportunity, and reward" (p. 330). If these elements are provided within a society, creativity will ensue (p. 330).

Csikszentmihalyi's assertions are supported by Sturges (2006), who defends the right to "intellectual freedom" with the argument that "freedom of expression and freedom of access to information perform a basic function that is as significant as any other response to fundamental human need" (p. 431). He supports his argument with evidence from neurophysiology and the evidence found in studies of the development of human brain function in infants' responses to external stimuli. The "plasticity" of the brain, especially in infants, his studies suggest, "can adapt and change according to need" depending upon the "flow of data ... that demands and triggers such responses" (p. 431). Learning opportunities provided by parents and teachers, are essential to infant brain development, and a lack of stimuli can inhibit brain development, a condition from which the infant may never recover (p. 431). As Sturges (2006) states,

if the [stimuli] is rich, varied, full of apparent contradictions and sources of confusion, the brain is both required to, and has the capacity to, develop and use a critical faculty to give order to the apparently chaotic, find ways to construct explanations, and devise responses and courses of action. (p. 431)

Sturges goes on to explain that the potential for brain development is greatest within conditions that do not limit the mind “to one set of data or one intellectual approach selected for it by some external authority, be it an educational system, religion or state ideology” (p. 431). Intellectual freedom, he argues, establishes the conditions under which children grow into independent learners and become adults who are better equipped to not only function independently, but are capable of “hold[ing] independent opinions” and therefore more able to make a contribution to society (p. 431). Intellectual freedom leads to the development of independent thought, which in turn supports and promotes the principles of democracy, innovation and economic growth, and the establishment of a fair and just society (p. 431). Sturges concludes therefore that intellectual freedom is a basic human right equivalent to any other right, such as food and shelter: “By promoting intellectual freedom, library and information professionals, in alliance with civil society organizations, serve not only the range of basic human needs, but the broader requirements of humanity” (p. 431).

The role of educators’ understanding of the distinction between the notion of “giftedness” and a concept of creativity that is akin to a sense of wonder that can be nurtured and developed is important to recognize, as this distinction can affect whether or not creativity is encouraged in their students and, thereby, encouraged more generally within the large society. These broader social effects are possible because, as Csikzentmihalyi, (1996) explains, creativity is the process of how an individual brings about change through the contribution of new ideas. Teachers can enhance creativity, though in some domains it is easier to enhance creativity than in others. Each field has specific methods for seeking information. For example, science predominantly utilizes

experimental activities, which give opportunity for students to discover within the lab setting. In comparison, the writing of poetry can be taught in the traditional way in a class that does not encourage individual creativity through imagination (Csikzentmihalyi, 1996, p. 237-238).

Furthermore, educators in different countries have different ideas and methods for how to motivate creative people (Zhou et al., 2013; Lubart & Sternberg, 1998; Riquelme, 2002). Appreciating individual ideas at an early age is the most important factor that leads people to be creative and express their ideas without fear of failure. It is important not to ignore young child when his or her curiosity leads them to ask questions. It is the parents' and/or educators' responsibility to be patient and find an age-appropriate way to explain and answer the child's questions. Communicating positively with young children, by attending to their contributions to a conversation or activity, helps children to develop self- confidence and leads to increased curiosity.

The support offered to young people enables them to take risks in their lives, which helps in developing their creative side. Risk-taking is experimenting and practicing without fear, which encourages divergent thinking because it helps build self-esteem and leads to trying different activities. According to the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) (2010), schools can offer the perfect environment for encouraging creativity, risk-taking, and “a positive attitude towards exploration and experimentation,” all of which are important to enterprise (p. 3, 9). NESTA states,

Taking risks within curriculum subjects can enhance learning by enabling young people to make more decisions and to experiment with different ideas and approaches. [...] Learning to consider alternative courses of action and less obvious routes can develop personal attributes, particularly drive and confidence. Risk taking is integral to enterprise. (p. 9)

As *The Apprentice* winner Tim Campbell (cited in NESTA, 2010) points out, creativity, experimentation and risk-taking are “skill requirements” for succeeding in today’s economy (p. 9). The youth today are no longer presented with the kind of job security and traditional career choices that were available to previous generations. Today’s youth need a different skillset than their parents, including the ability to be self-employed, manage a business and market themselves (p. 9). “Learning to take risks,” Campbell explains, “can help young people to participate more generally in decisions that affect their lives and to acquire the skills essential for success in the future world of work,” and an important aspect of learning to take risks is “experiencing failure” (p. 9). Risk-taking and experimentation, therefore, are important aspects of the education today’s youth need in order to succeed. As Campbell states, choosing a good job depends upon a person’s ability to make a risk-reward assessment; being able to take a risk when making career choices opens up opportunities for young people whereas avoiding risk and following expected or conventional career paths can diminish opportunities (p. 9). When family and communities discourage young people from taking risks, they cause them to miss out on chances in life.

The appreciation and support of individual ideas (as well as activities, practices) is the main factor that I believe is necessary to developing creativity in an individual, especially if this support occurs from an early age. The future will be built upon previous knowledge and experience; therefore, if an individual does not have their self-esteem supported from an early age, it will be challenging for them to be a creative person. Creativity, as it has been represented in the research that defines it as a developing skill, can be encouraged or destroyed by various elements: culture, environment, and teaching methods.

Culture and education are the central factors for either supporting or rewarding creative ideas, or not. Without support, individuals will face difficulty in breaking away from the cultural norms and rules, so as to bring about new ideas and inventions. Environments, such as the home and school, have a significant impact on personal thinking. Parents and schools can affect children at early ages in their development and influence their productivity either positively or negatively. Educational approaches can prepare people beyond immediate goals and have an impact on what kind of person they want to be in the future. An environment that supports freedom and esteems personal decision-making can be a positive place and supportive of creative potential. If personal creativity is supported by outside factors, this will help in developing an individual and lead them to better understand their sense of self and go beyond what is expected to what is of interest to them.

The literature review for this study point a need for understating creativity as it is an innate curiosity exist in all people and that need to be encourage by applying different positive approach. For the purpose of this thesis, I inquire into how intellectual freedom as well as teaching pedagogy are important in developing a creative mind. Integrating flexible education curriculums, with a multiplicity of educational resources and improved teacher training, will make the learning process more attractive, engaging and enriching for students.

In the next chapter, I expound methodology perspectives that inform narrative approach in qualitative research.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative Inquiry, which is a qualitative methodology, is used to collect, organize and analyze the personal/professional stories of participants so as to gain a better understanding of a topic based on lived experiences. In this study, as described previously, the participants are Saudi women who are teachers doing graduate work in education at an Eastern Canadian University and their stories focus on the topic of creativity and its significance in education. Narrative inquiry is the appropriate way of understanding the topic of creativity through the stories of participants who have experience in education in both Saudi Arabia (as students and teachers) and in Canada (as students of education). Their lived experience of education within these two very different settings offers a unique opportunity to explore differing conceptualizations of creativity and its role in teaching and learning. Through their stories, it is possible to gain insight into their understanding of what creativity means and the factors that they think facilitated or hindered the development of their own creativity. Narrative inquiry offers a rich source of data for research, especially in education, because it allows multiple participants to tell the researcher about their lived experiences in connection to the research topic and thereby enables consideration of the topic from different logical angles as the inquiry unfolds. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that “Experiences happen narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). For my research, narrative is an entry point for examining how past and present experiences have shaped the understanding of creativity in education from the perspective of Saudi women who have been teachers in Saudi Arabia and graduate students at a Canadian university.

Narrative inquiry in my study is informed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who explain that narrative occurs within a “three- dimensional narrative inquiry space” that allows the inquiry to move from “inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within the replace” (p. 49). The flexibility of narrative leads the researcher to look “inward” at our experiences so as to study and reflect upon own personal experiences and thoughts as well as those of my participants. It enables us to look “outward, backward, forward and situated within the place” exploration that allow me to take into account and to analyze the cultural, familial, school and social environments within my participants’ life histories through which they experienced both learning and teaching. This process allows us to transform our thought, or “replace” them, so as to lead to better understanding creativity in education setting. This enable me to consider my own history and my participants’ past, present and future, while studying the meaning and significance of creativity in education as it is variously expressed through different personal stories. The Narrative process, therefore, is a transformative experience, whereby my thinking on the topic of creativity change as I explore different points of view, and this, in turn, affects both my reflections on my past experiences of the role of creativity in education as well as my future experiences.

Narrative inquiry is the study of stories based on personal practical knowledge and offers a “way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with the exigencies of present situation” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). The narrative approach “is a legitimate way of knowing and an act of sense making that shapes our conception and understandings about the world around us” (Bruner, as cited in Latta & Kim, 2010, p. 139). Through a Narrative inquiry approach, I reflect upon the personal professional experiences offered by Saudi female graduate students who are working in the discipline of education. I chose narrative

inquiry to help myself understand my own and my participants' personal stories in a more profound way and to support in developing our conceptualizations of the notion of creativity by reflecting upon the narratives that make up our past, are constituted in our present, and affect our futures.

Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1995) explain how a narrative inquiry assists in reflecting upon the stories of our past, present and future so as to gain deeper understanding of our research subject. In *Understanding Curriculum: an introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses*, Pinar et al. (1995), articulate how a study of “school knowledge, life history and intellectual development” offers the potential for a “transformative experience” (p. 515). Faced with the question of how to study a subject when the meaning of that subject was already constituted by the researcher's own perspective, Pinar developed a method that shifts the focus of the research onto the “biographical functions” of lived experiences of the researcher and their participants (p. 520). Pinar referred to this methodology as *currere*, which is Latin for “to run the course” (an infinitive of curriculum). He explains that “[t]he method of *currere* is a strategy devised to disclose experience, so that we may see more of it and see more clearly. With such seeing can come deepened understanding of the running, and with this, can come deepened agency” (p. 518).

Pinar articulates four steps to this method: regressive, progressive, analytical and synthetical (p. 520). The first step, regressive, is the consideration of one's past experience. Here, “lived experience” is seen as the source of data for study (p. 520). The second step, progressive, considers the future and hypothesizes on what might be possible. The analytical step looks at both the narratives of the past and future, and reconsiders the present through a self-reflective approach that examines how past experiences and future projects are affecting the present. As

Pinar explains, “[t]he analysis of *currere* is like phenomenological bracketing; one distances oneself from past and future so to be more free of the present” (p. 520). With heightened awareness of how past and future are affecting the present, the final synthetical step is possible (p. 520). This step has the potential for revealing alternative meanings of the present that are perhaps transformative for the researcher and the participant. This final stage is similarly theorized by Connelly and Clandinin (2000) as the “restorying” stage:

The person returns to present and future considerations and asks what the meaning of the event is for them and how they might create a new story of self which changes the meaning of the event, its description, and its significance for the larger life story the person may be trying to live. (p. 560).

In this way, narrative inquiry reveals new meaning and creates opportunities for change and transformation.

Because narrative inquiry posits lived experience as a legitimate ground for knowledge, and because of its transformative potential, many studies have used narrative inquiry to reveal the knowledge’s of marginalized groups, such as women. For example, Pagano (1990) states that “the word ‘narrative’ first appear in English in 1748 with the publication of *Clarissa*. The novel is about many things: property, patriarchal authority, the conduct of women and the obligations of men” (p. 9). As Madeleine Grumet (cited in Pagano, 1990) explains, the story of *Clarissa* tells us that there is something “ironic” and “bittersweet” about being a woman-teacher. In her role as a teacher, a woman-teacher reiterates the dominant discourses of the culture when she instructs her students so as to help them succeed in the larger society, but as a woman, she is often limited by and struggles against those same discourses, which are often patriarchal. The role of the teacher, therefore, must include an element of empowerment. As Lemmer (2009) states, “[e]ducation is the basic tool for empowering women, and this is particularly striking among

women from deprived economic and social backgrounds. Narratives of women's lives indicate different statuses of self-development, which are further complicated by issues of race, class and socioeconomic position" (p.80). For instance, Stewart (2014) examined women's Experiences in leadership positions in an educational setting in Southern Ontario. Through the analysis of women's narratives, this study determined that gendered stereotypes of leadership persisted, affecting both the women's confidence in pursuing leadership positions and other people's responses to those women who held leadership positions (Stewart, 2014).

In other words, narrative inquiry helps us to understand ourselves and understand the world around us and assists us in engaging in living, telling, retelling, and reliving our lives within particular social and cultural context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Little Bear (2000), storytelling can play an important role in education; teachers can use storytelling to pass on the traditions, customs and values of their culture (p. 81). Narrative becomes curricula for understanding personal perspective in education. Pinar (cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995) explains that within the field of education, a too narrow focus on the larger, public objectives—which include instruction, curriculum materials, and evaluation—has led us to neglect the experiences of the individual (p. 519). Narrative inquiry, therefore, expands the curricula to include a study of how individuals experience their world, including how they experienced their own education.

Through this study, the participants and I present and learn from our personal stories. Conle (2003) argues that narrative helps us to identify and examine aspects of our experience and knowledge that have gone unnoticed, and to think more deeply about the meaning of our experience so as to discern what is and is not significant to consider in our efforts to render an interpretation (p. 11). As Larson (1997) explains, through the exploration of multiple

perspectives, narrative inquiry assists in revealing social and cultural issues or problems that are undermining students' education (p. 455). She offers several examples of problems that can be better understood through narrative inquiry, such as school dropout rates, and teenage pregnancy, as well as increased incidence of violence at school (p. 455). Larson states that we can more readily apply strategies that improve others' situations when we fully understand how it is that *they perceive* the circumstances, events or problems that are arising *for them* (455).

In other words, narrative inquiry can play a significant role in addressing problems within the field of education by broadening our understanding of what "education" means and by listening to individual personal stories of those who are involved in and are affected by what happens within and also outside of the classroom. This idea is supported by Huber, Caine, Huber and Steeves (2013) who explain that narrative inquiry enables teachers to recognize their responsibility to educate their students goes beyond engaging them within the immediate classroom context and view education as a continuously evolving over time and within a complex web of social and cultural interactions. The narrative inquiry approach, therefore, assists in engaging students and their families in a process of re-telling experiences from the past and present, so as to illuminate possibilities for improvement in the future (p. 227).

As a narrative inquiry, this study opens up the opportunity for Saudi female graduate students to tell stories about their past experiences in Saudi Arabia and their present experiences in Canada. I explore how these experiences have developed, supported or changed their conceptualization of creativity in general, and the expression of their own creativity in particular. By integrating in-depth personal stories, we learn from our past and present experiences and understand ourselves more by expressing what we know to others.

Connelly & Clandinin (cited in Clandinin & Huber 2002) describe this process of unpacking these personal-professional narratives within the educational context as “a way of understanding teacher knowledge,” and they explain how this reveals the links between identity, social context and knowledge:

We developed the concepts of personal practical knowledge and professional knowledge landscape, narrative educational concepts, as a way of understanding teacher knowledge. These narrative understandings of knowledge and context are linked to identity. For us, identity is a storied life composition, a story to live by. Stories to live by are shaped in places and lived in places. They live in action, in relationship with others. (p. 161)

Narrative inquiry considers dynamic educational pedagogy that reflects everyday experience, which helps educators to learn from their stories. In this study, therefore, I used narrative inquiry to consider the perspectives of Saudi female studying at the graduate level in education at a Canadian university and explore the notion of creativity so as to better understand the significance of creativity in our own education. In this way, I gained insight into how this conceptualization has affected, and perhaps continues to affect, our learning and our teaching practices.

I use the narrative inquiry approach because it is important methodology in education, especially for professional educational development. My interest is in how narrative inquiry supports a pedagogical approach that enables educators to reflect upon their experiences from different perspectives and offers an opportunity for us to tell, deconstruct and learn from our experiences in different cultures. The narrative inquiry approach assists both myself and the other participants in interrogating our own personal assumptions about Saudi Arabian culture and Canadian culture, and about our own past and present experiences in education. It assists us in challenging our taken-for-granted ideas about creativity. This is possible because it reveals not only similarities, but also differences, in our experiences and we are able to examine our stories

from the perspectives of our differing subjective positions and from within the different cultures in which we have lived. Hence, by reflecting upon differences and contradictions within our stories, narrative inquiry becomes a form of “critical storytelling,” wherein the voices of student and teachers find public support through narrative (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 575).

Narrative inquiry approach is a powerful tool in educational research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that “we need to broaden our idea of education beyond that of schooling. Education, in this view, is a narrative of experience that grows and strengthens a person’s capabilities to cope with life” (p. 27). This study therefore helps me, as a researcher, to learn more about the meaning and significance of creativity through the perspectives of students, whose cross-cultural experiences of education offer a unique opportunity for insight. An analysis of the autobiographical and biographical aspects of the participants help me to reveal more about how the environments within which students study either contribute to or deter from the development of their creativity. The insights gained through this study offer further information about the notion of creativity within the field of education.

The autobiographical narrative allows me, as a teacher and as the researcher in this study, to reveal my own personal practical knowledge. “Personal practical knowledge” is “a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as a knowledgeable and knowing person” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that the best way to understand and learn curriculum is through examining and understanding ourselves (p. 31). Autobiography is considered a self-curriculum that is constructed by the individual. As Jeevaraj (2013) explains,

[a]utobiography is also said to reveal the answer to man’s [sic] enquiries about life,

behaviors, characters, success, the struggles they faced, the life's strategy they learned, their experience, their attempt in different fields and the result of their attempt, their observation, their justification etc. (p. 448)

As an important aspect of this study, therefore, it is necessary for me to explore and analyze my own personal feelings and experiences of creativity through the critical examination of my own stories.

As a researcher, the autobiography approach not only helps me to identify, investigate and write down my own assumptions, but also helps me to be more empathetic about a particular experience in social reality. Engaging the other participants enable me to explain the data from different views. (Leavy, 2009). Use of biographical approach reflect an accurate account about the participants, and how they think about creativity through their experience and what it is like for them to study in a new and different place from their previous experience. Similarly, biographical approach assists in exploring the participants' relationship with their culture, and enables the participants to be conscious in their responses about their experience. It helps them to recognize a new insight and the deeper meanings behind their conceptualizations of creativity through an exploration of different points of view on this subject.

Through delving into the histories of the participants with particular reference to the topic of my research, I understand their personal perspectives, and what it is meant by the participants' ideas of creativity and their knowledge of creativity. This approach gives subjects a chance to tell stories about their personal and professional experiences based on their recollection of events that have influenced or affected them in terms of the development of their creativity within the field of education. This means an analysis of the participants' biographical experiences help contribute to a better understanding of how their perspective is shaped by family, school, community and culture, and assist in expanding the discussion on the significance of creativity

within education. We can explore personal practical knowledge that arises from the individual's lived experiences of the past and present, and is evident in the way they imagine and prepare for their future (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

I chose narrative inquiry because I am interested in understanding the lived experiences of Saudi women who are studying abroad and what creativity means to them through the lens of self-experiences. “[A] narrative, curricular understanding of the person is an understanding that is flexible and fluid, and that therefore recognizes that people say and do different things in different circumstances and, conversely, that different circumstances bring forward different aspects of their experience to bear on the situation” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 26). The personal ideas and stories of the participants demonstrate that an individual's ‘voice’ is very important and their ideas are a valuable contribution to knowledge. Valuing the participants’ narratives demonstrates that the participants’ “[e]xperiences are felt. Experiences are valued. And experiences are appreciated” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 26). The concept of ‘voice’ is central to narrative inquiry (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). The voices of the researcher and the participants are considered important in narrative inquiry research because they express the truth about the phenomena based on reality as it is experienced by the participant. Pinar et al. (1995) explain “the autobiographical voice as the site for society, culture, and politics” (p. 526). In this project, the ‘voice’ involve the recording and analyzing of stories of the personal and professional lives and learning experiences of Saudi female graduates at Canadian University.

Because my research topic is focused on participants’ conceptions about creativity, narrative inquiry is the appropriate method that help research participants to think more deeply while sharing their personal and professional experiences. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative

method that provides an opportunity to explore in-depth with my participants the stories about our teaching and learning experiences. It is also a form of “collaboration between researcher and participants” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). When reflecting on my own and participants’ narratives, I attend to the anomalies and inconsistencies that arise between our stories. That is, although we may share some experiences, I expect that there also be differences in our lives, and that my participants may have alternative perspectives on what might be similar experiences. It could very well be that our individual experiential knowledge of our shared experience is surprisingly different.

In other words, through an exchange of ideas about creativity, based on our personal lived experience, my participants and I have a better understanding about the meaning and significance of creativity and whether or not our conceptualizations have changed from the past to the present because of our circumstances. The situation in which my participants and I are in as Saudi female graduate students studying in a Canadian university presents a unique opportunity to analyze different thoughts based on experiences in different countries and cultures. Narrative inquiry helps us to make a sense of our lives and our feelings, and to better understand the world around us. It assists us in communicating with others and in examining and explaining our identities, which are reflected in our lived personal experiences. Conle (2003) explains that “[t]he narratives available to us delimit our areas of choice. It is the narrative repertoire of our imagination that helps us distinguish the world we live in from the world we want to live in” (p. 4).

Participants

I and two other Saudi female students participated within this study. Like me, the two other participants are second and third year, full-time, master’s students in the faculty of

education at a university located in Eastern Canada. The other participants are studying one of the following majors: Life-long Learning and Elementary and Middle School program. Like me, they also have bachelor's degrees from Saudi Arabian universities, though they may have studied in different disciplines. They also have had experience in teaching in Saudi Arabia. Our previous degrees were done in the Arabic language and, like me, they have recently begun their studies at the master's level as English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. All of us have passed the IELTS exam and therefore have proven proficiency in the English language. I selected two females who originate from different cities in Saudi Arabia. This was helpful in building a broader understanding of self-conception about the topic of creativity as the participants have different personal and educational backgrounds. I recruited the participants through the faculty of education via a request email that sent to all students who fit the criteria of my study (female Saudi graduate students who are studying within the faculty of education at an Eastern Canadian university). The two applicants who fit the stated criteria for the study were chosen based on the criteria stated above as an example of “purposive selection” of participants. According to Lund Research Ltd (2012), purposive sampling fits within the category of “non-probability sampling techniques” and is defined as follows:

Also known as **judgmental, selective** or **subjective** sampling, purposive sampling relies on the **judgement** of the researcher when it comes to selecting the **units** ‘e.g., people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data’ that are to be studied. Usually, the sample being investigated is quite small, especially when compared with **probability sampling techniques**. Unlike the various sampling techniques that can be used under **probability sampling** ‘e.g., simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, etc.’. (Purposive-sampling, para. 2-3)

This study is an exploration of the experiences of a very precise group of people—namely, Saudi female graduates in the education department of a Canadian University who have teaching experience in Saudi Arabia, and who are in a unique position to talk about their cultural, social

and familial influences on the concept of creativity. It is appropriate, therefore, to use purposive sampling because “the main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable you to answer your research questions”. To be even more specific, I use the purposive selection strategy referred to as “expert sampling,” which focuses on gathering data from individuals with particular expertise in an area. As Lund Research Ltd (2012) explains,

expertise may be required during the **exploratory** phase of qualitative research, highlighting potential new areas of interest or opening doors to other participants. Alternately, the particular expertise that is being investigated may form the basis of your research, requiring a focus only on individuals with such specific expertise. Expert sampling is particularly useful where there is a lack of empirical evidence in an area and high levels of uncertainty ...”. (Purposive-sampling, para. 13)

That is, instead of randomly selecting two participants or simply select the first two who contact me, this study is best served by interviewing participants who have expertise in the areas of teaching and studying in the contexts of Saudi Arabia and Canada. In the event, therefore, that more than two people contact me who fit the criteria of the study, I select the two who have the most experience teaching, the highest degree of education, and/or the longest amount of time living and studying in Canada.

I have limited my study to female participants because my research is focused specifically on understanding Saudi female perspective toward creativity in education for several reasons. Primarily, as expressed above, I want to increase awareness about women’s experiences of education and to promote the continued improvement of women’s access to quality education that enables them to develop their unique skills and make their own contribution to the disciplines of their choice. Women, therefore, are in the best position to describe their experiences and identify the obstacles that are hindering the development of the creativity,

learning process and full participation in society. This study focuses on women in order to offer an in-depth examination of women's experiences, specifically, rather than making a broad comparison of experiences based on gender. This study closely examines women's experiences of home, educational and professional environments to determine how these institutions have promoted or hindered their creative expression. My intention is to present Saudi female graduate students' personal reflections on their own education and professional experiences, at home and in Canada, and what this reveals about how culture and pedagogy has shaped their understanding of creativity and the role of creativity in education.

Method

In this study, I applied several tools, specifically field texts consisting of an autobiographical journal, biographical interview notes and recordings, and field notes. These are the tools Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe as essential to collecting data for a narrative inquiry. Field texts are the various recorded stories and reflections of the participants and the researcher that are gathered as the inquiry unfolds; they are created "in order to represent aspects of field experiences" (p. 92). I start this narrative study by involving two primary methods for gathering data. The first primary method, for the autobiographical portion of the study, is a personal journal in which I record my autobiographical writings and my own self-reflections and observations of the meaning and significance of creativity. The kind of data I record is a reflections and observations about my past and present history, as both a learner and a teacher, who has experiences in both Saudi Arabia and Canada, and about how my personal life experiences have shaped my understanding and integration of creativity in my own teaching practice. In this journal, I have begun to document stories of my past experiences in the classroom in Saudi Arabia and my current experiences in a Canadian university. I have also

included and continue to include throughout the research project reflections on these stories as my thoughts changes over time and I connect these stories to the literature regarding the concept of creativity.

In addition to recording my own narrative, I gathered further data by I conducted individual interviews and recorded the personal/professional narratives of my two other participants. These interviews were an hour in duration and it guided by a series of questions that are designed to encourage, without interruption, the telling stories of personal history related to the topic of creativity in education (See Appendix A). A second set of interviews were conducted one week after the first in order to have an opportunity to gain further insights that may have developed as a response to the first set of interviews. The interviews were “conversational” in style, and the participants and I were free to ask questions directly related to the topic that arose during the interviews and further related questions in the follow-up interviews. Through open-ended and face-to-face interviews, I explored their lived experience of being students and teachers within the educational settings of two cultures, so as to understand their perspectives of their current and prior experiences. I took field notes during the interviews to capture both the participants’ stories, thoughts and feelings in response to the interview questions and my own thoughts and feelings as they arose in response to the participants’ answers.

Therefore, the first interviews with each of the participants began with me introducing myself and my research topic to the participants in a normal conversational style in order to help in building a trusting relationship. Jeevaraj (2013) suggests, “[i]nterviewers may ask casual or easy questions to make the candidate relax” (p. 445). The interview conversation is based on open-ended questions intended to make the participants feel at ease with the interview process and to inspire reflection on the meaning and significance of creativity. Participants were asked to

explain the development of the concept of creativity and explain the factors that influences in developing or hindering their creativity through stories based on their personal experiences back in Saudi Arabia and recently in Canada, and how they received, or did not receive, support from their teachers in school and their parents at home. They were asked if they consider creativity as important and something that needs support and, if so, how can it be supported. They were asked to describe the various teaching pedagogies that they have observed, here in Canada and in Saudi Arabia. They were also asked whether or not they perceive a need for an adjustment in either context. If they felt that an adjustment should be made, they asked to elaborate upon how they think teaching pedagogies can be adapted. The interviews were one-on-one interviews with each of the participants. The interviews were recorded in audio-files and notes in order to help me transcribe and analyze the conversations later. This ensured that I did not miss any part of the interview. The information was collected only for the purposes of my study, and it was not shared with anyone. Only I have access to the interview recordings and I have encrypted and password protected all my digital data. All printed copies of the interviews data and the notes that I made during the interviews were kept in a locked cabinet. I plan to keep the data for 5 years after the completion of the study so that I may use it for conference presentations and publications.

I met with each of the participants two times, which enabled me to follow-up and collect insights that arose after the initial interviews. This process was consistent with what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest: “Adopting what might be called the principle of time defeasibility, time may be modified to suit the story told” (p. 7). I asked the participants to define creativity

based on their personal understanding, and I asked them how being in the Faculty of Education at a university in Eastern Canada has influenced or changed their view of creativity.

Language

Language is considered an important part in telling a personal story. As previously stated, the participants of this study are fluent in Arabic and proficient in English. To help participants feel comfortable and confident while they express their life experiences, they were free to select the language of their choice. They chose to speak Arabic during the interviews. Our fluency in our first language helped both me and the participants to feel confident and more at ease when describing our lived experiences, and enabled us to reflect deeper and express more during the interviews. I asked a language specialist to translate the interviews from Arabic to English for the purposes of analysis and writing. Furthermore, the language specialist and I both reviewed the translation, as is suggested by Nes, Abma, Jonsson and Deeg (2010). By working collaboratively with the translator, I was able to confirm the translator's interpretations and to explain the context in which the statements were being made and ensure that the subtleties of meaning were captured. As Nes, et al. explain, "often, different linguistically correct translations are possible, but there will be subtle meaning differences, which need to be closely examined in order to decide on the best translation" (p. 315). By carefully reviewing the translation, I ensured that the participants' words and intended meaning were accurately represented in English.

Data Analysis

As in the study conducted by Vance, Pendergast and Garvis (2015), I have chosen the narrative inquiry approach "because it offer[s] a specific way of conducting the data collection and analysis that resonates with the needs of this study" (p.198). The data analysis within this

study consistent with “narrative analysis” or “narrative configuration” (Kim, as cited in Leavy, 2009). Kim defines “narrative analysis” in the following way:

“[A] process whereby the researcher extracts an emerging theme from the fullness of lived experiences presented in the data themselves and configures stories making a range of disconnected research elements coherent, so that the story can appeal to the reader’s understanding and imagination”. (Kim, cited in Leavy, 2009, p.28)

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) define narrative analytical and interpretive tools as broadening, burrowing, and storying and restorying. Rendering coherent the complex, multilayered, incomplete and sometimes seemingly contradictory explanations of the participants’ conception about the study phenomenon (in this case, the notion of creativity) is considered a significant part of the data analysis that assist in rendering a more complete interpretation of the data for the reader at the end of the study. Prior to data interpretation process, I met with the participants for their individual interviews and hear their personal stories. I carefully read the notes and listen to the interview records to help me determine themes and connections so as to make interpretations of the data. I started the analysis by beginning with the re-storying of my participants’ stories. According to Creswell (2012) “[r]estorying is the process in which the researcher gathers stories, analyzes them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewrites the story to place it in a chronological sequence” (p. 509). By “chronological” Creswell is referring not only to a sequence of past, present and future events that may be referred to by the participants, but also the re-ordering of the way in which people tell their stories in a more logical way through an analysis of the transcriptions so that the stories, which are often told in ways that are non-linear, are retold in a way that “follow[s] a parallel sequence” (Atkinson, 2009).

An important part of the “re-storying” process to identify and categorize the key elements

of the story. As Latta and Kim (2009) explain, “[a]s researchers, we attend to the reflexive interchange created across all data sources, documenting the process, assessing the insights gained and the directions to proceed, on a regular basis” (p.140). A reflexive approach is illustrated by Alvesson & Skoldberg (as cited in Latta and Kim, 2009):

[D]ata collection and analysis is considered essential, operating inductively and deductively throughout, providing means to address the interface among the weekly narratives collected, the interpretations, and the research literature, situating the study and the traditions inherited and being reconstructed. The insights generated through reflexive analysis manifest just how critically important the narratives are as openings for educators to problematize their practices as internalized connections to one’s teaching identity, as invitations to live theory, enabling their praxis, and as interdependent within the social context acting as a catalyst for continued renewal. (p.140)

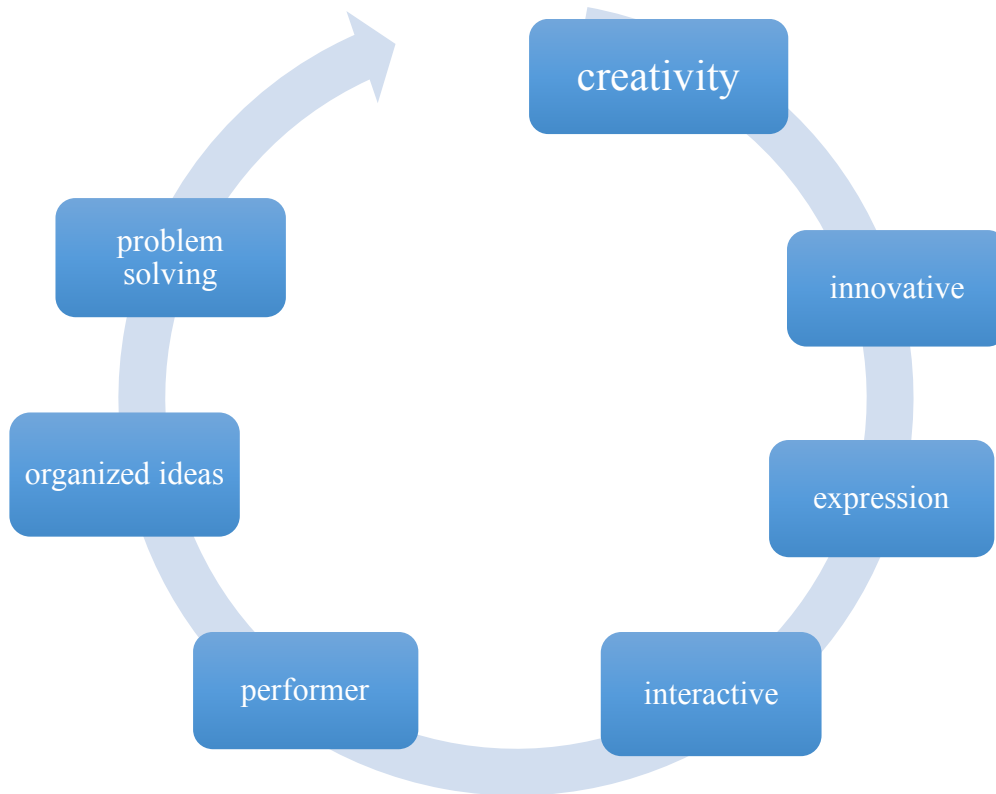
Before settling on an interpretation of the data, I read and reread the materials from the participants to ensure the accuracy and create a detailed accounting of my data analysis. This assist in developing the accuracy and depth of my interpretations and understanding of the meaning of my participants’ interviews. Eisner (1991) refers to this process of providing rich detail as “referential adequacy” (p.113). I used several strategies so as to ensure that the data interpretation accurately illuminates and reflects the study phenomena (Chan, Jones & Wong, 2013). For example, the recorded interviews were carefully transcribed and the translated transcripts were shared with each participant in order to ensure that they were in agreement with how their words had been interpreted. Moen (2006) claims that these member checks are important for establishing credibility in a narrative study. Moen also claims that prolonged engagement in the field was another criterion of quality.

This was the beginning of the coding process. As Creswell explains, the researcher must “[code] the data of the stories into themes or categories” (Creswell, 2012, p. 511). I look for

similarities between the participants' words and phrases when they reveal their personal thoughts. Then, I coded the stories into different categories by defining different types of stories. In doing the analysis, I have considered themes, metaphors, and patterns. Narrative coding, as described by Tappan and Brown (as cited in Chan, Jones & Wong, 2013), is a process whereby the researcher examines the data "to identify possible plotlines, how they inter-connected, the tensions that emerged and the settings/contexts of the events" (p. 2022). They described how "plotline clarification with participants occur[s] from beginning to end as written materials [are] revised" (Chan, Jones & Wong, 2013, p. 2022). The stories that participants tell about their experiences might change as time passes. So, it is essential to reflect upon the multiple meanings behind a story and to be as authentic as possible.

I also conveyed that it was optional for participants to be identified by their personal name or to choose a pseudonym. Before interviewing with participants, I asked them to sign an informed consent indicating their agreement and willingness to participate in the study. To secure this informed consent, I provided them with information about the inquiry and about their right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reasons. After the translation, I gave each participant a copy of their interviews so that they could confirm that the recording and translation were accurate and complete.

Chapter Four: Personal Narrative



There are many words that can describe someone or something as creative. The above chart represents a cycle of characteristics that a creative person exhibits. Looking at the chart, it is possible to see how I envision creativity as the first step or the basis of all sorts of activity and expression. From my perspective, creativity is what enables innovative, expression, interactive, performer, organized ideas and problem solving. I describe creativity or a creative person as a performer who knows how to express their inner thoughts and feelings. When someone creates really interesting work and we get impressed by it, the reaction that we express or the first word we say is that the person is such a good performer and that they fascinate us with their ideas and

actions. Alternatively, I describe creativity as an organized idea and expression, because a creative person builds upon previous knowledge with new concepts until she comes up with a new or creative idea. For a more elaborate conceptualization of this process, I would describe it as an interaction between old information or knowledge and a new idea that generates creativity. Finding the solution for the problem by deep analysis coupled with deep thinking will always produce a positive outcome to solve problems. This is supported by Osho (1999), Robinson (2009) and Csikszentmihaly (1997) who define creativity as an inspiration and as the development of new, original or novel ideas for the way to solve a problem. Also, as was previously explained in Chapter Two, creativity contributes to many different skills such as “language acquisition, imaginative play, adaptation, innovation, problem solving, planning, and decision making. [As well as] economic competitiveness, social cohesion and individual well-being” (Andiliou and Murph, 2010, p. 202).

Creativity can be defined in different ways based on personal view. It can be a new idea, imagination, and bring forth a new idea or the unique product into existence. When I read quotes about creativity, there are several quotes I like but I feel this one by Martha Graham (as cited in Gengareilly, 1975) resonates with me the most:

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost. (p. 223)

I think this quote resonates with me the most because of the inspired message of how I am important in this life and what I do will be shared with others. The “vitality” or “life force” of creativity empowers me to work and do my best to achieve my goal, which is to become a person who has a positive impact on my society, especially in terms of my teaching journey. As a teacher, I will strive to promote positive change and develop new teaching approaches. This

quote also encourages me to do what I love and love what I do. It reflects my belief that success is how I do things, how I enjoy it, and the intention behind what I do and the process of doing it is equally as important, if not more important, than the actual outcome. Creativity motivates me to do my best in what I like, to listen only to my heart and to believe in myself and who I am. These ideals encourage and guide me through everything I am doing at every single moment of my life. When I read this quote, it inspires me to be different, to be myself and not to follow the crowd. It has become part of me and it helps me understand that each experience I bring to this world is totally different from what someone else brings.

In Arabic culture, there is a common quote I always read to myself in private moments, to encourage myself to do my best and hard work. The quote is this: “the day that I did not bring or add anything to it, I am an addition to this world.” This quote reminds us that we should bring good things to this world or make changes in good ways that last forever. It helps us to remember to leave a lasting impact on the world, a positive impact, and not to allow life to live and die as if we had not come into the world at all. I am always impressed when I witness someone’s creative idea or work; for example, when I first saw Rotating Towers in Dubai, it made quite an impression on me and I thought about the creator’s mind and how that person must have both tremendous skill and experience in their discipline but also the ability to think beyond what is common-place so as to imagine the extraordinary. Whenever I see such creations, I am always impressed, and I stop and appreciate the work and I become curious about how people were able to create such things. I find myself asking, is a creative person someone, who does creative things that impress a multitude of people, just an ordinary person with the same mind and senses that we all have? Why is it that he or she is able to do that, and yet I am unable to do the same? I always try to challenge myself and measure my performances and work against

those of creative people. At times, funnily enough, I even question if we are from the same planet. However, their work always encourages me and helps me believe in myself more, believing that nothing is impossible.

In my opinion, creativity is related to personal characteristic and all people have the capacity to be creative. Creativity is a human sense, and it can increase or disappear, depending upon the surrounding motivation and on the individual's personal characteristic. For instance, some people are motivated during challenging circumstances or prove themselves when they are experiencing hardship, while others get motivation from the positive aspects of life. In my life, I have seen many creative people (both male and female). As a prominent figure, I think Steve Jobs is a creative and innovative person because he did things in a unique way, and influenced a lot of people across all age groups. He impressed the world with his innovation in technology. There are few places or homes where the Apple logo cannot be found somewhere.

When I reflect on the creative and innovative contributions that women of Saudi Arabia have made on the world, I think about Adah Almutairi, who is high up on my list of creative Saudi women. Her work in the field of medical science was touted as revolutionary, and she has received numerous honors and awards, such as the NIH Director's New Innovator Award in 2009 (US fed news service, 2009, p. 5). Adah Almutairi was born in the USA and her father is a highly educated person. He got a scholarship to the USA before she was conceived. She is motivated by her family and they encouraged her and her sibling to love the learning process, appreciate education and, most importantly, to have a passion for what they are doing (Ramlawi, 2016). I think the environment in which she was born and raised helped her in achieving success. In an interview she once said that the environment that a person lives in is extremely vital in shaping a creative and successful person (Ramlawi,31,2016). She added that the people in Saudi

Arabia who are in influential positions have a problem when it comes to guiding young people and she suggested that because some people cannot think outside the box, they do not respond swiftly and take advantage of the energies of young people and their numerous creative ideas. They do not focus on young people's energies and assist them in coming up with innovations (Ramlawi,31,2016). I agree with Adah Almutairi when she states that young people do not get a chance to use their energy in most situations; for example, students at school do not have a chance to move around. They have a lot of energy and at their age they want to play different activities, and there are no school trips or sports for girls. Their environment has an effect on whether they develop into a creative person or not. I think that if Adah Almutairi did not have the opportunity to study abroad she would not have developed an innovative mind and had her creative ideas. Inside of Saudi Arabia, she would not have been given the support that she received abroad. I agree with most people when they link diminished innovation and creativity in young people to a lack of proper education and an environment that provides minimal support and does not take advantage of the full potential of Saudi boys and girls.

Furthermore, a child's play-time is important and, in Saudi Arabia, mostly, it is not provided for within the classroom or even at home. Well, I remember as a child, I usually enjoyed playing the role of a doctor or teacher. I remember asking my mother to buy me a medical set and I played with my sister, cousin and aunt and ask them to be my patients. I also liked to play the role of a teacher when I was young, but then my interest in becoming a teacher waned after I had an experience in school. Unfortunately, I was unable to do what I liked and after I enrolled into school, my mother usually asked me to focus on my studies. If I had any free time, I would color in my coloring book. I really loved doing this and I remember one day I took my coloring book with me to school. My teacher was absent that day, and this meant that a

substitute teacher sat in for the absentee teacher so as to keep a watchful eye over the students. The teacher would say that anyone could do whatever they liked albeit silently. I pulled out my coloring book and started to color, but then the teacher noticed and walked towards me and said that that particular activity was prohibited in the school. She took the coloring book and tossed it in the garbage. From that moment, I dreaded going to school, as I felt that there was nothing of interest to do. I felt that they forced us to study and do whatever they liked, rather than encouraged us to learn and explore what was of interest to us.

Meanwhile, the school curriculum was full of information. The teachers were required to cover the school's curriculum in three months. The teacher's role in the class was like a lecturer and student's role was that of passive listeners. There were no activities or discussions between the teacher and the students, and we had to be silent. As children and as students, we had to listen to the teachers and defer to them, because they were older than us. I was sometime afraid of them, especially when they yelled at the students. They considered being quiet in the class as good behaviour and they rewarded it. As a child, I recognized my interests varied greatly from those of adults. I wished they would let me do whatever I liked, with the help, guidance and supervision of an adult. In case I was wrong, they could have directed me and showed me the right way. This is what I think people should do with children. I think this is an important way of teaching and learning, because I believe that all children are born creative and intelligent. Each one of us has our own way of understanding things that interest to us most and that are different from the way others approach things. I liked it when my teacher figured out that I was interested in a particular subject more than other subjects, and she supported me with sources, such as books, to pursue that interest on my own. I remember, for example, a time when I was in elementary school and there was a small bookshelf in the class with picture books. Whenever the

teacher was absent from the classroom and we had a few minutes between classes, I would go and find an interesting book to look at and read. The teacher usually allotted ten minutes a day from her instruction time to let us pick a book and read it with a friend. She encouraged us to go and read, but she did not support us by supplying more resources, because I remember having to read the same book several times. Thinking back, I wish my teachers had figured out how much I loved reading picture books so as to support me in pursuing an activity that I liked to do. I could easily have been encouraged to learn more and developed my imagination further by exploring on my own the books which interested me.

Over and above my teachers, my parents were the most prominent figures during my childhood. When I was a kid, my parents said playing was enough and that a child played until they were six years old. When I was a child, I liked to play soccer with my cousin because I liked to move and run. But, my parents said I should not play with boys and that soccer was boys' game. Then when I was in school, they said, I had to do whatever the teacher told me to do. Most parents think that the teacher is always right and that the students have to listen and follow the teacher's instructions. The teachers in Saudi Arabia had to be "respected" and the students are expected to listen to them without arguing or complaining. I remember during school time, the only activities I would do were schoolwork and study-related activities. My mother bought me toys and dolls, but my father did not approve, as he only wanted me to study. He thought that what we did in school was more important than playing, and that I needed to focus on studying, as it would benefit me and my future. My parents, as was the case with other parents who wanted their children to get good grades in school, were satisfied when they saw or thought I was doing well in school, even though I did not like what I was doing.

In fact, the general dynamics of the courses that I used to study during my time in school

was traditional in its approach to teaching and learning. The teacher stood in front of the classroom, where there was a desk and the green board. The teacher's pedagogical approach was to provide an explanation for what was written in the textbook, to prepare lessons by using posters, and to develop tests. The class would start at 7:00 a.m., and there would be six classes every day in elementary school. The first class started at 7:30 a.m. after the morning parade. When the teacher arrived, we all had to stand up for her (generally, my teachers were women because our schools were segregated schools, separate boys and girls). The first thing she used to do was to ask if our homework was complete and she'd come to each student's desk to check. If there was a student who had not done their homework, she would instruct the student to stand up for forty-five minutes, or the duration of the class. Moreover, she would make a note in her book that the student's homework was missing. After the teacher checked our homework, she would write the topic that we were going to study that day. She would then lecture, explaining the concepts to us, during which time we were expected to remain quiet, unless she asked a question that required an answer. At times, if a student did not answer as expected, the teacher would become angry, raise her voice or sometimes even scream. Before she left the class, she gave us homework for the next day. Students had to stay seated from the first class through to the third class. After the third class, there would be "breakfast break". This was the routine every day.

I remember when I was in middle school, the principal of that school was an active person and she liked to make some changes in the school. Every Tuesday, she asked us to not bring school bag or books because we would not study on that day. Instead, she had set up different activity stations focusing on different subjects (e.g., science, art, and language) and the students would select the subject that they liked. It was really fun. I remember enjoying that day and we would wait in anticipation of this day every week. Going to school became very

interesting. This did not go on for long, as the Ministry of Education asked her to stop these activities because they considered it a waste of the teachers' time and they argued that the class would not be able to cover the prescribed curriculum if this activity continued. I remember we were all very disappointed by this decision, because the activities had engaged our interests, and participating in them had changed our perceptions of school and had begun to instill in us a love of learning and made us feel that school was an exciting place to be. However, as students we did not have a say. We returned to normal classes and had no activities in the school. We felt that we had just gone back to boring classes. In girls' schools, there were very few assemblies or celebrations; we only had special events for National Day and a few holidays. Even these were highly structured and orderly: the students were required to sit in a row in the school yard while a few students gave presentations about Saudi history and then we sang a few patriotic songs. There were also yearly competitions but this was the extent of the assemblies and events offered at the girls' schools.

Basically, there were no approaches to delivering the curriculum that were student-centered. The teachers would just copy and paste from the book, and asked us to memorize that information when we went home. At times, the teacher did not understand how to answer homework questions. The teachers had answer books and they would look at these and answer our questions. There were no activities or practices that encouraged or fostered creativity. They would ask us to sit square in our seats and not move. There were no opportunities for us to do any activity. Unfortunately, girls were treated differently from boys, as boys would have a sports period and sometimes they were taken for school fieldtrips. As a girl, I never went for a fieldtrip, until I came to Canada. In Canada, when I studied English, the school took us on a fieldtrip, once to a local park and once to a museum, both of which were amazing experiences for me. When we

went to the park, a nature guide explained to us the different kinds of trees there were in the forest, and told us the history of the park. At the museum, a guide gave us a lesson in Canadian history and nature. For me, it was an unforgettable experience to be able to go someplace with my classmates. I realized what a great idea it was to have the school organize a fieldtrip for the students and let the students learn and have fun outside of the classroom, and I recognized that when we are able to connect what we learn with what we have experienced the knowledge we have gained stays with us and makes a lasting impression. School fieldtrips also teach students an important lesson about teaching and learning, that it is not restricted to the classroom during school hours, but instead happens anywhere and everywhere. The trip that I had with the school motivated me to love what I am doing and it encouraged me to come to school every day.

There are moments when I would let my creative flair soar. Actually, during my elementary and high school years in Saudi Arabia, we were offered art classes once a week. I was very engaged in art class, and would focus on what I was doing, because the teacher in this class asked us to draw or paint particular things, and gave us the opportunity to be creative. I also remember that during middle school, the art teacher frequently praised me in front of the whole class and expressed appreciation for my work. Her praise gave my confidence a boost. One time, on National Day, my art teacher asked us to do something in celebration of that day, and as I was thinking about what I should do, I came up with an idea to draw the flag on fabric. Then, I embroidered it with crystals and after I finished, I put it in a frame. I remember it took me two weeks to finish it. I brought it to school and the teacher and my friends were surprised and extremely pleased with my work. The teacher said it was excellent and awarded marks for that work. Now, as I reminisce, I ask myself why there was no exhibitions to display students' creative work. Unfortunately, this class was only one day in two weeks. Furthermore, I think in

this class we had greater opportunity to discuss our ideas with the teacher and do what we liked to do. This was completely different from the other classes, where we were more controlled and we were not encouraged to explore our creativity or have open discussions with the teacher or even participate in group activities.

When I came to Canada, I began to study at the graduate level. During my first semester, I took a seminar focused on research. The professor asked us at the end of the course to create a mandala that reflected the research. We were in a group and I suggested we make a tree with some creative idea on it. Here is the picture of our team work.



This is the artifact that I and a group of other students created as a final project during a research methodology course. It is a mandala that represents qualitative, quantitative and mixed research

methods. As a group, we presented and explained the meaning of our work, and there was an exhibition held for anyone to display their work and I took advantage of this opportunity. This really gave me the notion that what I created actually deserved to be seen and appreciated by others. I enjoyed sharing my ideas and my creative work with my classmates. I felt happy after that because the professor expressed appreciation for our work and acknowledged the time, effort and thought that had gone into its creation.

There is a story which really impressed me, about how a teacher encouraged her students and appreciated their work. I took a course entitled “Foundations of Curriculum Studies,” which required us to an hour-long presentation. Out of all the presentations, I was most impressed by one student who was a teacher in elementary school. She showed us examples of her students’ drawings and talked about the activities that they did in the class, and she asked us to go have a look at them. When I saw her students’ work, I remarked to my friend that they appeared to be random drawings but they were meaningful to the teacher. I was really amazed when she explains what the children meant by their drawings. I told to my friend how interesting it was how much this teacher appreciated her students’ work and how she encouraged them to do more. Even though the drawings appeared to be random, she found meaning in it and explained the significance of the activity.

From my experience, I have learned that there can be no creativity if there are no creative spaces provided. I remember when I was child in elementary school how happy we became when we were told to create and how active we were when we had art class. In art class, the teacher asked us to do whatever we liked. The creative process was important during this class, and I remember concentrating on my work, thinking deeply and using my imagination. Once, I remember there was a competition to create decorations for the classroom. The teacher gave us a

class free from studying in order to decorate. We were all engaged in the activity, and we concentrated on thinking up new and unique ideas that would help us win. In addition, the activity encouraged us to reflect, problem-solve and revise our work, because even after we tried the idea that in our imagination looked good, if it did not turn out the way we imagined, we would try and try again, until our work was pleasing. The process before working activated our minds and helped us think and imagine, while trying again and again for our own version of perfection. For example, one time, when I was a student in Saudi Arabia, my classmates and I discussed how we would decorate our classroom and worked together to accomplish some of our ideas. First, we painted a wall a blue color, which represented the sea, and we designed a poster in the shape of a boat and stuck seashell on the wall. We got the decorations done but only after a number of tries, and by using many different techniques. Even though it did not look bad, it was different from what we had imagined at the beginning. For me, this story represents my understanding of how sometimes we have creative ideas that need to be discussed and worked out with others so as to sufficiently develop and receive the support necessary for it to be accomplished.

Studying in two cultures has helped me observe differences in the approaches to education between Saudi Arabia and Canada. They are quite different, particularly in terms of the relationship between teachers and students. My experience as a student in Saudi Arabia began when I was young and continued through my bachelor degree, until I came to Canada to study English at a language school and then continue on in higher education. Throughout my early education in Saudi Arabia, I was never asked to describe or voice my opinion in school or even in university. When I came to Canada, I faced difficulty when people asked me to express my thoughts and opinions in response to questions or during group discussions. I observed that I

was not the only one who experienced this difficulty; other students from my country also found it challenging to express their thoughts and opinions. I was never asked, during my journey through school, to be critical when answering a question or to state an opinion. The teaching approach in Saudi was to apply *assessment of learning* and standardized tests where they measured students' abilities to remember and repeat information they were given. Despite this, I learned and heard about new things, especially since I started undertaking my graduate courses. In assessment for learning courses, I learned that assessment can be understood to be applied at three levels or in three different ways: assessment of learning, assessment for learning and self-assessment. The emphasis was on helping students to use self-assessment and the teacher to use assessment for learning instead of assessment of learning. In Canada, I observed parents and teachers encourage kids to do things that interest them and they use multi-activities to encourage learning, in and out of the classroom. For example, teachers in Canada use diversified methods in the class, such as role playing, and group work. However, in Saudi, they rarely use these kinds of approaches, because most of the time teachers are lecturing and the students are listing and memorizing.

I knew there would be challenges for me while studying in a country different from my native country. The most challenging thing I faced, as I said above, was the ability to critically question and express my own thoughts and opinions, above and beyond what the teacher presented. When I got the syllabus for the first course at graduate school, I did not understand what the professor meant by critique. There was a tutor helping graduate international students, and I went to him for advice. I was really worried about how to answer this question, because in Saudi Arabia I always got good grades, and yet I didn't understand what my Canadian professors were now expecting from me in terms of writing a critique. In Saudi, I would just memorize the

information from the book or lecture and transfer them in the test question sheet. The tutor explained to me what “being critical” meant; he explained that to think about the topic from various points of view, and to come to a logical conclusion that reflects my opinion on that topic. Thinking critically was an important aspect of every assignment that I completed during my graduate courses at my university in Canada. At first, I tried to answer the question and be critical, but I found it difficult. It was the most challenging exercise I had ever faced during my studies, and it worried me that I could not tackle it. In discussions with my professors, the recurring comment the professors asked was “why”, as they wanted me to explain more and think deeply about the question and reflect upon my answer. Over time, my understanding of what was meant by “critical thinking” improved and I now know it means analyzing the idea and finding a solution for the problem and presenting a logical response. Now, I believe this question of “why” is really important and it should be asked of students, and the students should be given a chance to share their responses with others. The student needs to practice critical thinking from early age and become familiar with how to think deeply so as to be able to formulate and express their own, individual thoughts and opinions.

Studying abroad in Canadian universities has changed my willingness and ability to express myself. Absolutely. From this experience, I gained and learned a lot of important things. First of all, my aspirations in life have changed. I am seeing plenty of opportunities that were inconceivable for me before. I believe that I can become a successful woman and, as a result, I have become more optimistic and a hard worker, and I have become more independent and responsible for myself than I was before. In Saudi, where I was dependent and couldn't do anything without letting my parents know or getting prior consent, I felt I was not able or eligible to do certain things. I have gained self-confidence and I believe in myself more than ever. Back

in my country, the community and the school were always discouraging, especially in relation to girls. I remember when I applied for a scholarship, a relative told me that I could not study in a Canadian university, as it was really difficult. What he said actually empowered me and motivated me and I forced myself to face the challenge. I was a quiet and timid person in discussions but now I always voice my opinion while respecting others' opinions. From then, I began reading about creativity and practiced it, becoming stronger. I want to be a role model for my siblings and for my future students. I want to inspire them to succeed.

In my graduate-level courses most of my colleagues are Canadian teachers and in the discussions I always heard about creativity in their classes with their students. After that I became interested in the role of creativity in learning, and I started to read up on this topic. When I think about education in Saudi Arabia, I rarely heard of teachers who thought about supporting students' creativity. I realized how important creativity was as a topic in education and I wanted to develop my understanding about it. I think that writing a thesis in creativity in education will help me and other teachers in Saudi Arabia to consider the significance of students' creativity and therefore encourage them to be creative.

Creativity is part of the process that enables innovation and change to arise, even under challenging circumstances, such as when there is a lack of tools or support for the person who is faced with a problem. Such circumstances can even be motivating, if the person is driven to search for alternatives and prove their ability to face the problem. Now I believe that every person can be a part of creating change and building a successful country, if we work hard and believe and encourage each other. I know when I go back, I will support my siblings and my students in their endeavors to develop the skills that will help them in the future. I will support them so that they gain self-confidence and strive to do what they like to do and not just what

others want them to do. I have always aspired to be an educator in the field of teacher education. I want to teach teachers how to think critically about traditional approaches to teaching and ask whether or not certain approaches, such as the transmission or lecture model, is valid in the contemporary context. As teachers, we are charged with educating student from an early age and our influence over them is significant. We have the potential to impact the development of their personalities, which are difficult to change later in life. I would like teachers to be persistent and motivate students to take part in more activities in school and take them on fieldtrips that will open their minds. This is very important and I strongly recommend that teachers provide the space and opportunity for students to express themselves and their knowledge in the class. This provision of opportunities for learning needs to be fair, not only in terms of access to education in general but also in terms of what happens within the classroom. There should be a democracy in education where education is a right for everyone, and learning opportunities must be made available for all learners. Also, educators should consider the learner's freedom to progress quickly to suit his or her abilities, inclinations and aptitudes, and to choose the materials and projects that he or she wants. This means taking into account individual differences, such as different styles of learning and various motivations to learn, as well as preparedness, inclination, and the speed of self-learning.

Finally, I think attitudes towards women, and the lack of recognition of women's potential to contribute to society, affects the potential for change in Saudi Arabia, as it does in any country where women's education is not considered a priority and girls' access to education is limited. Positive change occurs when women are viewed as equal contributors, as important members of the workforce who increase the performance and enhance possibilities of the country and national economy. I think Saudi women lack the support to achieve their full potential, and

because of the lack of recognition for women's contributions and creative ideas, they did not get encouraged to be inventive in schools and universities. Women would be empowered by expanding their education to include specialized fields and diversifying their opportunities to work in areas that are traditionally dominated by men. Women need to be prepared and qualified for a diverse range of roles, so as to be more effective and versatile in the community, and to keep up with the progress and development requirements of the various fields that are emerging in Saudi Arabia. Developing personal-professional skills, through training and continuing education, while encouraging creative initiatives and self-confidence, is important.

I also think that the project of raising community awareness through the media and government institutions needs to involve women more as active members of the community who can develop the proper mechanisms for enforcing the decisions of the government regarding the promotion of the role of women in government and private institutions. Steps must be taken in this regard. The change can be brought about by employing women who have had the opportunity to study and/or work abroad. These women have gained experience and knowledge that can be shared, and it would be possible to take advantage of their expertise in different fields and disciplines. Each one will have her own vision and creative sense in relation to the discipline she has chosen, and the literary and artistic disciplines should not be underestimated while the scientific disciplines promoted, instead all should be considered potentially valuable and relevant.

Biographical Information on Participants

While the participants in this study are all Saudi female graduate students studying in the department of Education at university in Eastern Canada, they came from different cities in Saudi Arabia and have different educational trajectory. One participant is from the southern Saudi city of Jazan. She received her Bachelor degree in kindergarten education from Jazan University. The other participant came to Canada from the western Saudi city of Jeddah and she received her Bachelor degree in Geography. Both of these participants were awarded a scholarship to study abroad, which enabled one of them to attend graduate classes in life-long learning and the other to study elementary and middle school's education. Through their graduate work in Canada, the participants not only studied but also experienced as students many new teaching and learning approaches. They have been introduced to teaching approaches that are different from what they had studied and experienced in Saudi Arabia, and they observed that Canadian professors and students had different perspectives on teaching and learning. Since integrating with their Canadian peers in the graduate courses (many of whom are also teachers at different schools within the Canadian education system), the participants have developed an understanding of how creative teaching methods can enhance the learning process. More specifically, they have come to recognize the importance of supporting students' creativity through the use of teaching methods that, for example, encourage independent, critical thinking and the pursuit of personal interests. The participants have engaged with me in a narrative inquiry of these experiences so as to gain insight from the past and the present, and to imagine the implementation of new ideas and new approaches for the future.

Chapter Five: Research Findings

This chapter discusses the findings of my study. These findings arose out of my analysis of the data gathered during my interviews, which identified four significant themes within my participants' narratives about their lived experiences at home and at school, in Saudi Arabia and in Canada, and the development of their own creativity. From their perspectives, they discussed the themes of (1) the definition of creativity, (2) giftedness versus creativity, (3) the role of culture, and (4) the individual's social/familial environment, including approaches to teaching and learning in education. These themes respond to my primary research questions:

How do Saudi female graduate students who are studying in Canada perceive the concept of creativity? How do they understand the significance of creativity in relation to their learning? What are the factors that they think facilitated or hindered the development of their creativity?

The Definitions of Creativity

The definition of creativity was the first theme that emerged during the interviews with my participants. The participant described their individual understandings of the meaning of creativity, and how these understandings changed after they moved from Saudi Arabia and began their studies abroad in Canada. As you will see, through my analysis of the participants' answers to questions regarding the meaning of creativity, I have determined that their reflections can be organized under four key categories: creativity is a personal characteristic, creativity is comprehension and a broad concept, creativity is knowledge, and creativity is multidisciplinary (see *Table 1* below).

Table 1

Summary of the key findings regarding the definition of creativity

Category	Definition of Creativity
Creativity is a personal characteristic	Personal view; optimism and accept the change; divergent thinking
Creativity is comprehension and a broad concept	Unlimited, multiple meaning, ordinary, unusual, new idea
Creativity is knowledge	Interaction; relationship between old information; combination with existing idea
Creativity is multidisciplinary	Multiple modes of expression; every discipline; teacher-student

Creativity is a Personal Characteristic

Participants variously described their understandings of creativity as a personal characteristic. This included a notion of creativity related to an individual's *smartness*, *acceptance*, *imagination* and their *produce*.

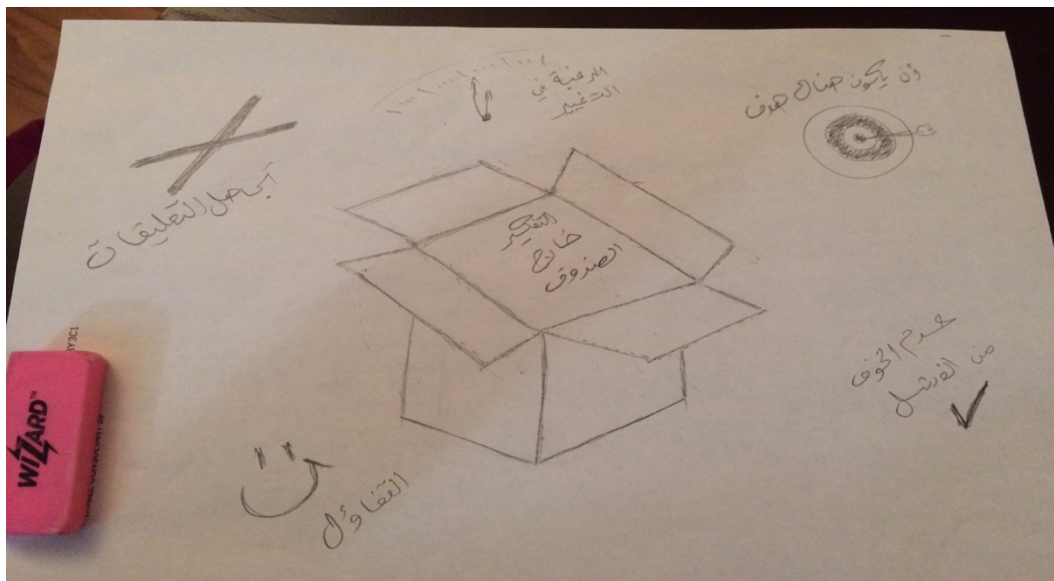
Participant N stated that creativity is a personal characteristic. She explained that a characteristic of creative people is an inner feeling that leads creative person to express their specialties. She believes that personal view is different from one person to another. Respecting others' views and providing more opportunity for the expression of views leads to a more personal creative view. She stated that each person sees and defines creativity by relying on own personal angle. She defined creativity as the following: "*Creativity is something that is out of the ordinary, something unusual. The result may be one but the thinking is always different*".

Participant N stated that behind a creative idea there has to be a goal and this is what makes a person creative. A creative person should think outside the box and be willing to change and ignore the fear of failing. She said that a creative person always faces many obstacle and the most important things that the creative person should do is "*to ignore the comments* (of other

people), *because as long as the person pays attention to negative comments or people, it is impossible that they will be creative*".

The following picture is participant N's drawing, which she said represented her conceptualization of creativity. She based her drawing on a story about her mother. She explained that she considered *imagination* as part of her mother's personality and that her mother was always very creative. She said that her mother one time took an empty can and changed it into a beautiful, creative flower vase, and another can, she turned into pencil box. Participant N described her mother as a creative person because she was able to imagine something new out of something old, and create whatever it was that had come to her mind. The participant said that her mother always used her imagination and she practiced creating what she imagined, sometimes without planning what she wants to do. She explained that when something came to her mind, she would just do it, "*because imagination makes the thought which leads to the creation, which is turned into something unfamiliar and different*".

Picture 1: Participant N's Depiction of the Creative Process



In the above drawing, Participant N drew her view of creativity. She drew a box at the center, which represents creativity as an act of thinking out of the box; the X mark represents how a creative person should ignore negative comments; the smiling face means that a creative person must be an optimist; the timer in the picture represents how a creative person should have a desire to change; the bow and arrow means that a creative person should have a goal; and the check mark means taking risks and learning from failure. The picture also represents her understanding of the creativity process. The symbols and Arabic text explain how she believes that creativity is the ability to think outside of the box, to be willing to think differently and ignore the comments of others, and instead strive to create a goal by being optimistic and taking risks. For her, this is the creative process. She also explained how she perceives creativity as critical thinking and said that this is the most common definition of creativity, because creativity requires brainstorming and comes after deep-thinking and the willingness to test out alternative ideas and approaches: *“A creative person has different way of thinking,”* she said.

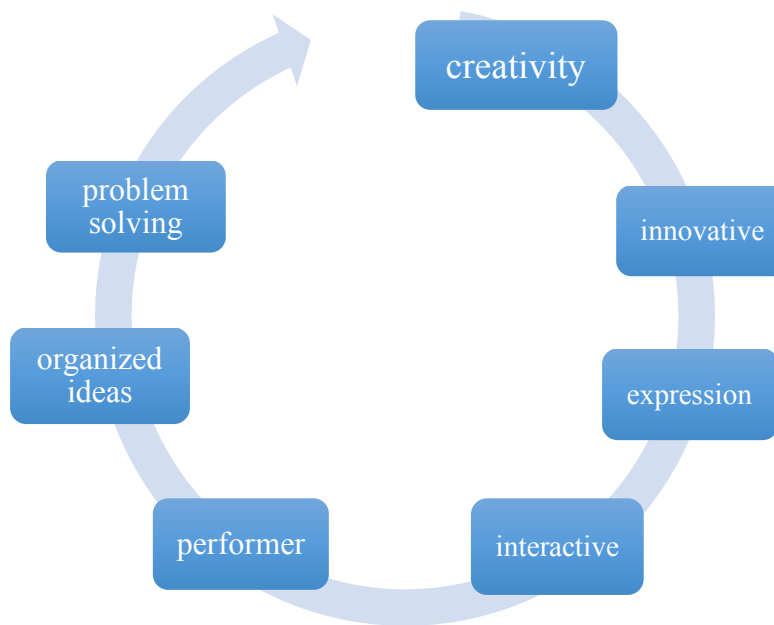
In Chapter Four, I explained that I understand the concept of creativity is a personal view, and that it reflects multiple meanings. I described it with various words, which are commonly used to describe creativity, such as imagination, new idea, and unique product. I believed that, based on personal characteristic, creativity could lead to similarities or differences between people. In my narrative, I stated that,

creativity can be defined by different words, based on personal view. It can be a new idea, imagination and bring a new idea or the unique product to the exist. Some people came up with the similar definition but others have their own definition. (See Chapter Four)

I described a “creative person as a performer who knows how to express their inner thought and feelings,” and explained that,

when someone does really interesting work and we get impressed by it, the reaction that we express or the first word we say is that person such a good performer and that they fascinated us with their idea and actions. (See Chapter Four)

Picture 2: Participant R’s Depiction of the Creative Process



As I previously shared in Chapter Four, the above diagram is a depiction of my own conceptualization of creativity as a quality that exists in all humanity and our creative personal characteristic can be increased or hidden, and is affected by motivation. In my view, therefore, a motivational factor contributes to what constitutes a creative personal characteristic. My own perspective is that,

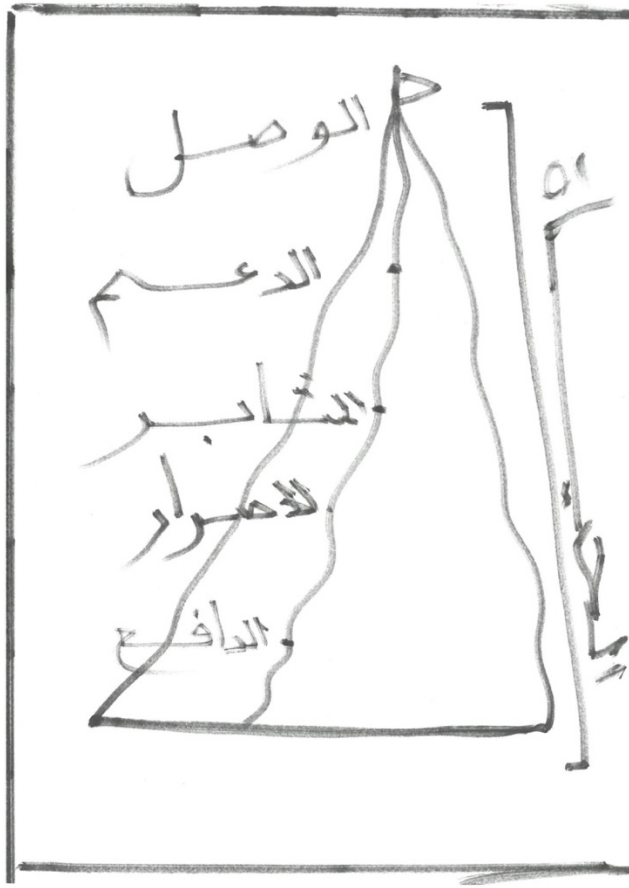
I think creativity is related to personal characteristic and all people can be creative. Creativity is human sense it can increase or disappear based on the surrounding motivation and depend on the personal characteristic. (See Chapter Four)

Creativity is akin to problem-solving: when someone is creative he or she needs to be familiar with all that is involved in a problem, be able to analyze the situation and imagine a new way or idea for solving that problem. As I explained, “Finding the solution for the problem by deep analysis coupled with deep thinking will always produce a positive outcome to solve problems”. In other words, critical thinking and seeking to find solutions to problems through trial and error will inevitably produce something creative. Sir Robinson (1997) defines creativity as “a process, not a single event, and genuine creative processes involve critical thinking as well as imaginative insights and fresh ideas” (p. 23).

Participant B agreed that creativity is related to personal characteristic. In her view, that characteristic is “*optimism*”. She defined creativity in several steps, and through a drawing that represented her understanding of the creative process, Participant B used the metaphor of climbing a mountain (see Picture 3 below). She said that,

life is like a mountain in creativity. It requires several steps, it starts with defense, then work, then determination and optimism, and then perseverance until you reach the top and this is creativity.

Picture 3: Participant B's Depiction of the Creative Process



This participant drew a mountain to represent her own understanding of the creative process. Her drawing indicates that creativity starts with motivation and ends up with the highest stage, which is the creative act. My own understanding of creativity strongly corresponds with the view that analyzing a problem logically and looking at it from different angles, until a final solution is found, is a creative process. Through this process of sharing different conceptualizations of the notion of creativity with the participants of this research project, my own understanding for creativity has been clarified. Through consideration of the various descriptions of creativity that could be categorized as a personal characteristic, I now understand that the notion of creativity refers to the process of analyzing an idea or problem, persisting until you finding a solution, and presenting a logical, alternative idea or approach. Creativity as a

personal characteristic was one theme or defining category that arose out of my interviews with my participants. Another defining category that arose as a theme in our discussions was the notion of creativity as comprehension and as a broad concept.

Creativity is Comprehension and a Broad Concept

Participants described creativity as comprehension and as a broad concept that reflects multiple meanings and cannot be encompassed by only one term. The participants explained that in their view creativity had multiple meanings and could be described through many terms, including ordinary, unusual, compassion, expression, performance, new ideas and concepts.

Participant N, for example, defined creativity as both ordinary and extraordinary outcomes that come to exist, and she said that a creative idea is born from both ordinary thinking and extraordinary ideas. She defined creativity as unusual ideas that could bring about something unusual and affect change. She related creativity to an uncommon activity: “*creativity is unusual activity [and] extraordinary*”. She also described creativity as compassion, especially compassion that leads to deep thinking and discovery. For Participant N, creativity is also expressed through feelings of love. She said, “*It is also expresses the beautiful feelings we get when meeting people whom we love and it also shows compassion*”.

Participant N explained that creativity can be observed in many different disciplines, such as in engineering and architecture. When someone builds a building she or he creates a new design for the building. In response to various images showing a variety of human endeavours, she said,

The picture that caught my attention the most was the image of the building in the form of basket. It caught my attention and started to make me think about how the owner of the building thought to be different from others and how he or she gave the place beauty.

Architects are creative people when they come up with a beautiful or unusual design or a new approach to organizing our living spaces. Such expressions of design demonstrate the architect's creativity. Creativity can also be found in the field of technology, as Participant N explains,

Technological innovations in the third picture shows creativity that can make work easier for people. For example, how a robot or electronic device made work easier and shorter

Participant N believes that everyone has the potential to express their creativity. She said that,

For example, once I saw the clip on Television of poor children in Brazil. These children wanted to play ball but they did not have one or not enough money to buy one. So what they did was roll many socks together and from that they made a ball and where able to play.

Like Participant N, Participant B indicated that her understanding of creativity was not limited to any specific subject or discipline, and that creativity could be observed everywhere but that sometimes people create obstacles that inhibit their creativity. She said that creativity could be included in any discipline and is dependant upon what a person is interested in. Architectural design can be creative, and theatrical performance can be creative. Everyone has the potential to be creative in something. As Participant B explained, "Not all that is inside of us can be expressed through words but through actions and movements. Through theatre a person can act, sing and dance or even give a lecture". For her, creativity is a comprehensive and broad concept and is an aspect of all fields.

The participants' examples of when and how creativity can be expressed, and who can express it, indicate that they believed everyone has the capacity to be creative and that creativity

can arise in any discipline. Creativity, therefore, is understood by the participants as being a comprehensive and broad concept. As our interviews continued, other examples and explanations of creativity indicated that they also perceived creativity as knowledge.

Creativity is Knowledge

Participant B defined creativity as knowledge, which consists of an interaction and relationship between old information and new idea. She said that creativity does not arise out of a void but comes from having studied existing information. She explained that if a person has not had access to good information and does not have a basis for knowledge within a certain subject or discipline, he or she cannot be creative within that discipline. Creativity is the ability to produce a new idea by combining and revising existing ideas. For Participant B, there needs to be an “interaction between old information and a new idea to generate creativity”. Based on the previous knowledge, she explained, the active mind, by connecting what is known and re-imagining it, it is possible to come up with new ideas and produce new things.

In my own narrative about my personal experiences, I reflected that through our imaginations we can build on old information and that sometimes I have a picture in my mind about a solution to a problem, and this image helps me try and try to work out an answer or imagine something new; until, finally, I come up with the perfect solution or idea by the end of my thought process. I explained that,

In addition, even after we tried the idea that in our imagination looks good, and after we try, it does not work out, we would try and try until our work was pleasing. The process before working is activating our mind and lets us think and imagine while trying again and again for our own version of perfection. (See Chapter Four)

The participants' and I expressed, therefore, an understanding of creativity as a process that builds upon previous knowledge and revisions of what is already known in a way that produces a new idea or new approach. The understanding of creativity as knowledge was the third theme that arose out of my interviews in regard to how they defined creativity. One final defining category the participants explored was the notion of creativity as multidisciplinary.

Creativity is Multidisciplinary

The participants described creativity as arising within multiple disciplines. This means that creativity is not limited to only one field. The participants reflected on a notion of creativity that encompassed a broad range of activities done by all sorts of individuals, such as students, teachers, and others, and included many fields, such as technology, writing, and architecture.

Participant B, for example, believed that everyone has a creative sense. She said,

The architect can be creative. The student can be creative. The teacher can be creative. Any person in the world can be creative and have a sense of creativity. For example, farmers, and the father can be creative and the mother as well.

I agreed that creativity is not limited to one field or discipline. Creativity, for example, can be found in technology, a field that in recent years has been considered hugely innovative. This is supported by Weston (2007), who explains that creativity “can be found in many areas such as cognitive psychology, social psychology, organization theory, group dynamic, and adult learning” (p. 422; see also Lubart & Sternberg, 1998). In my own narrative, I explained that,

I think Steve Jobs is a creative and innovative person, because he did things uniquely and influenced a lot of people across all ages. He impressed the world with his innovation in technology. There are a few places or homes where the Apple logo is not displayed. (See Chapter Four)

Participant N shared her personal opinion about who she perceived to be a creative person, and

the factors that impressed her the most. She has been influenced by Ghazi al Gosaibi, who was a complex, and multi-talented person. Participant N explained that,

Ghazi al Gosaibi is a personality that I love very much. He is a creative writer, poet, and a politician. He is also a creative minister and ambassador. I feel that he is a multit talented personality and I loved his writings. I personally love literature, though. I saw him as a creative literature writer.

Participant N is describing Ghazi al Gosaibi as a person she perceives to be exceptionally creative. As we have seen, the participants' depictions and explanations of the creative process, the various creative endeavors, and the people who they perceive as creative reveal a number of ways in which they conceptualize creativity. Through my analysis of their reflections, I have determined that from their perspective, there are four key categories under which definitions of creativity can be organized: personal characteristics, comprehension and a broad concept, knowledge and multidisciplinary. In addition to reflecting upon the definition of creativity, my participants' narratives revealed other aspects of their experience at home and at school, in Saudi Arabia and in Canada, that effected the development of their creativity. Another theme that arose within the interviews, therefore, was the idea of "giftedness" and how this idea relates to their conceptualizations of creativity.

Creativity Versus Giftedness

My participants' narratives revealed that creativity can be distinguished from giftedness in a few different ways. I have determined that these differences can be categorized under three main headings: creativity is a synonymous with giftedness, talents and giftedness are steps in the creative process, and creativity is talented behaviour (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Summary of the Key Findings of Creativity versus Giftedness and Intelligence

Category	Findings
Creativity as synonymous with Giftedness	Gifted people have potential to be creative; Talented and creative people have similar personalities
Talent, Giftedness and Intelligence are both steps in the Creative Process	Talent, intelligence, brain-storming creativity
Creativity is Gifted Behaviour	Creative people think differently; Creativity and giftedness are genetic characteristics

Creativity is Synonymous with Giftedness

Creativity and giftedness are synonyms, which was included explanation for creativity as giftedness (see Chapter Two). Gifted is representing creativity and gifted person can be creative because he or she has the potential to creative and produce.

Participant N reflected in her story that she can develop her giftedness in her personality by creating something useful and she said that “I can exploit this giftedness to purchase such bags and create drawings on them using crystals and then sell them”

Also, she explained that creative and talented people have similar personalities, that creative people can be talented and talented people can be creative. However, she used the word creative to refer to something more meaningful and deeper than gifts and talents. The difference between creativity and talent can be determined by the intensity of response someone has when experiencing, viewing, witnessing the impressive product a person has made.

The participants’ stated creativity and giftedness were nearly synonymous. Their understanding is that creativity and giftedness are two words with similar meaning, but the only difference is that creativity is more developed than giftedness, because it leads to the creation of innovative things. They also explained that creativity is more meaningful than giftedness, and

includes a deep thinking process that can make a change. The understanding of creativity as giftedness was the fifth theme that arose out of my interviews. Another theme that arose is reflected in the participants' exploration of the differences between talent, giftedness and intelligence as steps in the creative process.

Talent, Giftedness and Intelligence are steps in the Creative Process

One theme that arose during the interviews with my participants was the idea that the creative process consists of several steps or stages. My participants described a process that starts with a talent and with intelligence, contains a brain-storming stage, and then ends up with a creative idea or product. Participant N, for example, stated that a creative person starts with thinking about “the needs of people” and “thinking about creating something that can help people to achieve” and then she or he develops those thoughts through his or her talents. Participant N explained that creativity, intelligence and determination are all related to the same category of creative process; creativity, however, is more than intelligence, and a creative person knows how to reach their goals. She said that,

A person might be in the first phase of thinking differently, thinking about the needs of people, thinking about creating something that can help people achieve a certain goal. I think creativity, intelligence, and determination all fall under the same category. I think a creative person might be more intelligent than others. Because the person puts for himself or herself a plan and steps to reach the goal. Here he or she used personal intelligence. A creative person may be the one who thinks differently but the smart person is the one who achieves his or her objectives and target.

The interview with the participants revealed that creativity needs a basic talent and an interest in the activity. Creativity needs a companion between intelligence and giftedness to lead to creativity because creativity is more than just being intelligent; it is paying attention to personal goal and interest. Talent, giftedness and intelligence are steps in the creative process was a

category that developed during the interview with my participants. Another category that arose as a theme in our discussions was creativity as a gifted behaviour.

Creativity is Gifted Behaviour

The participants described creativity as being more significant than giftedness.

Participant N, for example, stated that a person's creative potential is more affected by the surrounding environment than a person's giftedness, because a creative person has a brain that works not just faster but differently. Participant N explained that all people had the potential to be talented but not creative, because it is creative people who come up with ideas that make huge changes and are rewarded. She said that,

It is normal that people have time constraints but unfortunately this affects the time we leave for our children, we give them very little time to express their talents and creativity. Not knowing that with the correct guidance, creativity can create people that are immortalized in history.

Participant B said that giftedness is a human genetic characteristic, and that human beings are born equal in thinking and ability, even though there are a personal difference between them. She explained, however, that people are mostly influenced by their parents and society, who impact them and either encourage them to be a creative or in various ways discourage them. She described her personal story of when she came to study in Canada and she failed in studying English in level three. So, she did it again, and she did not feel ashamed, because she believed there is no shame when someone tries to do new things again and again. When she repeated her level three English studies, she learned a lot from her previous mistakes, and she found this was the best method for her learning. She said if she were in Saudi, however, she would not have had the chance to fail or repeat things again, because failure is considered shameful in Saudi culture and so when someone fails they are blamed for their failings and they are described as somehow

deficient. This is why some students drop out of school early and prefer to work, because they have gotten the message from parents, friends and/or teachers that they are not capable of studying, and this has influenced their own perceptions of themselves. As participant B states,

I saw a study that says all humans have the same structures of minds that are created equal. But those students [who drop from school] have no faith and I believe that they are like the rest of the talented and creative people [but] because their parents, teachers, and school grades have convinced them that they are stupid, dumb and that they are a disappointment.

Participant B went on to explain, however, that creativity differs from person to person, naturally, depending on one's personality and nature of work. In specific fields, such as education, we see students who are intelligent and creative by nature but who still require guidance. It is the function of education to encourage and support students to be a creative.

The participants reflected their personal view about creative behaviour based on their experiences which were influenced by external factors more than talent which is an inherent characteristic. Participants agree that all people are talented and capable but not necessarily creative, because creativity is nurtured when motivational factors exist. The participants expressed an understanding that being similar to others or behave like others does not reflect creativity. In contrast, creativity means thinking independently and thinking in ways that are unique to one's own personality and in the way that produces something new.

I agree that all children are born talented and intelligent, every child needs assistance to be creative, so as to meet their needs. I believe that every child is an individual, who is creative in his or her own way, which means that adults are the ones who determine if a child is creative or not, because we affect their environment and the child needs positive guidance. As I revealed in my narrative (Chapter Four) that,

Each one of us have our own way of understanding things that interest to us most and different from other. I like when my teacher figured out that I am interested in particular subject more than other subjects that she supports me with sources such as books. To let me go deep on what I like and to learn more to find myself at that end with creative product.

Furthermore, to reveal on the factor that support or hinder women creativity in Saudi Arabia, my participants' narratives reveal the influential factor in Saudi Arabia and in Canada that the participant experiences and that impacted on develop or hinder their personal creativity. Another theme that resulted from the interviews is the role of culture.

The Role of Culture

Participants mentioned that their culture had an impact on their understanding of what it means to be creative and on the development and practice of their own creativity. They stated that the role of culture influenced them at home and at school, and restricted them from the freedom to express their personal opinions and explore their creativity. Participants described and told their personal stories of their home and school life back in Saudi Arabian culture. *Table 3* summarize the key findings of this third theme regarding the role of culture.

Table 3: Summary of the Key Findings of the role of Culture in the Development of Creativity

Category	Findings
The Role of Culture at Home	Space for practicing; parents' motivation; tools; meeting with peers
The Role of Culture at School	Lack of experience; lack of knowledge; limited freedom for the teacher; controlling students
Freedom to Express Personal Opinions	Lack of making personal discussion; difficulty with expressing personal opinion
Environment and Inspiration	Boring environment; lack of inspiration; unsupportive environment
Learning from Mistakes	no practice; discouragement; bad behavior; failure means unsuccessful
Gender Discrimination	Limited women opportunity: work, study and activities

The Role of Culture at Home

Participant N told a story of when she was young and how there was a lack of support from her parents in terms of providing her with the space and tools she needed to play and practice what she liked as a kid. She said that,

When I was a child I had a sense for creativity. When I was 7 or 8 years old I wished to have a swing. Of course, we had the space in the backyard and I asked my father to buy me a swing. He refused and I requested more than once. We had a lot of trees in the yard. I saw two trees and thought if I got a piece of fabric and tied it between two of them then I will have a swing. My dream came true and we used it, my sisters and I. When my father saw it, he became very excited and said how did you make it.

Participant B reflected her childhood years and described how she used to play and loved designing dresses for her doll. She described how she was creative when she met with children who were her age. She said that,

When I was a child I used to love playing with dolls and act. I also used to bring fabric and sewing tools and design dresses for my dolls. We had competitions with my sisters

and cousins in choosing the best design. It was simple things but we used to be very happy.

Participant B explained that she used to be creative and perform confidently in the things that she liked to achieve. She said, “even as kids we would achieve different things through our play”.

In Chapter Four, which presents my own narrative, I wrote about my thoughts about the significance of children’s play, which I believe should be encouraged at early age, as it fulfills a curial role in the development of a child’s personality and personal interests. I talked about my childhood years and how I used to play and spend time doing what I liked. I said that,

a child Play-time was quite interesting and similarly frustrating. Well, I remember as a child, I usually enjoyed playing the role of a doctor or teacher. I remember asking my mother to buy me a medical set and I played with my sister, cousin and aunt and ask them to be my patient. (Chapter Four)

As a child, I preferred to pretend to be teacher and liked the role of a teacher but my interests changed after I grew up and became a teacher at school. Unfortunately, I was not able to do what I liked; everything was planned out for me and my role was just to apply what was already planned. Also, my parents disturbed me and want to focus all time on my study even in the weekend, “after I enrolled into school, my mother usually asked me to focus on my studies”. My parents at home did not intentionally strive to understand my unique personality and seek to discover my personal interests. They encouraged me to be successful in schools and they were satisfied when I got high grades, but they did not supply me with the resources or opportunities that would develop my skills in areas that were of personal interest to me, such as doing arts and crafts. I figured out that I was interested in drawing and painting when I participated in art class at school and my teacher praised and rewarded me. My parents just wanted me to focus on my school duties.

The participants reflected their personal experiences of when they faced lack of support from their parents. Within their reflections, they revealed that there appeared to be two responses by children when faced with a lack of support: one, there are those who do not stop trying to get what they want, and fight for it until they achieve and, two, there are those who stop, because they do not want to resist against the obstacles their parents put in front of them. The thought and desire to do something that they have set their mind on doing, motivates them to overcome obstacles and assert their creativity. The participants also stated that letting children play with peers develops their sense of deep thinking and team working. In addition to the theme of how the role of culture within the family affects creativity, another theme that developed during the interview was how the participants' creativity was affected by the role of culture at school.

The Role of Culture at School

The participants reflected on the significant effects that the culture in Saudi Arabia had on their education, especially the teachers' role in Saudi culture and how teachers are restricted and do not challenge cultural expectations. As Participant N explained, "teachers do not apply what they learned". She remembers that her teachers did not apply what they learn when they were students at university. What they learned does not exist in reality. She said that usually the teacher in her school finished her job when the class ended, which is wrong because it is the teacher's job to continue to work on developing his or her skills beyond classroom hours, so that they increase their ability to help the students learn. A teacher's job does not end when the school bell rings; it should continue. Participant N expressed the concern that her teachers were not conscientious about their role as a teacher. It seemed that they thought of their jobs were to attend school meetings, committees, grade homework and assignments. According to Participant N,

teachers do not apply what they learned, because the Saudi teacher thinks that the teaching profession is nothing more than just another role in society. I think that teachers put their place in society and it is a great role to have in society. But the idea in Saudi Arabia is that the teacher simply does his job and receives a salary and walks away.

Participant N is describing what she has observed from within her own experience. While there are some teachers do strive to develop their teaching skills and want to change the traditional approaches that continue to be used—in fact, the Ministry of Education annually rewards a teacher who has demonstrated the ability to guide students to be innovative and accomplished in ways that benefit society—Participant N’s stories about going to school in Saudi Arabia do echo my own experiences. I also felt that my teachers prevented me from engaging in activities that were interesting to me. This is clearly expressed in the following excerpt from my journal:

If I had any free time, I would just color within the confines of my coloring book. I really loved doing this and I remember one day I took my coloring book with me to school and my teacher was absent. In my school, if the teacher was absent, a substitute teacher was brought in to sit in for the absentee teacher and keep a watchful eye over the students. The teacher would say that anyone could do whatever they liked albeit silently. I put out my coloring book on the table and started coloring, but then the teacher noticed and walked towards me and said that particular activity was prohibited in the school. She took the coloring book and tossed it in the garbage. From that moment, I dreaded going to school as there was nothing of interest to do. They would force us to study and do whatever they liked. (See Chapter Four)

I did not find that activities were provided within the school; in fact, I was prohibited from bringing any supplies for extra-curricular activities to school. I was disappointed when I did not have a chance to play or have fun in school, and I felt that everything was serious and the teacher treated the students as if they weren’t kids.

I think that, to this day, the role of education has not sufficiently changed to meet the needs of the students. The teachers continue to repeat the old teaching methods. They are not aware of the consequences of their teaching practices and/or they do not receive the appropriate

training so as to change their way of teaching. As was previously stated on this theme in my own narratives about my experiences at school:

school curriculum was full of information. The teacher must finish the curriculum within 3 months. The teachers' role in the class was like a lecture and students' role is to listen. There were no any activities or discussion between teacher and students and we have to be silent. As a child I have to listen to the teacher because they were elder than us and I sometime scare of them when they scream. They consider being quiet in the class is a good behaviour and they reward it. I was a child and recognized my interests varied greatly from those of an adult. I wished they could let me do whatever I liked with help, guidance and observation from an adult. In case I was wrong, they would have directed me and showed me the right way. This is what I think people should do with children. (See Chapter Four)

I believe encouraging creativity in school and in the classes was a very important aspect of teaching and learning, because I believe that all children are born creative and intelligent and need to be encouraged. I believe that each child has his or her own way of understanding things that are of interest to them and that are different from others. I became very happy when my teacher figured out that I interested in one particular subject more than other subjects and the teacher supported me with additional sources on that subject, such as books. I felt that this helped me think more deeply about the subject, and that I learned more and found myself at the end with a creative product. However, in general my teachers unfortunately lacked the skills to encourage me in my own interests and therefore limited my chances to practice activities that were different from what the teachers liked. It seemed to me that the new generation of teachers just inherited the teaching methods of the previous generation teachers, who taught them when they were young.

The participants described the teachers' role in the classroom, which was to implement the required curriculum and adhere to the approved teaching practices. The teachers do not have the option to adapt their teaching methods to suit the students. The participants stated that

cultural expectations restricted the way that teachers behaved and the expectation was that the teachers should be serious and stern when interacting with the students and that the students should respect their teachers and not appear to question or argue with them, even when the teacher is wrong. The dynamic that is established between the teachers and the students is influenced by culture, and it causes the students to be scared of their teachers and to be too scared to speak out in class and express their own thoughts or interests. The predominant mode of instruction was through lecturing and making students sit in rows. The freedom to express personal opinion, therefore, was another theme that arose frequently during the interviews and the participants felt that this was another significant factor in the development of creativity.

Freedom to Express Personal Opinion

The participants described their thoughts regarding the importance of having a personal voice and independent opinion. They stated that this is a problem that they faced in Saudi Arabia, and that they were not familiar with the idea of expressing one's personal opinion. It was their observation that most students and kids in Saudi Arabia do not get chance to make decisions. They felt that there was a cultural expectation in Saudi Arabia that students, especially young children, refrain from expressing their personal opinions: being quiet is seen as a sign of respect for the adults who are in positions of authority. When the participants moved to study in Canada, however, they observed that the cultural expectations were very different in Canadian culture, where expressing personal opinions is considered something everyone is free to do, and where respecting peers' opinions and views is considered important. In the participants' experience, this practice of accepting other's views and respecting other's opinions is generally absent from Saudi culture. It is not a part of Saudi education to encourage the expression of divergent views amongst students. Students in Saudi schools do not learn to voice their individual opinions and

so are not required to listen to and accept other students' views; instead, as children and as students, we were taught to defer to the authority of those who were teaching us—our parents, religious leaders, community elders, and our teachers—and we were required to listen to what they taught us, not to question it, but to follow, even if we were dissatisfied with what we heard. Divergent views were discouraged, so there were no opportunities to accept or respect other people's differing perspectives.

Participant N, for example, revealed that expressing personal opinions is important. Like me, she too faced difficulty when she began to study in Canada, because she had never been asked in Saudi culture to express her opinion. She explained how in Saudi Arabia if a student were to express their personal opinion they would be considered argumentative, and how there were no chances for students to speak up, especially young students. When she came to Canada she gradually became used to expressing her opinion. She said that,

In the beginning, it was very difficult. I felt so strange because the whole duration of my studies in Saudi Arabia no one ever specifically asked about our personal opinions or experiences. It was very difficult but after a while I found that asking students about their opinion is actually a very important step. It started from the first class I attended and then all of them. They each asked about our experiences and I think this is more important than stuffing us with information from books. It was difficult at the beginning but now it became a part of my life.

Participant B also described her first impressions of studying in Canada and when her teacher asked her to express her opinion. She said that,

I had found to be difficult from my studies in Canada is writing my opinion and reflection on the article. The first time I heard or was asked to do this, I had to first translate the word "reflection" and then I knew that I had to write my own impression of the class and what I benefited from it. I had not done this before and was not used to the idea. I was asked to write personal opinions and search for researchers that will approve the ideas and opinions I hold, and I must use quotes. This was very difficult at first, writing my personal opinion. It may be easy in some ways but even finding a researcher or scientist that approves my opinions was a difficult task to accomplish. I was once confronted with this question, ... I looked for sources finished the assignment then went to the library to

meet a private instructor to review it; I asked him about this question of course I had written it based on my understanding. The private instructor reviewed my work and wrote some comments on my answer. Of course this assignment was not easy it took me almost a week just to write my first impression of the material at hand.

Participant N revealed that she had observed that there was a difference between Saudi and Canadian culture, and that expressing personal opinions is considered important in Canadian culture, especially in early childhood education. Staying open to stating a personal opinion is important because it offers opportunity for new ideas and enables us to understand ourselves. Participant N said,

I believe that there are differences between Saudi Arabia and Canada in education and in culture in general. What I noticed in Canada, in the beginning when I came to learn the language, is that they pay attention to the concerns of the people. They ask what do you prefer, and ask for things that concern you. They tie together the students' expertise and past experiences, their trips or anything the student loves to talk about. This is an important point which does not yet exist in Saudi Arabia. Through my education from primary to university I do not remember someone asking me about my experiences, or to go on a fieldtrip, or about my interests, or anything that touches me personally. But this exists in Canada. In the beginning I had difficulty to blend in with this concept. I used to think, "what am I supposed to write or say or why?" But after practice I learned how to express my concerns and I quite like it. If anyone documents his experiences and delivers it in the classroom in front of their colleagues, they will benefit and be a benefit to others. Especially in the master program. Most students have jobs in the education field and have a long experience in education, from 25 years to more or less. All the things they learned were mostly through the experience of speeches and presentations and some would display reality in their classrooms. This was great, I liked it very and benefited very much from it. I had many colleagues and the topic was "experience in teaching", long experiences in teaching, some of them showed off their students and the order and physical layout of the classroom. Some displayed the curriculum and materials in the classroom and the activities that they would do with their students, how they will greet their students every morning and how they would create an active atmosphere in the classroom. Presenting the activities, they would practice with their students, how they would use the tools and the ways to make their students collaborate together and get to know each other and get close to each other.

Participant B stated there was cultural expectation that young people would listen silently to their teachers and other adults, and not argue or ask questions. She said that,

We are brought up in a culture where young people are obligated to be silent except with those who are the same age because speaking with elders, in our society, is considered rude. But when I came to Canada and from studying the English language I found encouragement to speak and express my opinions and I did not stay silent. Of course this was all by way of presentations and discussions. I found here that when they see someone from a different culture, they like to try and learn new things from them and they appreciate it. They always say, “I learned something from you”. They have appreciation here even for a simple piece of information. This is what encourages a person to go on and continue to discover himself, to talk about their views and goals. There is encouragement for this. But in Saudi there is none, none whatsoever.

She explained that the reason for this might be because the number of students in the class would not have allowed the teacher to ask individual students to present their personal views. There were 150 students in the class. She said that she studied for four years to get her bachelor’s degree, and she never heard her name called out, except during the taking of attendance.

Participant N spoke of first attending classes in Canada and described a difficult process of adjustment. She realized early on that the expectations in Canadian education were not similar to what she had experienced in Saudi Arabia. She explained that she never been asked about her personal opinions or experiences in her early education and, at the beginning of her studies in Canada, she found it very difficult to formulate and articulate her personal views, but after some practise, she now considers it an important factor in her education. She said that, “It was difficult at the beginning but now it became a part of my life, and wise teacher is one who helps students express their opinion and be creative and feel free in the classroom”.

Participants revealed about the important of considering personal opinion and give student chance to share personal thoughts about the subject loudly in front of peers. They described that young people in Saudi do not have skills to have discussions and dialogues because they are not used to express personal views at home or schools. Teachers can make students sit in the classroom all day, because that may be what is expected within that system,

and teachers often do not have the power to alter that system, sometimes not even in the slightest way. Teacher has assessment sheet to assess student and she has to restrict on it. The ability to participate in group discussion and do individual presentations are important skills but they were not required in Saudi classrooms. More recently, the Ministry of Education has begun to recognize the importance of adjusting the system and improving it. They are requiring teachers to attend workshops to develop their teaching approaches. Below I discuss another theme that emerged during the interview with the participants: the role of environment in facilitating and hindering creativity.

Environment and Inspiration

All of the participants consider the home and school environments as central factors in the development of personal creativity. Their stories about their home and school environments reveal feelings of being unmotivated and bored by what they were exposed to, and how they lacked the opportunity and space to develop their creativity. Participant B, for example, described how, from her perspective, the spaces and structures that organize everyday routines, do not allow for an emphasis on child learning and childcare in Saudi Arabia. The focus on child learning and care consists of very few hours per day. She also pointed out that the staff are not properly qualified. She stated that while staff might have scientific or other degrees, they lack the important skills, such as communicating with students and enhancing collaborative learning skills, which are required for teaching children. In Saudi Arabia, there are two types of early childcare centers: public centers are exclusive for female teachers' children under the age of six, and private centers are for people who want their children to learn at early age. The public early childcare centers are not intended to prepare children for school, because the main objective for the parents is to simply find a safe place to leave their child while they are at work. The private

daycare centers do provide some instruction that prepares children for school. However, this pre-school education has limited availability.

In Saudi Arabia, Participant N pointed out, the main objective of early childcare is different from what it is in Canada. She explained that,

In Canada I saw mothers put their children in daycares from morning until five in the evening, but during this time these children learn many things such as behaviours, the alphabets, counting, and much more. After daycare, the child goes in to kindergarten, the child goes in with the ability to read the alphabets and count numbers. While education in Saudi Arabia begins in kindergarten. In Canada, they strongly believe that the first five years of a child's life are the most important stages, therefore they begin with daycare.

Participant N stated that there is a need for a plan for the development of children's creativity, both physically and psychologically, which she feels was lacking in her early education. She believes that formally organized spaces and reinforcing messages that encourage creativity would empower a child to connect with the problem and imagine solutions. She explained that organized spaces can help a child in formulating new ideas. Privacy and individuality of these spaces, such as having a clean desk and available tools, would assist in stimulating personal creativity. She said,

Any creativity in life needs space and also privacy in order for you to work on your creations. Actually, I have my own room in the house where I can leave anything and I have no fear of losing it or of someone moving things around. This always helped me. Also, the availability of the tools is very important, I am person who always has to plan ahead. I have to simplify my idea, procedures, and techniques and I have to have all the expected materials I would need. Even if I have a presentation or project, the first thing I always do is work a plan. I use a pencil and paper. I write the subject of research, exploration and I record when interviewing people or in meetings if it is a group project. I always like to be organized.

While being organized is important for Participant N, she recognizes that an organized space does not necessarily inspire all people. Some people, she suggests, can be inspired by chaos. She said,

This varies from person to person, some people are able to achieve and create in chaos. For me, organization is very important. I cannot work if there is no organization or schedule to follow.

Participant N described the importance of changing the routine at home and school so as to positively affect the child's development. Providing spaces and organized activities to allow them to be comfortable in what they are doing. Clean and organized space are not usually necessary for someone to develop their creativity; there are some who can create within chaos. The participants also described their experiences of early childhood education back in Saudi Arabia. There are daycares where parents leave their children while they are at work but these are not necessarily places where learning takes place. Daycare in Saudi Arabia is not considered as important as a school, so some parents prefer to let their child stay at home and they do not consider the significance of early childhood education. If they do register their children in daycare, their priority is not education but on caregiving, and in some private Daycares, where there is a teacher available, these teachers are not trained in early childhood education and do not have teaching certification. Teachers need to be updated through professional development workshops, so as to educate them on the recent research in their field and to prepare them for how to interact with children. Another theme that emerged during the interviews, which was touched on earlier but needs further explanation, is the idea that we can learn from our mistakes as a part of the creative process and that how mistakes are viewed is culturally determined.

[Learning from Mistakes](#)

The participants also described how important it was to learn from their mistakes, and how people cannot be creative without practicing their skills. People learn from the first time trying, and if they make mistakes, they will try a different way and avoid those same errors in the future. However, the participants explained that the environments they had come from did not

support the idea of learning from their mistake; to the contrary, it had been their experience that mistakes were often judged as failures that were not to be repeated.

Participant N in her story revealed the importance of learning from mistakes and how this was an important step for her in her efforts to improve. She said that,

Obviously, people cannot be creative right away without practice, taking risks, and learning from mistakes. For example, the inventor of the lamp [who tested 1600 different materials as filaments before he found the right one]. That means he went through many mistakes, which eventually led him to his invention of the lamp. Without these mistakes, he would not have come to the final result. That means, he learned from his mistakes. It is impossible and unusual for one to perform or master an art from the first time. Many things I accomplished after I had learned from my mistakes. For example, after I came and saw the roads of Canada, whenever I go out with my friend, I do not concentrate, therefore I cannot find my way back. But, when I go out by myself and lose my way, I then have it clear in my mind where I need to go and this how I learned roads and places.

Participants B agreed that it is important to recognize the significance of learning from our mistakes. This recognition, however, only developed since she began studying in Canada, became more independent, gained confidence in herself, and she started to perceive how she herself learned from mistake and realized its value. In my experience, the idea of learning from mistakes was something that was not recognized in Saudi culture. Making mistakes, she now realizes, is not always bad, but when she was growing up in Saudi Arabia, she was made to feel that failure was something to be ashamed of. She reflected upon the ways in which she and her peers, as students in Saudi Arabia, tried to be perfect and were afraid of trying something new but instead avoided doing things that they were not able to perfectly the first time. However, since her time studying in Canada, she has learned that making a mistake was one of the best ways to learn. She described that,

I think I learned this approach and concept when I came to Canada. In Saudi Arabia, they do not make it easy or normal for a person to have faults and make mistakes. Even teachers in their daily applications in the classroom, when it comes to the students to apply the lesson, whether it is in cooking class or math class, it is a must to have the correct answers. If it is not perfect from the first time, it would be a big problem, and the

teacher would blame the student for not following the right path. If she told students to discover the error themselves and learn from the mistake, it would have been better and this is what encourages students to look for and find errors. I learned this in the education system in Canada. Mistakes are something normal, something ordinary. If you learn from your errors, you will become more creative and can reach your target and success. I think that the teachers who practice and teach the same curriculum for years in the classrooms are not correct, because if the student does not achieve that specific teachers' requirements, then they will be punished and have their grades deducted. This is very frustrating for students—I mean that the students are not given the space to make mistakes and learn from them—and this is not right.

Participant B agreed that learning from mistakes is a powerful way to learn. She shared about learning from her own mistakes and developing a more positive understanding of how failure represents a continued quest for learning, not the end of learning. She also expressed the importance of teaching our students to embrace their mistakes as lessons learned. According to Participant B's experiences, people in Saudi do not recognize that there is potential for learning through making mistakes, and they judge a person who "fails" instead of offering support to that person. She said,

In Saudi, they just throw the blame on to the child and do not see the reason for the failure of the child. For example, it could be due to the environment at home or because of the way the parents treat the children. They never blame the curriculum, the teacher's methods or way of teaching that are not suitable for certain students. No, all their blame is placed on the child and the child is branded as stupid. We believe that each student has their own way of learning and what works for one student does not necessarily work for others.

Like the other participants, Participant B has come to understand since studying in Canada that making mistakes can be a valuable method for learning, and that the pressure to avoid making mistakes, which the participants experienced growing up in Saudi Arabia, was detrimental to their creative development. As students in Saudi Arabia, they felt that if you failed it meant you were not successful and you should not try again for fear of failing once more. The negative reaction a student experiences from parents, teachers and peers when the she or he makes a

mistake intimidates them and they avoid similar situations that might illicit further negative responses. Having experienced different, more supportive, responses to the mistakes they had made during their studies in Canada, the participants had come to realize that a person gains a better understanding when he or she realizes their mistake, and that this is a good lesson in life that will promote further learning. Through their narratives of the experiences as students both in Saudi Arabia and in Canada, the participants also came to understand that a person develops their creativity and becomes an innovator only after they have tried new things and experienced failure many times before they can finally succeed in accomplishing their goals. Just as the drawing of Participant B depicts, creativity is like a mountain; it requires tremendous effort and persistence to reach the summit of our creative pursuits. In addition to these insights, participants' narratives also revealed that gender discrimination and the lack of resources and opportunities available to Saudi girls and women limits their chances of developing and expressing their creativity.

Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination played a role in Saudi culture and that this impacted how most parents raised and educated their children. I observed that parents often made distinctions between what was appropriate for boys and girls. For example, parents often had a specific activity for girls and the rest of activities were for boys and girls were not allowed to do them. As I discussed previously: “when I was a child I always liked to play soccer with my cousin because I liked to move and run. But, my parents used to say ‘do not play with boys’ and ‘soccer is boy’s game’” (See Chapter Four). This discrimination against girls, limits their opportunities to develop skills and maintain their physical health, and to develop confidence in their own abilities. In Saudi Arabia women are not allowed to practice physical exercise at school; only boys and men

are allowed to practice physical exercise, because there is a predominant belief that women have different physical capabilities and needs than men, and playing sports is not appropriate for girls. Women's activities in Saudi Arabia are limited to literary clubs and social visits, where women and girls can exchange and discuss literary books and articles. Even though there are gym clubs in certain communities, they are expensive and are not available to everyone.

One very practical consequence of the restrictions on women's activities was described by Participant B, who also discussed the lack of opportunity for girls to practice sport in school based on gender discrimination. She explained how not allowing girls to play physical games has increased the level of obesity in women, because there was an absent of fitness awareness in girls' schooling. Limitations physical activity is only one amongst many types of restrictions put on girls.

Participant N revealed that there are limitations on what is available to women in terms of pursuing their interests and practicing their creativity. Women were not expected to make a significant contribution or effect change outside of the home, within the more public spheres of Saudi Arabia, and this perception of women has a consequence on whether or not girls receive support and encouragement in practicing their creativity. Participant N said, for example, that "if a woman has creative skills such as wall painting, it is really difficult for her to practice it outside her home or in open area. However, nowadays, women get a chance to post on Instagram her creative skills through social media." In other words, women's creativity is predominantly practiced and expressed within the confines of their limited personal space at home and has recently found an outlet for greater expression through online networks. As Participant N shared in her narrative it is difficult for women to create these networks for practicing and sharing creative work in face-to-face settings, because if a woman wants to go out of the home, and she

does not have a private driver or a male relative to escort her, she cannot go out. There is no public transportations in Saudi Arabia. Saudi girls cannot practice their skills in such creative activities as dancing or theater because opportunity is not available to them. While sports clubs for boys with various activities get significant financial support from the government, helping men to develop and express their creativity, girl do not have this opportunity. There are separate activities for boys and girls to practice; for example, physical activities are restricted to boys and handicrafts are mostly girls' activities. The development, exercise and expression of girls' creativity in Saudi Arabia is restricted by cultural and traditional beliefs that are accepted and enforced by families who care about what other people's judgements will be if they were to encourage their daughters to break with norms of expected behaviours for women.

Throughout the life time, there are expectations of behaviour that restrict women's opportunity to explore and express their creativity. Participant B, for example, identified how, when a woman retires from her job, she is not presented with opportunities to explore her personal interests and practice other skills in activities that would enrich her life physically and intellectually. Women after retirement are expected to remain home and find activities within the household to occupy her time. All of the participants indicated that the chances for Saudi women of all ages are limited in practice skills that are predominantly attributed to men, including competitive skills of any kind, and that this prevents them from comparing their skills with others, especially with men, and being competitive with others in nearly all disciplines.

The Role of Education

From the perspective of the participants in this study, the education role played in the development of a student's creativity was considered significant. Table 4 summarize the key findings of the fourth theme, the role of education, which arose during the interviews with my participants.

Table 4: Summary of the Key Findings of the Role of Education on Creativity

Category	Findings
Socio-economic effects of family and neighborhood	Encourage their child; support them to achieve; good home background; instill excitement for learning in their children; ignore their kid
Personal Goals and Confidence	Develop personal goal; self-esteem; build personal strength
Teacher's Behaviour Toward Students	Ignore student; disrespect students; force students to study; control them in the class
Environment and Inspiration	No practice; discourage; bad behavior; failure is considered unsuccessful
School Activities	Ignore activities early age; lack of opportunities to play with peers; lack of time for joy
Education System	Old teaching and learning approaches; memorization.

Socio-economic Effects of Family and Neighbourhood

Based on their own observations, the participants believed that education was a factor in whether or not parents had the skills and knowledge to encourage their children's creativity. They had observed that parents who have access to higher education often encouraged their children to be more ambitious. This contrasted with parents who have not had access to higher education. The participants had observed that these parents often underestimated their children's ability to pursue their dreams. The participants attributed the differences in parenting to socio-economic factors that enabled some parents to have greater access to education and resources.

Families that have socio-economic advantages are able to provide their children with an enriched atmosphere at home by, for example, providing their children with books and spending more time reading to them, and by organizing a variety of educational and recreational activities that ignite their children's creative imaginations.

As I discussed previously in (Chapter Four), I believe that educated parents want success for their children, and that the home background plays an important role in children's development because parents are the first teachers for their children. I think that the reason for why the most successful Saudi women have achieved such success is because that they got the chance to study abroad and live and integrated in different culture, which helped them to discover themselves. It has been my observation that highly educated parents instill an excitement for learning in their children and that less educated parents face difficulties engaging with their children's education. I once read about a creative Saudi woman described her home life, the support she received from her parents and her education abroad. From this news story, I understood that a primary reason behind the creative Saudi woman's success was the environment she had grown up in. The problem in Saudi Arabia, I think, is that people in positions of authority and power lack of skills to support the new generation and sometimes apply old-fashioned teaching methods. This results in a system of education and life routine that does not support the youth of the next generation, who are full of energy. Students face a conflict between their roles inside the school and outside. As I discussed previously in my narrative, I explained that,

In addition, in Saudi, where I was born and raised, there are a few Saudi women known for their innovation and ingenuity, and Adah Almutairi is high up on this list. Her innovation in chemically amplified response strategies in the field of medical science was touted as revolutionary, for which she received numerous honors and awards, such as the

NIH director's new innovator award in 2009. She was born in the USA and her father is a highly educated person. He got a scholarship to the USA before she was conceived. She is motivated by her family and they encourage her and her sibling to love the learning process, appreciate education and, most importantly, to have a passion for what they are doing. I think the environment that she was born and raised in helped her in finding success. I read a transcript of an interview where she said that the environment that a person lives in is extremely vital in shaping a creative and successful person. She added that the people in Saudi Arabia who are in influential positions have a problem when it comes to guiding young people as some cannot think outside the box to respond swiftly and take advantage of the energies of young people and their numerous creative ideas, focusing their energies to assist them in coming up with innovations. I agree with her that young people did not get a chance to use their energy in most situation, for example, student at school did not have a chance to move as they have a lot of energy and, at their age, they want to play different activities. There is no school trip or sports for girls, which means that the environment can make a person creative or not. Some people think that if she did not get opportunity to study abroad, she would not have an innovative mind and creative ideas. She would not get the support that she received outside of Saudi. I agree with most people when they blame the lack of proper education and an environment which provides minimal support, for why we have not taken advantage of the possibilities that lie within educating Saudi boys and girls. (See Chapter Four)

Participant B stated that her parents lacked skills in listening to her and in encouraging her, even they often bought her what she wanted. She said,

my parents used to encourage me to play but I think this was also because we did not have the technology that we do now. So we used to spend most of our time playing with toys, especially dolls, so we used to just play with the toys that our parents buy for us. Since I loved giving speeches, I used to act and put on plays in my house, and I always used to practice it but my parents saw this as disturbing and always tried to tell me to "stop you are bothering us" or they would tell me to leave the room they are in. At home my parents would silence me and no one would listen to me. I would have preferred if they had set a specific time for me to express my self and have someone listen, had they done this I would have spent this time expressing myself and when my time is up I would have been quiet as they had asked.

The participants described how they perceived the role of parents as significant in motivating their child, and that parents who are educated tend to be more invested in having their children also receive an education. The participants explained that providing child with toys and games was important but that this was not enough for supporting and building the children's creativity; it is necessary to motivate children by listening to them and discussing different issues with them,

so as to guide them in thinking about things and to build their self-confidence. The participants described the benefit of integrating and studying in different culture, because it helps in extending human understanding. Moreover, the participants described the importance of focusing on achieving personal goals and on building self-esteem, which became another theme that arose out of my interviews.

Personal Confidence and Goals

The participants mentioned that children's individual interests and strengths need to be encouraged at an early age. They need to be encouraged to follow their interests is what they want to do and to discover for themselves, so as to help them develop their self-esteem and to choose their own goals and follow their own passions.

In Chapter Four, which presents my own personal narrative, I describe how studying abroad has helped me to become independent and to gain more self-confidence. I think that studying in different cultures and in different places has been to a good experience in my life. It has helped me to discover my own interests and build up strengths and skills in a way that had not happened while I studied in my own country. I felt that my experience back in my country had been traditional and restricted, and that to study in different country really helped me and enabled me to have a chance to improve and begin to believe in myself. It helped me to gain and improve a lot of personal skills, such as becoming more independent and determined to attain my own personal goals. As was previously stated that,

Studying abroad in Canadian universities has changed my willingness and ability to express myself. Absolutely. From this experience I gained and learned a lot of important things. First of all, my aspirations in life have changed. I am seeing plenty of opportunities that were inconceivable for me before. I believe that I can become a successful woman, and as a result, I have become more optimistic and a hard worker, and I have become more independent and responsible for myself than I was before. In Saudi, where I was dependent and couldn't do anything without letting my parents know or

getting prior consent, I felt I was not able or eligible to do certain things. I have gained self-confidence and I believe in myself more than ever. Back in my country, the community and the school were always discouraging, especially in relation to girls. I remember when I applied for a scholarship, a relative told me that I could not study in Canadian university, as it was really difficult. What he said, actually empowered me and motivated me and I forced myself to face the challenge. I was a quiet and timid person in discussions but now I always voice my opinion while respecting others' opinions. From then, I began reading about creativity and practiced it, becoming stronger. I want to be a role model for my siblings and for my future students. I want to inspire them to succeed. (See Chapter Four)

I think Saudi women face lack of support in comparison to men. In most situations, women do not get support for their creative and innovative ideas. As I discussed previously,

I think Saudi women lack support and because there is a lack of communication and listening to women's creative ideas, they did not get encouragement for their inventions in schools and universities. These women would be empowered by diversifying areas and the expanding specialized choices for women in higher education. They need to be qualified and prepared for their roles to be more effective and versatile in the community and to keep up with the progress and development requirements witnessed by the Kingdom in various fields. (See Chapter Four)

I have described how I gained self-efficiency and increased cognitive awareness through studying abroad, and I believe that women have the power to bring about positive change in my home country:

Now I believe that every person can be a part of building a successful country, if we work hard and believe and encourage each other. I know when I go back, I will support my siblings and my students to let them build the skills that will help them in the future. I will support them so as to build self-confidence first and then to do what they like, not what others like. (See Chapter Four)

I think that I have gained a lot of good experience from studying at a Canadian University and I now have self-confidence. Further to this, during the conversations with my participants, we discussed how a teacher's behavior toward students affected the development of creativity. This became another theme that was raised by within the interviews.

Teacher's Behaviour Toward Students

The participants mentioned that they believed that the teacher's behavior toward students played an important role in influencing the students' learning journeys and the development of their creativity.

Participant N, for example, explained that her teacher played a positive and encouraged role in her situation. Her teacher had her students sit in a circle and take turns speaking about how they spent their days. This was how the teacher tried to encourage them before getting into the main topic of the lesson. This was a very appropriate and important way of breaking up the daily routine. Participant N said,

The teacher's role is very important in making students speak up. Of course we have a problem in our schools, as long as the student is quiet then this is the exemplary student. Teachers were always trying to silence us: do not speak, just keep your eyes in your book'. We would only just listen or write. It is natural, in this case, that students believe that to be silent is to be on the right track. The only time students can speak is if she being asked a question, then just briefly and quickly answer a short answer only. Of course we are not allowed to discuss or debate.

Participant B mentioned that she observed negative behaviour from the teacher who was dealing with the students. She felt that this reflected a lack of qualification on the teacher's part. She said,

I am the type of student who hates art education. I did not have the talent for drawing and my teacher did not encourage me to draw anything. I remember there were two of us, me and another student in the class. The teacher used to describe us as the worst students in the class, and this is because we did not know how to draw. To be honest, the teacher used to treat me in a very disrespectful way and until this day I still hate drawing.

Participant B said that the teacher used to call her as "worst student," and this had a negative impact on her for long time. She explained that the teacher did not encourage her in more respectful way, which could have helped her to draw and not to hate art classes.

Participant N stated that she used to study with different kinds of teachers and that there was no difference between most of them in terms of their goals. It seemed to her that her teachers just wanted to give a lecture to the students, without listening to them, which made her hate school as a young student. She said that, “I passed through all kinds of teachers who made me hate them. Others make you feel that his or her mission is to just say a couple of words quickly and walk away”.

Participant B also mentioned a story about how a teacher’s negative behavior toward her create a fear in her, and caused her to have a lack of self-confidence when she speaks in front people. She had always felt that her voice was good in reading Quran and singing patriotic songs, but she did not get support from her family and teachers. She reported that,

Something happened to me one day in school. They gave me a speech to read for the morning announcement but they gave it to me too late. Usually I spend my time practicing the speech at home prepare myself, but for this day they gave me the speech that morning a few seconds before the announcements began. I tried to read it quickly and the speech was different than usual. I was stuttering while reading it. A teacher came forward and grabbed the paper from my hand and told me “go back to your seat”. This happened in front of the student assembly along with six class levels, as well as other teachers and the school principal. It was a very embarrassing situation, to be honest; it was embarrassment in front of other students. And to this day I am unable to read in front of a large group.

That experience created a fear within her and made her shy, because she always thinks about what happened to her that day. She has not been able to read anything in front of people, even today as a master’s student it affects her. She blames the teacher whose behaviour negatively impacted her. She explained that, “the teacher was not qualified or well prepared, and until this day teachers are unqualified and unprepared in Saudi Arabia”. She blames the education system for the lack of educated teachers who know how to deal with the student compassionately.

Participant N shared that her teacher's behaviour in elementary school influenced her and had an impact on her future goal to be a schoolteacher. She said that she wants to take care of all of her students. Her teacher's optimistic behaviour made a positive impact on her students for long term. Participant N said that her teacher "used to sit with students, trying to explain whatever is difficult for them. When I see her personality and how close to the students she was, I felt that teaching is wonderful". The feeling of become a teacher was growing in her, because she then became a role model for her classmates and she used to explain to her friends what they found difficult and the school would always ask her to help and to explain math.

Participant B showed that the positive and good behaviour of teachers toward students make students more successful and instills within them a love for what they are learning. Participant B told a story from her school days, and how the teacher's behaviour had a long-term impact on her students:

I remember that there was a science teacher who always used teaching aids in her lectures. From this, she became very close to her students and she broke the barrier between teacher and student. The beautiful thing about her was that she would get close to her students, especially the ones whose level of understanding was lower, and would try to look for the reasons for this. So she really was a hard worker. Loved by all. She gave us motivation to love the subject and used different methods of teaching in order to accommodate all of her students' different learning needs.

Participant B emphasized that this teacher was remarkable in the way she had established a positive relationship with her students. Said, "This is the teacher's job and all teachers should be like her to help students".

Participant N spoke about the teacher of her art class, who really impressed her. She said that this teacher always encouraged the students by saying, "any object you find to produce is a

piece of art, even if it is a very simple piece”. This inspired the students. Participant N told a story of when she made something creative:

One time I bought a bag and the bag was very normal. It was made out of plain silver metal. There was also the gold one too. I learned how to use crystals to create a very sophisticated look. I even changed the shape and it turned into a piece that looked as though it was expensive, although it was very simple. First, I used paper and pencil to draw a rainbow, birds, and sky. This drawing was a draft and then I drew it on the bag. This first step was just to know how it will look like and to see if there are any changes that need to happen. Second step is drawing on the bag using the crystals, which came in colours of silver, red, green, and blue, and of course also the using water paints. The things I had to use were very simple, crystals and glue. But the idea came to me because the bag was too plain and I wanted it to look fancy, change its shape, and increase its value.

Participant N explained that the art teacher who encouraged her was exceptional and that when she become a teacher in the future she wants to apply some of the things that she has learned in terms of creating opportunities for students to express themselves. She explained that,

I will give them limitless space to express their opinions through scripts, presentations, or demonstrations. I will ask them and afford to them the opportunity to talk together and connect the subjects to reality. For example, hand made artwork, cooking, even the most simple creations. I think that teachers could incorporate this in the classroom if it requires a lesson presentation. Teachers can use the strengths, capabilities, and creativity of the students. For example, if there is a student who loves to draw and the lesson was about country maps the teacher can give the chance for the student to use his or her creativity and integrate this creativity into drawing the map. Or let's say a student likes tourism, I can ask the student to go out and gather information or go on a fieldtrip to a museum. Sadly, this option is not available in most schools in Saudi Arabia, only in private schools. Another example, as a teacher I have a lesson in history, the history of the Saudi state, what I can do is arrange a visit to the Musmak Palace or museums to affirm the information in the mind of the students and relate and connect what they have learned with reality.

The participants have stated that the teacher's behaviour toward them influenced them in either positive or negative ways, which had an impact on them in the long term. One participant who was affected by the negative behaviour of her teacher felt that she had developed low self-esteem because of this experience and she became afraid to speak in front of people. Another participant

reported that, because her teacher's behaviour had been positive, she had been encouraged to perform well in the class and she became more active and gained many new skills. The participant was inspired by her teacher's motivation and this stuck in her mind, even outside the school, and she reported that because of her teacher's positive behaviour, she was inspired to become a teacher herself. The participants' narratives reveal that it is the teachers, themselves, who create barriers for students, through their behaviour toward those students. It is not just the teachers who create these barriers. The participants also discussed the schools' activities and how this had an effect on the development of their creativity, and this became another important theme within the participants' narratives.

School Activities

The participants mentioned school activities that are nowadays considered part of education. Participant B, for example, explained that it had been her observation that at the kindergarten level, the teachers occupy the children with games and activities, and "they believe that children at this stage do not have the ability to master the skills of reading or writing". The teachers focus on spending children's time at school playing games and activities, because in school after kindergarten there are no opportunities for such types of play or activities. As Participant B explained, "After this phase you will not find a variety of activities and if you do find, there is not enough time for it and it is not diverse". Participant N also mentioned that children need a play to let out all the energy they have. She said, "I guess kids usually are very active and they need games and activities to release their inner energy". This means that organized activity classes are important for the child, so as to let them discover themselves and release their inner energy.

Participant B mentioned that there is a huge difference between education in Saudi Arabia and in Canada, where it seems that teaching and learning is centered on activities at schools. Participant B felt that the teachers in Canada appeared to apply different activities in the classroom in order to encourage students' discovery and creative processes, while their education in Saudi Arabia tended to apply only one method of teaching, the lecture or transmission model, from first grade until graduation. Participant B did not agree with this system and she sometimes felt as if she was repeating the same level. They did not take advantage of the students' energy and enthusiasm. She related this issue to culture in the following statement:

Culture here plays an important role because of its help in developing our talent and creativity. The concept of literature in our culture is that the student listens to the information, sits for hours in their place without doing anything other than sitting quietly the whole time, so they can then be called the perfect student, the most behaved and can be honored in front of his peers.

Participant B agreed that integrating activities into the education system is important, especially in elementary school. She said,

In fact, the teacher can deliver information to students in many ways, many flexible and much more effective ways. It is true that the teacher is concentrating on the curriculum, but he has to take more effective steps in delivering the information.

Participant B stated that teachers can use more effective approaches to delivering information by using play-based learning. She talked about her research, which focused on a design approach for learning and that consisted of different methods of delivering information. She listed these methods as "multiple meanings of representation, multiple meanings of acting and multiple meanings of engagement". Participant B told a story about recent visits she'd made to school in Saudi Arabia where she observed that all the students were controlled in the classes and she did not see any of the students moving around, especially in the girls' schools because the girls have

no activities or sports classes like the boys do. The educators at these schools were not aware of the energy that the students have and want to expend in various ways.

Thinking back on her experiences with teachers in Saudi Arabia, Participant B felt that there was a negative judgment on the use of classroom time for creative activities, which were seen as activities for playing as opposed to studying. She perceived that the teachers, for the most part, were unaware of or misunderstood the theory of play-based learning. She said, “they see it as play because they can’t understand the concept or point of teaching with games. And this, in our culture, is limited”. Based on what she had learned studying education at a Canadian university, she has since developed an understanding of the role of creativity in learning.

Participant N stated that in her experience there was a lack of play, in Saudi education, such that it restricted the development of student’s creativity. She said, “I remember in art class, which supposedly a creativity class, but the art teacher would give us specific steps for drawing and made it necessary to follow”. In her art class, she felt, the teacher should have been more free and given the students a chance to practice their own way of creating a drawing, but instead, as Participant N explains, “the teacher never said to get this result you can try or you can do it as you like, the result in the drawing had to simply be a copy and paste”. There were no differences between the teaching methods of her art class and any other subject, where the teacher “required [the students] to just follow the same exact steps and instructions in order to get the 30 marks”. Participant N would have liked a change, and would have liked to have solved the problem by finding her own solutions. Participant N did say, however, that there were some who teachers did encourage students through the use of different approaches, but some teachers did not because they wanted the students to follow the same traditional approach.

The participants revealed the effects of the lack of activities they were able to participate in during their years at school. They described some differences between the approaches to teaching that they experienced in kindergarten and then in elementary school. In kindergarten, they explained, the activities were primarily free play and in elementary schools all forms of playing stopped. As the participants reflected back on their experiences, they felt that this change in the attitude toward playing indicated a lack of understanding on the part of teachers of the potential for learning during play activities. The participants agreed that their teachers could have been more effective as educators had, they been more aware of contemporary pedagogical theory. The participants discussed the importance of adjusting teaching practices so as to make the learning process more active and so as to accommodate a diverse range of learners. They spoke of recent developments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is witnessing economic growth but needs to develop its education system so as keep up with that growth and help the younger generation prepare for the future.

Education System

Participant B mentioned that the teaching methods primarily used in Saudi Arabia continue to reflect the traditional, transmission model, where they expect students to simply listen to the lecture or lesson and there is no opportunity for the students to talk. She said that,

Even though most of those who have children know that children require activity and movement. In school they always describe children who are restless, active and talkative as children with no manners and punish them, they would make them stand still in the corner and constantly talk to them in a disrespectful manner.

Participant B described how the application of the rule that students remain quiet and still can sometimes be extreme, whereby students are expected to remain in their seats and must ask for permission to use the washroom. She also mentioned that her teacher forced students to do their

homework, even though they did not like the subject: “As a student I cannot speak or argue with the teacher”. She agreed that the Education system and school curriculum in Saudi Arabia needs to be developed so as to incorporate a greater variety of teaching and learning approaches. She suggested, too, that there needs to be ongoing professional development for teachers so that they can learn more about teaching methodologies and curriculum development. As Participant B explained, “there needs to be a balance on the impact of the information on the students and then allow them the freedom to talk and express their opinions with confidence”.

Participant N offered ideas about “intellectual education,” which she explained referred to the use of thinking activities that exercised the mind. She described an active teaching approach, and explained how her own thinking about teaching changed when she studied for her Diploma in Education after her undergraduate in Saudi Arabia. Over a short period of time, “*a year and a half*”, she learned a lot of important teaching rules, and she learned that teachers in all levels in schools and universities play an important role in influencing their students. She believed that the teacher must be professional in their job and be more responsible when they teach students. She said that:

My idea about intellectual education changed after I completed my Diploma in Education (in Saudi Arabia). It was for a period of a year and a half and it is where I learned some very important things. Teachers and educators have a role in all stages of one’s life, whether it is in the primary or in university. Teachers have a significant impact on students, and are not just a person who lectures, speaks a couple of words and walks away. Teachers have a much wider role, especially with Elementary and Junior High students, who spend most of their time in school.

The participant B, talked about the school and the routine of classes. She said that there were no opportunities to practice creativity, except perhaps during art class, and that there was little to no variation in the class routine:

Each class is 45 minutes and it is all based on just stuffing information into the students' ears. Six classes per day for five days a week, with only one half hour break for lunch. We lack sufficient time and diversity in education.

According to Participant B, this lack of variety, occurs at every level of education, and students cannot even take breaks between the classes. This routine, she explained, was like a form of indoctrination and was the same even within the active classes, such as cooking:

For example, in grade four we had a cooking class. We used to enjoy this class because we leave the classroom and go to a kitchen. Cooking class, although it was our only breather, but it was only three classes in three months because the teacher taught us different types of foods and different types of fabric. And still indoctrination is continuous even in cooking class, the majority of it was theoretical.

Participant B described a teaching and learning rule that was applied by the teacher in all learning stage. She said,

I remember from my experience in school, starting from primary all the way until I reached university, that we were programmed. Programmed to listen to the lecture, buy the books, study from the books, and then be tested on what we read. Only then can the school semester pass successfully.

According to Participant B, her teachers were not focused on promoting personal skills nor attending to the individual students' needs. They treated all students in same way and they used the same teaching method at all levels of education. She said that when she moved to different places, where there were different systems, she recognized the difference between Canadian and Saudi Arabia approaches to education. In Canada, she explained,

When I visited primary schools, I always find the students playing outside. Then when I went inside the school, I found those who were playing a musical instrument, those who were drawing, who were reading, acting. Classes were ripe with activities and each student could choose something that agrees with his or her inclinations and the field they love.

Participant B observed that, in Canada, they keep students busy and practicing their skills through doing interesting things that they like.

Participant N stated that the education in Saudi Arabia is focused on memorization, until the students go to secondary school, when they are already conditioned to memorize information and regurgitate it on tests. It is a repeat of the same words and the same manner, and this was the problem, according to Participant B, who said that “of course my understandings have change after I came to Canada”.

Participant N also reflected on the education system and how school rules are more flexible in private schools than in public schools. In the private school, the teacher pays attention to students. She said that “private schools actually give good care to creativity and activities. The difference in public schools is that they have a strict system and lots of pressure on teachers and students, and there is no place for recreational activities”. In the public schools, students lack support, because teachers are busy with classes and the break time is short, which gives students no chance for enjoying themselves. Also, private schools' policy is a bit different from public schools because they are more flexible with the rule toward students. For instance, private schools open the way for students to practice different activities and celebrate. In private schools' music and singing are allowed in graduation and convocation day while it is prohibited in public schools.

Participant B talked about the different in the teaching and learning approaches that she was exposed to at university in Canada. She said that:

In regards to university studies, it is dependent on the students themselves. They are required to research and read up on information. The professor's job is to give the

students a task, and it is up to the student to use any method of research to complete this task. The student has to take the task at hand and design or create it in a way that he or she would like. The teacher also asks for your opinion on the subject and for you to write your own reflection for the class.

She admired the Canadian education and how they supported self-assessment in their teaching and learning approach. She said it is really useful to give the students the structure and ask them to search for the information. She said that in master's program the professor always said the teacher's job in the education is to "meet all children's needs".

Participant N also spoke of views on the education system in Saudi Arabia.

Responsibility for the problems in education system does not reside with the teachers alone but with the system itself, because the teachers changed their books but not their practices. It is the same system, she explained, as though they were just continuing from the same old way: "If you want to have a change, you do not only change books, but you have to change the way you deliver the information and introduce professional development to qualify teachers". She went on to say that, "during my practice training course, they taught us about creativity and brainstorming and how to help the students think".

Participant N applied and practiced what she learned when she became a teacher.

Unfortunately, she was required to adhere to certain guidelines, which if she did not apply, she would not get the expected outcomes. The teaching rules and overall system restricted her, as she said, "the problem here is not in the teachers, it is in the system itself". Teachers have no flexibility in how they run their classrooms or how they deliver the information. The problem is in the system. It is tying the hands of the teachers, which restricts them from even the choice of how to apply the curriculum.

Participant N also thinks it is difficult to teach creativity in all subject, because the nature of the subject might be more or less conducive to teaching creativity: “the nature of the materials and subject’s control might give room for students to be creative”. She explained that, “for example, if you have 250 students in the university class then it is hard to know the needs of each student and it is difficult to do special activities. Especially in scientific subjects”. The large number of students could be one reason why there is the lack of encouragement for creativity. Even teachers are not able to cover all the material. Schools are better than universities in implementing and supporting creativity, unless students are by themselves creative in their own way.

Participant N stated that the education system in Saudi Arabia is the reason why students dislike going to school. She said,

The problem is in the system itself. A system that relies on the memorization of information and having students sitting in their place on an ongoing basis only to listen to the teacher speak. She saw the children of her colleagues who loved to go to school and on weekends they show signs of boredom. They stay at home and do not go to school to play and enjoy time with their friends

The thing that struck her was their love of school and she thought that this should be developed from a young age. She also thought that developing skills for expressing themselves is a very important task. The teaching purpose is to educate students and to help them discover their talents and to encourage them to learn and develop their abilities and self-esteem. She stated that “Teacher plays a very important role in education. The role is wider and further than only a teacher”.

Participant N reflected on the possibility for change in Saudi Arabian education system. Her thought was that teachers should receive more support when trying to implement a less

structured, more student-centred teaching approach and that teachers who have studied education abroad should be encouraged to implement what they had learned. Participant N explained that,

teachers are not given the freedom, or the time, or even the ability to reorganize a lesson. The teacher is given lesson plans and activities already preplanned. This is a problem any teacher who has studied outside the Kingdom and has ideas for change will face. They will not be able to make any changes and they must follow the existing curriculum and approach only, even after learning a variety of teaching methods.

Participant N did agree, however, that teachers had the ability to make a change and bring a sense of creativity into the class:

teachers can certainly, with intelligence, make the change and make the lesson fun for students and integrate creativity and create a fun atmosphere that will help the students benefit and that will give the teacher satisfaction and pleasure with his or her performance as an educator.

Furthermore, Participant N thinks that Saudi students are intelligent and they can be innovators, if they get the chance, and she explains that she does see evidence of this: “[in the] present time and the existence of social networking sites we are seeing beautiful creations in all respects”. She told a story of when she observed a teacher implement an active learning approach with her students when she offered a lesson that included information that was difficult for the students to memorize. The lesson was in geography and she selected students to represent different countries. She had the students enact a drama in which each one of the students talked about the country that they represented. The participant explained that observing the lesson unfold was very inspiring for her: “It was so beautiful even the students said this way has made the subject fun and easy. They said, ‘Now we do not need to study. We can just remember the play’.” This way of teaching can reinforce information in the brain more than simply reading that information from a book, and this stuck in the students’ mind for the long term.

Summary of the Interviews

The interviews with the participants opened with introductions and a description of the objectives of the study and began with a creative activity that established a comfortable, reflective tone and encouraged a focus on the significance and role of creativity in education. I asked each of the participants to draw a picture, chart or symbol that represented their own personal thoughts on creativity (see these drawings above). Their drawings became the starting point for our discussion on what they perceived to be the role creativity in their own home life, schooling and in the larger culture. Through an analysis of the data collected during my interviews and within my own narrative journal, I have identified four important themes that apply to my research questions: (1) the definition of creativity, (2) giftedness versus creativity, (3) the role of culture, and (4) the individual's social/familial environment, including approaches to teaching and learning in education. Regarding the first theme, the participants described how they developed their understanding of the word creativity and became more aware of what constituted creativity and what affected its development. The interviews revealed different understandings for the meaning of creativity, and demonstrated how creativity can be defined differently, based on a person's perspective. The participants in this study reflected on the factors that played a role in the development of their own understanding of creativity. They explored various conceptualizations of creativity that were defined by such things as personal characteristic, comprehension, knowledge and multidisciplinary. In terms of the second theme, creativity versus giftedness, the participants compared these two terms and saw them as synonymous, with the qualification that talents and giftedness are considered to be steps in achieving creativity. Creativity was considered a talented attitude. The result of the study stated that there were two basic factors that influenced the development of the participants' own

creativity: culture and education (themes three and four). Culture had an impact on the participants' creativity, at home and at school, especially in terms of whether or not there were opportunities to express personal opinions and to learn from mistake, and in terms of differences in the way boys and girls are treated based on their gender. The participants described the affects of their family and schooling environments on the development of the creativity, especially in terms of their parents' educational background, their own personal self-confidence, and their teachers' attitudes, as well as the kinds of school activities they experienced and the education system in general. All of these factors had an impact on the development of their creativity.

Chapter Six: Conclusions from the Research Findings

This chapter summarizes and discusses the research findings of the study of Saudi female graduate students at a Canadian University and draws some conclusions. This discussion that follows focuses specifically on two components of the study: Saudi female graduate students' perceptions of the meaning and significance of creativity in education, and how their experiences of studying in Saudi Arabia and abroad at Canadian universities has influenced their understanding of creativity.

Through face-to-face interviews, I examined how they conceptualized the notion of creativity during their journey from one culture to another, first in Saudi Arabia and then Canada. I explored the reasons behind both their positive and negative experiences in relation to their understanding of creativity in general and the discovery of their own personal creative development. I discussed the influences of Saudi Arabian culture on their creative development and, specifically, on the expression of their creativity during the learning process. Then, in the data analysis stage of this study, I considered factors that either nurtured or inhibited their individual creative sense.

Through my analysis of the data, I investigated the Saudi female graduate students' perceptions of how their performance was affected by their surrounding environments and whether or not they found there was support and available opportunity for the development of their creativity within their school settings. The Saudi female participants reported that their understanding and conceptualization of creativity was influenced by the culture they grew up in and changed in response to their education, which developed their thinking and behaviour.

These two crucial points were repeatedly and strongly expressed by the participants throughout the interviews. They mentioned that the culture and the home environments in which they were raised and their education shaped their conceptualizations of creativity, and that they experienced limited opportunity to develop their creativity and thinking. The participants home, school and cultural environments were (are) crucial to the development of their creativity. As Lubart and Sternberg (1998) state, “the place, or setting for creative activity can be described through a set of interrelated context, which include the physical setting, the family, the school or workplace, the field of endeavour, and the culture” (p. 66). This has been proved by Saudi female participants in this study.

What follows, therefore, is a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter Four and an explanation of how the findings answer the stated research question: **How do Saudi female graduate students who are studying in Canada perceive the concept of creativity? How do they understand the significance of creativity in relation to their learning? What are the factors that they think facilitated or hindered the development of their creativity?**

The consequences of these findings are also discussed, and possibilities for potential future research are explored.

Participants’ Conceptualizations of Creativity

The participants’ personal perspectives on the meaning of the word “creativity” was a significant theme throughout their interviews. Their understandings of creativity from their personal point of view was expressed through the use of many synonyms that, for them, represent aspects of what they would identify as creative. They stated that creativity has multiple meanings, such as creativity as personal characteristic, creativity as comprehensive and a broad

concept, creativity as knowledge, and creativity as multidisciplinary, which means that creativity is not restricted to specific discipline, such as the Fine Arts or Drama, and is an important aspect of all subjects. This understanding of the multiple meaning and broad applicability of creativity is supported by Andiliou and Murph (2010), who found that creativity contributes to many different skills such as “language acquisition, imaginative play, adaptation, innovation, problem solving, planning, and decision making. [As well as] economic competitiveness, social cohesion and individual well-being” (p. 202).

The participants stated that creativity is not limited but is a board concept and can be witnessed in all the fields or disciplines. They expressed the understanding that every person can be creative in his or her area of interest. They provided examples of creativity that occurred in a number of different disciplines, such as engineering, architecture, education, and they provided many examples of people who they recognized as creative individuals, such as teachers and students. From their perspective, anyone can be an innovator, if she or he is offered the right support for their ideas. The necessity for change and development is at the core of invention in each field. The participants’ perspectives on this issue are discussed and are supported by Lubart and Sternberg (1998), who state that “creativity can occur in virtually any domain, including the visual arts, literature, music, business, science, education and everyday life” (p. 66). (See Chapter Two)

The participants also discussed how there are, however, a number of barriers that inhibit or prevented the development of creativity. They spoke about this in terms of creativity as a process that builds upon prior knowledge. That is, they describe creativity as a process wherein a problem or an idea is mulled over in the mind for long time, until a new or innovative approach

arises out of what is already known. The lack of prior knowledge and a lack of support for creative thinking will impact an individual's ability to develop and express their creativity. The Saudi women who participated in the study explained how they were impacted by the culture and the environments that shaped their thinking, their creativity and their futures.

The participants described "creativity" as a characteristic that people have and that contributes to or hinders the development of their sense of creativity. The notion of "personal characteristic" was emphasized by the participants, because according to their understanding of creativity, personality plays an important role in determining the development of a person's creativity. The participants stated that, to be a creative person, a child must be encouraged from an early age to practice his or her ability to create both ordinary and unusual things and to come up with new or innovative ideas that can be brought into existence. To be creative and to come up with innovative ideas, a person must have high self-esteem, and must not be discouraged by other people's comments and just keep exploring and reflecting on what she or he likes. Sarcastic comments and unconstructive criticism directed at children when they are making things at home or in school lowers their self-confidence and prevents them from developing their creativity.

The participants believed that creativity is the act or process of imaging a goal that makes a change or difference, and that the creative person is one who can focus on his or her goal and work toward making it come into existence. Their belief is supported by Csikszentmihalyi (1997), who states that creativity as "any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transform an existing domain into a new one" (p. 28). The characteristic that creative people have is imagination and the ability to think deeply. The participants believe that, at an early age, children should be introduced to the practice of brainstorming, so as to be familiar with it in the future. They mentioned that a strong personality that is nurtured when someone is young helps

that person develop high self-esteem and enables them to question and openly discuss whatever it is they hear or experience. A person with this kind of personality and this kind of support can be a creative person.

In other words, the participants conceptualized creativity as a personal characteristic that is impacted by psychological factors and is formed by surrounding circumstances (home, community and school environments) that determine whether or not that person will develop their creativity. The creative personal characteristic is a result of a positive and encouraging environment and is therefore dependent upon the cultural context of the individual. The participants stated that, as Saudi women, they were not given many opportunities as young girls to become independent, either at home or at school, and they thought the culture and religious beliefs of their environment had impacted the Saudi community's attitudes towards women and therefore had an effect on their experiences.

Even while they were studying for their bachelor's degrees in Saudi Arabia, they had not been given opportunities to be creative, and they understood this to be due to out-of-date pedagogies that are still being used, and also due to teachers who did not give them chances to be creative. They believe that there was a difference in the possibility for opportunities to be creative within different fields of study, that there were fewer opportunities in the field of literacy and that creativity was deemed mostly relevant in sciences. One explanation they presented for this lack of opportunity was that larger class sizes did not allow for creative exploration. Another explanation was that the lack of qualifications for teacher leads them to apply traditional teaching practices that limit their students' creativity. The participants believe, however, that the class size and teacher qualifications do not fully explain why it was that they experienced such limited opportunities to be creative. They expressed the notion that had their

environments been more supportive, they would have become more independent and creative and had increased confidence in themselves. Their understanding that their environment was a factor in the development of their creativity is supported by Maker & Muammar (2008), who explain that “[c]reativity depends on cognitive and environmental factors that combine in an interactive fashion” (p. 403).

They explained how it wasn’t until they had studied abroad that they began to consider the role of creativity in learning, and they began to expanded their thinking about the meaning and significance of creativity in their own education and in the education system in general, both in Saudi Arabia and in Canada. As the findings from the interviews with my participants and from my own journals indicate, we felt that we had previously had limited knowledge and understanding about our own creativity, because we did not receive support within our home and school environments, and because as women we were not given opportunities in Saudi Arabia. We felt that there was tremendous social pressure to just follow traditional ways and to pursue only those occupations that were expected for women to perform. We also felt that we were dependent on our families and that our families did not approve of their girls working in places that were predominantly male environments. For these reasons, our stories reflected how our education limited our chances of building a foundation of knowledge in areas that interested us that we could then expand upon through a creative process and also limited our opportunities to explore new ideas through the creative process.

Moreover, the participants’ narratives revealed that they conceptualized creativity and giftedness as synonyms, and that creative and talented people follow their wonder and curiosity. Gifted people, they believe, have the potential to be creative. As the participants became more

aware of creativity, they began to believe that giftedness, talents and intelligence are steps that have helped them in the development of their own creativity. They expressed an understanding that children are all naturally curious and inclined to be creative, and that if a child's family supports the child's individual interests and offers them opportunities to explore those interests, the child will grow up with a sense of their own creativity and be able to express it. The child's natural curiosity and individual talents will develop into creativity. As Gow (2000) explains, creativity can be learned, which suggests that creativity can be developed through practice and over time: "[It] is what we teach in our classroom and encourage in our students, a result of the methods, practices, and processes that we as educators have developed" (p. 32). This conceptualization of creativity, which holds that creativity can be affected by teaching and learning, seeks the "restructuring of traditional methods, or the creation of new, habits of the mind" (p. 33). (See Chapter Two)

The participants described the importance of encouraging children at early age and of listening to their interests and trying to encourage them to pursue their area of interest and talent. Reflecting back on their own experiences, they felt that this attention to children's interests was absent in their families most of the time. The participants described how, as children, the adults in their homes often ignored their unique talents, and they expressed curiosity about something and explored their own interests in front of their parents, their parents would ask them to stop. Reflecting back on these experiences, the participants felt that what they were doing as children sometimes bothered the adults, and so the adults asked them to leave the room and to play alone. This type of dismissal and discouragement of children's exploration of things that are of interest to them was understood by the participants as having the effect of inhibiting the development of their creative expression. Their parents seemed to not realize that allowing and encouraging such

free play can build a good relationship with a child and that expanding on what the child is doing through discussion can contribute to the development of the child's mind. Hirschman (1985) suggested that parents should "listen and talk to [their] children. Parents must take time to listen to their children. Encourage them to discuss what they do and how they feel. Listening to [their] children gives them a feeling of belonging" (p. 490).

The participants believed that creativity is an inherent characteristic, which means that all people are born equal, and that their natural creativity is nurtured (or not) by their parents, their cultural environment and the teachers in their schools. The participants observed, however, that not everyone believed that all people have the inherent capacity for creativity. That is, it was their experience that some teachers and people in their community believe some children have greater capacity for creativity than others. These children were often identified as more intelligent, as excelling in problem-solving skills. So, sometimes a differentiation is made between children and based on this differentiation, the parents or teachers motivated some children more and ignore others. The participants, however, held the belief that all children are intelligent and have the capacity to be creative, and that it is the role of adults (both parents and teachers) to help and support them, understand them well and recognize their needs. In this way, adults can nurture the natural curiosity and intelligence of the child and encourage the development of creativity.

The Significance of Creativity in Learning and the Effects of Culture

The participants discussed the importance of enhancing creativity in students and using various learning approach to helped encourage the students' creative endeavors and innovative thinking. They believed that the role of parents and educators was to encourage young people

curious minds and guide children from an early age in their own discovery of knowledge so as to best prepare them for the future. Based on their own personal experience, the participants reported what they believed were the factors that supported them in developing their creativity and the factors that inhibited them. In their narratives, they explored the relationship between culture and these positive and negative factors in the development of their creativity.

The participants reported that, as children and as students, the culture they grew up in, and their environments at home and schools played a significant role in the development of their creativity. This claim is supported by Csikszentmihalyi (1997), who states “The individual’s early background has a significant effect. Interest and curiosity tend to be stimulated by positive experiences with family, by a supportive emotional environment, by a rich cultural heritage” (p.327). They discussed the effects of such things as having (or not having) opportunity to express their personal opinions, being inspired (or not) by their environment, and being encouraged (or not) to learn from mistake, as well as the effects of gender discrimination.

For example, the participants believed that parents and families play a significant role in supporting the development of a child’s confidence in their own creativity. The findings of this study revealed that most of the participants’ parents did not assist them pursuing any interests at home, which indicates that the parents did not value the importance of attending to a child’s particular interests and ideas. The participants felt that, had they had opportunities to pursue their interests within a supportive home environment, they would have developed a greater sense of their own creative and by extension had greater success in their endeavors.

There is lack of community education in Saudi Arabia around the subject of parenting, including such things as the benefits of encourage children’s talent and creativity, attending to children’s individual interests and encouraging their creativity, or even focusing children’s early

childhood education. There is a lack of public awareness around how parents and family members at home can play an important role in supporting children by encouraging them to practice what they like, helping them prepare and plan activities that advance their skills and knowledge, and giving them positive reinforcement for simple accomplishments.

In my study, the participants described their own experiences of studying in Saudi schools and universities and indicated their belief that these experiences were strongly impacted by the larger cultural and had a significant effect on the development of their creativity. According to the participants, the influence of culture on education had an impact on the classroom environment, which tended to require the students to be quiet in the class and listen to the teachers, and that this impacted the students' education. It seemed to the participants that their teachers practiced a traditional approach to teaching that focused on abstract, general rules and ignored personal values and interests.

The participants described the cultural impact on the dynamics within Saudi classrooms; for example, the students do not make eye contact with the teachers when the teachers and students discuss together because this is considered disrespectful behaviour. Students must always speak to teachers and if the students, for example, refer to the teacher by name rather than by title, the student received a penalty. The participants also discussed how their parents tended to consider teachers as role models and as experts, so most parents forced their children to listen to the teachers' discussion without questioning it. The participants also stated that the approach that the teacher takes in school made them unwilling to become a teacher, because the teacher did not encourage the students' desire for learning or inspire them through the use of interesting and engaging teaching approaches. The apparent, systemic decision that creativity was irrelevant to education—evident in the lack of encouragement given to students—had consequences on the

development of students' self-confidence and creativity abilities. As explained by O'Hera and Sternberg (2000- 2001; Sternberg, 2006),

Creativity, according to the investment theory, is in large part a decision. The view of creativity as a decision suggests that creativity can be developed. Simply requesting that students be more creative can render them more creative if they believe that the decision to be creative will be rewarded rather than punished. (p. 90)

The participants reported that their teachers in Saudi Arabia seemed unconscious of the educational significance of asking students to formulate their own personal opinions and develop their own ideas. As a consequence, the participants themselves did not realize that the expression of personal opinions was important to the learning process until they attended a Canadian university, where they were suddenly asked to voice their thoughts on different subjects they were studying. To be asked questions about their personal opinion was a difficulty they had faced for first time in their studies. During classes at their Canadian university, they had opportunities to speak up and be part of the community, and this was an important experience for them as students who are studying abroad. Their experience is support by Edit and Corina (2006), who state that "argumentation skills should be explicitly taught, as they are not spontaneously executed" (p. 537).

Their experiences of the classroom in Canada contrasted to their previous experiences in Saudi Arabia, where they did not get opportunities to voice their opinions, and where they had to absorb the information that was presented by the teacher without sharing their own thoughts or opinions. The participants revealed that they had become more aware, since beginning their studies in Canada, that expressing personal opinion and becoming active in their own learning is their responsibility and that it is important to share their views and listen respectfully to other people's views, even if those others express opposing opinions. The participants spoke of their

belief that, as women, it increased their self-esteem and confidence when they were given the opportunity to express their personal thoughts and opinions, and that the lack of this opportunity in Saudi culture has led women to have low self-esteem and inhibits them from discussing issues in public.

In other words, the participants' responses revealed that the environment was an important factor in the development of creativity and could be inspiring and motivating or unstimulating and discouraging. The participants' narratives were also clear that the environments where they lived and studied in Saudi Arabia had impacted their thinking and influenced their behavior in regard to creative expression. They believed that their home, school and community environments did not support them in their endeavors to consciously develop their minds. There was an absence of spaces and resources to practice creativity. The participants explained their belief that when children cannot find anything to do and to spend their time they grow up with a lack of skills and talent. Most of the participants described their school environment as boring and uninspiring, and that this influenced their interests and their performance at home and at school.

In this study the participants expressed a belief that the way in which their parents and teachers (and by extension, the general culture) viewed making mistakes as shameful and as a weakness was a factor that affected their creativity and learning process. Making mistakes is a crucial part of learning but that the notion of learning from mistakes is absent, generally, in Saudi culture. The participants described how the consequences they faced when they had made a mistake led them to avoid making mistakes in the future. Learning from mistakes means a person is reflecting, growing and consciously developing. This positive evaluation of "mistakes" is supported by NESTA, which states,

Taking risks within curriculum subjects can enhance learning by enabling young people to make more decisions and to experiment with different ideas and approaches. [...] Learning to consider alternative courses of action and less obvious routes can develop personal attributes, particularly drive and confidence. Risk taking is integral to enterprise. (p. 9)

The Saudi female participants reported that they admitted to themselves whenever they made a mistake, and that to admit this to oneself and in front of others is a helpful way to reach a goal and succeed. In contrast, when a person has a fear of failure or punishment, she will not likely admit to making a mistake. Encouraging children to be honest with themselves about their mistakes, and teaching them that making mistakes is the beginning of a process toward success is important. As Edit and Corina (2006) explain, “self-explanation characterizes expert problem solvers, who are more likely to admit their difficulty in understanding a concept. Such self-diagnosis appears to lead to an elaboration of the solver’s conceptual understanding” (p. 532). However, the idea that one can learn from mistakes is a cultural belief, so too is the idea that failure is shameful and mistakes follow a person everywhere. Culture, therefore, plays an important role in whether or not students are encouraged to self-reflect on their mistakes and to learn from them.

In addition to this, the participants described how they experienced gender discrimination both at home and at school while growing up in Saudi Arabia, which significantly impacted the development of their creativity. It has only been in recent years that Saudi women have had the right and opportunity to study abroad, as the women of this study have done. As Hamdan (2005) explains, “women education in Saudi Arabia has been changing, and the Ministry of Higher Education has considered sending talented women aboard to finish studies in high-demand subject” (p. 59). However, most Saudi families do not allow their daughters to study abroad or

work in occupations other than those traditionally associated with women. The participants revealed that they felt that the traditional beliefs of their own families limited their opportunities and influenced them in their choices to study a discipline that was considered appropriate for women. Yamani (as cited in Hamdan, 2005) stated, “[w]omen of Hijaz (the western province of Saudi: Mecca Jeddah and Madinah) have a more heterogonous character than that of other region and province in the country” (p. 48).

Moreover, education was considered by the participants to be a core factor that affected their creativity, because school is comparable to a second home for student, and a sense of belonging needs to be enhanced within the larger school community. If a student lacks the feeling of belonging to the place where they study, they cannot feel comfortable and the school is not providing the best environment for learning and achieving. The participants in my study revealed that educated parents have an enormous influence on their children, because children learn first at home. Children’s brains are shaped in their first years depending on what their parents teach them, because child mind is flexible and able to learn from everything around them. What they learn from their parents, therefore, will affect them in the long term. The participants thought that their parents’ level of education was a factor in whether or not they instilled in them an enthusiasm to learn. The participants observed that those parents who were highly educated and had had the chance to study abroad when they were young also preferred to send their children aboard to study, so that their children had an opportunity to gain more experience and become more independent. Parents who are aware of the benefits of higher education because of their own level of education tend to motivate their kids to achieve success in school, and this affects their children’s learning process.

In addition, as education factor influenced student ways to creativity, inspired teacher behaviour increase or reduce students' self-confidence to take the path to be a creative. Teachers' attitudes affect their behavior towards their students in the classroom and in the school, and depending upon a teacher's behavior, students can perform well or not. The participants described experiences of teachers' negative behaviour in the schools; for example, one participant described how she had observed teachers calling students who were challenging in the classroom "failures" or "stupid students". The negative words spoken by teachers to their students impacted the student's self-esteem and creative sense, which are supposed to be nurtured and carefully encouraged at that age. This sometimes led the students to hate going to school, and thus affected their achievements. Strict teachers often created fear in their students and forced them to just memorize all the information in a book to avoid confrontation with the teacher and ensure that they did not get bad marks. A teachers' behaviour within the classroom affects the development of the students' self-confidence. The participants observed that their teachers' behaviour made them feel as if they could not do anything except what the teacher asks them to do and this had the effect of inhibiting their creativity. As Kumar (2013) states, "when educational institutions impose authority and discipline and encourage conformity, they cultivate fear" (p.70).

Teaching and learning style and activities in the class are integrated to encourage creativity. The participants reported that using activities in the teaching and learning process can be considered one of the most effective and useful learning methods. What they experienced, however, was that activities were not provided for them once they enrolled in school. As young students in Saudi Arabia, they faced strict rules and discipline, which they felt dampened their sense of creativity and led them to want the school day to end so that they could go back home.

Participants reported that after attending classes at a Canadian university, they recognized the benefits of employing activities in the classroom so as to facilitate group work and active learning approach.

Most of the interviewed participants claimed that the education system has, in their observation, started to change from the more traditional model that emphasizes memorization to one that encourages greater critical thinking. As explained in Chapter Two, the Ministry of Education evaluated school textbooks and curriculum, and more recently, there have been revisions in the textbook and curriculum that focus on developing critical skills (Alwehaibi, 2012). They have changed the textbook but there has not been sufficient professional development for the teachers; there is still a lack of skills and use of traditional teaching methods. According to the observations of the participants, their teachers did not make the effort to engage their students and make the classroom an exciting and happy place. Developing critical thinking skills in students requires a teacher who is able to pay more attention to the individual needs of his or her students, and also requires continuous improvement in pedagogy and a focus on students' self-assessment and independent learning. The participants revealed that their teachers would have supported them more if they had been aware of their students' needs and striven to find different approaches to meet those needs. A lack of passion and lack of teachers' motivation inhibited the students' creative sense. The participants explained that teachers in Saudi Arabia do not have the freedom to deliver the curriculum in ways that they believe may be more suited to their particular group of students; they must follow a strict assessment schedule. The participants admired the education system in Canada, where they had observed that teachers employed a variety of strategies to assist their students in achieving academic success.

Both Participants N and B discussed the use of teaching approaches to encourage active learning and support student creativity, and the possibility of changing the teaching and learning approaches used in Saudi Arabia from traditional methods to these more student-centered, active learning methods. The interview with participants revealed their belief that there was a need for fostering creativity in the Saudi education system through the use of multiple teaching and learning methods and an overall adjustment in the education system. Future generations need to have access to a more developed teaching system that reflects greater awareness of diverse learning modes and offers greater opportunities for students to develop creativity.

Participants' Perspectives on the Future of Education

Although the education system in Saudi Arabia is pursuing development, this study raises concerns about traditional methods of teaching in general and about the education of girls in particular. It is the participants' hope that when they go back to Saudi Arabia they will work toward implementing what they have learned about education through their studies at a Canadian University. This study considers different perspectives and personal experiences of Saudi female graduate students who have studied education in both Saudi Arabia and Canada. Because the participants in this study are all highly educated students, who are also teachers and who have experienced education in two culturally different contexts, they are each in a position to offer important insights into the differences in approaches taken in the classroom and their possible affects.

This study examines the participants' narratives about their experiences of studying and learning in different cultures, from when they were very young until they came to study at the graduate level. Participants in this study spoke about the valuable experience they gained from

studying abroad and how they would be a positive good position to transfer their knowledge to other teachers in Saudi Arabia. The participants indicated that an important motivation for furthering their studies was to apply what they had learned from their graduate work in Saudi Arabia and advocate for greater opportunities for active learning in the Saudi classroom so as to meet the needs of Saudi students. They want to apply different teaching approaches from those they had experienced as students themselves and encourage the next generation of students by providing them opportunity and space to develop their creativity. They also want to increase the use of group activities, which will develop learning communities within the classroom, so as to support the exchange of ideas and enhance collaborative learning.

The participants expressed an awareness that change in the Saudi education system will not be easy, especially at the beginning. They expressed concern that will not be able to make any changes and that they will be required to follow the existing curriculum and traditional approaches that are currently required. They are committed, however, to the belief that a successful teacher can certainly, with intelligence, make the necessary changes and create an atmosphere and lessons that are fun for students and will encourage creativity. This will not only benefit the students but will also give the teacher satisfaction and pleasure in his or her own performance as an educator.

The participants in this study aim to help improve teaching practices for the benefit of the teachers and the young generation of students in Saudi Arabia. They are hopeful that they can contribute to increasing teachers' awareness about the need to apply a more active approach in the classroom, and to use multiple teaching and learning methods, so as to access various ways to teach the lesson. The participants want to heighten awareness about the significance of creativity in learning throughout all disciplines, and inform other teachers about the use teaching practices

that encourage the development of students' self-esteem and creativity. They believe that students are creative and in need of being supported through access to education, all disciplines, and opportunities to express their thoughts and opinions. This applies most especially to Saudi girls and women. The participants are keen to return to Saudi Arabia and make a contribution to their fields of study based on their experiences and studies in the Canadian education system.

The Saudi Arabian government has published a vision plan for 2030, which contains many positive changes that are expected to improve the quality of life for Saudi citizens. One of the proposed changes is to create an exclusive, government-funded scholarship program that will fund teachers (both male and female) who want to study abroad at universities in developed countries. By funding an initiative that offers teachers the opportunity to increase their education and observe the education system of other countries, the government recognizes the need for teachers to enhance their skills and increase their knowledge as well as the need for change in the larger education system. The vision plan for 2030 reflects the government's acknowledgement that teachers play an important role in effecting the change. Their plan for teacher professional development will enable teachers to incorporate the progressive teaching approaches they have learned through education abroad and thereby strengthen the education system for future generations.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

I chose a qualitative research approach in order to focus my research on how the complex and multifaceted subject of creativity is perceived by a very specific group of people. The choices I made to limit this study allowed me to perform a more in-depth and detailed investigation, rather than a broad and more general survey. The limitations of this study relate, primarily, to the number of participants it included (three) and the proximity of the participants

to each other. As discussed in the methodology chapter, all three participants (myself included) are Saudi female graduate students, who are studying in the faculty of education of a university in Eastern Canada. There are no male participants in the study, or undergraduate students, and all of the participants were studying at a university in Eastern Canada. No participants originated from countries other than Saudi Arabia.

As previously explained in Chapter One, I have limited my study to female participants because my research is focused specifically on understanding Saudi female perspectives on the meaning and significance of creativity in education. My intention is to increase awareness of Saudi women's experiences of education and to determine ways in which women's education in Saudi Arabia can be improved. Only Saudi women can describe the hurdles young girls face in school in Saudi Arabia and explain how the development of their creativity and learning processes are being hindered thus preventing them from participating in Saudi society to the greatest degree of their ability. This study is an in-depth study of women's experiences, rather than a broad study that explores differences in experiences based on gender or comparative study based on culture. Future studies would, perhaps, elaborate upon the conclusions presented here through the inclusion of a broader scope of perspectives.

Admittedly, the small number of participants prevents a cross-checking analysis of the participants' personal stories, which would be necessary if I were to make more general claims regarding the experiences of women in Saudi Arabia based on the stories of a few. As Creswell (2012) states, "when gathering stories, narrative researchers need to be cautious about the stories" (p. 512). For various reasons a participant might embellish, or even fabricate, a story. This is what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) refer to as "fak[ing] the data" (p. 10). In larger studies it is possible to distinguish "fake data" within a larger body of data through comparison.

In such a small study, this was more difficult and I was dependent upon my participants to tell an accurate story of their experience. The bias of this study consists of restricting the study to the perspectives of a few female Saudi student studying graduate courses in education at Eastern Canadian Universities.

The most significant recommendation I can make to follow up on the results of this study is that future research extend the scope of the participants and delve deeper into the study of educators and teachers' perspectives on their responsibility toward creating opportunities to develop students' creativity within Saudi Arabia. For example, future research could consider the degree to which Saudi teachers are willing to accept alternative approaches to teaching and identify barriers to change, or a future study could follow up on teachers, who have completed their graduate work in Education at a Canadian university and then returned to teach in Saudi schools. This study could examine how teaching practices have changed and what challenges they encountered. Such studies would ask teachers whether or not they were willing or able to adapt their teaching practices to reflect a variety of pedagogical theories, such as active and student-centered learning. Such research would inform the design and implementation of professional development within all levels of the Saudi education system. In order to raise mindfulness of the meaning and significance of creativity in the learning process, a better teacher education and public awareness is necessary.

Conclusion

This study has presented Saudi female graduate students' perceptions of the meaning and significance of creativity in education, and it has considered their observations of the education system in both Saudi Arabia and Canada, so as to determine the factors that they identify as

either supporting or inhibiting the development of their own creativity. This study reveals how culture has impacted the participants' learning, in terms of shaping their awareness about the significance of creativity and in terms of the development of their own creativity. Culture had an impact on their home environments and on their school environments, both of which are central to a child's development. The absence of opportunity, motivation and inspiration at home and school were all factors that affected the participants' learning process, and upon reflection of the consequences of these absences, they have developed a greater awareness of the significance of creativity in education and why creativity needs to be encouraged within the Saudi home and school environments.

Given the conclusions of this study, I recommend that new and multiple approaches to teaching and learning be implemented within the Saudi education system, so as to increase student engagement and involvement in their own learning, and encourage the development of their inherent creativity. It is the intention of the participants within this study to return to Saudi Arabia and enhance, in whatever ways possible, the learning environment of their students. By example, they will demonstrate how teachers' behavior toward students can be improved, so as to create environments that enable students to express their opinions, make mistakes, persist in problem solving, develop their creativity so as to imagine new ways of thinking and doing things, and ultimately learn. Schools should establish greater communication with parents and assist them in recognizing differences in children's learning styles. Encouraging cooperation between the teachers and parents will increase community involvement in the school, and create additional opportunities for learning, not only for the students but also for the parents and the teachers. Teachers and parents can collaborate in the discovery and discussion of the students' interests and discover a child's interest by sharing their observations of that child at home and

school. These strategies for effecting change within the schools are some of the ideas that the participants have taken away from their involvement in this study. Their intention is to apply these strategies in their classrooms in Saudi Arabia, and to create the kind of learning environment that enables their students to explore and learn about the world through activities that encourage, rather than hinder, their students' creative development.

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Appendix A

I: Interview Questions

The following is a list of interview questions that I intend to ask my participants. These questions are open-ended and flexible, so as to allow my participants the freedom to express their thoughts without my interference or control, and so the answers will be a reflection of their personal feelings, opinions, or ideas about a subject. I intend to ask this series of questions in order to focus the discussion on the main topic areas of the study.

1. What words would you use to describe someone or something that is creative?
Explore creativity or words that represent creativity in “Bubble Chart”. Can you describe how and why you filled in your chart this way?
 2. What quote resonates the most with you? Why does it affect you the most?
- “There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost.” ~ Martha Graham
 - “[C]reativity is a central source of meaning in our lives. Most of the things that are interesting, important, and human are the results of creativity” (p.1). ~ Csikszentmihalyi (1996).
 - “You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.” ~ Maya Angelou
 - “Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.” ~ Sir Ken Robinson (2009)

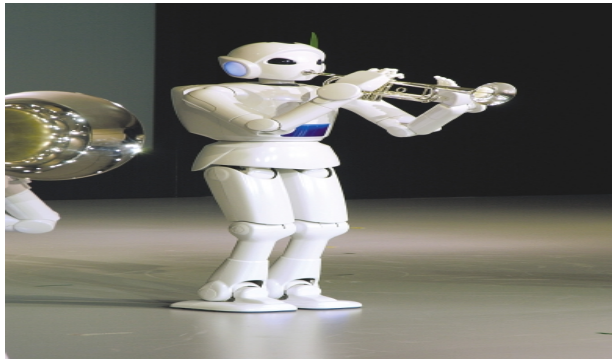
3. What comes to your mind when you see pictures of creative ideas or creative people?



Created by School of Creative & Performing Arts



Created by Joachim_werner



Created by Frances Cha, CNN



Created by RoyalBlak007

4. Tell me about someone who you think is very creative? In your opinion, why do think that he or she is creative? Tell me about a woman in your life back home in Saudi Arabia who you think is a particularly creative? What was it about her that makes you think of her as a creative woman? How do you think she became so creative? How did people respond to her?
5. As a child, what did you enjoy doing most during play-time? Tell me a story from your childhood about something you did that you think demonstrated or encouraged your creativity, or promote your sense of creativity?
6. When you were a child, did your parents or other family members encourage or discourage the type of play you have just described? Can you tell a story about when you were encouraged or discouraged? And explain why this might have happened?
7. Describe the general dynamics of the classes you attended during your education back

- in Saudi? What approach did the teacher primarily take in terms of delivering the curriculum? Were there activities that encouraged your creative skills? Were you provided with opportunities to express your creativity?
8. From your experience of studying in Saudi Arabia and Canada, can you recall any projects or artifacts that you would consider creative? (Follow up questions to this could be ... Can you please bring it in the next interview? Alternatively, can you describe it in detail and explain the qualities you see in it that make it stand out as something creative?)
 9. Describe the process you experience when doing or making something you feel is creative? (Prompting questions to this could be ... Do you need a quiet space or do you like activity around you? Do you need an extended period of time or do experience creativity in short bursts? Do you like to move or use a tool, like a pencil or laptop?)
 10. Based on your observations of Saudi Arabia and Canada, do you think there are cultural differences in how teachers encourage the personal interests of their students? Do you think educators need to use approaches to teaching that encourage students to pursue and express their personal interests?
 11. Tell me about some challenges you faced as a new student in a Canadian university. Do you think Canadian educators teach in a different or similar way to Saudi Arabian teachers? Were there different expectations?
 12. Do you feel that you have changed in terms of expressing yourself over the last few years? What do you attribute this change to?
 13. How do you think your thoughts and experiences of creativity will change the way you contribute to your field when you return to Saudi Arabia?
 14. What are the limits of possibility for change in Saudi Arabia, especially in terms of encouraging women creativity?

II: Participants Requesting Letter

A Study of Creativity in Education

I am a Master of Education student researcher at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada studying Curriculum Studies. I am writing a master dissertation entitled *Exploring the Meaning and Significance of Creativity in Education: A Narrative inquiry of Saudi Female Graduate Students' Experiences in a Canadian University*. I am currently seeking interested participants.

The purpose of this study is to explore the notion of creativity and how the development of creativity is encouraged or hindered by factors of culture, family background and educational experiences. By gaining insight into the meaning of creativity, its role education and those factors that affect its development, this study aims to promote pedagogical practices that nurtures students' creativity.

Who can participate?

The study will include participants who fit the following criteria:

1. Female from Saudi Arabia studying at an Eastern Canadian university
2. Second or third year, full-time, master's degree students in the Faculty of Education at a university located in Eastern Canada or recent graduates of the program
3. Two or more years of teaching experience

What does the study involve?

The study will involve the following steps:

1. Participants will be interviewed twice over a two-week period
2. Interviews will be face-to-face and will take place in a university library study room
3. Interviews will be one hour in length and will consist of open-ended questions
4. Participants will be given the opportunity to read and approve transcripts of their interviews

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw their consent to participate at any time and without stating any particular reason.

Privacy of participants will be respected. Only the primary researcher will be aware of participants' identity. Throughout the collected data, the participants will be referred to by a chosen pseudonym.

If you wish to participate in this study and share your thoughts and observations about what it means to be creative, how your creativity has been considered by your culture, your family life and/or your experiences in the classroom please contact me for further information. Contact information here: reem.almahmudi@msvu.ca

IV: Certificate of Research Ethics Clearance



University Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Research Ethics Clearance

Effective Date	June 1, 2016	Expiry Date	May 31, 2017
File #:	2015-127		
Title of project:	<i>Exploring the meaning and significance of creativity in education: a narrative inquiry of Saudi female graduate students' experiences in a Canadian University</i>		
Researcher(s):	Reem Jaber Almahmudi		
Supervisor (if applicable):	Ashwani Kumar		
Co-Investigators:	n/a		
Version :	1		

The University Research Ethics Board (UREB) has reviewed the above named research proposal and confirms that it respects the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and Mount Saint Vincent University's policies, procedures and guidelines regarding the ethics of research involving human participants. This certificate of research ethics clearance is valid for a period of **one year** from the date of issue.

Researchers are reminded of the following requirements:	
Changes to Protocol	Any changes to approved protocol must be reviewed <u>and</u> approved by the UREB prior to their implementation. Form: REB.FORM.002 Info: REB.SOP.113 Policy: REB.POL.003
Changes to Research Personnel	Any changes to approved persons with access to research data must be reported to the UREB immediately. Form: REB.FORM.002 Info: REB.SOP.113 Policy: REB.POL.003
Annual Renewal	Annual renewals are contingent upon an annual report submitted to the UREB prior to the expiry date as listed above. You may renew up to four times, at which point the file must be closed and a new application submitted for review. Form: REB.FORM.003 Info: REB.SOP.116 Policy: REB.POL.003
Final Report	A final report is due on or before the expiry date. Form: REB.FORM.004 Info: REB.SOP.116 Policy: REB.POL.003
Unanticipated Research Event	Researchers must inform the UREB immediately and submit a report to the UREB within seven (7) working days of the event. Form: REB.FORM.008 Info: REB.SOP.115 Policy: REB.POL.003
Adverse Research Event	Researchers must inform the UREB immediately and submit a report to the UREB within two (2) working days of the event. Form: REB.FORM.007 Info: REB.SOP.114 Policy: REB.POL.003

*For more information: <http://www.msvu.ca/en/home/research/researchethics/policies/default.aspx>

Dr. Daniel Séguin, Chair
University Research Ethics Board

166 Bedford Hwy Halifax Nova Scotia B3M 2J6 Canada
Tel 902 457 6350 • msvu.ca/ethics

IIIV: Confidentiality Agreement for the Translator

Project title - *Exploring the Meaning and Significance of Creativity in Education: A Narrative inquiry of Saudi Female Graduate Students' Experiences in a Canadian University*

I, _____, have been hired to translate from Arabic to English the collected interviews for the above named project conducted by Reem Jaber Almahmudi.

I agree to -

1. keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the primary investigator;
2. hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual revealed during the transcription of recordings, during a live oral interview, or in any other data;
3. not make copies of any raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts), unless specifically requested to do so by the primary investigator;
4. keep all data that contains identifying information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession. This includes:
 - keeping all digitized raw data in computer password-protected files and other raw data in a locked file;
 - closing any computer programs and documents of the raw data when temporarily away from the computer;
 - permanently deleting any e-mail communication containing the data; and
 - using closed headphones if transcribing recordings
5. give, all raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the primary investigator when I have completed the translation tasks.
6. destroy all research information in any form or format that is not returnable to the primary investigator (e.g., information stored on my computer hard drive or any backup device) upon completion of the translation tasks.

Translator: _____
(Print Name) (Signature) (Date)

Researcher: _____
(Print Name) (Signature) (Date)

IIIIV: Confidentiality Agreement for the editor and proofreader

As a research editor and proofreader you will be in possession of personal, and at times sensitive, information about individuals, possibly including their identities, locations, as well as their study data. You are expected to keep all information confidential, and understand and abide by the ethics policy as described in the Tri-council Policy Statement

(<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>).

- I understand that participant information will not be discussed or shared in any form or format with anyone other than the research team, except as necessary in performing my duties as a research assistant/editor. When required to discuss participant information with individuals outside of the project team, I will do so in a discreet and professional manner.
- I will ensure that when not working on the data it will be kept in a secure location. I will not work with the data in an area that may compromise participants' confidentiality or anonymity. When transferring data in hard copy or electronic form, I will also ensure their security.
- All participant data, in any form or format, is to be returned to the research team once I have completed the research tasks. Participant data is not to be copied unless specifically requested by the research team.
- I agree to notify the research team immediately if any unexpected or adverse events occur in the conduct of the research, data analysis, or other review that can have a possible negative impact for the participants.
- This non-disclosure agreement is permanent. I will not discuss participant information with others even after the project is complete or when I have finished working with the research team.

I have read and understood the Confidentiality Agreement, understand what constitutes confidential materials, and I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the research materials. I accept the terms and conditions for my involvement in the project.

Name (print):	
Date:	
Signature:	

IIIIIV: Informed Consent form

Study name:

Exploring the Meaning and Significance of Creativity in Education: A Narrative inquiry of Saudi Female Graduate Students' Experiences in a Canadian University.

Researchers:

Reem Jaber Almahmudi
Master of Arts in Education (Curriculum Studies)
Reem.Almahmudi@msvu.ca

Purpose of study:

This study explores the concept of creativity, the significance of creativity in teaching and learning, and the importance of establishing pedagogical practices that encourage the creativity of students. The literature on creativity reveals how challenging it is to articulate a comprehensive definition of creativity; it has been variously defined, based on individual perspectives and within different disciplines. This study considers the pedagogical consequences of these various definitions of creativity, such as “giftedness,” and it explores the understanding of creativity as an innate sense of wonder or curiosity that can be nurtured and developed in ways similar to a skill. The various definitions of creativity have corresponding views on the significance, if any, of creativity within in education. The literature also reveals differing views on the relationship between culture and creativity, and considers whether or not an individual’s familial, social or cultural environment can encourage or hinder the development of creativity. How one understands the relationship between culture and creativity also has implications for teaching and learning. Furthering the literature on creativity, therefore, this study explores the meaning and significance of creativity in education as it is understood by Saudi female graduate students at a university in Eastern Canada. Through in-depth interviews, the study will explore the biographical of two Saudi female graduates and the autobiographical of the researcher, so the participants will be asked to describe what they understand as the meaning of creativity and its role in education. Through stories of their own personal-professional experiences, the participants will explore how they received, or did not receive, support for their creative development from their parents and community, and from their teachers in school both in Saudi Arabia and in Canada. They will also explore differences or similarities of the teaching pedagogies that they observed here in Canada and in Saudi Arabia, and whether or not they perceive a need for an adjustment in either context. To analyze the participants’ stories, the researcher will look for themes that arise out of the participants’ stories that reveal what it is they believe about creativity. The researcher will make connections or draw contrasts between what the participants have expressed about their experiences and also with the literature. Through an analysis of the stories presented by these uniquely positioned participants, therefore, this study aims to contribute to the scholarship in the field of education that is developing a better understanding of the importance of using pedagogy in the teaching and learning process that

nurtures students' creativity, so as to make education more valuable, meaningful and interesting to students.

What I will be asked to do in the research:

The researcher will ask me to participate in the following:

1. I will be interviewed twice over a two-week period
2. Interviews will be face-to-face and will take place in a university library study room
3. Interviews will be one hour in length and will consist of open-ended questions
4. I will be given the opportunity to read and approve transcripts of my interviews

Risks and Discomforts

The researcher does not anticipate that there will be any risks or discomforts involved in this study. Interview questions will ask me about my past and present experiences at home and in the classroom that relate to the topic of creativity, creative development and the significance of creativity in education. The interview questions are not intended to raise sensitive topics or to bring out psychological or emotional responses. In the unlikely event, however, that I experience discomfort during the process of the study, the researcher will offer assistance in obtaining guidance in dealing with any negative effects.

Benefits of the research and benefits to me:

In addition to making a general contribution to the scholarship in the field of education that promotes a pedagogy that nurtures students' creativity, and strives to make education more meaningful and interesting to all students, this study focuses on the experiences of female educators from Saudi Arabia. The benefit to me as a participant, therefore, is that I will have an opportunity to explore my own sense of creativity, and contemplate how my creativity was supported or inhibited. It is possible that I will gain insight into how I can overcome any inhibitions and nurture my own creativity. I will also develop an awareness of how to improve my skills as an educator with a better understanding of how to encourage creativity in my students. Furthermore, because participants are female educators from Saudi Arabia, this study is a platform for voicing the perspectives and experiences of Saudi Arabian women, and aims to encourage educators to implement teaching practices that will benefit women's creative expression.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and I may have choose to stop participating at any time.

Withdrawal from the study:

I can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if I so decide. My decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect my relationship with the researcher, Mount Vincent University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event I withdraw from the study, I will notify the researcher of my wish to withdraw. All associated data collected will be kept for 5 years after the completion of the study so that the researcher may use it for conference presentations and publications.

Confidentiality

Following the signing of this agreement, I can choose to be referred to by a pseudonym. If I so choose, I will be referred to by this pseudonym throughout the data collection process and the writing of this research. This will protect my identity. Only the researcher, her supervising committee, and a translator will have access to the data collected during this project. The researcher, committee members and translator (who has signed a confidentiality agreement) will hold my identity in strictest confidence. The interviews will be audiotaped, and these stored on the researcher's personal laptop and her personal online account at MSVU, both of which are password protected. All notes referring to the interviews and all hardcopies of the data will be stored in a locked cabinet. It might be used after the study is completed at least 3-5 years for the possibility of publication and/ or conference presentation.

Legal rights and signatures:

I, _____, consent to participate in the study entitled *Exploring the Meaning and Significance of Creativity in Education: A Narrative inquiry of Saudi Female Graduate Students' Experiences in a Canadian University* conducted by Reem Jaber Almahmudi

I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Participant Signature _____

Date _____

Principle Investigator Signature _____

Date _____