Selections From the New Book Room

*Creativity in Education & Learning: A Guide for Teachers and Educators* / Arthur J. Cropley  
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*Creativity in Education & Learning* is the latest offering from Arthur J. Cropley, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Hamburg. One of his primary research interests has been the concept of "creativity," and he has written a number of books and journal articles on the topic. The present volume is aimed at a general audience, with special emphasis on teachers and parents who would like to foster creativity in young people.

One of the strengths of this book is that Cropley manages to pull together the "best of both worlds" -- his writing style is clear, accessible, and free from technical jargon while at the same time all the ideas and theories discussed are firmly anchored in research. Scholarly books and articles are cited throughout the text and included in the extensive bibliography. But the writing never succumbs to dry, academic prose or to the "peppy" verbiage characteristic of self-help books.

Cropley begins with the idea that creativity is NOT something you either have or haven't got. He believes that creativity is inherent in everyone and that it can and should be developed in each person. Because of the broad definition of creativity used, the "everyday creativity" of individuals in a variety of settings is considered as well as the "exceptional" creativity of Nobel Prize winners and famous artists. He addresses the question of whether or not creativity is related to psychopathology, and while acknowledging that there are some superficial similarities, he ultimately finds that creativity is more closely linked with a high degree of mental health. Part of his reason for encouraging creativity is the belief that engaging in creative acts is not only healthy for the individual but also for the families, schools, businesses, and communities of which we are a part. Cropley also makes the argument that creativity and intelligence are related but not identical. Creativity has a positive correlation to intelligence, but only up to a certain point. Ultimately, the test of creativity is not only what you think, but how you think it.

Much of *Creativity in Education & Learning* is focused on how we can define, measure, and foster the thinking processes and personal properties that lead to creativity. Examples of these qualities are divergent thinking, which produces variability rather than
orthodoxy, and a complex personality, in which both ends of a polarity (such as cool neutrality and passionate engagement) are found within the same individual. Cropley also takes a look at the roles of personality, motivation, and environment in either facilitating or blocking creativity.

Two chapters are specifically devoted to creativity in educational settings, including lower-level schools and institutions of higher education. In general, Cropley finds that teachers and the educational milieu do not do a good job of encouraging creativity or providing an environment where creativity can thrive. One study cited (Stone, 1980) found that students "who scored the highest on tests of creativity were the ones most often in trouble with teachers." Likewise, higher education exhibits such shortcomings as one-sidedness, inappropriate concepts of knowledge, and lack of emphasis on creative thinking skills. Cropley makes various recommendations for improving this situation, including taking a more holistic approach to education and using techniques such as independent learning and problem-based learning.

Cropley does an effective job of summarizing a wide range of creativity and education research and presenting it in an easy to comprehend form. This book is a must-read for all Education majors, and highly recommended for professors who wish to encourage creativity in their classrooms and individuals who would like to gain insight into their own creative abilities. -- Reviewed by Alison Lewis