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Unlocking Latent Potential: A Conceptual Analysis of the Creative Thinking Ability of Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

Although creativity is often regarded as a domain of the gifted, individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) possess significant but under-recognised creative potential. This conceptual analysis, titled "Unlocking Latent Potential," aims to identify the creative thinking ability of students with intellectual disabilities. Individuals with intellectual disabilities are considered a source of national energy and valuable contributors to society, assuming the necessary care and attention are given to develop their abilities. A student who has a intellectual disability still has hidden creative skills and talents, despite any limitations in their physical, sensory, or mental capabilities. Although the education system supports the all-around development of students and improves facilities for those with intellectual disabilities, their inner capabilities and creativity are still neglected. In most of these cases, parents and teachers are not aware about the creativity of their children with intellectual disabilities and do not provide them proper environment and support systems to explore their inner potential. Individuals with intellectual disabilities mainly express their creativity through art, music, dance, drama, and writing. It is the responsibility of parents and teachers to understand the latent potential and abilities of their children and provide them appropriate opportunities so they can develop their inner potential. Ultimately, this research shows that well organised and personalised strategy and learning support are crucial to developing this creative potential.

Keywords: Creative Thinking, Intellectual Disability, Latent Potential, Special Education.

1. Introduction

Previously, creativity was considered the exclusive domain of only talented individuals; as a result, it neglected many aspects of creativity in people with intellectual disabilities (ID). According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD, 2021), Intellectual disabilities show as difficulties in both thinking abilities and everyday life skills. Intellectual functioning refers to the type of functioning that affects daily life, while adaptive behaviour refers to the behaviours or actions that are part of an individual's social and practical skills. These difficulties affect their livelihood activity like poor daily life skills, low academic performance, delayed speech and language, problems with self-control, and unusual physical development. (Goo, 2013).

Individuals with intellectual disabilities are also considered a source of national energy and valuable contributors to society. It is essential to provide the care and attention necessary to develop their abilities. This includes a long-term perspective, including a continuum of services, individualised follow-up, and a comprehensive, multi-year program that addresses all aspects of their lives, abilities, special talents, and readiness. It also includes the development of training programs and curricula to care for and develop them at different stages of their development, and their implementation according to a well-structured framework. Through this approach, care becomes a daily, interactive lifestyle based on day-to-day behaviour, preparing the individual for a promising future. This is the essence of the educational process for individuals with intellectual disabilities (Wells & Sheehey, 2012).

Despite the physical, sensory, or mental limitations of students with intellectual disabilities have many latent creative talents and skills. They can move towards society and towards other people; through this, they begin to rediscover themselves and their abilities and strive to develop them, so that they can compete with other members of society in a creative way. Therefore, it is very important to identify and unleash these latent potentials for the sake of their overall development.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To critically examine the relationship between creativity and intelligence among individuals with intellectual disabilities based on existing literature.
2. To synthesise the best procedures and support systems provided for students with intellectual disabilities to foster creativity.
3. To analyse parents' and teachers' attitudes and awareness about the creativity of students with intellectual disabilities.

3. Methodology of the Study

This study adopts a qualitative and conceptual research design, which aims to critically analyse and synthesise existing knowledge on the creative thinking abilities of students with intellectual disabilities. Since this study does not involve primary data collection, it is completely dependent on secondary sources of data which are exploratory and interpretive in nature.

4. The Relationship Between Creativity and Intelligence

Individuals with intellectual disabilities are often perceived as less creative than individuals with high IQs. Previous educational and psychological research has relied heavily on standardised tests to measure human potential. Because of this rigid framework, society has often mistakenly considered human intellectual ability and creative output to be synonymous. However, many studies have shown that there is no direct or positive relationship between creativity and intelligence. A person with below-average mental ability can be highly creative (Mangal, 2021).

For a better understanding, it is crucial to examine how these two traits interact in broader populations. Arya and Maurya (2016) evaluated the connection between academic achievement, creativity, and intelligence in students. The information was collected through a self-made questionnaire

to bring out data on the basic information of the respondents, their family income, and information connected with their study actions. Data were analysed using percentages and frequencies. As a result, no significant link was discovered between creativity, academic achievement, and intelligence (Arya & Maurya, 2016). This shows that excelling in traditional logical or academic subjects does not automatically make a student a creative thinker.

Hooda and Devi (2017) investigated the connection between innovative thinking skills, intelligence, and family environment among senior secondary school pupils. Data analysis revealed that creativity dimensions, i.e., Fluency, Originality, and Flexibility (Torrance, 1974), in female and male adolescents were negatively linked to intelligence but positively linked to family environment. Overall, these complex findings show that creativity of a student is a special ability which cannot be determined only based on their IQ score. Traditional methods of measuring intelligence usually focus only on visible limitations or symptoms of the thinking process. As a result, the true abilities of people with intellectual disabilities are not fully revealed in these methods. However, if we also look at other areas, such as how they process information, we can better understand their true creative potential.

When we carefully study individuals with cognitive delays, many research studies explain that how the intellectually disabled child think and process information. Rana and Ahmad (2021) investigated the relationship between creativity and intelligence in individuals with intellectual disabilities. Research results indicate that there is a significant relationship between creativity and intelligence among people with intellectual disabilities (Rana & Ahmad, 2021). Although this may appear to contradict typical population studies, it indicates that for students with intellectual disabilities, fundamental cognitive abilities and creative expression could evolve in a more connected way, depending on the same basic neural pathways to understand their surroundings. However, no significant difference was found in creativity and intelligence among individuals with an intellectual disability with regard to gender and age. This means that the capacity for creative thought is universally accessible across demographics within this group.

Beyond simple metrics, we must consider the psychological purpose of creativity for these individuals. Neubauer and Martskvishvili (2018) investigated just how intelligence and creativity are actually connected with human requirements. It was expected that creativity, as an attribute of a self-actualised individual, must be associated strongly with self-actualisation, while intelligence must be connected more strongly to satisfaction, due to its role in humans' survival and adaptation. Outcomes mostly verified expectations: intelligence is favourably associated with lower requirements, while creativity methods show good links to increased human requirements (Neubauer & Martskvishvili, 2018). A student with intellectual disabilities can be frustrated when they are not able to fulfil their educational expectations. However, by using their creativity, they can build their confidence to overcome obstacles and release the need for self-expression and self-satisfaction.

5. Best Procedures and Support Systems for Fostering Creativity

Every child is different and has their own needs and abilities in reading, writing, and social participation. Because of this diversity, using only one teaching method can limit learning ability. This is important to understand their uniqueness and design their learning environment and support system

according to their ability and interest. Education is a powerful tool to truly meet these complex human needs and to eliminate existing inequalities and divisions in society. Individuals with an intellectual disability are also considered a source of national energy and productive human wealth, provided they receive the necessary care and attention to develop their abilities. This dedicated attention must go beyond basic life skills and include initiatives to provide continuous care with a long-term perspective, as well as the development of training programs and curricula for their care. According to recent academic studies, many very effective and specialised methods and support systems have been found to help bring these hidden talents to life. To develop the creativity of these students, it is not enough to teach them rote knowledge or daily tasks; they need proper methods that allow them to learn through their feelings, experiences, and various senses. Many research has shown that it is possible to develop creativity in these students by providing appropriate methods and a supportive environment.

- **Visual or scene-based methods**

  Students with intellectual disabilities understand content much better when they learn through visual experience with proper explanation. Visual aids such as pictures, drawings, and real-life objects help them to easily understand the topic, and this will help them to memorise. By using visual aids and materials intellectual disabilities can connect their imagination with real-world examples, which helps their learning process effectively, and they can express their creative ideas (Gagić et al., 2015).

- **Auditory and music-based methods**

  Music is a very powerful tool for learning, developing and expressing creativity. It also helps to connect with our emotions, memory, and imagination. Listening, singing, or playing a musical instrument can help students become more creative and express their emotions and feelings through music. The practice of listening to music in a well-planned manner enhances students' enjoyment of learning and sharpens their creative thinking skills. Also, music fosters a relaxed and positive learning environment, which is crucial for the development of creative thinking ability (Wong, 2022).

- **Physical and Dramatic Approach**

  Creative drama and movement activities are an effective approach to express creativity. Through these activities, a person with intellectual disability can act, move, and express their thoughts through physical gestures. Creative drama can increase the fluency, flexibility, and originality of the creative thinking ability of students with intellectual disability (Sahin, 2022). It helps students to respond creatively in different situations and improves their problem-solving skills. Also, drama activities provide them with an opportunity for social interaction and develop self-confidence.

- **Structured Cognitive Approach**

  Many people think that creativity means thinking independently. It has been found that creativity can be increased or developed by adopting particular structures or approaches. According to TRIZ (Theory of Innovative Problem Solving), to solve complex problems, breaking the problem into smaller parts, which helps intellectually disabled students to understand the

problem easily and then solve it partwise, helps to increase their creativity. This method encourages brainstorming, questioning, and discussion, which increases the generation of new ideas and problem-solving skills (MalAllah et al., 2022). As a result, this not only helps to increase problem solving skill also helps to their built self-confidence.

- **Supportive learning environment**

  However, teaching methods alone are not enough for developing creativity also need a proper supportive learning environment. Students with intellectual disabilities need to provide proper environment and opportunities to explore themselves and make decisions. They also need guidance, encouragement, and positive feedback, which can encourage them to act more effectively. Wong (2022) identified five key elements for creativity: play and exploration, guidance, active participation, decision-making opportunities, and positive reinforcement, which can help students become confident and motivated.

Parents' and Teachers' Attitudes and Awareness: Overcoming Perceptual Barriers

The effectiveness of an inclusive education system actually impacts the lives of key participants, especially teachers and family members. While the Indian education system advocates for the all-round development of students and inclusive education (Ministry of Education, 2020), and students with intellectual disabilities are getting more importance and are being provided better facilities, their own inner power and creativity are neglected. Although improvements have been made in terms of physical infrastructure, funding, and educational facilities in recent years, some aspects of this special psychological expression are still neglected. Parents and teachers are often unaware of the creativity of a child with intellectual disabilities. This lack of awareness isn't just a result of neglect; it actually comes from a deeply rooted historical bias about mental capacity.

For a long time, the educational field has been working under a narrow, intelligence-centred model. Many researchers have found that persons with low IQ are less creative than students with high IQ. Since this misunderstanding has been common in the academic field for such a long time, it has unintentionally influenced the expectations of adults who interact with these children regularly. The Pygmalion effect in educational psychology (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) indicates that the expectations of an adult can significantly affect a student's performance. If a teacher or parent unconsciously believes that a student with an intellectual disability cannot think creatively, they will not provide proper adaptable teaching strategies, study materials and support systems. Consequently, the student never gets the opportunity to practice creative thinking, which seems to be a confirmation of the adult's primary, erroneous ideas.

Many studies show that one hidden problem comes from teachers' own beliefs. According to Wong (2022), teachers often doubt whether students with intellectual disabilities can really develop creativity, especially in music. Even when teachers use proper and structured teaching methods, the results are often limited if they do not truly believe in the students' abilities. In the same way, families of children with special needs face a lot of stress and pressure. Because of this, most of the parents focus on basic needs like daily life skills, basic education, and safety for their child, and also do not give much attention to developing higher skills like creativity. Parents also feel pressure because of society's negative attitudes

towards differently able children. As a result, they feel confused and afraid about how to integrate their children into society and sometimes prefer to keep them away from society. However, instead of many conservative mentality, this is necessary to adopt a more flexible and balanced approach and try to understand the child's capabilities and create opportunities where the child can express himself through creativity and meaningful activities.

To improve awareness, we need to understand that students with intellectual disabilities express themselves in unique and different ways. They often express their creativity through art, music, dance, drama, and writing. Parents should take guidance from teachers and experts and provide proper support and encouragement so that these children can express their ideas and imagination freely. Creative fields like art and music are very personal, and there is no single “right” or “wrong” way to express creativity. If parents ignore this opportunity, it may increase their stress and depression. But if they support and encourage their children properly, it can make them happy, relaxed, and creative.

To change this negative attitude, need to provide clear and unbiased information that shows positive results through research, and provide proper awareness among parents and teachers so that society better understands these students. If adults change their mindset and actively support this talent, it can bring positive and meaningful changes in the child’s life. When children recognise their creative potential, they naturally try to develop it and helps to increase the confidence and self-esteem of individuals with intellectual disabilities, allowing them to live more independent, confident, and happy lives.

6. Conclusion

Everyone has inner potential and abilities. Individuals with intellectual disabilities have their own capabilities, parents and teachers need to find out and provide a proper atmosphere so that they can express themselves through their work and creativity. Through such research, parents and teachers can learn and understand about general civilisation. This will help to develop the confidence and self-esteem of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Government and society need to be more flexible, understand people's preferences, and provide them proper environment and infrastructure to express themselves.

7. Implications for Practice

The outcomes of this conceptual analysis shows that multi-sensory and creative strategies (such as TRIZ, active music listening, and creative drama) need to be formally integrated into special education curricula, rather than being regarded as secondary extracurricular options. In addition, to overcome biases regarding the limitations of students with intellectual disabilities (ID), professional development for teachers and mentoring programs for parents must proactively address the ‘Pygmalion effect.’ caregivers focus not only on basic needs but also on helping students reach their full potential, they can greatly improve the students’ overall development and future growth.

8. Directions for Future Research

Most of the recent research focuses on how specific activities like art or music help students with intellectual disabilities and tried to provide them a support system. However, this is important to examine

the long-term impact of combining different creative activities on their daily life skills and creative thinking. Also, need to conduct more quantitative research in future to understand how the changing expectations of parents and teacher can influence the creative performance of these students.

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