



Research Article

Myths about creativity: A qualitative study on gifted students' parents

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Abstract

Giftedness and creativity have been popular research areas especially in the last century. Moreover, giftedness and creativity are interrelated concepts. Although many researchers study different aspects of these two concepts, there are not consensuses on their definitions. Gifted individuals are defined as those who have above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment and combine these three traits and apply these to one or more domains. The inventions and products of the gifted individuals are results of their creativity. Parents of gifted students play a significant role in fostering creativity of their children. Unless the gifted children are given the opportunity to use their creativity, their abilities to discover new things will not be appeared. Although creativity is a significant trait, there are still some myths that are unrealistic opinions about creativity. This qualitative research aims to determine the myths of parents of gifted students about creativity. The data was collected by semi-structured interviews with 12 volunteer parents of gifted students. In order to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews, content analysis was conducted. In the content analysis, data similar to each other are organized by bringing together under themes and data is interpreted. After analyzing the content codes, four themes emerged as: (1) definition of creativity; (2) characteristics of creative people; (3) thinking patterns of creative people; (4) motivation of creative people. The results reveal that myths about creativity are common among parents of gifted students. Believing that creativity is a divine inspiration, linking creativity with personality, thinking that creative people like to take risk and believing that there is a positive relationship between intelligence and creativity are some examples to the common myths about creativity.

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Introduction

Giftedness has been an important research area since significance of science, technology and art increased by time. Although there is not a consensus on the definition of giftedness, many researchers agree that creativity is one of the basic features of gifted individuals (Dabrowski, 1972; Maker, 1992; Renzulli, 1986; Torrance, 1971; Whitmore, 1980). For example, in a widely used definition, gifted individuals are defined as individuals who have above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment and apply these three traits to one or more domains by combining them (Renzulli, 1986). Thus, in order to put forth a concrete product, creativity is essential.

Since creativity is a complex phenomenon, various approaches defined creativity in different ways (Keleşoğlu & Kalaycı, 2017). Creativity is simply defined as thinking in a different, original, flexible, fluid, and unusual way (Senemoğlu, 1999). In addition, Sungur (1997) mentioned that everybody is more or less creative, unless they are hindered or restricted. In case of restriction to creativity, people need long or short-term training. In the developing world, creative personalities are needed in every area of life. Creativity can be developed and encouraged by a supporting education system. This means, each person has the chance to be creative. According to the researchers, the environment effects the development and encouragement of creativity (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In that sense, the attitudes of parents and teachers towards divergent thinking play important roles in encouraging creativity in children (Tortop, 2018).

According to Ömeroğlu and Turla (2001) creativity manifests itself in the child's play in the first years of life, especially during games where the mother plays with her baby. Thus, the relationship of the baby with the mother or the caregiver has the most important role in the emergence and development of creative behavior. Furthermore, Aydoğan (2006) stated that parents who provide enrichment stimuli in the home environment support cognitive, physical, social and psychological development of their children as well as fostering their creative and productive behavior.

Guilford (1959), who is a pioneer in creativity research, mentioned convergent thinking equated with intelligence while divergent thinking equated with evaluating the alternatives which are created from information. In other words, in order to solve problems in a creative way, people who have diverse thinking skills are needed. Also, Csikszentmihalyi (1977) mentioned that people have a varied creative curve and the curve is not homogeneous. Thus, creativity is an innate ability that can be stimulated, regenerated, and developed by special programs and within life experiences, even if it is restricted.

Parental attitudes and behaviors play important roles in development of creativity in children especially in early childhood. The results of an exploratory study on the childhood period of highly creative people show the influence of the family (Gute, Gute, Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). According to the findings of this study parents of highly creative people are found to be less authoritarian and more open to opportunities to nurture and develop their children's creative and critical thinking abilities. Also, the highly creative people stated that their parents tolerate children's failure, and set examples of copying strategies for children. In other words, parents that create a safe and free environment for their children develop children's creativity.

Although creativity is a significant trait, there are still some myths that are unrealistic opinions about creativity. Cropley (2016) mentioned that modern creativity debates are also based on at least six myths inherited greatly from the past. According to Cropley (2018) these myths about creativity can be summarized as ineffability, ineluctability and inscrutability. Ineffability means that creativity cannot be defined. Ineluctability refers that creativity cannot be controlled while inscrutability infers that creativity cannot be understood. It is important to identify and address these myths in order to facilitate the development of creativity (Benson, 2004).

Sevinç and Kanlı (2019) conducted a study in order to reveal the teachers' myths and views about creativity. The participants were 211 teachers from the various provinces of Turkey 2016 - 2017 academic year. Data was collected by a 33- item questionnaire developed by the researchers. According to the results, it can be said that teachers have some different views and myths about creativity.

Yalçın (2018) states that creativity is among the learning and innovation skills among the 21st century skills that education aims to gain. It is necessary to raise creative individuals in order to keep up with the developing world (Memduhoğlu, Uçar & Uçar, 2017). For this purpose, it is emphasized that it is necessary to make the students to produce information by making connections rather than uploading information to students (Öztürk, 2001). In that sense, revealing the myths about creativity is important. In order to foster creativity of gifted students, parents should have realistic beliefs about creativity. This qualitative research aims to determine the myths of parents of gifted students about creativity.

Problem of Study

What is the gifted students parents' myths of creativity?

Method

Research Model

In this study, qualitative research method was used. Qualitative research is characterized by a qualitative process that reveal perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in the natural environment with qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The 'case study' pattern, which is one of the qualitative research patterns, was preferred because it focuses on a current phenomenon, event, situation, individual and groups and provides an in-depth examination.

Study Group

Qualitative data was collected from 12 parents of gifted students. After the purpose of the study was explained by the researcher, parents who were willing to participate, involved in the study. Distribution of demographic variables of parents in the study group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1.*Distribution of Demographic Variables of Parents in the Study Group*

Demographic variables		n	%
Gender	Female	7	58.3
	Male	5	41.7
Age	22-30	2	16.7
	31-39	6	50
	40 and over	4	33,3
Education Level	Elementary school	2	16.7
	High school	3	25
	University	7	58.3

As shown in Table 1, 58.3% of participants are female and 41.7% are male. When the distribution according to age groups is examined; the proportion of those aged 22-30 years is 16.7%, the proportion of those aged 31-39 is 50% and those who are 40 and over age group are 33.2%. According to educational level; the proportion of those whose educational level is elementary school is 16.7%; while the proportion of those high school is 25%, and university graduates are 58.3% of the participants.

Data Collection Instrument

Semi-structured Interview Form

Qualitative data was collected by a semi-structured interview form consisting of 4 questions about the creativity of gifted, prepared by the researcher. While preparing the interview form, first of all, the literature review was done in accordance with the purpose of the study and then opinions are received from three academicians who are the field experts. The questions in the interview form are given below.

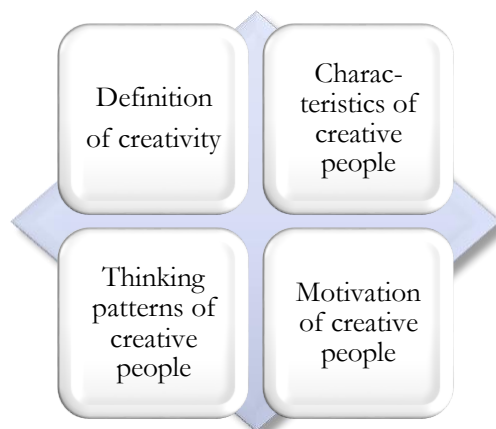
- How do you define creativity?
- What are the characteristics of creative people in your opinion?
- What are the thinking patterns of creative people in your opinion?
- What are the characteristics of creative people in your opinion?

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed by content analysis. For content analysis, similar data are organized by bringing together under themes and then interpreted (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In order to ensure validity and reliability, two experts also analyzed separately from the researcher. According to the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994), it is concluded that over 70% of the consensus is reliable.

Results

In order to analyze the qualitative data, similar content codes were organized by bringing together under themes. After analyzing the content codes, four themes emerged as: (1) definition of creativity; (2) characteristics of creative people; (3) thinking patterns of creative people; (4) motivation of creative people. These themes are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.***Themes Regarding the Myths of Parents about Creativity*

Definition of Creativity

When the content codes in the parents' interviews were analyzed, the myths about the definition of creativity have emerged. According to these myths, creativity is a divine characteristic, spiritual power and a gift from God. Due to these myths, parents believe that creativity is an innate property that cannot be taught. According to this idea, a talented person is born as creative and others are not. They think that creativity is a talent specific to the artists. Examples of these are given below.

"Defining creativity is not so easy. It is like feeling and thinking in a different way from others. Creativity is an innate property. Some people are creative and some are not." (Parent 1, male, 39 years old, university graduated)

"Creativity is presenting something new. For example, a novel, a composition, a different architectural building. It is not learned. It comes from inspiration. It is a spiritual power." (Parent 3, female, 41 years old, university graduated)

"Creativity is a divine characteristic. Artists are creative, they can produce new products. This is talent and it is a gift from God. They are special people." (Parent 8, female, 28 years old, elementary school graduated)

Characteristics of Creative People

Due to the answers of parents about the characteristics of creative people, they believe in myths linking creativity with personality. They think that creative people are isolated from the society and being alone is essential for this process. The answers of some parents are given as examples.

"Creative people are born as creative. They see the world differently. Thus, they compose songs, write poems, paint etc. They are different from us. It is about their personality. They are not ordinary people." (Parent 2, female, 30 years old, elementary school graduated)

"I think creative people are isolated from the society. They are not affected by the common ideas or feeling. They have to be different and unique in order to be creative, so they form an inner world and live there." (Parent 5, female, 43 years old, high school graduated)

"In my opinion, creative people are alone and they are usually excluded from the community. But they are independent so they do not need others. They do not copy others' lives. They are just living as they want and this makes them creative." (Parent 11, male, 42 years old, university graduated)

Thinking Patterns of Creative People

According to the answers of parents, it can be said that myths exist as thinking patterns of creative people are unusual, different and strange. Being unusual, different and strange are accepted as taking risk and in this context creative people are seen as risk-takers. Examples of some statements are as follows.

"Creative people have different thinking patterns of course. They see and feel different from other people, thus they produce new things. Ordinary people see and feel in a usual way, but creative people do in an unusual way." (Parent 6, male, 40 years old, high school graduated)

"Thinking patterns of creative people are unusual. They see what others cannot see. Many people are afraid of being unusual. But they are not afraid of being strange. That is why they are talented." (Parent 7, female, 36 years old, university graduated)

"In my opinion, creative people think differently from the majority. Of course, it is a risk to be different but they are so. They like taking risks. They do not care the norms of community." (Parent 10, female, 38 years old, university graduated)

Motivation of Creative People

Parents stated that intelligence and creativity are interrelated. They believe that only intelligent people can be creative. In order to be creative, inner motivation is needed. Some examples to these myths are presented below.

"Creating a masterpiece is magnificent. Your name is written everywhere even if you are death. They are special people. They are both intelligent and talented. Their brain works better than others." (Parent 4, male, 35 years old, university graduated)

"I think they have inner motivation. They do not care what others say or think. They just study alone and they create using their intelligence." (Parent 9, male, 37 years old, university graduated)

"Creative people are intelligent at the same time. That is why they make an invention. Of course, this is a divine inspiration. It is not for everyone. They are special, not ordinary." (Parent 12, female, 37 years old, high school graduated)

Discussion and Conclusion

It is obvious that creativity is among the learning and innovation skills among the 21st century skills (Yalçın, 2018). In that sense, researchers studying about education mention that creative individuals are needed in the developing world (Memduhoğlu, Uçar & Uçar, 2017). However, creativity is an ambiguous locution about which many myths exist. Cropley (2018) summarized these myths about creativity as ineffability, ineluctability and inscrutability. It is essential to turn the myths into facts in order to facilitate the creativity of students. Parents of gifted students play a significant role in fostering creativity of their children. In this context, finding out the myths common among parents of gifted students is important.

This study revealed some myths that parents of gifted students have. According to the content codes within the interviews, four themes emerged as: (1) definition of creativity; (2) characteristics of creative people; (3) thinking patterns of creative people; (4) motivation of creative people. These myths were analyzed and interpreted. Believing that creativity is a divine inspiration, linking creativity with personality, thinking that creative people like to take risk and believing that there is a positive relationship between intelligence and creativity are some examples to the common myths about creativity. The findings of this study are coherent with the study of Sevinç and Kanlı (2019) on the teachers' myths and views about creativity. The myths such as creativity is innate, genetic or divine; bring along a common and wrong view that creativity cannot be taught and developed. On the other hand, parents tend to view the creative people as strange, unusual and different. In their opinions, being unusual causes being excluded from the society. They think that creative people are living alone, in their inner world and taking risks.

Although, creativity has been a popular research area for last decades; in literature, it is mentioned that these myths about creativity are still common among people. These myths are barriers for developing creativity by education at the same time. In order to adapt social, economic and global changes of 21st century, people need to be creative. Thus, it is essential to teach the facts about creativity to people instead of these myths. Since parents play an important role in developing their children's creativity, studies focusing on this subject can be useful.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, for further research it can be recommended conducting experimental research in order to change the myths of parents. For example, further research focusing on eradication of myths about creativity can be beneficial. Also, studies searching the effects of training programs about creativity for the parents of gifted students would contribute to the field of gifted education as well as creativity.

Limitations of Study

Since in this study qualitative research method is used, it has some limitations. These limitations are specific to qualitative research method such as prejudice and a small study group. Due to these limitations, the findings cannot be generalized.

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Biodata of the Author



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