

Personal Reflection & Review: Creativity and Innovation

CBU EDUC 6013 – Education for Sustainability & Entrepreneurship

Zhao, Y. (2012). *World class learners: Educating creative and entrepreneurial students*. Corwin Press.

Couros, G. (2015). *The innovator's mindset*. San Diego, CA: Dave Burgess Consulting.

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The Social Perception of Age, from Growth to Fixed Mindset

When the magnitude and frequency of imagination, creativity, and innovation decreases with age, it is a stark reminder that social and environmental conditions greatly influence one another, directly and indirectly. Repetitively, Zhao (2012) emphasized the notion to foster the prosperity entrepreneurship for the future leaders and economies of tomorrow to ensure sustainable, economic, and anthropogenic welfare, success, and advancement. Zhao provides a succinct rationale for human perception in the lens of change:

Some experiences strengthen our desires to asks questions while others instill compliance. Some experiences foster a mindset of challenging the status quo, while others teach us to follow orders. Human beings are adaptable and our nature [is] malleable. The experiences we have play a significant role in what we become (Page 11, Paragraph 11).

This written expression of human nature, tendency, determination, self-reflection, resilience is a power message which resonated with me, which highlights the personal, social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of complexity when addressing systematic value systems; if creativity, innovation, and ultimately, entrepreneurship are not a high priority in education, how can be adapt and modify ways of teaching to foster such an essential and intrinsic nature of curiosity and personal growth? This anecdotal reflection supports Lands and Jarman's (1992) quantitative evidence that there is a strong and negative correlation between curiosity and age of humans (Figure 0.1; Zhao, 2012). Despite difficulty to reflectively address definitive answers on the parameters associated with this negative relationship – one thing is clear – humanistic fostering of creativity and entrepreneurship must change in one way or another for our contemporary society. As an educator, creativity and innovation are essential for the personal growth and endeavour of all students, regardless of their expertise as it is a foundation for self-defined epistemology. Common and traditional pedagogical practices and structure are a limitation with has negative confounding effects to our students, yet often justified by systematic and conventional order of teaching, classroom management, administration, economic funding. As a result, students are stifled in their intrinsic growth mindset as they age – fixed is fixed. Figure 1. (below) illustrates an artistic and symbolic representation of the juxtaposition between frames of mind between the dichotomy of young and old.



Figure 1. An artistic depiction of creativity, contrasting the differences in perspective between a son and a father by Marion Favolle. Original source retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/19/opinion/sunday/what-happens-to-creativity-as-we-age.html>. The Image by Marion Favolle respects and abides by the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

Entrepreneur – Am I an Entrepreneur?

Zhao (2012) states that “Entrepreneurship is fundamentally about the desire to solve problems creatively. The foundations of entrepreneurship – creativity, curiosity, imagination, risk taking, and collaboration is, just like the ideas of engineering.” Despite a cohesive and poignant description of what is to be an entrepreneur, I believe that the expression is quite misleading. The emphasis to solve problems with an analogy to engineering is a problematic, biased, and agenda-based description which suggest a value system associated with entrepreneurship. Zhao’s extreme remarks to solve and progress human prosperity is an elitist perspective of who should be an entrepreneur. Entrepreneur is not the same as engineering. I believe that all individuals have the capacity to be an entrepreneur, whether is self-actualized or professional. To live a such a progressing and dynamic world, interdisciplinary approaches to value and foster entrepreneurship is essential for societal reflection of self-defined prosperity, growth, and welfare. In the eyes of Zhao, I am not an entrepreneur. However, I don’t think that is such a discrete answer of either being an entrepreneur or not being an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship, like many anthropogenic phenomena are extremely complex and difficult to address in abstraction. Through self-reflection and introspection, I have qualities of entrepreneurship, like many other individuals which have discrete attributes, skills, and passions which defines their personalities. I don’t believe that to be an entrepreneur, one must have the personal pre-requisites of a certain number of entrepreneurial traits to be defined as one, but rather it is a continual, dynamic, spectral, and progressive lifestyle which is either enhanced or centralized around actions which are entrepreneurial.

Sustainable Entrepreneurship – Is that an Oxymoron?

Based off Zhao’s baseline definition of entrepreneurship from the World Economic Forum (2009), it is highly centralized around the competitive, commercial, and innovative value of entrepreneurship:

A process that results in creativity, innovation, and growth. (Page 3, Paragraph)

Even though innovative entrepreneurship come in all shapes and forms which are not limited to start-ups, innovative ventures and jobs, it directly implies the values and associations for the desired product: growth, not creativity and innovation – they are just building blocks to lead to growth. Zhao’s central dogma surrounding economic prosperity with sustainability poses ramifications that may lead to exploitation and extrinsic motivation to foster sustainability which is only superficial. Zhao’s emphasis of commercial purposes aligns with the conventional and traditional model of sustainability, opposed from the contemporary Social Ecology Model which de-emphasises economic success (Mulligan, 2018).

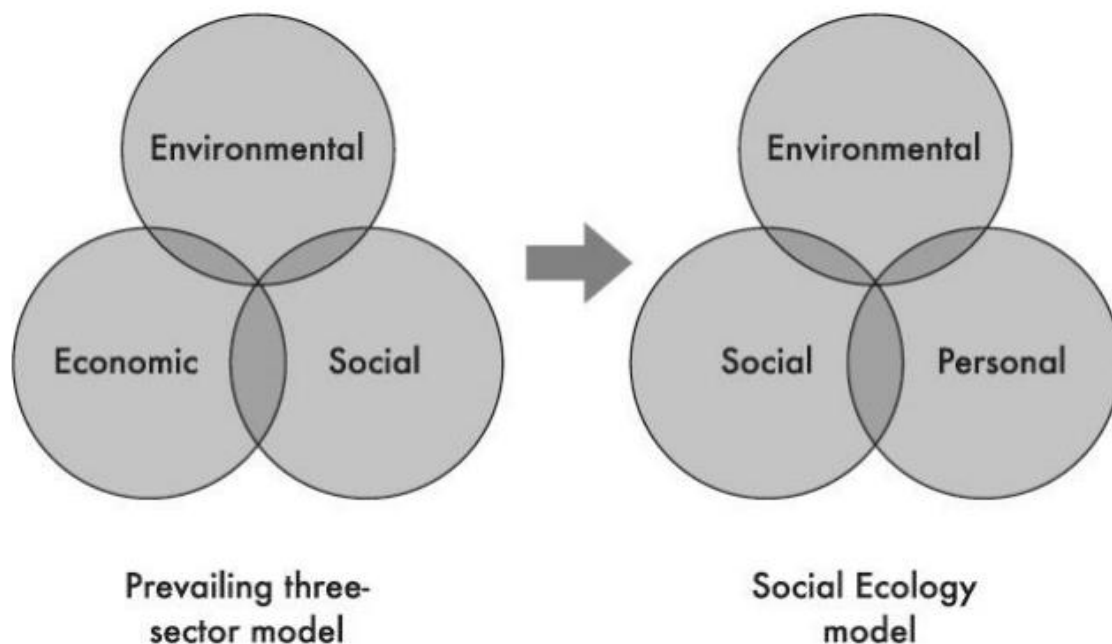


Figure 2. A transitional way of sustainability thinking from the prevailing model to the Social Ecology Model of Sustainability. Retrieved from Mulligan’s (2018) textbook publication, *An Introduction into Sustainability*, 2nd Ed. This figure was inspired from EDUC 6101: Introduction into Sustainability from Cape Breton University (CBU).

I think that Zhao has strong and directed intentions for the greater good of humanity, but *good intentions don’t necessarily give good results*. Human prosperity can not be mutually exclusive between fostering technology and the environment, as technology can’t co-exist without the environment. Often many may state that technological advancement is the definitive remedy to progress our society indefinitely, however, the environment which we live in is finite. Therefore, the progress of advancement will be finite as well, especially if exploitation and unsustainable practices continues to be prominent. To better reflect a more prosperous and inclusive ideal of

entrepreneurship, a holistic approach which centralizes around sustainable development will be essential for truly meaningful creativity, innovation, and solutions of today and the future.

Human Nature

Human nature highlights the personal, social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of complexity when addressing systematic value systems, where some experiences strengthen our desires to asks questions while others instill compliance (Zhao, 2012).

Couros's inquiry and guide into innovation reveals *the good, the bad, and the ugly* of fostering innovation. Aligning with Zhao (2012) and Couros's (2015) remarks on innovation, they both have one thing in common – things shape the way we are:

Some experiences strengthen our desires to asks questions while others instill compliance. Some experiences foster a mindset of challenging the status quo, while others teach us to follow orders. Human beings are adaptable and our nature [is] malleable. The experiences we have play a significant role in what we become (Zhao, 2012; Page 11, Paragraph 11).

To help people change, it is important to understand what drives their habits in the first place (Couros, 2015; Page 26, Paragraph 2).

These two passages resonated with me on a personal, professional, and academic level; as an educator, I have the opportunity to be that difference in a student's live to foster positive change. From reading "What Innovation Isn't" by George Cousos, it scaffolded to many existing ideas and foundations of *what innovation could be like* from Zhao's "World class learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students." From a transitional read from theory to practice, Couros emphasizes that innovation is not a linear transformation such as $A + B = C$, but rather an emergent transformation where $A + B < C$, where C is greater than the sums of A and B combined. I think that is a powerful message of the revolutionary applications and beauty of innovation.

For true innovation to spark, educational and societal values must revolve around meaningful learning which supports, fosters, and scaffolds on creative, innovative, and revolutionary philosophies, discussions, creations, and applications in a dynamic and collaborative environment. Is that not the goal of education? To foster inclusive, collaborative, adaptable, and mindful critical thinkers for the future of now and tomorrow?