

Students' Experiences of the Creativity Process in Project-based Learning: A Phenomenological Study

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Creativity is so imprative that it is presently recognized as one of the four learning skills of the 21st century (along with critical thinking, communication, and participation skills). Educating creative students in universities and other scientific and educational institutions is very important. Given that the main function of universities is to expand the boundaries of knowledge and production of science, as well as participation in the creation of new technologies, creativity is very necessary for these institutions and higher education curricula should cover this skill seriously. The reason for this pondering is to investigate students' encounters with the creative handle in project-based learning.

Method

To achieve the aim of this research, a descriptive phenomenological method was used. Participants were 11 undergraduate students who were studying educational sciences at the Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz and were selected by purposive sampling method. Inclusion criteria were: undergraduate student in educational sciences, passing an individual project course, doing a creative project, and willingness to participate in the study. The students were involved in a creative project (making an educational game) for approximately 4 months. At the end of the project, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the students. Data were analyzed by a seven-level Colaizzi method. To increase the accuracy of data analysis, MAXQDA software was used.

Results

Data analysis revealed four main themes: a) Experiences related to encountering the project, b) processes, c) supportive resources, and d)

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outcomes. Each of the main themes had other sub-themes. Based on the research findings, suggestions have been made to facilitate and improve the students' creative process. The main theme of "experiences related to encountering the project" includes two sub-themes: positive experiences and feelings, negative experiences and feelings. For the "processes" main theme two sub-themes were identified: supervisor-related processes, and student-related processes. The theme "supportive resources" reflects the support that students have received during their projects. Two sub-themes were identified: the support of the supervisor, and the support of others. And finally for the main theme "outcomes" two sub-themes were identified: Improving capabilities related to creative thinking, and Lessons learned.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that students be exposed to creative projects so that they can experience the creative process through these types of projects. Of course, it is necessary for the supervisor to identify and pay attention to students' negative feelings such as worry about failure, low self-esteem, and feelings of inability, and to create a sense of security and peace of mind in students with the necessary techniques and actions such as welcoming Students' ideas, continuous guidance, and seriousness in work, attention to the principles of creativity (such as suspension of judgment), timely and accurate evaluation, as well as the role of facilitating and delegating responsibility to students for improving the creative process for students. Based on the findings of this study, students achieved valuable skills such as creative self-efficacy, creative courage, creative knowledge, and creative thinking skills, and learned useful lessons from their own projects. Therefore, it is suggested that creative project-based teaching methods and related learning opportunities be taken more seriously and expanded in the higher education curriculum, given the valuable achievements that creative project-based learning has.

Keywords: Creativity, Students' Experiences, Phenomenological Study, Project-Based Learning

Author Contributions: Dr. Seyed Abbas Razavi, general framework planning, content editing and analyzing, submission and correction, and corresponding author.

Acknowledgments: The author thanks the students who participated in this study.

Conflict of interest: The author states that there is no conflict in this article.

Funding: This article has not received any financial support.
