

# INTRODUCTION

*A renewed and creative fit is necessary.*<sup>1</sup>

*Prof. Lorenzo Ornaghi*

The society we live in "requires" creativity. Such a request comes from many different fields. The development of new technologies requires more and more innovative ideas; many trade companies are looking for talented individuals who can manage problematic situations; universities aim at creating centers of excellence to promote research and innovation. Even the European Parliament and Council made 2009 Year of Creativity and Innovation in order to underline the importance of creativity for personal, social and economic development.

As Runco stated "the world is becoming more complex" and it implies that "creativity is more important now than ever before. This is because creativity is a useful and effective response to evolutionary changes" (Runco, 2004, p. 658).

Evolutionary changes have a strong impact on our society as well as creativity's underwent a transformation, or better, conception of laypeople have about creativity is changed: nowadays creativity is considered human heritage overtaking the mistaken definition of talent exclusive reserved to genius. On this subject, Ed Catmull (2008), president of Pixar and Disney Animation Studios, pointed out two relevant aspects: first of all, creative people are important as also creative ideas, because "if you give a good idea

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<sup>1</sup> Inaugural speech read by the Rector Prof. Lorenzo Ornaghi for the inauguration of the academic year 2009-2010

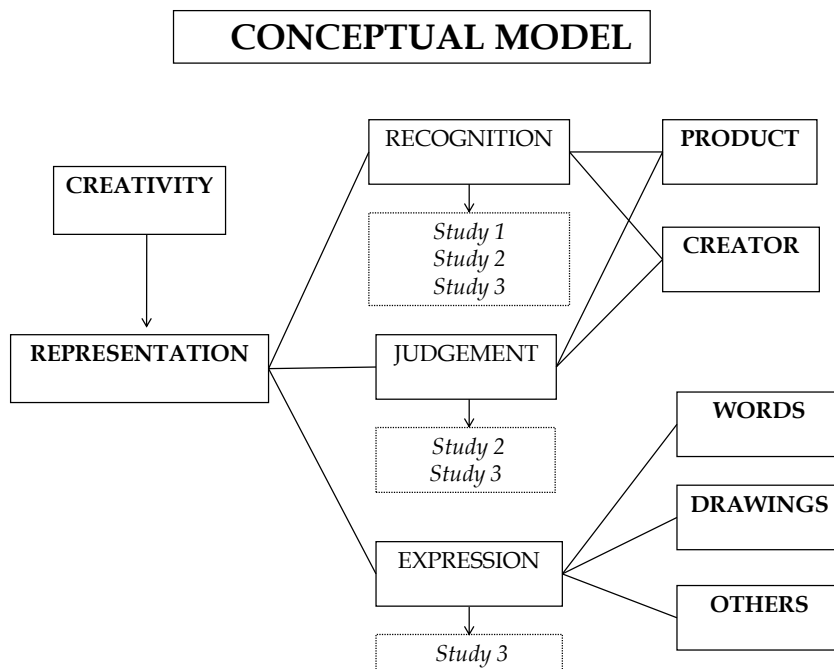
to a mediocre team, they'll screw it up. But if you give a mediocre idea to a great team, they'll make it work" (p. 68). Secondly, "the view that good ideas are rarer and more valuable than good people is rooted in a misconception of creativity" (p. 67). In other words, nowadays the concept of collective creativity is becoming popular because it provides an answer to requests of business' world. Encouraging the development of creative strategies it is fundamental to foster creativity in early childhood and education takes a crucial role in this sense. Moreover, encouraging children to have creative experiences may contribute to eradicate naïve conceptions about creativity.

Traditional research on creativity attempted to define the aspects of creativity itself, ignoring how people conceive it. Since 1980 a growing body of research focused on beliefs and opinions about creativity shared by laypeople as teachers, parents (Runco, 1984; 1993), artists and scientists (Runco & Bahleda, 1987). Such beliefs and opinions are conceived as "implicit theories" (Runco & Johnson, 2002; Sternberg, 2003).

A contextualized approach to assess implicit theories of creativity has never applied to children, although schooling was considered a privileged place that can promote creative skills of children. Moreover, relations between representation and expression of creativity are still unexplored, probably because of the multifaceted nature of creativity itself. To summarize, it is necessary to explore implicit theories of children about creativity in order to promote an adequate knowledge of creative strategies instead of misconceptions. To do this, children had to observe a creative act during its manifestation and then to express their own opinions about the final product and the phases that produced it.

The research described here focused on a specific aspect of creative process, the restructuring act, that is responsible of the change of perspective in front of a transformation of a given product.

The following figure provides a general overview of the investigation.



Schematization of constructs investigated in the present work, including means and corresponding studies

The present work aimed at exploring how students *represent* creativity (using different research tools as words, drawings, and different tasks as judging, recognising, describing).

As shown in the figure, three key-concepts are related to representation of creativity and will be investigated in this research:

- the *recognition*, as ability to distinguish creative and non-creative products as well as creative and non-creative authors catching the distinctive elements that determine the change of meaning of an artifact so that it become creative;

- the *judgment*, as ability to evaluate the author(s) of creative and non-creative products;
- the *expression*, as ability to express his/her own creative potential.

Three specific aims are set across this research as follows:

- to investigate the ability of students to recognize the restructuring phase of a creative act differentiating originality between creative and non-creative products. Also beauty level was analyzed in order to ensure that responders can distinguish beauty and originality. Different series of drawings that represented the realization of creative and non-creative objects were devised and tested on adults (Study 1) in order to employ such material with school children (Study 2, Study 3);
- to describe the representation of the behaviour of the creator. Through a story, namely the creative drawing story, that described the phases of restructuring, it was requested students to judge the role of the creative person (Study 2, Study 3);
- to evaluate the expression of creativity. This last aspect was investigated in Study 3 using different tasks: a semantic differential scale, employed to investigate how students described a creative person; a picture completion task, in which students had to complete two drawings using respectively creative and non-creative ways; a subscale of the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT: Torrance, 1989), in order to obtain a reliable measure of the creative potential.