

Expanding mental boundaries for better creativity

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Human societies and civilizations have been built on countless innovations, and the role of creativity is indispensable in generating such innovations. Therefore, creativity training is the top priority of many organizations and institutions [1,2].

Two researchers from Ohio State University, Angus Fletcher and Mike Benveniste, have recently proposed a new method for training creativity [3]. The training method is based on the narrative theory, which focuses on the narrative, its structure, and how these can generate cause-and-effect in human minds [4]. The training curriculum consists of three narrative techniques [5]:

1. World building: the technique of helping the mind imagine a new environment
2. Perspective shifting: the technique of helping the mind imagine from a different perspective
3. Action generating: the technique of helping the mind imagine possible actions

Although the narrative techniques' effectiveness and cost-benefits still need further research to be evaluated, their effectiveness can be felt through the early adoption of the curriculum. In particular, the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College, the U.S. military's special operations community, the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, the Ohio State College of Engineering, and other partners have applied and refined the curriculum of narrative training for senior military officers, corporate executives, and graduate students in multiple disciplines ranging from Entrepreneurship to

the Arts [3].



Figure: The storytelling swan, illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker (Public Domain);

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Storytelling_Swan.png

In line with the mindsponge theory [6,7], information in the physical world is objective, but people's way of understanding and capitalizing on it is subjectively driven. In reality, how much people can understand and capitalize on a thing or event depends on their mental capacity to imagine possibilities that can happen. Such mental capacity is confined by the set of information existing within the mind, creating a subjective boundary for imagination [8].

From this information-processing standpoint, the narrative training technique can be interpreted as a way to expand the trainees' subjective worlds (or subjective boundaries) through world-building, perspective-shifting, and action-generating techniques. When the subjective boundary is expanded, people may imagine more possibilities that can happen, enhancing their creativity – the ability to generate useful novel ideas [9-11].

References

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