

Adopt creativity to survive in challenging times

By **Stuart Danker**
stuart@malaysiasme.com.my

Creativity has many definitions, depending on the source. One definition that is generally agreed upon describes creativity as a conversion of thoughts into reality through creation. A distinctive feature that differentiates creativity from imagination is the materialisation of ideas, instead of merely thinking about them.

Creativity is not limited to vocations commonly associated with the arts, such as fashion, design, writing and music. This quality can be applied in jobs and careers of all types, as its use transcends the creation of pieces of art. Creativity in its higher forms can be used to solve problems, increase sales, implement more effective leadership styles and create new ways of doing things.

A recent study by Adobe, unveiled at its annual education leadership forum, showed an important link between creativity and employability, solidifying the role of the often overlooked trait as an important quality to have to increase chances of landing a job.

The study was carried out across 13 countries from the Asia Pacific region with data from 1,531 educators being the subject of the study. The theme for the year 2014 was to measure the im-

An often overlooked trait seems to be a contributing factor to growth and development, according to a recent Adobe study

portance of creativity in education and its ability to create a digitally-able workforce.

In terms of digital proficiency, Adobe, in its press release, stated that the challenge now is to bridge the gap between the education system, creativity and digital knowledge. As educators, there is a need to get together to create a plan towards creating this shift for students not only to become consumers of digital content but also creators of such content.

Adobe head of education marketing in Asia Pacific Prabhjeet Singh told *MALAYSIA SME*, "The business environment has changed drastically in the last decade or so. Businesses which have not been creative in addressing the challenges have either stagnated or perished."

"Leaders of today's businesses and companies are coming to recognise that creativity and creative thinking are among the most crucial elements for success in the modern world. Creativity today, is all around us and is applicable not just in traditional fields such as design and the arts, but also in fields like science, mathematics and business, regardless of rank or role," he continued.

The message is clear - creativity is a necessary catalyst for future growth within businesses.

Consequently, there are various groups that are now beginning to embrace the value of creativity, be it design companies or multinational corporations.

The study showed that educators from the Asia Pacific region resoundingly agreed about the important role creativity plays in all fields of study and work. Almost all of the respondents, amounting to 97%, agreed that creative tools help students absorb more of what is being taught in the classroom.

Another important fact taken from the study was the emphasis on digital

know-how. With 58% of respondents agreeing that knowledge of digital technology was essential to ensure competitiveness in the workforce companies cannot afford to ignore the development of this essential ability in the workplace.

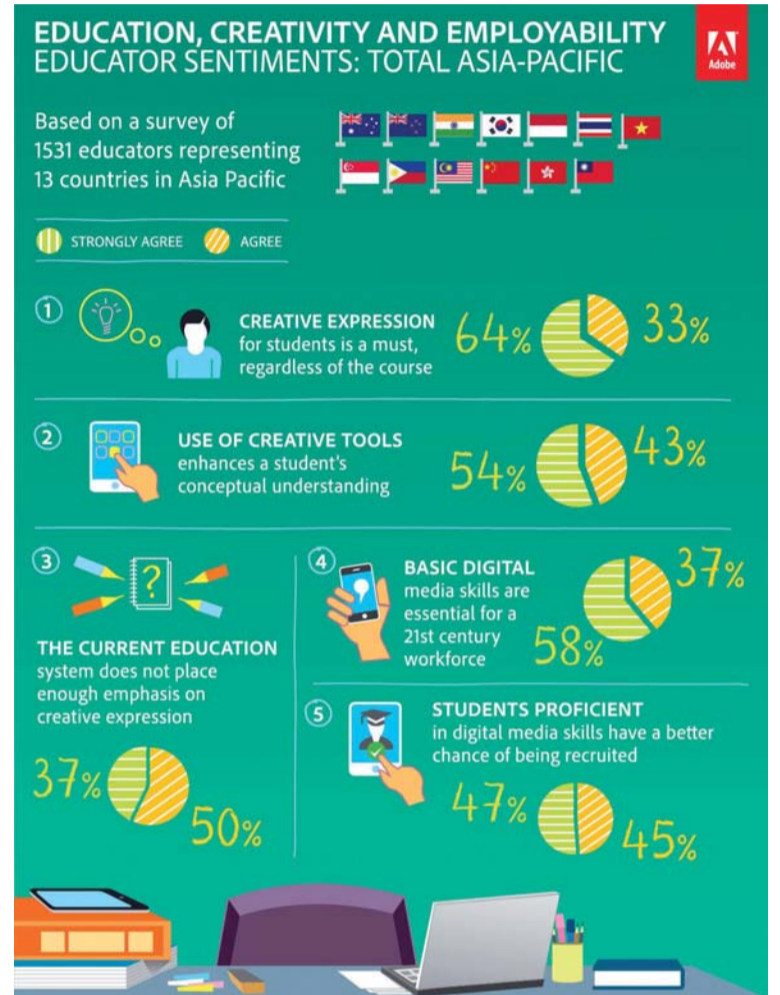
A supporting figure showed 47% of respondents stating that applicants who had digital knowledge surpassed their untrained counterparts in finding employment. It is a scary wakeup call for the high number of employees in the workforce that are not digitally proficient, with the prospect of being redundant looming in their horizons.

"With innovations in social media as well as the democratisation of information and technology, we see greater value and emphasis being placed on user-generated content - something which will continue to evolve in sophistication and value thanks to digital media skills," Prabhjeet said.

He added, "Additionally, to succeed in today's VUCA world, which is volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, the only thing we can bank on is creativity. It is a force that will push us to tackle complex issues innovatively and boldly go outside our comfort zones to figure out solutions."

Narrowed down to the perspective of the Southeast Asian region, the qualities above were rated 62% and 52% respectively. Within the APAC, the Southeast Asian region had the highest number of respondents who thought that digital media skills created more opportunities for recruitment.

"Thanks to the explosion of mobile devices, there is a need for to-



day's educators to develop more engaging curriculum for digital-native students as the ways of teaching and learning have evolved drastically over the years," Prabhjeet said.

"The use of creative tools in the ideation process definitely helps to improve creative expression and collaboration. When students share their ideas, it encourages acceptability of different opinions and provides multi-dimensional views of challenges - this in turn helps students to be more creative," he continued.

Perhaps the biggest challenge unearthed by this study is the fact that a gap exists between education and creativity. With the output of schools not meeting this demand for creative expression, the workforce stands to lose out on the opportunity to move forward in improve-

ment and development. "This data shows that a majority of the educators understand the importance of creativity in education but there is still a lot to be done to bring creativity to a next level. This includes changes to the education policy, curriculum and professional development for teachers and, more importantly, a change in mind-set that creativity is not just limited to art and design," Prabhjeet said.

While the findings point the way towards the right direction, implementation will be the biggest obstacle in helping develop creativity among the country's students. Meanwhile, SMEs can give the country a head start by encouraging creativity in the workplace and making digital knowledge development a priority. **MSME**



Prabhjeet

	TOTAL APAC	ANZ	Greater China	India	South East Asia	South Korea
Creative expression is a must for all students, regardless of the course	64%	62%	65%	71%	59%	65%
Use of creative tools by educators improves and enhances a student's conceptual understanding	54%	58%	57%	70%	62%	45%
The current education system does not place enough emphasis on creative expression as part of academic	37%	38%	37%	31%	28%	39%
Basic digital media skills are essential for a 21st century workforce	58%	68%	53%	66%	62%	50%
Students who are proficient in digital media skills have a better chance of being recruited by employers	47%	49%	50%	44%	52%	46%

Source: Adobe