Creativity of Chinese International Students in St. Paul University Manila: Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: *This study examined the creative activities of Chinese international graduate students at St. Paul University Manila during different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their descriptions of creativity before, during, and after the pandemic, as well as their efforts to foster creativity among their peers or subordinates post-pandemic. Thirteen Chinese international students in the College of Education at St. Paul University Manila participated in a survey featuring three open-ended questions exploring their creative activities throughout the pandemic. Their voluntary responses were analyzed thematically within the frameworks of the Sociocultural Theory of Creativity and Transformational Leadership Theory. The findings indicate a utilization of both traditional and innovative teaching methods, fostering interdisciplinary engagement, and encouraging independent thinking and exploration, ultimately enhancing student engagement and problem-solving skills. The study discusses creative engagements during the pandemic, including the adaptation to online teaching and learning, exploration of new hobbies, and utilization of online resources and platforms, to address challenges and foster innovation amidst evolving educational landscapes. It also reveals educational creative engagements post-pandemic, emphasizing the promotion of independent thinking and exploration, providing resources for innovation, strengthening mentorship and support systems, utilizing online learning resources, and implementing innovative teaching methods to foster dynamic learning environments and promote critical thinking.*

Keywords: Creative activities, Chinese international graduate students, St. Paul University Manila, COVID-19 pandemic, Sociocultural Theory of Creativity, Transformational Leadership Theory, Innovation

I.   Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges, impacting various aspects of daily life, including creative expression, use of creative spaces (Bantugan, 2024), and productivity. Before the pandemic, individuals often engaged in diverse creative pursuits, ranging from personal hobbies to professional endeavors, influenced by factors such as social interactions, work environments, and time availability. However, with the onset of the pandemic and subsequent restrictions, individuals faced disruptions to their usual routines and environments, prompting the need to adapt and find new ways to nurture creativity amidst uncertainty and isolation.

Understanding the dynamics of creative expression before, during, and after the pandemic is essential for several reasons. Firstly, investigating individuals' creative experiences before the pandemic provides insights into the factors that facilitate or hinder creativity in normal circumstances, laying the foundation for understanding how these factors may have shifted during the pandemic. Secondly, exploring how individuals continued to be creative during the pandemic sheds light on the adaptive strategies and resilience mechanisms employed to sustain creative pursuits in challenging circumstances. Lastly, examining how educators or leaders engage students or subordinates in creativity post-pandemic is crucial for informing effective approaches to fostering creativity in educational and professional settings, considering the lessons learned from navigating the pandemic-induced disruptions.

By addressing these research questions, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on creativity by providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the pandemic on creative life and exploring strategies for promoting creativity in the aftermath of COVID-19. Through empirical investigation and qualitative analysis, this research seeks to offer valuable insights that can inform practices and interventions aimed at supporting and enhancing creativity in individuals and organizations in a post-pandemic world.

Value of Creativity. Creativity holds multifaceted value across various domains. In the context of education, creativity is pivotal for talent development, preparing students for the demands of the 21st century (Oppert et al., 2023). Moreover, in organizational settings, creativity fosters a culture of innovation, enhancing competitiveness through divergent thinking and problem-solving (Lamb &Dekelaita-Mullet, 2022). The literature review underscores the instrumental nature of creativity, serving as a tool to achieve both extrinsic and intrinsic-inherent outcomes, particularly in business and workforce contexts (Belizário, 2022). Recognizing the subjective nature of value, creative learning in universities plays a crucial role in shaping diverse perceptions and beliefs, emphasizing the significance of understanding the real value of creative degrees beyond mere economic considerations (Bazaz, 2020).

Creative Engagements Before the Pandemic. Creative engagements before the pandemic encompassed various forms of artistic and sociological practices. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, neighborhoods utilized streets, sidewalks, and driveways as sociable spaces for informal and uncoordinated creative expression, fostering community connections and coping mechanisms (Pfeiffer et al., 2022). Additionally, art museums worldwide focused on creating discourse spaces through online platforms and implementing new curation methods based on public participation and community cooperation models (Zhang, 2022). Moreover, some art projects showcased the use of arts and cultural activities to maintain and support social connections, emphasizing the importance of creative projects in addressing loneliness and enhancing social well-being (Hancox et al., 2022). Overall, creative engagements before the pandemic served as vital tools for fostering community resilience and social cohesion.

Creative Engagements During the Pandemic. Creative engagements during the pandemic have been crucial for various sectors, including the cultural and creative industries. Managers in the cultural market have highlighted the significance of creativity in overcoming the limitations imposed by the pandemic (Pietrzyk, 2023). Artists and cultural workers have adapted by transitioning their activities online, intensifying digital presence, and engaging with audiences through social media and online performances (Goodwin & Brophy, 2023; Pop et al., 2023). The use of digital technologies and online platforms has facilitated intimate connections and collaborations, providing psychological support during restricted movement (Reformat, 2023). Through innovative solutions and creative approaches, individuals and organizations in the cultural sector have demonstrated resilience and adaptability, turning challenges into opportunities for reflection, diversification, and new forms of expression that extend beyond the pandemic era.

Engagement in Creativity After the Pandemic. Creative engagements post-pandemic have been crucial for various cultural sectors. Exhibitions have shifted online, fostering public encounters and

psychological support (Pietrzyk, 2023). The cultural and creative sector has adapted to online platforms, addressing socio-political and economic issues (Zhang, 2022). Independent cultural spaces have shown resilience by intensifying digital activities and transitioning online during the crisis (Basu, 2023). Artists have utilized digital technologies for intimate connections and contemporary expressions, exploring mediated intimacies and asynchronous encounters (Pop et al., 2023). Creativity has played a pivotal role in seizing opportunities during the pandemic, leading to reflection, diversification, and chance management in various cultural domains (Goodwin & Brophy, 2023). Hence, post-pandemic creative engagements have showcased adaptability, resilience, and innovative approaches in navigating uncertainties and embracing new opportunities in the cultural and creative landscape.

Sociocultural Theory of Creativity. The socio-cultural theory of creativity, underscored by Glăveanu (2020), emphasizes the influence of societal and cultural elements on creative expression and innovation, highlighting collaborative and context-driven aspects over individual traits. It posits that creativity emerges from interactions within social groups, drawing upon shared knowledge, norms, and values. Cultural beliefs and societal structures shape perceptions of problems and creative solutions, while factors like social networks and organizational cultures can either support or impede creative endeavors. It offers insights into problem-solving, adaptability, and subconscious motivations influenced by stress and societal changes. Before the pandemic, cultural norms and educational experiences influence creativity, while during and after, creative practices are adapted amidst changing environments, leveraging social interactions and cultural resources. This approachsheds light on the intricate dynamics of creativity within specific cultural and social contexts, informing strategies to foster creativity effectively.

Transformational Leadership Theory. Transformational leadership, introduced by James Burns in 1978, focuses on enhancing individuals' beliefs and motivations to facilitate their fulfillment (Morton et al., 2011). Leaders employing this style inspire higher-level needs by displaying traits like charm, charisma, and personalized attention, thereby instilling awareness of responsibilities and maximizing potential performance. The theory emphasizes goal setting and moral exemplification to embody idealized influence, urging leaders to nurture followers' capabilities with humility, patience, and attentiveness. This leadership approach involves active listening, patient assistance, genuine concern for progress, and tailored support, fostering a conducive environment for growth (Yammarino& Dubinsky, 1994). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic's challenges for Chinese international students, the transition to transformational leadership becomes imperative, aiding in adaptation and innovation amidst changing circumstances. Leaders' ability to adjust policies and maintain creativity during the pandemic underscores the relevance of transformational leadership, particularly when integrated with psychological theories of creativity, offering a comprehensive framework for nurturing creativity among graduate students and fostering their academic and professional success.

II.   Statement of the Problem

The study looked into the creative engagements of Chinese international graduate students of St. Paul University Manila before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions: (1) How do Chinese international graduate students of St. Paul University Manila describe their creative life before the pandemic?; (2) How do Chinese international graduate students of St. Paul University Manila continue to be creative during the pandemic?; and (3) In what ways did Chinese international graduate students of St. Paul University Manila engage their students or subordinates to be creative after the pandemic?

III.   Methodology

Thirteen Chinese international students enrolled in the College of Education of St. Paul University Manila were invited to participate in an open-ended survey composed of three questions investigating their

creative engagements before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Their voluntary responses were collected and organized to arrive at the desired data through thematic analysis. Data generated were interpreted and discussed through the lens of Sociocultural Theory of Creativity and Transformational Leadership Theory.

IV. Results

Creative Engagements before the Pandemic

Traditional Teaching Methods and Classroom Dynamics. This theme showcases both conventional and innovative approaches to education. Phrases like "Implement offline courses" and "theoretical lectures interspersed with student keynote speeches, group discussions, debate competitions" reflect traditional classroom instruction, emphasizing teacher-led learning and student participation. However, there is a recognition of the need for change, with mention of "Breaking the traditional classroom model of 'teacher-led and student-passive'," indicating a shift towards more interactive learning experiences. Integration of "practical projects" and "collaborative plan-making by group members" suggests a move towards hands-on, project-based learning. This highlights the importance of balancing traditional methods with innovative practices to create dynamic learning environments that meet the evolving needs of students.

Academic Atmosphere and Research Collaboration. This theme is prominent throughout the text, reflecting efforts to foster a conducive environment for scholarly pursuits and collaborative endeavors. Responses like "Encourage students or subordinates to use these platforms to communicate and collaborate with people in different fields, thereby broadening their horizons and stimulating creativity" leverage online platforms for interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange. Additionally, phrases like "Regularly organize teaching and research experience sharing meetings, academic salons, and other activities" speak about initiatives aimed at promoting a vibrant academic culture and facilitating the sharing of ideas among peers. The integration of "Collaborative Projects" and "Cross-Disciplinary Teams" further elaborate the importance of collaborative research efforts in driving innovation and generating new insights. These underscore the significance of fostering a collaborative academic atmosphere conducive to research excellence and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Vibrant and Varied Creative Life. This themepertains to the promotion of creativity and innovation among students and academic staff. Responses such as "Creativity often comes from the freedom to explore and think about things" refer to the encouragement of independent thinking and exploration to stimulate creativity. Moreover, phrases like "Encourage students to engage in intense brainstorming sessions" emphasize fostering a dynamic learning environment where students can actively participate in creative activities. Additionally, statements like "Encourage collaboration on projects that require innovative solutions" indicate the importance of collaborative endeavors in nurturing creativity and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, the integration of "Flexible Environments" and "Resource Library" elevate efforts to provide conducive spaces and resources that inspire creativity. Hence, there is a concerted effort to cultivate a vibrant and varied creative life among students and academic staff, fostering a culture of innovation and exploration within the educational community.

Innovative Teaching Methods and Student Engagement. This theme showcases various strategies aimed at fostering creativity and active participation among students. Responses such as "Encourage them to think independently, come up with their own insights and ideas, and try and innovate in practice" underscore the promotion of independent thinking and innovation among students. Moreover, statements like "Organize virtual challenges that require creative thinking" emphasize the implementation of creative challenges to stimulate students' problem-solving skills and imagination. Additionally, phrases such as "Use technology to carry out innovative projects" demonstrate the integration of technological tools to facilitate hands-on learning experiences and promote innovative projects. Furthermore, the emphasis on "Collaborative Projects" highlights the importance of teamwork and cooperation in generating innovative solutions to real-world problems. These

collectively illustrate a commitment to employing innovative teaching methods and fostering student engagement to cultivate a culture of creativity and innovation within the educational environment.

Face-to-Face Communication and Interaction. This theme underscores the importance of direct engagement in educational settings. Responses like "Strengthen teamwork and mentoring" point to the significance of regular communication and feedback between educators and students to effectively manage research time and enhance learning outcomes. Moreover, statements like "Implement offline courses, with teachers providing theoretical lectures interspersed with student keynote speeches, group discussions, debate competitions" bring attention to the value of face-to-face interactions in facilitating dynamic classroom experiences and fostering active participation among students. Additionally, phrases such as "Encourage collaboration on projects that require innovative solutions" underscore the role of interpersonal communication in promoting teamwork and collaboration to address complex challenges. The mention of "Classroom surveys" signifies an effort to encourage participation and engagement through interactive methods during in-person sessions. Evidently, these underscore the importance of face-to-face communication and interaction in creating enriching learning environments and facilitating meaningful educational experiences.

Offline Academic Seminars and Research Collaboration. This theme covers the significance of in-person gatherings and collaborative efforts in academic pursuits. Responses such as "Organize educational administration workers to participate in seminars, lectures and training courses related to teaching and research" reflect the value of offline academic events in fostering knowledge exchange and professional development among educators. Additionally, statements like "Regularly organize teaching and research experience sharing meetings, academic salons and other activities" emphasize the role of face-to-face interactions in promoting research collaboration and intellectual discourse within academic communities. Moreover, phrases such as "Encourage collaboration on projects that require innovative solutions" indicate the importance of offline engagement in facilitating teamwork and joint efforts to address research challenges. The mention of "Deepened theoretical knowledge and research skills" signifies the potential benefits of offline seminars in advancing academic expertise and enhancing research competencies. These collectively highlight the significance of offline academic seminars and research collaboration in promoting scholarly exchange, fostering collaborative endeavors, and advancing academic excellence.

Creative Engagements during the Pandemic

Adaptation to Online Teaching and Learning. This theme brings to the foreground the necessity of adjusting educational practices in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Direct quotations such as "Encourage students to use online resources for learning" and "Use technology to carry out innovative projects" highlight the shift towards virtual platforms and digital tools to facilitate remote learning. Additionally, statements like "Offer workshops on creative thinking, problem-solving, or new skills" emphasize the importance of leveraging online platforms to provide educational opportunities and foster creativity among students. Moreover, phrases such as "Encourage learning from online courses, webinars, or conferences" and "Create a flexible working environment where people feel comfortable sharing their ideas" indicate the need to embrace digital learning modalities while maintaining a supportive and adaptable educational environment. Furthermore, the mention of "Implement offline courses" suggests a blended approach to instruction, combining traditional and online methods to meet diverse learning needs. This integrated approach, encompassing remote training opportunities and maximizing online resources, allows educators to adapt to new teaching modes suited to online environments, ultimately enhancing student engagement and academic achievement in virtual settings amidst unprecedented circumstances.

Exploration of New Hobbies and Activities. In this theme, individuals can engage in various strategies to broaden their horizons and foster personal growth. Direct quotations such as "Search the Internet and view the latest research achievements and directions in the field of literature research" emphasize the

importance of leveraging online resources to stay informed about emerging trends and developments within one's areas of interest. Additionally, the notion of "Communicate more with classmates, teachers, discuss recent learning and reading outcomes with each other, and maintain a state of continuous thinking and research" highlights the value of peer interaction and collaborative learning in stimulating intellectual curiosity and encouraging ongoing exploration. Moreover, the acknowledgment of "Expanding the classroom poses challenges in teaching and student management" underscores the potential challenges and opportunities associated with embracing new learning environments and pedagogical approaches. By actively seeking out new information, engaging in meaningful discussions with peers and mentors, and embracing the challenges of expanding learning horizons, individuals can embark on a journey of continuous exploration and personal development.

Innovative Teaching Approaches. This theme covers the adoption of creative methods to engage students and enhance learning outcomes. For example, phrases like "Implement offline courses" and "highlighting the protagonist role of students in course learning" signify a shift away from traditional teacher-centered approaches towards more student-centric methods. Similarly, statements such as "Encourage collaboration on projects" and "Flexible Environments" stress the importance of creating dynamic learning settings that foster active participation and idea generation. Moreover, the mention of "Virtual Brainstorming Sessions" and "Online Workshops" demonstrates the integration of technology to facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences. Furthermore, phrases like "Open-Ended Assignments" and "Encourage Curiosity and Exploration" underscore the promotion of critical thinking and independent inquiry among students. These data collectively illustrate a commitment to innovative teaching approaches aimed at improving student learning outcomes and nurturing creativity.

Remote Research and Collaboration. This theme is essential for fostering the creativity of Chinese international graduate students at St. Paul University Manila, particularly in the context of globalization in education and the increasing prominence of online teaching. As emphasized in the citation, "In-depth study of online teaching, understand its characteristics and advantages, and guide students to better carry out online learning," online teaching offers unique flexibility, abundant resources, and strong interactivity, becoming integral to modern education. Moreover, the outbreak of the epidemic has accelerated the adoption of online teaching, necessitating universities to adapt by selecting suitable online education platforms and addressing technological barriers. It was cited, "After the outbreak, universities moved quickly to implement online teaching to ensure continuity of student learning, including the choice of teaching tools, the adaptation process for teachers and students, and the challenges and solutions faced." To better adapt to online teaching, active participation in online academic conferences and teaching training is crucial, as it deepens understanding of educational technology transformation, as noted in the quotation, "Attend online academic conferences and attend online teaching training. we have a deep understanding of the power of educational technology change, actively learn and use modern educational technology to make up for the shortcomings of ability, form Internet education thinking." Therefore, remote research and collaboration play a pivotal role in addressing academic challenges and fostering innovation amidst evolving educational landscapes leveraging online platforms for collaborative research endeavors, virtual brainstorming sessions, and adapting research methodologies to online formats to continue scholarly pursuits despite physical distance.

Maintaining Routine and Self-Care. This theme emphasizes the importance of prioritizing physical and mental well-being amidst academic responsibilities. As highlighted in the quotation, "Pay attention to a healthy life. I keep a regular routine and try my best to keep a certain amount of time for creation and study every day, so that I can constantly be in the state of work and study," establishing a structured daily routine is crucial for sustaining productivity and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore, the transition to online teaching amid the pandemic has necessitated adjustments in campus life and social activities. As indicated in the quote, "Online teaching has been promoted and implemented, campus life and social activities have been adjusted, student and mental health has been supported," educational institutions have adapted to the

new normal by implementing online teaching platforms and providing support for student well-being. In addition to academic adjustments, universities have recognized the importance of mental health support for students during these challenging times. The provision of psychological counseling, online support platforms, and psychological lectures online, as mentioned in the quote, "Mental health support was provided by the university for students, including psychological counseling, online support platform, and psychological lectures online to help students eliminate fear and anxiety about the epidemic," calls for the commitment to addressing students' emotional needs and promoting mental wellness. Responses declare the significance of maintaining a structured routine, adapting to changes in academic practices, and prioritizing mental health support to ensure the holistic well-being of students amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Utilization of Online Resources and Platforms. In this theme, the integration of various digital tools and platforms has become essential for effective teaching, learning, and research collaboration. The quotation, "Make full use of the form of Internet + education, established a discipline learning and exchange platform, and used QQ group, Wechat group, etc., to carry out personalized and diversified online teaching, teaching and research guidance and exchange," stipulates the incorporation of online platforms like QQ and WeChat for personalized and interactive educational experiences. Moreover, the use of video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Voov facilitates remote interviews and data collection, as stated in the quote, "Conduct remote interviews via video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Voov, etc. Large-scale data collection is carried out through online survey tools (such as Questionnaire star, Tencent questionnaire, etc." These tools not only enable real-time communication but also support collaborative functions like screen sharing and file transfer, enhancing the efficiency of research activities and academic interactions. Furthermore, various online platforms like SuperStarLearn provide opportunities for interaction and engagement with students, as emphasized in the quote, "Through various online platforms like SuperStarLearn, I interacted with my students. This adaptation and transformation, in my view, were manifestations of maintaining creativity." Such adaptations demonstrate a proactive approach to leveraging online resources for maintaining academic continuity and fostering creativity in teaching and research endeavors.

Educational Creative Engagements after the Pandemic

Encouragement of Independent Thinking and Exploration. This theme underscores the promotion of autonomy and innovation in academic pursuits, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The response "Cultivate students' independent learning and research ability, use technology to carry out innovative projects" highlights the importance of fostering self-directed inquiry and leveraging technological tools for creative exploration. Moreover, the statement "Online education and teaching in response to the epidemic is both emergency and innovation, education should continue to explore the reform of education methods, especially on the basis of refining and summarizing the experience of 'stopping classes and teaching without stopping school,' explore intelligent teaching methods, enhance students' learning autonomy and effectiveness" reflects a commitment to adapting educational practices to meet evolving needs, with a focus on enhancing student autonomy and effectiveness through innovative pedagogical approaches. Similarly, the statement "Encourage students to study and research independently" affirms the value of promoting independent inquiry and exploration, complemented by the adoption of innovative teaching methods to facilitate active learning experiences. These quotations collectively highlight the imperative of nurturing independent thinking and exploration within academic settings, fostering a culture of innovation and self-directed learning among students.

Providing Resources and Platforms for Innovation. This theme emphasizes the multifaceted approach to fostering creativity and exploration within educational contexts. The quotation "Virtual Brainstorming Sessions. Online Workshops. Collaborative Projects. Resource Library" highlight the importance of offering diverse platforms and resources to facilitate innovative endeavors. Furthermore, the mention of "We begin to use shared apps to check student attendance, student intern, etc." indicate a proactive response to

leveraging technology for administrative purposes, creating opportunities for streamlined processes and enhanced collaboration. The acknowledgment that "The impact of the epidemic on us is not only the lifestyle, but also inspires people to think about and try the existing education model" points to the transformative potential of challenges, encouraging reevaluation and experimentation with traditional educational paradigms. These responses collectively indicate the significance of providing accessible and adaptable resources and platforms for innovation, fostering a dynamic learning environment that promotes creativity and adaptation in response to evolving needs and circumstances.

Strengthening Mentorship and Support. This theme highlights the multifaceted approach to fostering mentorship and support within educational settings. The quotation "Conduct research and innovation training… mainly includes the retrieval and reading methods of literature reading, the methods of writing and publishing papers" underscores the importance of structured training programs aimed at enhancing research skills and scholarly output. Furthermore, the emphasis on "Strengthen teamwork and mentoring. Communicate with students regularly and respond to student feedback in a timely manner" reflects a commitment to fostering supportive relationships and open channels of communication between mentors and mentees. The statement "Share successful teaching research cases, organize educational administration workers to participate in seminars, lectures and training courses related to teaching and research" highlight the value of sharing best practices and providing opportunities for professional development within academic communities. These reveal the significance of nurturing mentorship and support systems that empower individuals to thrive academically and professionally, fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth.

Utilizing Online Learning Resources. This theme elucidates the diverse array of digital tools and platforms available for educational enrichment. The statement "Use various online platforms and resources, such as online courses, video tutorials, e-books..." emphasizes the breadth of online resources accessible to learners, offering flexibility and customization in learning experiences. Additionally, the response "Participate in online lectures, seminars, and web forums to communicate and interact with experts and other students in various fields" manifest the interactive nature of online learning, providing opportunities for engagement and collaboration with peers and subject matter experts. By leveraging these online platforms and resources, learners can access a wealth of educational content, engage in meaningful interactions, and broaden their knowledge horizons beyond traditional classroom settings, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of their learning experiences.

Implementing Innovative Teaching Methods. This theme presents the transformative shift in pedagogical approaches facilitated by information technology. The statement "Teachers have changed from face-to-face, hand-held, and controlling; to guiding and inspiring in the information technology teaching environment" points to the evolution towards more student-centered and facilitative teaching styles, promoting autonomy and critical thinking. Additionally, the role of educators as growth mentors is emphasized, encouraging the formation of learning communities and fostering both group and independent learning initiatives. Furthermore, the imperative to "Explore intelligent teaching methods" emphasizes a multifaceted approach, including strategies such as Open-Ended Assignments, Collaborative Activities, Providing Feedback and Encouragement, and Embracing Technology, to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By embracing these innovative teaching methods, educators can create dynamic and inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse learning styles and promote active participation and knowledge construction among students.

V. Discussion

Navigating themes of creativity pre-pandemic, through the combined lenses of the sociocultural theory of creativity and transformational leadership theory, underscores the importance of traditional teaching methods and classroom dynamics in either fostering or inhibiting creativity (Oppert et al., 2023). Transformational leaders have the potential to inspire innovation by integrating practices such as project-based learning and

collaborative activities into traditional settings (Lamb &Dekelaita-Mullet, 2022). Collaboration and knowledge exchange within academic communities play a vital role in shaping creative processes, with transformational leaders fostering a collaborative atmosphere by promoting open communication and interdisciplinary collaboration (Belizário, 2022). Encouraging exploration, independent thinking, and intense brainstorming sessions nurtures creativity among students and academic staff (Bazaz, 2020), while providing flexible environments and access to resources supports creative endeavors.

Themes of creative engagements during the pandemic highlight the adaptive responses and innovative approaches in education and research (Pietrzyk, 2023). Individuals leverage digital platforms and peer interactions to foster creativity and personal growth, with transformational leaders inspiring flexibility, collaboration, and self-care to navigate challenges and drive innovation (Goodwin & Brophy, 2023; Pop et al., 2023). Innovative teaching methods, remote research collaborations, and the utilization of online resources underscore the role of social and cultural factors in shaping creativity (Reformat, 2023), while transformational leaders play a crucial role in guiding these efforts.

Post-pandemic educational creative engagements encompass a multifaceted approach aimed at fostering autonomy, innovation, and support within academic settings (Zhang, 2022). Encouragement of independent thinking and exploration highlights the importance of nurturing self-directed inquiry and leveraging technology to enhance student autonomy and effectiveness (Basu, 2023). Providing resources and platforms for innovation underscores the significance of offering diverse avenues for creative endeavors and adapting educational practices to meet evolving needs (Pfeiffer et al., 2022). Strengthening mentorship and support systems emphasizes the value of structured training programs, supportive relationships, and professional development opportunities to empower individuals academically and professionally (Hancox et al., 2022). Utilizing online learning resources underscores the accessibility and interactive nature of digital tools, enabling learners to engage with educational content and peers beyond traditional classroom settings (Glăveanu, 2020). Implementing innovative teaching methods reflects a transformative shift towards student-centered approaches, promoting critical thinking, collaboration, and technological integration to enhance learning outcomes (Bazaz, 2020). Collectively, these themes underscore the importance of fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that nurtures creativity, autonomy, and resilience among students and educators alike.

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