
CREATIVE EDUCATION OF PUPILS AND TEACHERS

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Abstract: The efficiency of creative education in students is dependent on teacher's scientific and pedagogical preparation, his ability to organize appropriately student's activities and use appropriate teaching techniques for the attainment of proposed objectives. Composing exercises and problems similar to those resolved during teaching contributes directly to the promotion of creativity. Problems can be designed after homework, diagrams, teaching material existing in the class. Also mathematical games can be organized, combining work with fun efficiently. The more the pupil is given the freedom of choice from data and means of resolution, the faster the creative activities are. In the absence of precise guidelines, thinking and imagination operate through associations more or less accidental. Learning through discovery develops the spirit of initiative and independence, critical thinking, boldness, intellectual flexibility. Undoubtedly, the cultivation of the student's creative spirit depends to a great extent on the teacher's ability to create a favorable atmosphere for the educational process. He is the intermediary between the child and the surrounding world, opening possibilities for acquisition of personal experience, supporting them in systematizing knowledge. The basic product in creativity education is the independent activity which can be put into practice in all areas of study. Systematic engagement of pupils in operations of analysis and synthesis provides a creative and flexible thinking.

Keywords: Problem solving, independence, intellectual flexibility

Multidimensional phenomenon, creativity emerges as a complex activity resulting in a product. It manifests in the development of a process and requires the existence of personality traits and a social and organizational context in which it is conducted.

All individuals possess dispositions to create, which have only to be discovered. It has been demonstrated that all children possess native general endowments based on which favorable conditions and working environment foster individual-specific capabilities.

Many psychologists point out that, if many children exhibit stereotypic behavior, we may not conclude that their thinking would be purely imitative or that their native creativity would be poor. They mention that the deficiencies noted are not in any way features of infantile psyche, but reflect deficiencies in training and education. If students fail to overcome imitative behaviors, it is because this is how they were accustomed, and as the teacher claims independent work and thinking, ingenuity becomes natural.

Undoubtedly, nurturing the creative spirit of the student depends largely on the ability of the teacher to create an atmosphere conducive to the educational process. The teacher is the mediator between the child and the surrounding world, the teacher opens opportunities for acquiring own experiences, supporting the children in ordering and systematization of knowledge. The basic product in educating creativity is the independent work that can be implemented in all fields of study. Engaging systematically the students in operations of analysis, synthesis, generalization provides creative, flexible thinking.

The efficiency of creativity education in students depends on scientific and pedagogical training of the teacher, on the teacher's ability to organize students' work judiciously, to use all the teaching means for the objectives proposed.

Knowing the child means knowing the biological reality, the psychological reality and the environment where the child develops, as well as the child's life experiences, successive stages of child's development since birth and, maybe, even some stages in prenatal period that could explain aspects of the current general condition of the child.

A good knowledge of the child can be achieved, as we found, not in a passive analysis process but in the joint work with the child and by active help provided by the teacher. As each child is an individual case, a single subject, with own experiences, joys and sorrows experienced in different circumstances, with own features and originality distinguishing the child from other children, the teacher has a duty to adapt to each particular case not to hinder the fragile development of the child, but especially to know which way to contribute effectively to the child's later development.

Knowing the mental development level and volume of knowledge will allow the detection and systematic practice of lagging functions, assimilation of concepts indispensable for understanding and acquiring a whole range of school knowledge.

The beginning of the school period falls entirely into the profile characteristics of a transitional phase, occupying a special position in the configuration of childhood picture. It marks the beginning of the third sub-period of childhood, which will extend over a period of four years (from 6/7 years – 10/11 years). The start of school life is also the beginning of the learning activity that requires the child not only considerable intellectual effort, but great physical strength also.

Children aged 6/7 are of particular receptivity to the surrounding reality. Perception is global, sometimes superficial, supported by intuitive material. Development of feelings is a process in full development at this age. There is a widening of the field of vision, and a more accurate differentiation of color shades.

The progresses of space perception are due primarily to the enrichment of their life experience. The distances perceived by the child increase, spatial direction is generalized (right, left, forward, backward), topographical sense falls into place.

The substantial increase of memory volume is specific to small school age. The memory receives a large amount of information. The students memorize and retain data about the tools they work with, about the signs and symbols they operate with, about new terms they use, about the rules and laws they learn.

Besides the traditional effort to educate critical thinking, the stimulation of imagination appears also as a major objective. This implies significant changes both in teachers' mindset and in the methods of education and training.

First, the climate has to be changed in order to remove the cultural and emotional blockages that were strong in the past schooling method. Relaxed, democratic relationships are required between students and teachers. Then, the teaching method should seek involvement, initiative from the students by using the methods. Finally, the imagination must also be properly appreciated, along with the soundness of knowledge, the rigorous reasoning and critical thinking.

The pedagogical creative product engages at least the inventiveness level, located between creativity significant only individual-wise and that relevant at social level. This level is reached “only by few individuals” i.e. “the most flexible and responsive to symbolic processing in large spaces.”

Education leads to the increase of their number because of the creativity exercise permanently employed during the lesson, requiring the teacher continuous adaptation to new, unpredictable situations in fast speed mode.

The creative product reflects the subject-object correlation complexity, correlations employed at the level of educational / didactic action by multiplication of necessary pedagogical correspondences between pedagogical objectives - educational content – teaching-learning-evaluation strategies, specifically targeted to achieve a formative priority education.

The education field develops pedagogical space and time open to creativity in the individual plan (creativity of the teacher, of the student), in the collective plan (creativity of teachers’ collective, classroom creativity, creativity of micro-groups of students) and in the social plan (school organization creativity, education, national, regional, local community creativity).

The pedagogical-type creative process is engaged at the teaching/education design level which involves valuing the preparation-incubation-illumination-verification stages of lesson achievement, in primary formative terms.

Creativity must be cultivated, learned from primary school, even from kindergarten. The need for innovation is essential to the smooth running of the school, of the life, of the times in which we live. Because education is not the exclusive obligation or attribution of the school, educational activity must be undertaken by the family, the media, the local community as well, as complementary factors with major influence in shaping the child's personality.

The small school age, characterized by fantasy, curiosity, sense of adventure, is a time for stimulating creativity. At this age, children have the courage to give personal opinions, to argue and to find novel solutions to different situations without the fear of being wrong or of appearing ridiculous, as might happen with people who have certain life experience.

Therefore, creativity apprenticeship must start at an early age for its development to enroll in an upward direction beyond the end of schooling.

Creativity of students depends on several factors: education, the physical and cognitive development level of the individual and not least their experience. It would be great if each teacher would accept students as they are, while creating favorable atmosphere to express their personality and originality.

School is the main factor that can contribute decisively to the valorization of the potential creativity of students, to stimulating their creative inclinations and to the education of creativity. Creative acts, more or less relevant, existing before the child enters school age, are managed and used to some extent in the family and in the kindergarten, subsequently the tracing, simulation and shaping of creative skills in students being emphasized in school.

At the level of primary school children, any settlement of problem situations represents at the same time a manifestation of their creative thinking. The main characteristic of creative thinking in students is the novelty or originality of the solution found, of the idea

issued. In primary school it cannot be about the existence of particular creativity of student thinking but rather about forming prerequisites for further development of creativity. Small age students adopt creative attitude when facing problems, restructure the problem data, discover solving methods, and solve the problem in a personal way.

At present stage, in order to achieve a formative education, every teacher should be aware that it is necessary to have a stimulating school environment. This is created by teachers / professors who allow the free expression of ideas, even of opposite ideas, who stimulate independent work, who are able to establish a democratic relationship with students that is not based on fear, coercion, irony, nor on the “laissez –faire” style.

Equally, the teacher must learn how to be creative in teaching. If the teacher does not prove creativity, it will be very hard to develop this feature in students. They must learn how to formulate a question, to “play” with it, to reformulate it, to assume the role of investigator.

While directing the work of students, the teacher encourages them to discover knowledge, solve problems, and to formulate problems on their own. Students should be guided to acquire independent thinking, to show tolerance for new ideas, to act freely and to use constructive criticism. This type of learning not only leads to the formation of a creative style of problem solving, but has an effect on personality development of students. The student is habituated to address issues without fear, to analyze and solve them. The student is stimulated to become curious and open, to fulfill tasks with pleasure.

In this perspective of stimulating students’ creativity, the teacher should pay more attention to the way in which the evaluation is conducted. It requires a shift of emphasis in evaluation objectives, from the informative objectives to the formative ones. Tension and frustration that usually accompany the evaluative act can only be harmful for students’ expression of creativity. Assessment should be oriented towards highlighting the positive aspects and the progress of each student. Letting off the fear of assessment can be done by postponing it or by setting periods without evaluation. The aim of this work is to create conditions for the free expression of the possibilities of each student, to develop the courage to take risks (Sălăvăstru D., 2004, p. 114-115).

Family environment must be a permissive, non-stiff and unconventional one, where the appreciation of creativity, humor and freedom is always present. Parents have an important role in terms of opportunities of the school and teachers to develop children's creativity. Some teachers say they are discouraged by the fact that they feel pressured to teach the way the parents want it. To do otherwise means “playing”. Teacher communication with parents and informing them of the objectives pursued and methods used, is essential in this case.

In terms of school environment, in relation to creativity, there are two types of environments:

- inhibitor - with hypercritical, rigid teachers, lacking enthusiasm and with reticent attitude towards creative students, which they consider a source of pranks, indiscipline and anarchy;
- stimulating.

The school has to put the student in a position to possess as early as possible own means of acquiring knowledge, processing and integrating it into new systems and structures

and their creative application in practice. There are many educational games and creative activities focused on language issues, by means of which figurative language can be learned and formed.

The teaching game gives the child the appropriate environment for independent action and is simultaneously a means of indirect education. This type of activity practices not only muscles but also intelligence; it brings that self-control in absence of which one cannot be human.

In any normal person, creativity can be more or less developed. In everything they do, little students can show a creative attitude: drafting a letter, a composition; solving an exercise or a problem; making a practical design; etc. To educate the creativity we need to help children to cultivate it from the youngest age.

There are no miracle recipes to stimulate creativity of students. Stimulation of seeking the new and beautiful in compositions, drawings, plastic activities, etc., and the requirement not to reproduce verbatim the lesson, but to express it in their own words, represent the means which guarantee the development of originality, creativity.

The concern for the development of creative spirit led to the development of specific methods and procedures to stimulate creativity.

In the teaching activity, the psycho-pedagogy of creativity is not focused only on methods which can quickly slip into routine, conventionality and can often be misapplied by the teacher. The way in which the assessment is conducted has a great importance in this respect, especially when evaluation is closely associated to the challenging attitude of the teacher for novelty, originality, audacity, and valorization.

Challenging evaluation in terms of creativity and free expression of students is performed primarily through alternative assessment methods that enable the teacher to analyze the products of the subjects' activity, regardless of their nature, in a less formal way. From this perspective the evaluation focuses on formative aspects, on how the student is able to exploit the knowledge and skills he/she possesses – implicitly creativity - and not strictly on what the student knows.

Small schoolchildren have a native creativity, thanks to rich imagination or curiosity, to the pleasure of the fable, to their age-specific spontaneity. The more children are given the opportunity to be spontaneous and independent, the more the chances for them to become creative persons increase.

The school has to discover the creative potential of students exploring the possible dimensions of the student's personality, it has to instruct, to educate, to organize, to correct, to refine and evaluate constantly the training and perfecting process of the necessary qualities for the future person.

We observed the investigation of specific aspects related to the level at which the teachers influence the creative potential of students through creativity stimulation strategies they use in the teaching-learning process.

Specific objectives:

To identify the influence of methods to stimulate creativity in streamlining the teaching-learning process;

To identify the role of the teacher by using such methods;

To identify the level of implication of students in the learning process by applying these methods in the lessons;

To identify the creative attitudes of teachers.

General hypothesis of this research

The teacher having creative attitudes determines the development of creative potential in students by adequate use of strategies to stimulate creativity.

Specific hypothesis

Supporting creative initiatives of the teacher determines the development of task solving strategies in students.

The activity of the teacher in order to stimulate creativity influences the results obtained from the students following the application of these methods.

After interpreting the results of the questionnaires, we concluded that students' creative initiatives become creative products with the support from teachers. Providing material support, conditions to manifest, a degage environment help the teacher to stimulate students' creativity, showing confidence in their initiatives.

Teacher activities have a significant role in fostering creativity in students. Thus, by encouraging creative expression through training and expressing creative attitudes of students, through a free and open relationship and the choice of strategies used and of the application method, the teacher has a relevant influence on the creative potential of students and on their creative products.

The creative activity is one of the greatest challenges of life and thus entails the greatest rewards. Students show a vivid imagination, great flexibility in thinking and intuition, sense of humor, playing attitude, maximum freedom in associating ideas and not least originality in finding solutions.

In order to maximize the creative potential in school it is necessary to understand the “puzzle” nature of the creative process. The conditions that favor creativity of students in the educational process are:

- personal initiative in educational process;
- self-learning;
- good self-esteem;
- stimulation of the child by the social environment;
- encouraging the child's imaginative approaches;
- providing large individual freedom;
- pursuing quality creation not only performance;
- right to failure, and supporting the child to overcome the failure.

Both teaching methods and means used in the activities stimulate children's creative potential. Heuristic strategies involve the child in the activity of discovery, of problem solving, of reality investigation, while creative strategies focus on spontaneity, originality, divergent, analogic thinking.

Creative availabilities of school children manifest in emotional expressions and behaviors in the game, in drawing and communication activities. By drawing, the child reflects reality in a selective and subjective manner, it does not reach a social value as the child's intellectual abilities and graphic skills are not sufficiently developed. In the verbal

area, creation requires mastery of language as an instrument of knowledge and communication. Students' products express needs, wishes and feelings underlying creative combinations.

The lesson remains the creative process by which the teacher shapes original, creative personalities. This is where the teacher shows true mastery, pedagogical tact, starting with the discovery and knowledge of the group of students and continuing with the adaptation of teaching approach to the age specificities of the class and of each student. This requires creating a permissive atmosphere for the affective participation of children in the learning process that encourages communication, cooperation, consultation, formulation of questions by students, which releases them from a specific tense situation, even from fear.

Equally important is to stimulate the student's personal effort and to boost its tendency to make their own contribution, to be original, inventive and creative. We know that work is the means of expression of creative potential. The specificity of the student's work is learning, school activity. Therefore, we must include certain activities specific to this work and for this age, to be able to diagnose creative potential. For students, it is not important for the product to be original, but for the preceding processes to be similar to the very creative adult. Psychological and individual structure creativity will be the manifestation form of the child who promises. This means that he/she has those intellectual and personality premises that with the evolution over the years, may contribute to the original acts, but which now only materialize in a certain ability to think alone, independently.

Pedagogical researches highlight some behaviors as indicators of student's creativity:

- the student can occupy his/her time without being stimulated;
- the student prefers to dress unusually;
- the student goes beyond the task assigned;
- the student is capable to entertain with simple things, in clever ways;
- the student insistently asks « why » and « how »;
- the student likes to organize games in the school yard;
- the student likes to talk about his/her discoveries and inventions;
- the student finds unusual uses for things (objects, toys);
- the student is not afraid of trying something new;
- the student draws in the notebook while the teacher instructs or teaches the lesson;
- the student uses all his/her senses in observing.

Developing students' creativity to achieve performance requires a paradigm shift in teaching practice based on:

- Shifting from teaching for assimilation and repeating to student-focused teaching;

This is a real challenge for the teacher, who is not only a transmitter of knowledge, but the organizer and facilitator of learning process and practice of students' creativity

- promoting collaborative learning, as the optimal way to achieve knowledge and development through practicing the spoken and written communication skills, to perceive spoken and written message;
- Creativity stimulated by cultivating diversity of views and experiences as a basis for gaining independence and personal autonomy;
- Increasing responsibilities in assuming opinions supported by logical arguments;

use of interactive teaching strategies that put students in real situations of communication, learning, problem solving, achievement of original products, with creative support.

Much can be done to educate the creative spirit in school. But the need to change rather in a large proportion the thinking and working style in the classroom, crystallized from centuries in traditional education, hardly concerned about this aspect of student's personality, gaining nowadays more significant value, is obvious.

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