

## WAYS OF STIMULATING CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY THROUGH PLASTIC EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

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**Abstract:** *Creativity is hard to define because of its complexity. The expression evokes the power to innovate, to be original in thought and achievements, to manifest a flexible spirit, a tendency towards active prospecting. So it would be more appropriate to talk about creative skills. Thus it would be more appropriate to talk about creative skills. This is, in Guildford's opinion, in the area of divergent production, a concept that approaches the original action of non-conformism, simply an escape from the current and common ideas of imitation or reproduction. The educational ideal of the Romanian school aims at forming the autonomous and creative personality, a personality capable of anticipating the future, transforming the present in its own anticipations, discovering and solving situation along with the others. In our article we want to highlight the possible means of classroom intervention that would favour the development of these innate skills.*

**Keywords:** *creativity; stimulating; education strategies; capacity; aptitudes;*

### 1. The Importance of stimulating preschool children's creativity

The Romanian educational ideal aims the development of autonomous and creative personality, a personality that is capable of anticipating the future, to change the present towards anticipations and to discover and solve situations along with other peers.

The notion "creativity" originates in the Latin word "creation," meaning "conceived," "making," "creating," "giving birth." The very origin of the word demonstrates that the term of creativity defines a process, a dynamic act that develops, completes and encompasses both origin and purpose. Creative capacity is hard to define because of its complexity. The expression evokes the power to innovate, to be original in thought and achievements, to manifest a flexible spirit, a tendency towards active prospecting. Thus it would be more appropriate to talk about creative skills. This is, in Guildford's opinion, in the area of divergent production, a concept that approaches the original action of non-conformism, simply an escape from the current and common ideas of imitation or reproduction.

The literature refers to three categories of factors favouring creativity: mental factors, social factors (cultural, educational and socio-economic environment) and biological factors (gender differences, age, etc.); it is understood that, in real situations, these factors are in a complex interaction.

A.L.Taylor proposes five levels of creativity:

- selective, when there is a free and spontaneous expression of the person, without concern for unity or value, as in the case of drawings made by young children;
- productive, when the person has mastered the skills and habits that enable him/her to produce useful things, but where his/her specificity is poorly expressed;
- inventive, innovative, emerging.

From a psycho-pedagogical point of view, we are interested in creativity as a psychic structure that the kindergarten/school is called to develop and to form. Its structure has many facets, many factors compete for the creation of the creative potential.

An important factor in stimulating creativity within schools is the educator. The "creative" teacher provides self-directed learning, a non-authoritarian atmosphere, encourages students to learn extra, encourages creative thinking processes. This means that s/he urges children to seek

new connections between data, to associate, to imagine, to find solutions to problems, to make unsuspected assumptions, to express ideas, to perfect the ideas of others, and to direct these ideas to new directions. It encourages the student to juggle with elements that seem to be unrelated, to express theories that seem ridiculous, to form theories that are hard to believe, to combine materials and concepts into unexpected new patterns. The good educator allows students to take intellectual risks, speculate on inconclusive information, probe structural relationships and spaces between things".

The creative educator knows how to use the questions. Every creative act begins with questions, but they must be open, meaningful, not predominant, and especially there should be questions that do not require an exposition of facts. The operational question provokes creative behaviour, because it leads to exploration, develops curiosity and stimulates the tendencies involved.

The psychopedagogy of creativity does not have its centre of gravity on methods (whose importance is not to be denied), because they, depending on the teacher's training, can quickly slip into routine and conventionalism. Fortunately, the key factor in stimulating the creative spirit is the relationship between educators and pre-schoolers, their attitude in class or outside the class.

Have we been wondering why creativity is stifling? The causes are numerous, but there is one that definitely dominates the others, i.e. the educators' attitude towards their creative students. The perspective from which the student's intervention is judged is that of error. This is sanctioned so as not to be repeated and for the student to avoid being mistaken in the future. And the child avoids it, but sometimes this fear of mistake is so profound that s/he no longer dares anything when s/he is on unexplored ground. The courage to try fades away, the taste of risk is lost and will not be recovered in the educational institution because s/he knows that, by failing, she will not escape the educator's ironies and admonitions. The child learns to do nothing but what is prescribed and required, suppressing his natural spontaneity. As primary pedagogical remedies available to any teacher, it is recommended: to establish periods of non-evaluation and encouragement.

If we urge the child to think or compose originally, we must respect the ideas and compositions they produce. Let's take their effort seriously, which proves they worked sincerely. If we are forced to reject their creation, we must indicate why. Let us always remember that a creation that can be trivial to us can be something new to the child who produced it.

Finally, self-evaluation should not be neglected. Learning to be creative, to be self-reliant and self-responsive requires constant practice in self-evaluation. A good educator will cultivate this ability in his children. Children must be trained to appreciate correctly; fairness is in fact the reporting of their own production of internal values, which is constituted within the internal creator's assessment framework, and is so necessary in maintaining the courage to confront the often incomprehensible and hostile opinion of those around us. In short, the assessment that responds to the demands of a pedagogy of creativity takes three hypotheses: it changes its character; sometimes deferred (brainstorming); sometimes given up (the non-evaluation).

Emphasis should be firstly placed when formulating the instructive-educational objectives. Cultivation of imagination should not be placed at the end, among the secondary goals. It must be alongside the education of thought. We need to combat cultural conformism, which is manifested in educators who regard fantasy exercises as a simple game without serious consequences on intellectual development.

The creative behaviour is the most complex, it is carried out on several levels, leading to a revolution of the whole humanity in terms of knowledge, which is why it is necessary to have a creative child today, which is the basis for the progress of tomorrow's society.

## **2. Research methodology**

## **2.1. Argument.**

Ensuring children's success in learning according to their biological and psychological potential, on the one hand, and overcoming failure, on the other hand are considered educational objectives of great complexity at this stage of development in terms of pedagogical theory and practice.

The pre-schoolers' effectiveness depends not only on the ability to assimilate knowledge, skills and abilities, but also on certain personality traits, particularly their imagination. Without imagination it is impossible to accumulate the same knowledge, skills and abilities, it is impossible to form the pre-schoolers' personality.

The achievement of experiment goals involves organizing learning situations through activities followed by applied themes proposed by educators by means of which children develop their thinking, interrogative attitude, discernment, imagination and creativity.

*Research objectives:*

The research objective is the interpretation of spontaneous forms in artistic-plastic activities with pre-schoolers in higher level groups.

## **2.2. Research hypothesis**

If interpretation exercises of spontaneous forms are used, the children's' imagination will evolve to a new stage, creating and developing their creative capacities. It is assumed that children will acquire the right way to draw forms, to apply elements, shapes, objects, skills to work with the watercolour and colour palette independently if their plastic art activities will be consecutive. Developing creative capacities at pre-school age would make progress in developing creative potential, and the more creative the capacities will be, the higher the creative potential of pre-school children.

The potential of children with a developed creative imagination will differ from the potential of children with less developed fantasy through the values of expressiveness, consistency, originality, variability, flexibility, fluency.

## **2.3. Research objectives.**

The entire experimental programme depends on the general research objectives. They are:

O1. Knowledge and use of materials and working techniques specific to plastic education activities;

O2. Acquiring techniques specific to plastic shapes.

O3. Development of children's' creative abilities.

The following methods have been used according to the research objectives:

a) theoretical methods - analysis, comparison and generalization of data;

b) empirical methods - observation, detection and training experiment;

c) statistical methods - qualitative, quantitative and comparative analysis of the data obtained.

## **2.4. Work Variables.**

### ***2.4.1. Independent variables***

The use of entertaining and creative games during plastic activities with preschool children.

### ***2.4.2. Dependent variables***

- Skills to stimulate creativity through plastic activities with pre-schoolers;
- Social skills;
- The children's' degree of involvement during work activities

## **2.5. The Sample**

### ***2.5.1. The experimental sample***

We selected as experimental group, the upper group “B” with 15 children and the upper group A with 12 children. The two groups are approximately equal.

### 2.5.2. Content sample

In terms of content sample, we focused on the development of children’s creativity to obtain creative products according to valid School Curricula.

### 2.6. Research tools

We used modern techniques and methods as well as different entertaining and creative games to successfully carry out plastic activities.

### 2.7. The experiment

We conducted the experiment through the following stages:

#### 2.7.1. The ascertaining stage – pre-test stage

- we checked the level of both groups at the beginning of the school year during the initial assessment stage (October, 2013). We used exercises for spontaneous forms interpretation;

#### 2.7.2. Formative stage

- we applied specific topics for plastic forms during the activities with children according to the yearly planning (November, 2013 – April 2014)

#### 2.7.3. Final stage – pre-test.

- we applied the same test to both of the samples to be able to compare the results obtained and verify that the hypothesis is confirmed. (May, 2014)

In the first stage we gave the children a predictive evaluation test with the following objectives:

- recognize the materials used to create plastic images (brushes, watercolours, white sheets, water bowl, straw);
- to obtain spontaneous shapes by folding the paper, by spraying with a brush, on a dry support and blowing with the straw;
- to identify the spontaneous forms.

The children in the two groups had as working time between 30 and 35 minutes in an organized

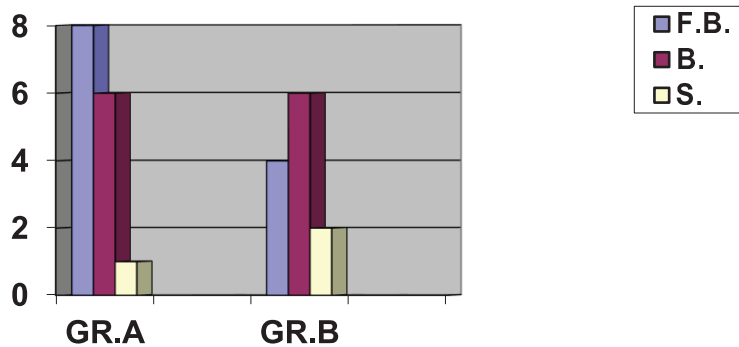
Very good	Good	Sufficient
- recognizes all the materials used to create plastic images;	Recognizes half of the materials used to create plastic images;	- recognizes less than half of the materials used to create plastic images;
- uses all three techniques to obtain spontaneous forms;	- uses at least two of the three techniques to produce spontaneous forms;	- uses only one working technique to achieve a spontaneous form;
- identifies all spontaneous forms obtained.	- partially identifies the spontaneous forms obtained.	- fails to identify any spontaneous form.

classroom environment.

The appreciation was based on the following performance descriptors:  
Performance Descriptors

We would like to mention that the identifiable situation referred to what children knew from previous years.

Results



The test addressed the imagination and creation skills. Children had to develop the first idea that came to their minds after using the techniques to give the paper a title as interesting and close to reality as possible to help them in understanding it.

Even though they all knew how to properly designate their work tools, only a few of them managed to do interesting works, giving free rein to imagination. For this early school year, both myself and my colleague have been pleased with the children's results. Over the course of the five months we have been doing activities in which we have used these ways to create spontaneous forms and also bring some new techniques through themes that aim the objectives of the curriculum.

For the unit "Autumn - characteristic phenomena" we used the forced spray technique with dry brush paint suggesting the rain, a phenomenon frequent during the autumn season. Also, for the unit "Children's Winter Games", we used the technique of painting a piece of ink dyed with colour and discreet colouring with watercolours to get a work that suggested winter games for children. For the unit "Mother's Day" I used the colour-soaked thread technique, pressed between two sheets of paper, suggesting brightly coloured flowers or vases with flowers, works given by children to the mothers.

II. After this five-month period (April), we applied a common theme represented by the technique of folding and pressing paper, entitled "Butterfly". The experimental programme is appended to the didactic project, where we highlighted the objectives, the stages the games of our experiment, the activities to develop creativity in pre-school children in order to remove as much as possible the deficiencies observed during the first stage of the experiment. We have tried some new solutions for the development of skills, abilities and the creativity in plastic art. We organized activities as games (fun and movement games: "Coloring Game", "Catch the butterfly"), nature observation, etc. linked to the activities of plastic education. This unit had the following objectives:

- to obtain the spontaneous form ("Butterfly") by folding and pressing the paper;
- to designate the technique of making this spontaneous form;
- to identify similarities between the spontaneous form obtained and certain forms of reality.

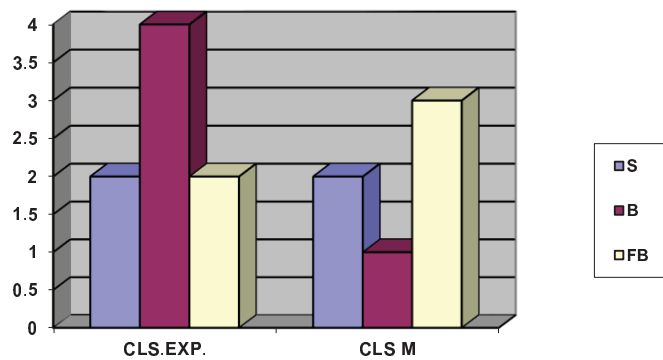
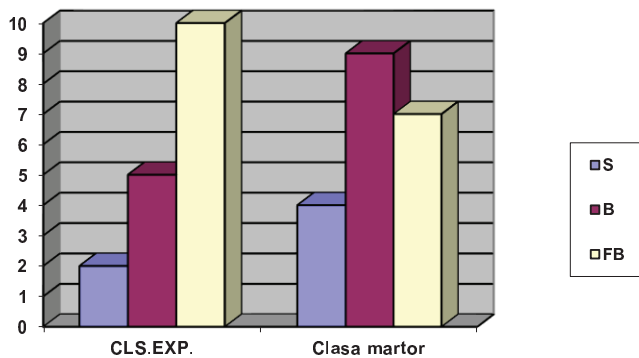
The appreciation was based on the following performance descriptors:

Performance descriptors

Very good	Good	Sufficient
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- totally obtains spontaneous form ("Butterfly") by folding and pressing the paper;	- partially obtains spontaneous form ("Butterfly") by folding and pressing the paper;	- failed to get the spontaneous form ("Butterfly") by folding and pressing the paper;
- explains and denotes the technique of obtaining the spontaneous form;	- partially explains the technique of obtaining the spontaneous form, and it denotes it;	- explains the technique of obtaining the partial spontaneous form but cannot name it;
- identifies all the similarities between the obtained spontaneous form and certain forms of reality.	- identifies partial similarities between the spontaneous form obtained and certain forms of reality.	- identifies a single resemblance between the spontaneous form obtained and certain forms of reality.

Results



In achieving the objectives of this common task, 14 children from the upper group scored VG. and only one child failed to meet all the objectives by scoring only G. In the upper group, 8 children scored VG meeting all objectives, and 4 children scored B, meeting only some of the objectives. This time, as well, I was more than satisfied with the results of the children.

**2.8. Results**

By comparing the test results, we noticed that all the children in the two groups met the requirements of the school curriculum. There were no significant differences between the two groups, they all recognized work materials and spontaneous forms using different techniques.

Significant differences were found in the identification, recognition and naming of these spontaneous forms, where the upper group was the one who encountered several difficulties. The most relevant reason could be the age difference between the children of the two groups, the children in the preparatory group having a richer imagination.

At the beginning of June, we re-tested the children of the two groups. The third stage of the experiment is the control experiment, which is in fact a stage of evaluation of the ways of creating the spontaneous forms in the plastic education activities. To achieve this goal, we used the same evidence as in the observation experiment in order to achieve a new objective consisting of adding some elements of the obtained spontaneous form, combining the spontaneous form with the elaborated form. The topic of the activity was to obtain a spontaneous form ("Cherry Tree") through the blowing technique with the straw, within the unit "Summer has arrived!", through combining elements belonging to the elaborated forms, the line and the point for the contouring of the image and through stamping (cherries and leaves).

We set the following objectives:

- to obtain spontaneous forms through the blowing technique;
- to add to spontaneous forms, some elements that combine the spontaneous form with the elaborated form;
- to identify similarities between the obtained forms and certain elements of nature.

## 9. Conclusions

The exercises of interpreting spontaneous forms have resulted in the stimulation of children's creativity. Children have been able to complete their spontaneous forms so that they would resemble certain forms of the surrounding reality.

In conclusion, through this experiment, we demonstrated that children's imagination and implicitly the creativity of the children can be influenced by creative didactic procedures, through creativity stimulation strategies, for example the game. In plastic activities where the basic method was the game, we achieved high results: the children were active, they felt free, the works were very good.

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