DEVELOPING THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF YOUNG SCHOOLCHILDREN

Carmen Maria CHIŞIU, Ph.D., Associate Professor,
Teacher Training Department, „L. Blaga" University from Sibiu
carmenmaria.chisiu@ulbsibiu.ro

Abstract: *At early school age, school work should fully demand the student's creative forces. Once they enter school, children are trained in an intellectual activity, largely unknown to them. In such situations, life experience and previously acquired knowledge prove to be insufficient for obtaining a positive result and children have the opportunity to activate and capitalize on their creative potential. It is about one of the sensitive periods in the child's life, when certain mental qualities, with minimal effort, can be exploited with maximum efficiency and oriented towards the development of creativity. Developing children's creativity should be a permanent concern for teachers. to respond to these needs, a creative, ingenious, imaginative, well-trained teacher is needed who is always discovering new strategies that go beyond templates and contribute to the development of creativity. Thus, the child challenged to create will become the man capable of finding solutions and adapting in a society in permanent change. The presented research aims to bring attention to the need for school intervention for the development of creativity, methods of intervention and the results obtained within an experiment oriented towards this goal: the development of creative potential in young schoolchildren.*

Key words: *creativity; predictive reading; free text writing; interactivity.*

Conceptual boundaries

The term creativity was introduced by G.W. Allport (1938) following the understanding of the fact that "the psychic substrate of creation is irreducible to skills and presupposes a general disposition of the personality towards the new, an organization of psychic processes in the personality system" (Burdus, Caprarescu, p.282).

Creativity is defined as "representing the highest human behavioral level, capable of training and focusing all other levels of biological and logical conduct (instincts, skills, intelligence), as well as all the attributes of an individual (thinking, memory, attention, will, affectivity) in the direction for which he is prepared and concerns him, in order to create products that are characterized by originality, novelty, value and social

utility"(V. Feier, 1995, p. 50-53).

Creativity is a process by which the human spirit transcends the present reality and discovers new truths and realities.

V. Oprescu considered creativity as "the ability to make new combinations between two or more concepts already existing in the mind, combinations resulting in products that correspond to individual or social needs; the more independent the elements of the new combination are, the more creative the solution" (Oprescu, 1989, pp. 38-41).

According to P. Popescu-Neveanu "creativity **implies** a general disposition of the personality towards the new, a certain (stylistic) organization of psychic processes in the personality system" (Popescu-Neveanu, 1987, p.52).

Al. Roșca is of the opinion that, due to the complexity of the phenomenon of creation, it is unlikely to be unanimously recognized, since each author emphasizes different dimensions. Thus, it is shown that according to some authors "creativity is the aptitude or ability to produce something new and of value", and according to others it "constitutes a process through which a product is made" (Roșca, 1981, p.16).

"Creativity is a superior human faculty, a psychic process of identifying new possibilities, of ensuring disparate elements, more or less distant, consisting of knowledge accumulated through studies or experience, the combination achieved representing a scientific, technical or artistic, which constitutes a material or spiritual good, useful to society" (Manolescu, 1997, p. 87-98).

In general, in the specialized literature, the dimensions of creativity are considered to be: the creative process, the created product, the creative personality, the environment or the social climate of creation.

Creativity in the educational process

Cultivating creativity has become an important task of schools.

A first step must be taken in the formulation of the instructional-educational objectives, so that the cultivation of creativity stands alongside the education of thinking, by combating the cultural conformity manifested in many of the teachers. Thus, the very progress of thinking in solving problems depends on the creativity factor.

Educating creativity in children of all ages involves achieving the following general objectives (Ionescu, 2000, p.129):

- the formation of a positive attitude towards progress, towards new elements and towards their introduction in one's own actions;
- their readiness to accept the new as an indication of progress, innovations and human creativity;

- encouraging student manifestations characterized by character and original results;
- training and development of skills and capacities to create, rethink work strategies and integrate them into dynamic, flexible and efficient systems;
- the formation and development of capacities to achieve something new: connections, ideas, theories, ideal or material models, material products, etc.

Very important is the attitude of the teacher, his relationship with the students. The authoritarian attitude can create emotional blockages in students. A democratic, relaxed, friendly atmosphere is preferable. The teacher must be close to the students, lenient (within reason) and encourage imagination (Cury, 2005, p. 53).

For the development of students' creativity, there are non-specific means, which are not related to any educational object, and specific methods for a certain subject, depending on its content.

The first category includes imaginative-inventive activities.

The role of these non-specific methods is to develop creative attitudes.

The progress of creativity is also achieved through specific methods.

Methods of developing creativity

During the research, in the experimental stage, the following methods were used: Free text writing, Predictive reading, Research hypotheses, Philips 6-6, Thinking hat method, Snowballs, Quintet.

In this paper we present in detail only two methods: Free text writing and Predictive reading, which are less known and used in school practice. They can be used in particular within the Romanian language and literature discipline.

Free text writing

The Free Text Writing method is a method that increases the student's interest in written composition. The method develops creative expression and encourages the person to write without constraints or strict rules. This is a great way to free your imagination and explore new ideas without being limited by formal structures or grammar rules. This method can be used to develop creativity, to clarify thoughts or to discharge yourself emotionally. There are no rigid rules. It's about *letting your* **releasing the creative spirit** and enjoying the writing process.

Here are some steps to go through this method:

1. Students are divided into groups of 4.
2. Each student writes on a piece of paper the titles of three texts they would like to write for 20 minutes.
3. Everyone communicates to their colleagues in the group the titles of the texts, which they are willing to write.

4. They choose the text they would like to listen to.
5. Each student creates a first form, in which he writes ideas, feelings, thoughts, without a logical, chronological order. Spelling problems can be ignored.
6. It is written on one line, so that corrections and additions can be made, individually or through consultation with a colleague or the teacher.
7. Reread and correct the text, by everyone, together with a colleague.
8. The text for the presentation is created: calligraphic rewriting, completing with drawings, writing on the computer, putting it on the page, being another element of creativity that the student should be aware of. This activity can be homework.
9. Read each text in the small group.
10. Some texts are read to the whole group.
11. It is recommended that the teacher works at the same time. This is how the motivational state is formed: WE LEARN together!
12. A booklet or part of a booklet is made (Popa, 2009, p.113)

Recommendations!
1. One hour is not enough for such an activity.
2. Allowing the necessary time is recommended.
3. The teacher must teach his students how to present their creation: tone of voice, non-verbal language, eye contact.
4. The booklet will be presented to students in the school and will be taken to the library or a place where peers can browse it.

Predictive reading

It is a way to increase students' interest in reading and to exercise creativity, critical thinking and written expression of ideas (Popa, 2009, p.114).
Steps:
1. Divide the class into groups of 4 and distribute the worksheets.
2. The teacher dictates the predictive terms, words from the supporting text.
3. Students create a text using all the words for 3 minutes.
4. Students read the texts in pairs and choose the one they find more interesting.
5. The chosen text is read from each group. The main idea is extracted from each text.
6. The teacher notes on the flipchart the basic idea of each read text.

7. The first fragment of the given text is read. It is recommended that the text has the points that divide it into fragments marked.
8. **It is formulated** The students write it down on the cards and the teacher on the flipchart.
9. The whole class looks at the predictions and compares them with the idea of the text. It is decided which of the predictions is most similar to the idea of the text.
10. The teacher equally appreciates the originality and similarity of the texts created by the students.
11. 7. Each student, for 3 minutes, completes the table with a new prediction.
12. 8**. The second fragment is read and the table is completed again.**
13. 9. Do the same with the third fragment, the fourth and so on until the entire text is covered.
14. The discussion network in which the binary-question is passed is completed.
15. Students find at least 2 arguments for and 2 against the idea expressed in the binary question.
16. The teacher places posters in the classroom: PROS, CONS, UNDECISED, in such a way that three groups of students can be formed.
17. Each student positions himself in front of a poster according to his personal opinion.
18. Each group discusses to find the most consistent arguments to support their point of view.
19. In turn, through a representative, each group brings a single argument.
20. It comes back with a new argument, as time allows.
21. 16 Everyone writes their own conclusion. The conclusions are read in the group.
22. Some conclusions are read, including the one made by the teacher, for the whole class.

Recommendations!
The teacher will draw his own conclusions, together with the students, which he will read at the end of the activity. This is how the motivational state is formed: WE LEARN together! (Popa, 2009, p. 114)

Research hypothesis
In carrying out the experimental study, we started from the premise that the development of creativity in young schoolchildren can be stimulated by the use of specific strategies, which demand their interest, respect the particularities of age, and the activities are carried out in a relaxed

atmosphere.

Research hypothesis: If the teacher frequently uses strategies to develop creativity in learning activities, then the children's ability to be creative will increase.

Conducting research

In order to fulfill the objectives and validate the hypothesis, the research was carried out throughout the school year 2022-2023, in the third grade, on an experimental batch comprising 15 students.

There was an experimental intervention in the discipline of Romanian language and literature.

The research was carried out in three stages:

The pre-experimental stage in which the students' creative potential was evaluated, before the start of the experimental research. An initial assessment test was administered.

The test was designed starting from 3 competencies, mentioned in the program. The evaluation of creativity was done on a scale of 10 levels, 1 being the minimum level and 10 being the maximum level.

The experimental stage, the stage of introducing the progress factor, represented by the creativity development methods mentioned, and specific activities were carried out for this purpose, activities with a pronounced interactive character.

Among them we mention:

- creating stories starting from supporting words;
- formulating hypotheses regarding the possibilities of continuation of an event;
- group conversations, based on an overheard text or an image;
- games for changing the stories heard: changing the sequence of events, changing the ending, introducing some characters, etc.;
- making up statements and/or creating stories based on ideas/images, data or drawings created by children;
- games of the type: "Say further", "Continue the verse/stanza", "What would happen if...", "If I were...", "Continue the story";
- creating stories in the group;
- dialogues in real or simulated contexts, on various topics;
- formulating a personal opinion regarding a character/a person's conduct/an event, etc.;
- role-playing games;
- writing stories, diaries, poems, through which the child can express his joy, sadness, delight, pride, following

different experiences;
- the presentation, in writing, of pleasant, funny, surprising experiences, of good deeds.

There was also an intermediate evaluation.

At this stage, the students were often grouped according to the performances achieved, forming groups by performance level. For students who recorded low levels of creativity, from the perspective of the targeted skills, remedial activities were carried out, in order to stimulate spontaneity and the development of creativity.

Students who achieved the minimum level of the specific skills evaluated or those who have already formed them, were included in development groups or were tutors in the remedial groups, depending on the wishes and needs expressed by them.

The post-experimental stage, the comparison stage, of the performances from the initial level, with the intermediate and final level. A final assessment test was applied.

Analysis and interpretation of research results
The tests were designed based on three competencies.
Following the analysis of the initial assessment, the following were found:

At competence 3.1. Extracting some detailed information from informative or literary texts, the students identified the meaning of the message conveyed in the text, 5 formulated hypotheses regarding the possibilities of continuation of events and 10 students encountered difficulties in formulating hypotheses regarding the possibilities of creative continuation of events. Also, expression is cumbersome, entwined with verbal stereotypes. Little creativity was noticed in the hypotheses formulated.

To competence 3.2. Formulating an emotional response to the literary text read, 5 students encountered difficulties in formulating creative sentences with visual support, and 7 students formulated less creative sentences. 2 students managed to formulate creative answers.

Competence 4.4. Briefly recounting an imagined/lived event, 8 students have difficulties in expressing their own opinion, when writing stories, dialogues. The lack of creativity and originality is shown by 5 students when writing a surprising experience. 2 students managed to answer creatively.

Following the analysis of the intermediate evaluations, the following were found:

At competence 3.1. Extracting some detailed information from informative or literary texts, the students identified the meaning of the message conveyed in the text, 8 formulated hypotheses regarding the possibilities of creative continuation of events and 7 students

encountered difficulties in formulating hypotheses regarding the possibilities of creative continuation of events. Also, expression is cumbersome, entwined with verbal stereotypes.

To competence 3.2. Formulating an emotional response to the literary text read, 4 students encountered difficulties in formulating creative sentences with visual support, and 6 students formulated less creative sentences. 4 students managed to formulate creative answers.

Competence 4.4. Briefly recounting an imagined/experienced event, 6 students have difficulties in expressing their own opinion, when writing stories, dialogues. The lack of creativity and originality is shown by 6 students when writing a surprising experience. 3 students managed to answer creatively.

Following the analysis of the final evaluations, the following were found:

At competence 3.1. Extracting some detailed information from informative or literary texts, the students identified the meaning of the message conveyed in the text; 5 students encountered difficulties in formulating some hypotheses and 10 formulated hypotheses regarding the possibilities of creative continuation of the events. The expression became more nuanced.

To competence 3.2. Formulating an emotional response to the literary text read, 2 students encountered difficulties in formulating creative sentences with visual support, and 4 students formulated less creative sentences. 9 students managed to formulate creative answers.

Competence 4.4. Briefly recounting an imagined/experienced event, 2 students have difficulties in expressing their own opinion, when writing stories, dialogues. The lack of creativity and originality is shown by 3 students when writing a surprising experience. 10 students managed to answer creatively.

Conclusions

The purpose of this work was to introduce into the classroom teaching activity interactive strategies that require the mechanisms of imagination and creativity, that activate the students to make a greater effort, to undertake a mental action of search, research and rediscovery of truths. Creative capabilities have been developed, demonstrated in a linear ascending line following the application of interactive methods such as: (Research hypotheses, Philips 6-6, Thinking Hats Method, Snowballs, Quintet, Free Text Writing, Predictive Reading);

Following the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained at the initial, intermediate and final assessments, it was found that the students' results increased.

The graph below shows the individual evolution of the students, through a comparative analysis of the three evaluations (initial evaluation,

intermediate evaluation, final evaluation) regarding the discipline Romanian Language and Literature.
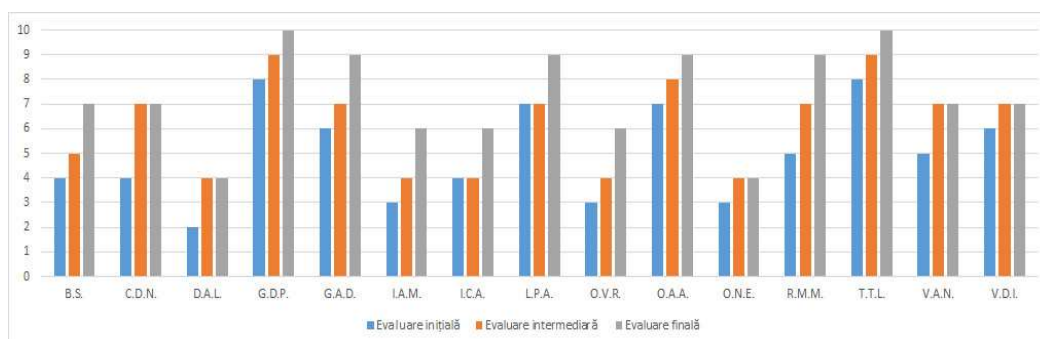

Figure 1. Individual comparative results obtained in Romanian language and literature

Two students with a score of 4 and 7 did not make progress in the intermediate stage. In the final stage, two students did not make progress compared to the intermediate assessment.

During the experiment all students made progress. The highest progress was achieved by 4 points by 2 students from 5 to 9 and the lowest progress by 1 point from 3 to 4. Most of the students, 7, achieved a progress of 2 points and 5 students a progress of 3 points.

The evolution of students by class, through a comparative analysis, in the form of the average, in the discipline Romanian language and literature (initial evaluation, intermediate evaluation, final evaluation) confirmed the progress, in a linear form; from 5, in the initial assessment, to 6 in the intermediate assessment and 7 in the final assessment.

Following the analysis of the research results, we formulated conclusions regarding the influence of the application of some interactive strategies, for the development of creativity.

The use of interactive didactic strategies stimulated the students' creativity, each making progress of at least 1 point.

Following the use of the stated methods and the differentiated activities with an interactive character, the collaboration and communication relationships between the children improved. All students engaged both cognitively and creatively and were more responsible. Even the less sociable participated in discussions and debates.

The working climate in the classroom was relaxed. During the activities they communicated and asked questions, were interested, persistent, motivated, which led to increased creativity. Students gained confidence in themselves, that they can deduce and have the ability to create something original from their creativity, thinking and imagination.

Creativity is not something that some have and others don't, all children

have it and it is imperative that teachers create the environment **worthwhile** to the manifestation of creativity, offering them work assignments and topics of interest, adapted to their age and level of development .

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