

Research Article

DETERMINANTS OF CREATIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPING LANGUAGE AND LITERARY LITERACY OF CHILDREN IN THE PRE-SCHOOL AGE

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Received 18th December 2021; Accepted 20th January 2022; Published online 28th February 2022

ABSTRACT

We encounter with the concept of creativity at every step and more often. It is inflected in all cases; it is a popular adjective for the creations of man marked by the dynamics of revolutionary changes in the era in which we live. Today, not only adults but also children are forced to receive a lot of information, they have to make quick decisions and respond to constant changes in a new, adaptive and creative way. The ability to work creatively with information as a megatrend of today's world is already formed in the process of pre-primary education and is realized mainly through activating methods, that develop the elementary literacy of a child. In this paper, we offer a partial analysis of creativity with an emphasis on educational practice in developing the language and literary literacy of a child in the pre-school age.

Keywords: activating methods, literacy, kindergarten, creativity.

DETERMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY

"... I dislike that array of instruments and apparatus. The school kills creativity."

Jean Jacques Rousseau
(taken from the book of Emil or on education)

In the pedagogical practice there is a case of a five-year-old girl who has never gone to school, its physical organization and staff before and has never encountered this organizational pattern, which is (unfortunately) sharply distinguished from any other form of social organization (using Dewey's words) she did not know how to behave when the teacher asked her for an entrance test. At the school, specially equipped mainly for administrative purposes, she spent there some time, feeling alienation when she saw how people communicated with each other, looking at the arrangement of things in the room. However, she felt uncomfortable her when interacting with school and this alienation multiplied in meetings with other teachers, who told the girl how to behave, what she had to do at a given moment and situation, how to complete the test in the prescribed way without her own access to its content. The above example, that points to the absence of a creative approach of the teacher and the school as such, corresponds to the introductory quote. On the other hand, the question is, what will the world look like when today's children take responsibility for it? It is likely to be very different from the world as we know it today and it will completely transform. "Preparing children for this role in the future means uncovering and developing the hidden potential of their creativity, because being creative in today's world means a greater ability to function effectively for the benefit of oneself, others and society." (Szobiová, 2016, p. 13). Our aim in this paper is not to give a "textbook" definition of creativity, as the literature offers us a number of different definitions of creativity. Some saturate the system of intellectual operations (e.g., Guilford, 1956, and others); some, in

turn, speak of a set of abilities (e.g., Chaplin, 1968; Luk, 1981, etc.), a personality trait (e.g., Barron, 1964; Nicholls, 1972; Harrington, 1981, etc.) or the nature of creativity as a human motivation (e.g., Maddi, 1965; Hayes, 1989; Sheldon, 1995 *et al.*). We believe that creativity is not only a synthesis of what is mentioned (synthesis of thinking, personality traits and motivation), but it is a highly flexible process of analysis and orientation on solution, which manifests itself in a new and surprising product, meaningful also for others (product perceived as new and useful in a social context). Although the concept of creativity is usually considered delicate, volatile and even vulnerable, there is a consensus among experts. And in what can we actually find consensus? Namely, in order for something to be considered creative, it must be new, unusual, valuable or useful, acceptable. „It can't just be bizarre, weird“ (Corazza, Darbellay, Panciroli, 2021, p. 57). In addition to this consistency, there is a rare consensus in viewing creativity as a complex, multidimensional and universal phenomenon, and is therefore challenging in terms of scientific research. "Torrance (his test of creativity is well known; note of author) emphasized that creativity can never be reduced to a completely predictable or controllable concept" (Salbot, 2017, p. 46).

OUR EVERYDAY CREATIVITY

Most contemporary authors who deal with the issue of creativity agree that creativity is considered „a natural human phenomenon, manifested in different levels and degrees, as well as in different styles“ (Isaksen, 2018, p. 75). Elements of creativity appear in solving life problems, especially in children and adolescents. We can observe them in people's daily activities, although not every activity provides the same opportunities for creativity. The basis is the principle of progressive change, which can explain specific creative processes, personality structure and conditions for the creation of creative products. This understanding is more natural and, in our opinion, more acceptable, as it connects two extremes - creative and uncreative. The main problem in distinguishing the meaning of the term creativity was relatively conceptually (from our point of view) expressed by Kaufman and Beghetto (2019), who focused on creative production expressed by current personal or social needs.

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THE PERSONALITY OF A CREATIVE CHILD

It is clear that we cannot reduce the traits of a creative personality to just a few basic traits. It is a complex, dynamic unity complex of social relations, cultural expressions, inner experiences and experiences. In the last decades there have been a lot of studies of children's and young people's creativity. For example, biographical inventories administered mainly to adults draw attention to the importance of the early stages of the life path (Szobiová, 2016). Feldhausen (2015) as well as other authors, studied the lives of many well-known, highly productive and creative personalities (e.g., Charles Darwin, Ernest Hemingway, Mahatma Gandhi, etc.). They found that many creative personalities could be recognized in early childhood. These include for example:

- premature mastery of knowledge and/or techniques in the field or type of art,
- high level of intelligence, reasoning or memory in early childhood,
- high level of energy driving to create,
- strong independence, preference for independent work, individualism,
- awareness of one's own creative power and internality,
- increased sensitivity to details,
- natural curiosity, courage and willingness to take risks, etc.

CREATIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERARY LITERACY OF A CHILD IN THE PRE-SCHOOL AGE

Yemez and Dikilitaş (2022) also speak, in the above context, about the so-called verbal and nonverbal creativity, which is characterized by developed language and literary literacy. As the authors emphasize, hereditary factors play a dominant role here, but the development of literary and language literacy in the process of pre-primary education through games and activities that saturate the development of verbal skills and work with information (information literacy) plays an extremely important role. „Creativity as a tool for developing language and literary literacy in kindergarten is realized through games and activities that shapes up children's verbal skills and work with information“ (Yemez, Dikilitaş, 2022, p. 67).

The basis for the development of creativity in the context of language and literary literacy in pre-primary education are four pedagogical procedures:

1. training of heuristic procedures and cognitive processes;
2. developing personality traits that support creativity, such as: curiosity, fearlessness, courage, independence, imagination and, in particular, promoting motivation for a creative approach to the world;
3. creating a social atmosphere, that supports creativity, consisting mainly of the authorities' relationship to the creative way of thinking and behaving;
4. development of the so-called pre-reading literacy, which does not allow the formation of thought stereotypes (i.e., the child works with pictures, written or reproduced text in a divergent way with the application of fluency, flexibility, originality, fantasy, imagination and vision) (Martišová, 2013).

GAME AND ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERARY LITERACY IN KINDERGARTEN

Achieving the main goal of education, i.e., the development of a child's versatile and harmoniously developed personality, should be the primary interest of every teacher. We consider it natural that those, who want to work with children should understand creativity and have the ability and skills to help and encourage children to express their creative nature. At the same time, they should be aware of the importance of creativity for both the child and the teacher, be able to discover creativity in children, help them develop it and express it in various forms. Although children tend to be creative in a natural way, if adults organize their every activity, as children grow, they lose their natural creativity. It is therefore important to know how to develop, support and encourage creativity in children, which means first and foremost understanding the very meaning of the word creativity. In the following text, we offer several topics of games and activities that the teacher can reflect in his or her work and children's work and thus develop the creative potential of their language and literary literacy.

Activity no. 1 "MY DAY"

Educational area:

Man and society

Educational sub-area:

- Orientation in time

Performance standard:

- Child describes the daily routine;
- Child orients in the time relations of the day;
- Child sorts typical activities into a time period of one day;
- Child understands the time difference in a time period of one day;
- Child speaks fluently about his or her hobbies and responsibilities.

Educational area:

Language and communication

Educational sub-areas:

- Understanding the explicit meaning of the text - vocabulary
- Understanding the formal characteristics of written speech
- The concept of printing and knowledge of book conventions

Performance standard:

- Child answers questions related to key events and sequence of events, questions requiring categorization of concepts;
- Based on his or her own illustration, he or she tells his or her own story;
- In activities with the book, child understands and actively uses the terms author, book, page, writer, illustrator.

Educational area:

Arts and Culture: Art Education

Educational sub - area:

- Spontaneous artistic expression.

Performance standard:

- Expresses his or her ideas artistically.

Things needed: envelope, demonstration pictures on the topic, magnetic board, plush sun, sheets of paper A5 or A4 – according to

the number of children, drawing on the cover of the book, black marker, coloured crayons, glue, twine.

Motivational part

The teacher will bring the children a large envelope given to her by the courier. He will open it with the children. The envelope contains various pictures that the children place on a magnetic board. The teacher always involves a different child in the interpretation of the pictures.

Exposition part - initial acquaintance of children with the new curriculum

- The teacher asks the children to look at the pictures well. He or she gradually talks to the children about each picture. He or she asks children interesting questions to help them talk about the picture as much as possible. If the children exhaust the answers about what they see in the picture, the teacher tries to draw their attention to the fact that in each picture there is a drawn girl who performs certain activities, within different parts of the day - morning, forenoon, lunch, afternoon, evening, night. Subsequently, he or she helps them to identify which part of the day is shown in the picture with questions like: You said that the picture shows a girl getting out of bed, washing, combing and dressing, what do you think what part of the day she performs these activities? (Morning). What part of the day follows the morning? (Forenoon). Which picture represents the morning – what is the girl doing on it? etc. In this way, children gradually identify the activities that the girl performs in different parts of the day.
- Subsequently, the children sort the pictures according to this sequence: Morning, Forenoon, Lunch, Afternoon, Evening, Night. Through the activities that take place during the day, it is easier for children to remember what part of the day it is.
- According to the ordered pictures, they will also come up with a story about what the girl did in that day.

Fixation part - initial repetition and strengthening the learnt curriculum

- The children sit in a circle. The teacher will give one child plush sunshine, which the children will gradually pass to each other in a circle. The child, who has the sun in his or her hand, answers the teacher's question: What part of the day do you like best and what do you do then? Rule - only a child who has the sun in his or her hand answers. If the children's concentration is disturbed, the teacher will include sports moments, for example: children can imitate the activity with movement, facial expressions or gestures, sing, say a poem on a topic, etc. If the child has a problem answering, the teacher helps him or her with questions such as: What do you do in the morning when you get out of bed? When your mother brings you to kindergarten, what do you like to do in kindergarten and do you know what part of the day it is then? Do you know what part of the day it is when children eat (lunch, afternoon snack) in kindergarten? What meal do you like most for lunch that you're the cook cooks? What do you do at home when you come home from kindergarten in the afternoon? What part of the day is it when the moon shines? ... The teacher tries to ask questions so that all parts of the day are mentioned by children. Children are forced to think, to respond on the basis of experience, to learn to name their experiences, to learn to express themselves and use all components of the language.

- The teacher writes each child's answer at the bottom of a sheet of paper, reads the answer again, and asks the child to agree with the written answer - each child has their own sheet.
- After all the children have answered, the teacher tells them to make a book. They repeat the knowledge about the book as the way it should look (hard cover on the inside, soft paper on the inside, illustrator, author, what types of books we know ...) The authors and illustrators of the book will be children, as each child creates one page of the book with their own efforts.

Examination of acquired knowledge, abilities, habits, skills

- Children practice finger and wrist mobility on the rhyme: "The thumb is strong, the index finger is diligent, the middle finger is the largest, the ring finger is the most beautiful, the little finger is the smallest. They all play, clap, twist and have fun together".
- Children sit at tables where they have colour-box. The teacher gives each child a sheet of paper with their answer, which he or she reads to him or her again, and then asks the child to draw a picture of the answer. The child creates it themselves. Each image will represent one page of the book.
- If children already have pictures drawn, they will divide them according to the sequence into activities that are done in the morning, forenoon, lunch, afternoon, evening and night (in one book there can be, for example, 5 answers about the morning, 2 answers about the forenoon, 1 answer about lunch ...).
- The teacher sticks the sheets into the book together with the children and binds it, for example with a ribbon, twine, etc. The teacher prepares the cover of the book in advance by writing the title of the book and the author of the book. The cover of the book can be created by the children who first finish drawing their page - their story. They read the finished book together, so that each child reads their own story. As part of the weekly topic, children return to the book every day, read it, they can also read it to their parents or children from the other class.

Activity no. 2 "WEEK"

Educational area:

Man and society

Educational sub-area:

- Orientation in time

Performance standard:

- Child orients at the elementary level in the time relations of the week;
- Child understands the difference in terms of day, week;
- Child fluently talks about his or her hobbies and responsibilities;
- Child distinguishes between working and free days.

Educational area:

Language and communication

Educational sub - areas:

- Grammatical accuracy and literacy
- Spoken language

Performance standard:

- Child formulates grammatically correct simple developed sentences and clauses;
- Child answers questions about time.

Educational area:

Mathematics and dealing with information

Educational sub - area:

- Numbers and relations

Performance standard:

- In the field up to 7, child creates a group of prescribed subjects with a specified number.

Educational area:

Art and culture: art education

Educational sub - areas:

- Art activities with colour.
- Art activities with shape in space.

Performance standard:

Music education:

- Child expresses the character of a song with a simple movement.

Performance standard:

- Child masters the technique of painting with tempera paints;
- Child composes and combines a spatial assembly of different materials;
- Child cuts out parts of the pictures.

Educational area:

Man and nature

Educational sub - area:

Perception of nature.

Performance standard:

- Child identifies weather elements.

Things needed: finger puppets - days of the week, kindergarten calendar, large wrapping paper, pencil, tempera paints, brushes, water, terms of the days of the week, coloured paper, toilet paper rolls, glue, scissors, magazines with pictures of birds.

Motivational part:

On the motif of the rhyme (In Langerová, Papp, Perečinská, Révészová, 2021, p. 5), the teacher sings a song called WEEK to the children:

WE SHOPPED ON MONDAY.
 WE HEATED ON TUESDAY.
 WE COOKED MASH ON WEDNESDAY.
 WE SHARED IT ON THURSDAY.
 WE BLEW IT ON FRIDAY.
 WE GAVE IT TO DOG.
 BUT THE DOG DOESN'T LIKE IT

IT STICKS ON HIS TEETH.
 WE BROUGHT THE DOG OUTSIDE,
 WE ATE THE MASH.
 WE CLEANED THE HOUSE ON SATURDAY
 AND YOU DIDN'T HELP US
 SO GO OUT.
 WE RESTED ON SUNDAY
 AND ENJOYED A FREE DAY.

While singing, the teacher points to the named days of the week on her fingers. Each finger represents one day of the week and has a finger puppet or a drawn character on each finger. He or she sings the song once more and invites the children to join her or him.

Exposure part

- The teacher talks to the children about the individual days of the week. They already learned what a day is when they made the book "My Day" (for more details see Activity 1). He or she invites them to imagine that one day is like one branch of a tree. When there are seven branches on a tree, a beautiful tree is formed, as from seven days a week. They list all the days of the week in which they help each other with the kindergarten calendar (which is a teaching aid for every kindergarten). In the next step, the teacher informs the children about the division of the week into working days and days off.
- Just as there are five fingers on one hand, so there are 5 days in a week when children go to kindergarten and their parents go to work. So, we can say that everyone works, learns and can do many things. These are working days – children try to name them. They then determine and record the current day on the kindergarten calendar. The teacher conducts an interview with the children, lets them remember and talk about their experiences they have lived on each day.
- Working days are followed by two days off, when the family is at home together, everyone can do their hobbies and relax. The teacher asks the children if they know which days of the week are days off. They say them. What do you like to do on Saturday and Sunday? He or she has a conversation with the children again, lets them remember and talk about their experiences, which they had over the weekend or would like to have.
- During the conversation, the teacher can include various sports activity so that the children are constantly motivated and focused. For example: they imitate the movement of the hands and fingers as the sun shines, it is night - they rest, wake up and yawn, they exercise, they wash themselves, they comb their hair, etc.

Fixing part

- The teacher tells the children that they will make a tree of the week together. First, they do exercise with the muscles of their wrists and fingers through saying a rhyme: We count the fingers on our hands (the children clench their fingers into a handful of both hands and gradually point one finger at a time), which one holds (they clench their fists), which one releases (they release the grip). Why such a counting (waving hand-wrist), lets hide the thumb in the palm (they hide thumb in the palm). The thumb in the palm is angry, it does not want to be pressed there (they make circles with the wrists of both hands), it straightens (we put our thumbs out), it climbs out like a snail with a house (their thumb is straight and the other fingers are clenched like a snail house).

- The teacher divides children into three groups. Each group will have a different activity on producing the "Tree of the Week". When everyone is done with their work, they will meet and create a tree together. The teacher explains the procedure to each group, warns them about hygiene, safety, order and mutual assistance and cooperation.
1. Group 1 – children draw a tree with seven branches and paint the tree with tempera paint. 7 branches will represent 7 days a week.
 2. Group 2 – children wrap 7 rolls of paper with coloured paper. Then they stick a pre-prepared term on each roll - the name of the day (from Monday to Sunday).
 3. Group 3 – children cut out birds from magazines by cutting as many birds for each day as the day in order (Monday - 1 bird, Sunday - 7 birds).

Examination of acquired knowledge, abilities, habits, skills

- If the groups finish their work, they will meet together. They stick 7 rolls with the names of the days of the week on the tree so that one roll is glued to each branch - that is, branch - one day.
- Subsequently, according to the order of the day of the week, they stick the same number of birds to the branch (Monday - 1 bird, Tuesday - 2 birds, etc.)
- The tree produced in this way represents one week. The rolls will be used to insert a rolled sheet of paper on which will be written notes for parents from children. The notes will reflect what the children did during the day in kindergarten. The notes are written down by the teacher. Children must agree on one joint text for morning, forenoon, lunch, afternoon. The rule - observe the sequence of day, that means we start in the morning and end in the afternoon. Children can express what they would like to do in evening at home and so on. The tree of the week I used throughout the week, but can also be used throughout the year for notes for parents who will be informed about the children's activities during the children's stay in kindergarten throughout the year. In the end, the children sing together - the Week song.

Notes:

- In addition to the day, children can also record the current weather during the week. Together with the teacher, they create weather symbols, which they then stick (add) to the current day on the Tree of the Week.
- Children can complement the space around the tree, e.g., they make the sun (day) by pushing their hands on the paper, they make the moon (night) from plastic yellow lids or another using other technique, they create nature around the tree according to the season (clouds, snowflakes, snowmen, raindrops, flowers, grass, kites, etc.). The teacher directs the children's creative activity. It is important for the teacher to give the children space to create and provide them with a variety of material

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