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Points of view

THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE STIMULATION OF YOUNG LEARNERS' CREATIVE ABILITIES

Abstract

The knowledge and the stimulation of the young learner's creativity is one of the most important directions of development and modernization of the educational process. The development of the students' creativity can lead in time to the progress of the societal progress, emphasizing every person's creative potential. The study aims at presenting aspects related to the knowledge and the stimulation of the young learner's creative capacity, by creating a positive learning environment that will nurture the students' curiosity, developing the creative skills that are essential for learning.

Keywords: education process, young learner, creative ability.

1. The context in Romania

In a society in southeastern Europe, in which changes take place very rapidly and fiercely, and diversity becomes greater and greater, it is necessary for the citizen, regardless of his/her occupational structure to be creative, responsible and well informed. In Romania, the role of education in shaping such individuals is universally recognized, and its ability to engage in the social economic structure or in public affairs, in an intelligent and responsible manner forms in time in schools, regardless of their character: public or private. These days, Romania goes through events and changes (ethical conflicts, insecurity, the emergence of new information and communication technologies, the reduction of social cohesion, distrust of traditional institutions, etc.), which is a challenge for the revival and the development of the educational system. One of the fundamental problems that the new Education Law in Romania (which came into force on 1st of February, 2011, and the methodologies that have been adopted for the application of this law) treats is the rethinking of the educational system with the aim of making it compatible with the EU context, in the context of globalization and by sustainable creation of high competitive national human resources able to function effectively in today's society and the one in the future, along with the training of individual creativity because this is the essential resource in the development and the renewal of the Romanian society.

The new law has assumed the mission of creating the mental infrastructure of the Romanian society through education, teaching institutions and teachers, in accordance with the new EU requirements. The 1st paragraph of the second article details the vision of promoting a value-oriented type of education, with emphasis on skills and creativity (Law nr.1/20110). An idea that comes from national studies and which has found its echo in the new law comes from the following question: 'How much has it been invested in the creative and moral development of students in the last 20 years?' Specialists in psychology and education science have concluded that the screening and the stimulation of creativity in the case of young learners is one of the most important directions of development and modernization of the educational process, of education and instruction in general in Romania.

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Also, by developing creativity from primary school, we stimulate the progress of society, which depends on innovation and creative individuals and we're leveraging the creative potential of each individual. "Creativity and its education represent a great and beautiful challenge for companies, people and education, the creative type of behavior being the most complex one." (M. Ionescu, 2011, p. 365).

2. Barriers in developing creativity in the case of primary school students

By realizing an insight of the last 20 years that the Romanian education system has crossed there have been discovered barriers that limit the development of students' perceptual, emotional and cultural, intellectual, expressive and environmental creativity. We believe that, the social environment in Romania, with all its gaps is the major factor that influences the students' ability to use their own unique expression of creative potential, and education is still constrained by rigid principles that promote critical thinking, discipline and conformity more, and it should not be overlooked the fact that, at the community level the idea that competition between schools can lead to their autonomy, autonomy through which schools and teachers are determined to promote new methods in their work emerges. In the case of the instructive-educational process we also assist to the lack of effort in challenging the obvious solution as well as the tendency of certain teachers ignoring students, which is another barrier. All these negative reactions of non-acceptance, expressed in the group can often lead to primary school pupils refusing to engage with their own ideas in educational activities. Gary A. Davis (1999, p. 165) argues that barriers "are internal or external blockages, which inhibit creative thinking and inspiration. Most barriers result from learning. They can come from family, education, peers or community. Barriers, no matter whether they are internal or external stand in the way of expressing creativity, in the case of both teachers and students. Andrei Cosmovici (2005), considers as barriers of creativity the social, methodological and emotional ones. Among social barriers, society and conformism are major factors that influence the students' ability of using their own unique expression of creative potential. From the category of methodological barriers, Andrei Cosmovici (2005, p. 155) considers early criticism (sometimes the existing form of authoritarianism) as Alex Osborn (one of the promoters of creativity promotion) names it to be a barrier to creativity. "When we think of solving a complex problem, he says, there are times when we think of all sorts of ideas When imagination is going through a time of ferment, we should let the ideas flow - just note them down. Only after this source of inspiration dries up, we should proceed to the analytical examination of each person"(ibid., 2005, p. 155). Fast evaluation is also regarded as a barrier to the development of the young learners' creative capacity. Most students have a well developed ability to evaluate their own ideas and, when ideas are invoked, this is almost instinctively applied. Another barrier is the promotion of competition among learners (created in the classroom). In a bid to compete, students fight against each other rather than create new solutions of all the ideas emerging in the group. Sometimes, however, teachers tend to classify students into able and less able to be creative, which is another barrier to creativity. After all the research that has been made in schools, John S. Dacey (1989, p. 200), concludes: "schools suppress creativity and after having attended school for a period of time, students become more cautious and less innovative" and the appropriate learning conditions can promote in many cases at least some elements of creativity. "The school as an institution of education must promote flexibility, openness to innovation, adaptive capacity and courage in front of unexpected things. It is hoped that this thing will help teachers adapt to a changing world" as Arthur, J. Copley (2001, p. 135) said. Teresa Amabile (1989, p. 72-87), presents four methods in which we can suppress creativity in schools: evaluation- by evaluating their work students tend to be less motivated and creative; the limited, restricted choice; the reward- by sensing that these

rewards are the main reason for doing something, their creativity will be compromised, competition- appears when students feel that their performance will be evaluated according to other students' performance and that the best ones will receive rewards.

The emotional factors, by having an important influence on students' creativity, raise some emotional barriers (psychological) that can be found within each individual: students and teachers. In this context we should mention that self-imposed barriers are among the most difficult obstacles that arise consciously or unconsciously, which prevents the student "from expressing and developing an unusual point of view" (A. Cosmovici, op cit.. P. 156); the rush in accepting the first idea is sometimes wrong, because the solution is rarely found from the beginning. Some students get discouraged quickly, given that creative and innovative work is difficult and requires long-term efforts (ibid., p. 156); fear of rejection or refusal in itself is another obstacle in the development of young learners' creativity. The learners, who are convinced that they will fail due to multiple reasons, won't try to express their creativity in the classroom group because the negative assumptions about themselves determines them to make negative assumptions about their classmates as well; the student's fear of seeing himself as an incapable person is one of the oldest barriers in the educational institution and in student creativity. This is hard to be eliminated in most cases.

3. The experimental approach in the knowledge and stimulation of the young learner's creative capacity

The knowledge and the stimulation of the creative ability in the case of young learners must meet the current social requirements as well as the defining requirements of formative education towards which the Romanian education leads. The educational institution should be responsible for turning the creative potential of each student as a future citizen, by stimulating his creative inclinations. An X-ray of the primary students' creative potential, through which we can reach a conclusion as a result of a comparison between literature data objectives on the one hand and the concrete reality of class on the other hand is necessary and appropriate. Considered a preliminary needs analysis, necessary for the design and the implementation of an experimental intervention, the pedagogical research aims, on theoretical premises, at proposing an ameliorative psycho-pedagogical intervention, whose purpose is to identify and use basic ways of improving the educational practice as an extension of the effect, by contagion, in all subjects in the curriculum, mandatory optional or voluntary to follow by primary school children in order to stimulate the creative capacity of young learners, for enrollment in the curricular performance standards.

The main object of the research was to identify and use new ways of improving the educational practice by developing interest and motivation for the study of primary school pupils in order to seek and stimulate their creative capacity, methods and strategies used in the instructive-educational process. Involvement of all responsible factors: teachers, counselors, psychologists and other educational partners: family, cultural institutions are all important aspects. During the intervention, the general research hypothesis is based on the following assumption:

The promotion of a creative training system in the case of young learners, which should stimulate the intellectual factors increases the creativity level and improves his/her school performance.

The general hypothesis was based on experimental classes, on the approach of two courses of action and intervention:

- the use in school practice of creative training methods (brainstorming, star-bursting, mind mapping, thinking hats) to determine and generate an active reception from behalf of students;

- the development and the application of methods and techniques for stimulating creative ability in teaching activities.

Research variables:

- independent variable - promotion of a training system that fosters intellectual factors

In our situation, the dependent variable concerns the level of creativity and school performance:

- dependent variable = changes the level of creativity and school performance in the case of disciplines.

The independent variable was introduced only in the experimental classes.

The specific items sought were:

- the registration, monitoring and comparison of the results obtained at the initial, formative and final assessment

- designing activities meant to develop the students' ability to solve problems creatively without the fear of making mistakes, to encourage them in valuing their individuality, aiming at transferring creative skills within the instructive-educational process, by using interactive group strategies, applied to various forms of activity, either individually or in groups

- the planning and the ongoing of extracurricular activities that are complementary to school activities;

- the creation and usage of a rich range of tools (quizzes, lists of topics for the new curriculum, specific activities for stimulating creativity), in order to carry out evaluations during the experimental phase;

- developing an intervention program, in collaboration with experimental class teachers and parents, as important educational factors in discovering, unlocking and developing the creative potential;

- the evaluation of teachers in primary concerns about the methods and techniques used to stimulate the creative capacity of young learners;

- the observation and the scoring of difficulties, by adapting the instrument, the methodology, the content (sample content), depending on the dependent and independent variables in order to achieve the immediate objectives of the research, but the ultimate goal;

- finding how the extracurricular life of creative ability and motivation influence the students' disciplines.

The research methods and tools that have been used targeted the analysis of the data, meant to verify the hypothesis, but also to provide answers on the topic of research. The undertaken research was based on various working methods and techniques-systematic observation, the analysis of school and curriculum documents, the questionnaire-based survey (for students and teachers, interview-based survey (for students), tests (for students and teachers), experimentation, analyses of work-products present at all stages and investigated pedagogically, by making an analysis of the advantages and the drawbacks encountered in the case of these methods, in order to indicate their effectiveness in the knowledge and ability of stimulating the young learners' creative ability. Their inventory is presented in the table found below.

The pedagogical intervention took place during the school year 2010/1011. At this stage the subject of the investigation were 160 students observed, questioned and interviewed from schools in Cluj-Napoca, respectively, "Ioan Bob" Secondary School, "Avram Iancu" High School, "Gheorghe Șincai" High School and 70 teachers. The investigation was conducted on a number of 160 students, 46 (28.75%) of which are "Ioan Bob" Secondary School students, 55 (34,375%) are "Gheorghe Șincai" High School students, and 59 (36,875%) are "Avram Iancu" High School students. Of the 160 students investigated, 34 (21.25%) students come from rural areas and the difference of 126 (78.75%) students is represented by those residing

in urban areas with some social implications - favoring materials in the learning process. The distribution of surveyed students in classes, respectively 53 second grade students, 55 third grade students and 52 fourth grade students, allows us to formulate the possible development of creative training classes conducted at lower second and third grades and valuing in the terminal primary grade in the context of substantial accumulation of knowledge. As shown, 84 (52.5%) students are girls and 76 (47.5%) are boys, girls; the difference is quite small, of only 8 students. This implies the possibility of achieving harmonization of interest in teaching and learning in primary school. The increased level of sensitivity in the case of girls and the fact that they mature faster are aspects that allow us to maintain control over disturbing factors such as convenience and low interest, which can be observed in the case of boys. Faster assimilation of information by boys than girls is the result of divergent thinking manifested by them and because of this, creative performance is obvious, the girls demonstrating perseverance and social skills.

The ascertaining phase lasted four week, period of time during which there were applied a wide range of tests meant to determine their level of creativity. Wishing to obtain valuable information for highlighting students' attitudes regarding creativity, I used as a tool the questionnaire consisting of 10 items. Applied to students at this stage, the questionnaire included a series of open, closed and mixed (public opinion and knowledge) items, aiming at obtaining information necessary to address the establishing stage.

After the analysis of the questionnaire that was applied it was discovered that:

Percentual distribution:

- 64% represents the percentage of juveniles who have detailed the notion of creativity, which becomes deeper and deeper as they grow intellectually (advancing to a higher class);
- In what concerns the students' preferences regarding the school disciplines it shows that 64.5% of respondents mentioned that the discipline that they like more is the "Romanian Language and Literature," and 33.5% prefer "Mathematics" as the share of Romanian language classes is of 34% of the number of hours established in all four classes, where from the functions and hence the primary objectives that are sometimes mistaken from those of the Romanian language that is taught in schools result
- 55% is the percentage of subjects who have intrinsic motivation to learn and get good grades, 25% have an intrinsic motivation to get good grades, and 30% is the percentage of subjects whose motivation is extrinsic;
- 25% of the subjects are helped with their homework - 28% of them are helped by their grandparents, 35% of them are helped by their mother, 15% of them by their fathers and 75% of them by subjects are not supervised homework and so do their own homework;
- 76% of the subjects give the family members information about the educational activity held in school and 24% of them do not give the family any information about their school situation;
- 45% of the parents are interested in the subjects' passion for reading, 55% of parents do not monitor their children reading activities nor provide other suggestions;
- 68% of respondents are interested in additional reading and 32% of the respondents find their other concerns.

4. The Pedagogical Intervention

During the experimental phase, which lasted five months, there have been administered evaluation items and formative assessment and knowledge tests applied for the experimental sample in order to verify the degree of assimilation and understanding of knowledge and acquisitions, establishing and adopting the values of dependent variables and the adopting of the ameliorative measures. The formative activities focused on:

- completing activities in class and extracurricular activities and extracurricular activities in nature;
- the stimulation of imagination and curiosity;
- the formation of flexible thinking creativity;
- the encouragement of initiative and availability for various tasks;
- the development of the ability to perform and appreciate the practical;
- focusing the discovery effort of innovation by using creative methods and techniques;
- the substantiation of the teaching approach by using rich and diverse teaching materials;
- the necessity to change the teachers' teaching style and the students' learning style.

During the educational process there have been used various techniques applied in various forms of work activity (story, teaching the game, reading the images, speaking, memorizing) in order to know the effectiveness of each method of working to achieve the objectives of capacity development of receiving the oral / written message and oral/ written capacity of expression and in stimulating creativity. The following indicators were important in management: how to report, immediate correction of prompt mistakes, the way in which to explain their involvement with students or teachers and the way in which these explanations are perceived, the students' involvement in the development of team or differentiated individualized tasks, the involvement of students in discovering innovation, of new information, the relationship between the quantity and the quality of the use of support materials, the objective notification of the etiology and symptoms of the difficulties encountered in the case of vocabulary enrichment and communication management based on grids of interpretation, changes in the students' behavior as well as the teachers' behavior according to independent variables, the rhythm and the increase in school performance, the reduction of communication difficulties in learning the language, the identification of obstacles, the way in which the students should be handled by students and teachers, the diversity of formative activities in the case of the psychological and pedagogical experiment. Analyzing closely the way in which the activities were conducted in experimental classes, we found that creativity training is achieved through a gradual effort from students, asking for fluency in speech and the use of adequate mathematical language. The students who show less openness to creativity enjoy the positive influence of those peers that are more creative. Besides the activities concerning the Romanian language and literature, the teachers have designed and developed mathematical extracurricular activities. The undertaken activities have started with different relaxation exercises meant to motivate students with low sociometric status index and the situational exercises in the case of which students had to apply logical consequences were numerous. This way, the creation and the solving of exercises and problems contributed to increasing flexibility in thinking, the imaginative-anticipatory student ability and the imaginative spirit of initiative. A relevant aspect of extracurricular activities is the students' openness and cooperation in studying Romanian and Mathematics in a relaxed manner, this being the way in which they can show their creative ability. By valuing their prospective imagination, the students have discovered their talent, by drawing them into a real cunning game of mind. After analyzing the research results there were considered effective proposals of intervention meant to help the teachers and the families involved as well as the subjects in building a viable system of knowledge and creative ability in the case of young learners and in developing another perspective for them.

- The development of parental educational skills, supervision and involvement in children's lives.
- Adequate and effective communication and networking, by developing confidence in the students' networking opportunities and responsibilities

- The school has an educational and socializing role - its intervention in stimulating activities, in the development of the young learner's creative, communicative intellectual and emotional potential is necessary for inducing a positive state of mind
- Tutoring and counseling activities as well as extracurricular activities developed through the efficiency of the students' creative training
- Groups of social and personal development by stimulating the group creativity, a competitive spirit and by supporting the students' free spontaneous manifestation
- Cultural and educational activities for reducing the periods of time spent by students on harmful educational actions, for the stimulation of interactive participation and of the active-creative spirit.
- The existence of day care centers and special programs for children from families with low socio-cultural financial potential, whose parents cannot bear certain costs for educational programs meant to lead to the knowledge and stimulation of the young learners' creative ability.
- Motivating students to develop their creativity, by using specific methods and techniques (It was noted that, while the control group ratings remained close to the ratings obtained in the case of the experimental group during the two stages of research, it was also noticed a path between the two stages, from 14 students who obtained FB to 23 students).

By analyzing the conduct of curricular and extracurricular activities in the case of the experimental classes it was noticed that they largely contributed to the acquisition of new knowledge and educational facets, stimulating the students' motivation. Certain methodological tasks are recommended: the use of new strategies and techniques based on active interactive learning; the use of individual work with the collective one in the realization of content activities; the creative approach of extracurricular school activities taken by teachers taking into account the interdisciplinary character; the diversification of methods and procedures by combining the traditional with the modern ones; the improvement of the relationship between the teacher and the students and between students with the prospective of free, open and collaborative verbal expression. During the analysis of the results obtained in the case of the personalized intervention in the case of the sample group it was observed the fact that 64% of the students have developed their creative ability; during the activities, the students have showed high interest in participating in an active and conscious manner; the active and interactive involvement of the students in the activities have helped with the development of fluidity of thought and with the formation of an adequate language, by following the formation of a positive attitude towards their own creativity, they were helped to achieve upward paths in obtaining high-value ratings; the data has demonstrated the viability of using a creative environment in obtaining an increase in school performance; the improvement of the teaching / learning style with emphasis on the formative side, meant to stimulate the creative element has lead to significant results with emphasis on the qualitative side; the students' self-knowledge and self-confidence have contributed to better assessment and to a better identification of their own creative limits.

5. Conclusions

During the educational process as well as in the case of the new social economy, learning experiences involve the overcoming of the obstacles, which means building the best field for obtaining satisfaction, confidence in the students' own power, successful school performance, prerequisite for engagement in a new learning experience, of human learning, of human knowledge, of finding ways in which to stimulate the creative ability of each student and individual. Creativity is a fundamental problem in the instructive-educational process of the primary cycle, as well as of the whole educational system and its native and social premises

must be known, stimulated by the family, by the school representatives, who must build and develop around the individual a whole system of strategies, pedagogical and methodological procedures. The teacher is the one who identifies giftedness in the case of learners and he/she provides the appropriate environment for developing creative capabilities, for encouraging imagination, fantasies and creative suggestions. The teacher needs to build and develop among his/her students' 'creative attitudes' and especially the ability to search and find imaginative, creative issues ". The knowledge and the stimulation of creative abilities in the case of young learners constitute a priority in the case of instructive-educational activities, its development being greatly influenced by the socio-emotional climate in which they work.

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