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DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVITY IN YOUNGER SCHOOLCHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW UKRAINIAN SCHOOL

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Abstract

The article explores the issue of creative thinking and the development of creativity in younger schoolchildren within the new educational paradigm of the Ukrainian school system. There is no universally accepted approach to understanding the nature of creativity or defining its content. Generally, creativity is seen as the ability to generate unique ideas, find new solutions, and deviate from traditional thinking patterns. Using E. Torrance's creativity test, the study empirically reveals specific aspects of verbal and non-verbal creativity in younger schoolchildren: all creativity indicators fall within normal ranges; the verbal creativity indicator "flexibility" scored 47 T-scores, and the non-verbal creativity indicator "elaboration" scored 55 T-scores. The structural profile of creativity in younger schoolchildren is characterized by uniformity in both verbal and figurative creativity. Gender differences were found in the main creativity indicators, such as elaboration, titles, resistance to closure ($p < 0.05$). Girls displayed better abilities in developing and expanding ideas than boys.

Keywords: creativity; verbal and non-verbal creativity; younger school age; gender differences; new Ukrainian school.

Introduction

The European trajectory of modern Ukrainian education demands significant modernization, including addressing the sources and patterns of creative personality development in ontogeny. This is particularly relevant to stimulating the creative activity and potential of the growing individual, which is a pressing issue for various educational practices in the face of contemporary challenges. This involves developing effective technologies for creating a creatively nurturing, egalitarian educational environment within new learning standards because it is within the New Ukrainian School that the comprehensive development of the individual is emphasized, regardless of gender, age, ability, race, culture, religion, ethnicity, etc., determining "the future trajectory of human life" (Kremen, 2009).

The New Ukrainian School prioritizes instilling in young students a system of universal values – moral and ethical (dignity, honesty, justice, care, respect for life, self-respect, and respect for others) and socio-political (freedom, democracy, cultural diversity, respect for native language and culture, patriotism, reverence for the environment, respect for law, solidarity, responsibility) – cultivating an active, independent, adaptable, and competent individual (Bibik, 2017, p. 19).

H. Kostyuk, the founder of research on thinking in Ukrainian psychology, once wrote that elementary school is the "last chance" for non-coercive volitional correction of children's mental development and abilities, allowing them to achieve their potential (Kostyuk, 1989, pp. 137-225). He asserted that abilities (talent) manifest as the holistic essence of personality, indicating a tight connection between cognitive, emotional, motivational, and other ability components, which facilitate activities where they manifest. These abilities drive creative activity, ensuring success and effectiveness in the relevant endeavors. The researcher emphasized the importance of nurturing thinking in the growing individual, as primary education sets the foundation for mental activity (abilities, thinking, emotions, imagination), which determines the future success of the creative personality (Kostyuk, 1989, pp. 137-225).

Today's Ukrainian school emphasizes self-realization and self-actualization, creating conditions for the independent creative abilities of children. President of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences V. Kremen states: "A culture of child-centeredness and innovation should define all activities of the modern teacher both within and outside of school" (Kremen, 2009, p. 412). This involves

recognizing the intrinsic value of childhood and implementing a student-centered educational approach within a developmental educational paradigm, adopting a systematic approach to egalitarian socialization on principles of humanism and democracy.

According to researchers, the first teacher plays a crucial role as a "fully operational" organizer of a creative and developmental environment to reveal the unique self of each child, regardless of gender. This involves cooperative activities and dialogue between the educator and the child and necessitates studying the personality as an active and creative subject in a historical context, being "born" in primary school (Ball, 1996; Roments, 2001; Molyako, 2008, 2021; Pavlenko, 2015).

S. Maksymenko notes the importance of setting realistic expectations for child achievements, primarily from a practical standpoint, as education is the primary life activity during formative years, fundamentally shaping a person's future (Maksymenko, 2006, p. 121). The author suggests that how school requirements align with children's potential significantly affects not only academic success but also overall personality development, as "student success is a measure of agency: independence, originality, creativity, flexibility, etc." (Maksymenko, 2006, p. 121). V. Kremen echoes the necessity of tailoring education to each child's natural abilities, making interest and fulfillment of cognitive needs the primary motivators for learning (Kremen, 2009, p. 388).

Creativity and the realization of creative potential contribute to personal harmony and psychological well-being. Thus, the issue of ensuring the psychological-pedagogical conditions for the creative realization of younger schoolchildren necessitates exploring the sociocultural interaction among all educational space subjects (children, parents, educators) and the psychological mechanisms of creative personality development along with its integral characteristic – creativity. Intelligence, thinking, and creativity define the key competencies of a generation capable of successful self-realization amid continuously changing informational uncertainties. The wealth of scientific research on creativity as a personal capacity indicates significant interest in the field today.

Methodology and Research Methods

Creativity is an established category in psychological science. The main task of creativity psychology is to reveal the psychological patterns and mechanisms of the creative process as a personal capability. Foreign researchers have examined issues of creative thinking through the lens of divergent thinking. For instance, J. Guilford and his followers (Furnham, 2009) see divergent thinking as a multi-directional cognitive process. J. Guilford defined creativity and creative potential in unity as a combination of abilities and other traits that facilitate successful creative thinking (Guilford, 1968). H. Eysenck suggested that the diversity of intellectual manifestations is rooted in the dynamic of association creation, while creativity relates to the scale of their realization (Eysenck, 1995). M. Csikszentmihalyi pointed to systematic, extensive, and multifaceted characteristics of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). D. Campbell's classic theory suggested that creative thinking is based on two mechanisms: spontaneous variability and selective retention of ideas (Campbell, 1960). According to E. Torrance's "threshold theory of intellect," creativity transcends pure intelligence (Torrance, 1962).

Ukrainian scientists consider creativity as a cultural-historical phenomenon. Notably, researchers from the Institute of Psychology named after G. Kostyuk, under the leadership of S. Maksymenko (2023), have developed a cycle of modular formation of cognitive abilities through a genetic-creative approach to foster creative competence in a growing personality. Studies from V. Molyako's school of creativity psychology focus on exploring psychological laws of creative perception within a unified strategic-activity theory, examining age-specific features of creative perception and understanding new information in various activities (Molyako, 2008, 2021).

Creativity is viewed by scientists as a special ability to produce new, non-standard, original images, ideas, and hypotheses, representing the development of all potential abilities of a person, as a universal ability that manifests and materializes in the creative process (Klymenko, 2006; Pavlenko, 2015; Rybalko, 1996; Rybalko & Molyako, 2007; Vasylykevych, 2015, 2016; Vasylykevych, Kikinezhdi, et al., 2021). Key factors of creativity include persistence, tolerance for ambiguity, openness to new

ideas, independent thinking, and risk-taking. Thus, creativity is a complex integrated ability of a person expressed in the inclination to find non-standard solutions to problems.

In summary, creativity, as a dynamically developing personal capability, is characterized by a set of unique and integral personal traits: creative potential, creative activity, creative individuality, creative direction, initiative, and improvisation, which facilitate self-actualization and the formation of creative maturity. Such an impact can only be achieved through an educational process focusing on developing students' creative thinking and solving creative tasks in learning and upbringing. Throughout schooling, students should acquire the ability to construct an adequate, holistic worldview and develop the creative tools to solve non-standard problems.

The theoretical and methodological foundations of foreign and domestic creativity psychology provided the conceptual basis for our empirical study on developing creativity in younger schoolchildren under the reforming national school context. In the empirical study, we used E. Torrance's test, which is the most valid and reliable standardized tool for diagnosing creativity. It comprises two parts (verbal and non-verbal) that allow measurement of all main characteristics of personal creativity. The wide range of suggested tasks offers extensive opportunities for subjects to demonstrate their creative abilities.

The verbal battery includes 7 subtests with the following tasks: 1. "Questions": In this subtest, participants must come up with as many questions as possible about events occurring in a picture. 2. "Causes": Participants need to propose as many causes as possible for the events depicted in the picture; 3. "Consequences": The task requires coming up with as many consequences as possible resulting from the events shown in the picture. 4. "Improving an Object": Participants need to think of as many ways as possible to improve a toy. 5. "Unusual Uses": The task is to suggest as many unconventional ways as possible to use cardboard boxes. 6. "Unusual Questions": Participants should create as many unusual questions as possible about cardboard boxes. 7. "Unusual Situation": Participants need to devise as many outcomes as possible regarding an unusual situation depicted in a picture.

The figural battery consists of 3 subtests with the following tasks: 1. "Creating a Drawing": Participants must draw an original picture, incorporating a colored shape chosen by the examinee. 2. "Completing Drawings": The task requires creating as many original drawings as possible based on various proposed incomplete figures. 3. "Repeating Lines": Participants should create as many original drawings as possible based on pairs of repeating parallel lines.

The testing involved students aged 7-8 from Ternopil Secondary School No. 4 and Pereiaslav General Education School No. 6. The total sample consisted of 50 individuals (24 girls, 26 boys). For children aged 7-8, the test was conducted individually. During the methodologies, it was considered that creativity fully manifests only under favorable conditions. Since adverse functional states and an insufficiently friendly testing atmosphere may reduce creativity expression results, achievement motivation was minimized, and children were oriented towards revealing their hidden creative abilities.

Results and Discussion

The results from each subtest allowed for calculating a total score for each type of creativity and assessing the indicators of verbal and figural creativity, reflecting levels of creative ability development. E. Torrance suggested using T-standard scores as scale values. Transition to T-scores is conducted separately for each creativity indicator. Utilizing the Torrance creativity test's standard T-scale defined the normal range of scores: values from 40 to 60 points. The results for verbal and figural creativity indicators are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Verbal Creativity Scores of Younger Schoolchildren (in T-scores)

Indicators of Verbal Creativity		
Productivity	Flexibility	Originality
43	47	43
Normal	Normal	Normal

As shown in Table 1, all indicators of verbal creativity in younger schoolchildren are within the normal range; the highest score is flexibility (47 T-scores), while productivity and originality both score slightly lower (43 T-scores).

Table 2. Figurative Creativity Scores of Younger Schoolchildren (in T-scores)

Indicators of Figurative Creativity				
Productivity	Originality	Elaboration	Title	Resistance to Closure
46	43	55	42	42
Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal

Figurative creativity indicators in younger schoolchildren are also within the normal range. The highest score is in elaboration (55 scores). The lowest scores are in originality (43 scores), titles, and resistance to closure (42 scores). Converting to standard scores allows for constructing structural profiles of verbal and figurative creativity (Figures 1 and 2). Analyzing the structural profile reflecting the relationships of different creativity indicators allows for describing its qualitative uniqueness and highlighting strong and weak aspects of creative ability. The analysis of the structure of verbal and figurative creativity is conducted based on the following indicators: 1) Homogeneity–heterogeneity of creativity structure; 2) Level characteristics of verbal and figurative creativity indicators.

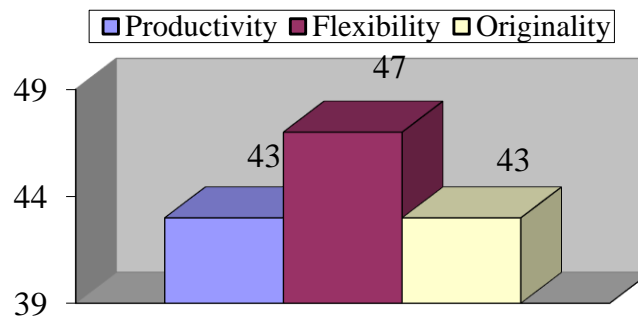


Figure 1. Structural Profile of Verbal Creativity in Younger Schoolchildren.

Analysis of the features of the verbal creativity structural profile showed that younger schoolchildren have a homogeneous structure of verbal creativity: all indicators are within the norm. Analyzing the level characteristics of verbal creativity allows us to note that flexibility is somewhat higher than other creativity attributes in the studied younger classes. The flexibility indicator reflects a child's ability to offer diverse ideas, approach problems from different angles, and utilize various strategies and solutions.

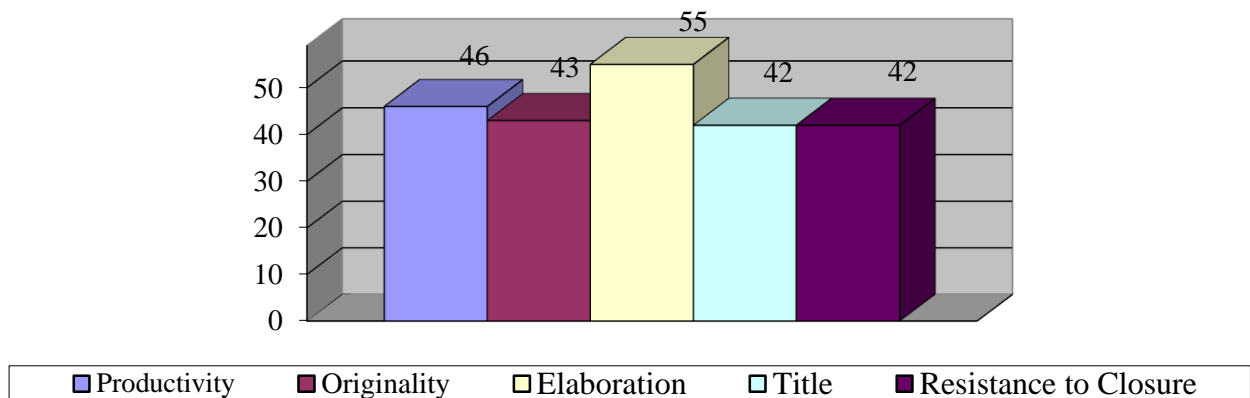


Figure 2. Structural Profile of Figurative Creativity in Younger Schoolchildren.

Analyzing Figure 2, we can note that this age category is also characterized by a homogeneous structure of figurative creativity (all indicators are within the norm). The analysis of level characteristics of figurative creativity showed that the highest score among younger schoolchildren is in elaboration. Thus, children of this age can well-develop, supplement, and expand the boundaries of arising ideas. However, good "elaborators" can have a weakness: they strive to develop their ideas as best as possible, making them unable to complete the work on time. To determine gender differences in the creativity structure of younger schoolchildren, the sample was divided by gender (26 boys, 24 girls). The results for verbal creativity indicators in boys' and girls' subgroups are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Gender Differences in Verbal Creativity of Younger Schoolchildren

Gender	Verbal Creativity Indicators		
	Productivity	Flexibility	Originality
Boys	38	42	40
Girls	40	44	43

The analysis of the presented results allows us to conclude that all verbal creativity indicators in girls are slightly higher than in boys, but these differences are insignificant. All verbal creativity indicators in both subgroups are within the norm, except for productivity in boys, which is slightly below the norm. This can be explained by the fact that from the age of two, girls exhibit a higher level of verbal abilities, manifested in more complex and correct speech. Therefore, girls have higher verbal abilities and a larger vocabulary.

The analysis of gender differences in the structural profiles of verbal creativity showed that for both boys and girls, flexibility holds the highest score, while productivity scores the lowest. The figurative creativity indicators for boys and girls are shown in Table 4. The analysis of results showed that all figurative creativity indicators in boys and girls are within the normal range, and all figurative creativity scores in girls are higher than in boys. Notably, there are statistically significant differences in the level of such figurative creativity indicators as elaboration, titles, and resistance to closure ($p < 0.05$). These results can be explained by girls having better-developed perception and attention to detail.

Table 4. Gender Differences in Figurative Creativity of Younger Schoolchildren

Gender	Figurative Creativity Indicators				
	Productivity	Originality	Elaboration	Title	Resistance to Closure
Boys	53	47	49*	41*	51*
Girls	54	48	56*	47*	56*

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

He analysis of gender differences in structural profiles of figurative creativity of younger schoolchildren showed that for both boys and girls, the highest scores are in productivity, elaboration, and resistance to closure, while the lowest are in originality and titles. Therefore, the creativity structures of boys and girls do not overlap: girls have slightly better-developed verbal creativity, but statistically significantly higher scores in elaboration, titles, and resistance to closure of figurative creativity. Girls, therefore, have a larger vocabulary, propose more ideas for drawing titles and further plot development, and use ordinary objects creatively. Girls also excel at developing proposed ideas, supplementing them with many details. Boys, too, propose a large number of original ideas, but they are less able to elaborate and refine them in detail.

Conclusions

An empirical study using E. Torrance's creativity test revealed the specificity of verbal and nonverbal creativity in younger schoolchildren, identifying gender differences in the manifestation of main creativity indicators in younger schoolchildren.

In younger school-age students, all indicators of verbal creativity are within the normal range; the highest value is for flexibility (47 T-scores); productivity and originality have equal and slightly lower values (43 T-scores). Indicators of figurative creativity in younger students are also within the normal range. The highest value is for elaboration (55 points). The lowest values among those studied are for originality (43 points), titles, and resistance to closure (42 points). Features of the structural profile of creativity in younger students were identified: this age category is characterized by homogeneity in the structure of both verbal and figurative creativity (all indicators are within the normal range).

Concerning gender differences in verbal creativity, all indicators are somewhat higher in girls. This means girls have higher verbal abilities and a larger vocabulary. Notable statistically significant differences were found in the level of such indicators of figurative creativity as elaboration, titles, and resistance to closure ($p < 0.05$). Unlike boys, girls are better able to develop and complement ideas. Future research prospects in this area include studying the functioning of creative thinking and creativity of a growing personality under conditions of informational uncertainty in ontogeny.

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EXPLORAREA NOILOR ROLURI ȘI ACȚIUNI ÎN PROCESUL ÎNVĂȚĂRII TRANSFORMATIVE: ABORDARE TEORETICO – PRAXIOLOGICĂ

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Introducere

În contextul documentelor de politici educaționale naționale și internaționale, transformarea și individualizarea procesului de învățare reprezintă o direcție strategică esențială pentru asigurarea unei educații de calitate, implicit dezvoltarea gândirii independente.

Adaptarea strategiilor de învățare la nevoile și particularitățile fiecărui student devine o prioritate fundamentală în vederea promovării învățării transformative și a dezvoltării achizițiilor valorice și competențelor necesare într-o societate bazată pe cunoaștere. În acest sens, cadrele didactice au un rol esențial în proiectarea unor experiențe educaționale flexibile, menite să stimuleze autonomia, spiritul critic, gândirea independentă și creativă, asigurând astfel perceperea fiecărui formabil ca subiect activ în procesul educațional. Prin respectarea principiilor constructiviste și practicilor respective, formabilii pot naviga mai eficient și cu succes prin schimbările și provocările contextelor de învățare create. Astfel, intervențiile strategice de explorarea opțiunilor pentru noi roluri și acțiuni devin o componentă esențială a procesului de învățare transformativă.

Învățarea transformativă este procesul prin care formabilii își reconfigurează profund modul de a înțelege experiențele personale, modificându-și în acest sens perspectiva asupra unei idei, situații sau chiar asupra propriei identități, acestea solicitând eforturi ale gândirii independente. Aceasta reprezintă o extensie a constructivismului, un cadru teoretic conform căruia fiecare subiect își construiește în mod activ sensul realității prin comprehensiunea noilor achiziții raliindule la experiențele și convingerile anterioare. Procesul respectiv este declanșat, de obicei, de unele momente critice sau dileme dezorientative, evenimente care provoacă formabilul spre reevaluarea convingerilor și reflectarea asupra noilor perspective. În urma acestei reflecții independente și critice, educabilul poate adopta un nou cadru de referință, unul mai incluziv, mai deschis și mai adaptabil la realitatea sa în schimbare.

Învățarea transformativă se fundamentează pe paradigma constructivistă și urmărește cultivarea gândirii independente, critice și creative, prin confruntarea formabililor cu situații dilematice menite să declanșeze procese de reflecție profundă și restructurare a cadrului personal de interpretare a realității. Tipul dat de învățare se produce în mai multe etape, incluzând conștientizarea limitelor vechilor convingeri, explorarea alternativelor, testarea noilor perspective prin acțiune și, în cele din urmă, integrarea acestora într-o identitate sau viziune revizuită asupra lumii. Acest proces nu este doar unul cognitiv, ci și emoțional, social și cultural, având un impact semnificativ asupra dezvoltării personale și profesionale a persoanei implicate în procesul de transformare.

În această ordine de idei, învățarea transformativă nu doar că facilitează adaptarea la noi circumstanțe, dar oferă și oportunitatea unei creșteri autentice, permițând formabilului să își redefinească valorile, atitudinile și modul în care interacționează cu lumea. În acest proces, un element esențial îl constituie nivelul deținerii gândirii independente a studenților implicați, permițându-le să analizeze critic informațiile, să formuleze propriile concluzii și să ia decizii în mod autonom.

Analiza literaturii de specialitate a permis identificarea unui set de însușiri/trăsături definitorii ale gânditorului independent, care sunt cultivate gradual în cadrul celor zece etape ale procesului de învățare transformativă, așa cum sunt acestea prezentate în Figura. 1.

Fiecare fază contribuie la formarea și consolidarea unor dimensiuni cognitive, afective și comportamentale – precum reflecția critică, flexibilitatea mentală, independența în gândire și acțiune,