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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHER IN ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY AMONG THE GIFTED STUDENTS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The development of students' creativity is one of the main goals of educational activities. However, it is not always properly developed in the school environment, especially when it comes to the education of gifted students. Creativity can be challenging for most teachers due to lack of understanding and inadvertently inhibit it with teaching methods that are not aimed at encouraging student potential. Therefore, the teacher and his behavior play an important role in the development of creativity. The way teachers, especially in primary education, perceive creativity provides a basis for their real activities that are oriented towards the development of students' creativity. The purpose of this paper is to highlight teachers and their behaviors for developing creativity in the school environment from primary education.

Key words: creativity, teachers, primary education.

1. Introduction

Creativity is a complex concept with a not clear enough meaning. It is often used in education but seldom defined (Beghetto, 2005 as cited in Cachia & Ferari, 2010). Runco (1999 as cited in Cachia & Ferari, 2010) points out that many stakeholders in education, such as teachers, parents and children, have tacit knowledge about creativity, which manifests itself in behaviors and expectations that are in stark contrast to what creativity requires and which can to have detrimental effects on all attempts to encourage creativity in schools. In a school context, creativity still does not develop as it should. Teachers use imaginative and widely applicable practices that promote and develop creativity in students, but at the same time there is concern that they do not have a clear idea of what creativity means and are unsure of the best ways to encourage it. Most students feel unmotivated due to repetitive learning. This lack of motivation occurs primarily in gifted children who "make their own discoveries and invent new ways of understanding. And therefore, they have such a drive to dominate, so they are different from other children who work very hard to accomplish their activities." (Winner, 1998, p. 247 as cited in Piske, 2014). Schools and education authorities are also unsure of how to measure their success in fostering creativity and are unsure of what can be considered an indicator of that success.

Therefore, this paper aims to highlight the importance of teachers and their training for the development of creativity. It is essential that teachers are prepared on how to create a stimulating environment for students' potentials and talents.

2. What is Creativity?

Humans have incredible creative potential. Creativity is an inherently productive ability. As such, creativity is not an activity that has a clear-cut purpose by itself, but something that aims to accomplish different goals for personal satisfaction – it is the quality or ability to create (Stojanovska and Popovski – Petrova, 2021). The available definitions of creativity (Barron and Harrington, 1981; Gelade, 2002; Anderson and King, 2002 as cited in Bakx, 2007) center around the claim that creativity consists of two principal elements. Firstly, creativity implies either the creation of something new or the rethinking and re-combining of pre-existing elements. In order to be considered creative, the concept or idea must be both valuable and useful. This second criterion indicates the creative ideas should also be purposeful. Both criteria are age and context dependent. Novelty is always relative, the solution may be new to the person who came up with it, but it is possible that it is already known to other people. Sometimes, we can all be brilliant.

3. Practical Dillemas About Creativity of Gifted in Primary Education

Originality and value are the main features of creative process or a product (Ferrari et. al., 2009). Yet, it is questionable whether or not primary school students can actually have such original

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and revolutionary ideas about their surroundings. Therefore, Runco (2003) suggests that when defining and discussing creativity in education, the terms originality (or novelty) and value should be considered in their mundane, everyday meaning. In this early school age, a child's creativity should not be assessed in terms of its influence and value in a wider social context, but rather on its influence on that particular child/student. This understanding implies the acceptance of a more democratic definition of creativity which recognizes the potential of all individuals to be or to become creative. Therefore, in terms of education, it is important for creativity to be conceptualized in such a way that each individual's ability to develop his creative potential is recognized, and the attributes of originality and value are considered in relation to the individual himself, rather than the entire society.

Many authors claim that the opinions of children of all levels are significantly influenced by the opportunities presented to them. In a school context, gifted children are considered to have different characteristics from other children in their group. These children are engaged in activities of their interest. Gama (2006 as cited in Piske, 2014) says that gifted children have an excessive commitment to doing things of their interest that is not seen in children of the same age. It is a high ability to concentrate for long periods of time and this ability is superior when compared to the abilities of students in the same conditions and age. Therefore, providing opportunities for developing cognitive and creative potential should be a priority in the design of curricula and programs. Ferrari, Cachia and Punie (2009) identify several aspects that can result in improving the curriculum in terms of developing creative thinking:

- The recognition that all subjects can benefit from creativity, as well as the fact that creativity is not subject-related;
- The possibility to introduce statutory time for interdisciplinary work, as it gives a wider picture of education and learning and develops creativity and other thinking activities;
- Time away from statutory curriculum to allow space and time for teachers and students to teach and learn what they are interested in;
- A curriculum which allows space and time for innovation and experiments;
- The recognition of student's interests when designing the curriculum;
- The recognition of the importance of creativity for every age group;
- The recognition of student's interests when designing the curriculum.

A rebalancing of the pre-existing curricula is necessary so that skills such as creativity can be encouraged freely. The development of creativity is particularly affected by giving students time and freedom for individual activities and experiences that will allow each student to develop their own creativity and originality. Time is a limited resource in schools, and from a time-use point of view, it may seem more efficient to 'tell' students knowledge than to be active participants in the discovery of knowledge. However, allocating time in teaching for individual activities and experiences is one of the ways to encourage creativity, especially among gifted children. Curriculum design should ensure that curricula provide sufficient flexibility, time and space for student exploration and development of creativity at the classroom level.

4. Teachers as Key Persons in Developing Student's Creativity

Teachers are perceived as key persons in developing student's creativity. Teachers are key components. (Sharp, 2004 as cited in Cachia & Ferari, 2010) and builders of a creative climate conducive to creative learning (Esquivel, 1995 as cited in Cachia & Ferari, 2010). They provide the balance between structure and freedom of expression and determine the triggering or hindering of student's creative output. Creative performance is more likely to happen in a classroom where a teacher empowers students (Craft, 2005). Innovative teachers enjoy working in a democratic classroom (Esquivel, 1995) where everyone has a say. Many authors emphasize the importance of a nurturing environment to kindle the creative spark, an environment where students feel free and rewarded, where they are active, have a sense of ownership and can openly discuss their problems, where teachers promote cooperative learning methods of learning, thus making learning relevant to student's life experiences. In order to do this successfully, teachers need to be prepared both on the pedagogical side – being aware of the ways and means to foster student's freedom and on the subject-

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knowledge side. Lack of preparation will prevent teachers from being ready to provide a learning environment which allows students to discover and ready (Craft, 2005 as cited in Cachia & Ferari, 2010).

Piske (Piske, 2017, p. 8) offers some recommendations for teachers during their lessons:

- Be good observers to identify the needs of your students during all lessons;
- Work with activities that provoke the curiosity of students;
- Oportunize students freedom to make questions in class;
- Pay attention to the students' areas of interest;
- Perform art activities;
- Allow students some moments to have freedom to express and choose what they want to learn;

5. Conclusion

The learning process for gifted students becomes effective when teachers understand the needs of their high-potential students and provide them with challenging activities. In conclusion, the development of creativity depends on good training of teachers to prepare activities that stimulate the curiosity and interest of every child, including the gifted, giving them time in the teaching for individual activities and experiences. Teachers provide the balance between structure and freedom of expression and determine the triggering or hindering of student's creative output. In order to achieve this, the 0curricula should be reconsidered, that is, it should allow flexibility, time and space for the development of creativity and not overload teachers and students.

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