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Characteristics of pre-school children’s creative activity

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of preschool children’s formation of the creative activity. The author understands creative activity as integrative, qualitative characteristic of personality, which includes a complex of motivational, creative, volitional components. According to the selected indicators, a diagnostic methodology for the three main blocks was constructed. All indicators were evaluated by a 3-point system, in which each score expressed the content of the existing level of formation of diagnosed indicators. Four levels of creative activity of older preschool children are distinguished: high (creative), middle (research), below average (imitative), low (performing). It is established that the most unformed components of creative activity in preschool age are creative and volitional. It is substantiated that development of speed, flexibility and originality of thinking, as well as stimulation of children’s initiative and independence will allow to increase the level of creative activity.

Keywords. creative activity, older preschool children, creativity, levels, indicators, components

1. Introduction

Formation of a person with an active life position in modern conditions is one of the urgent problems of pedagogical theory and practice. Initiative, independence, interest and creative attitude add value to what a person does. Particular importance of forming children’s qualities such as creative activity is emphasized in the works of teachers, psychologists, physiologists.

The modern period of fundamental changes in the life of our society requires from each person manifestation of flexibility, lateral thinking, initiative, the ability to produce new ideas, that is, the realization of the creative potential of his personality.

The content of education should be oriented on the organization of activities that stimulate the development of thinking, imagination, fantasy and children's creativity, the realization of children's creative activity. By developing a core component of creativity - creative activity, you can achieve this goal.

2. Analysis of researches and publications

In pedagogy it is possible to distinguish directions in research of preschool children’s creativity of in different types of activity: musical (N. Vetluhina, N. Metlov, O. Radinov), visual arts (O. Fleurin, N. Sakulin, T. Kozakova, T. Komarov, N. Khalezov, R. Chumicheva), literary (N. Karpinskaya, L. Penevskaya, O. Ushakov), theatrical (L. Furmin.), playing (N. Mikhailenko), motor (A. Keman, N. Poltavtseva, O. Stepanenko).
Psychological aspects of the problem of formation of preschool children’s creative activity are presented in the works of B. Ananyev, L. Vygotsky, E. Ignatiev, D. Kolesov, G. Uruntaeva and others.

3. Aim and objectives of the research

The purpose of the article is to highlight the indicators and levels of older preschool children’s creative activity. The tasks are to describe the diagnostic methodology for assessing the level of creative activity of older preschool children, taking into account the manifestation of the distinguished criteria and their indicators.

Research methods

During the writing of the article, the following research methods were used: theoretical (analysis, generalization, systematization of scientific sources from the perspective of the problem); diagnostic (conversations with children, study of products of children’s activity); empirical (an experiment to determine the levels of creative activity of older preschool children), statistical methods to test the objectivity and validity of the results of a pedagogical experiment.

4. Results of the research

Analyzing psychological and pedagogical research of the problems of creativity in general, summarizing the experience of scientists and practitioners on the formation of creative activity, we came to the conclusion that the creative activity of older preschool children is an active state of personality, characterized by the desire to transform something, create something personally significant, some material or spiritual product. The organization of this process is impossible without reliance on various activities of preschool children: the development of speech, word-formation, visual and constructive activity, etc.

Creative activity of preschool children is manifested in the following:

- the desire of the child to be engaged in creative activities;
- finding your own new ways to solve the problem;
- the desire to get an interesting, original result of this activity;
- a high level of storytelling creativity (ability to modify, transform, combine existing ideas; ability to anticipate subsequent events, establish relationships among individual events, ability to enter into depicted situations, emotionally empathize their characters, ability to use appropriate expressive and visual properties).

In the process of developing of older preschool children’s creative activity, we keep to the following structure of creative activity:

Stage 1 - preparatory, which involves the design of the future product of the activity (choice of the topic, selection of materials, tools, methods of action).

Stage 2 - is the main one, which involves:

- planning future actions;
- the actual realization of the plan;
- getting the result.

Stage 3 - the final stage, which involves improvements, verification, analysis of obtained results, possible usage in practical activities.

Creative activity is understood by us as an integrative, qualitative characteristic of a person, including a complex of motivational, creative, volitional components.
The creative component is the foundation of creative activity. As one of the basic in the structure of the creative activity of the child, it involves the ability to generate new ideas that deviate from traditional, quickly solve problematic situations. Creativity in psychology acts as the ability of a preschooler to creatively solve various problem situations that arise when performing one or another activity.

The tendency to creativity is the highest manifestation of human activity, the ability to create something original, it can be performed in any field of activity. The scale of creativity can be different, but, as N. Leites notes, in all cases there is something new. Therefore, no matter what the novelty of a product is, obtained in the process of creative activity, objective or subjective, the creative component is present in it equally.

The creative component of creative activity is reflected through the motivational component. Human behavior is aroused by a variety of needs and motives, the totality of which characterizes a person, forms his or her motivational sphere. These are the motives that determine the orientation of the child's personality, the presence or absence of creative activity. The formation of specific agents of behavior, namely the desire for creativity puts the person in a completely new relationship with the surrounding reality. These relationships are characterized by the fact that a person ceases only to adapt to circumstances, and begins to intervene in them, "to create them", as well as "to create oneself" (D. Bogoyavlen skaya).

The volitional component of creative activity is analyzed through the independence of the preschooler in the process of completing a creative task (choosing the path "according to example", mostly independent work, with occasional support of the teacher), initiative and ingenuity in finding a solution and performing a creative task. Researches show that older preschoolers only need visual orientation in the task, to complete immediately the entire sequence of required actions. It testifies about the child's mental regulation of his actions and development of independence.

Motives and will, as components of creative activity, are closely interrelated. Psychologists have shown that older preschooler's motives of volitional actions are restructured: motives increasingly appear as one of the decisive conditions, which provides stable and long-lasting volitional tension of the child (T. Ginevskaya, Z. Manuilenko, N. Matyushkina).

Theoretical searches have shown that it is most expedient to choose the following criteria indicators of the formation of significant structural components of older preschoolers’ creative activity:

1. Motivational component:
   - active interest in knowledge, perception and reflection in their activities of available knowledge and skills;
   - curiosity in learning and creative activities.
2. Creative component:
   - speed of thinking;
   - flexibility of thinking;
   - originality of the product of creative activity;
   - breadth of categorization.
3. Willful component:
   - independence and initiative in applying familiar ways of acting in new situations.

Therefore, the assessment of the level of creative activity of older preschool children
was made taking into account the manifestation of certain criteria and their indicators. The criteria presented to us have been selected on the basis of available psychological and pedagogical developments in this field. According to the selected indicators, we considered it advisable to build a diagnostic methodology according to three main blocks. The content of each block is determined by the content and interconnected with all components of the creative activity of preschool children.

I block (motivational component). The task is to determine the level of older preschool children’s interest in creative activity.

In group of tasks we have developed the following methods:

1. Observation of children's creative activity.
   Purpose: to record manifestations of interest in creativity, curiosity.

2. Individual conversation with children.
   Objective: to determine the interests of children in a particular kind of creative activity.

Preschoolers were offered to answer a number of questions:
1. What do you like to do most?
2. Do you have any favorite kindergarten activities? Tell them about them.
3. Do you like to fantasize, invent? Why?
4. Are you a fancier? What does it mean?

Block II (creative component). The task is to identify the indicators of older pre-school children’s level of creative thinking.

Building diagnostics of this component of creative activity, we relied on research of creativity of thinking of J. Goldfrank, E. Torrens, A. Matyushkin, O. Dyachenko, D. Bogoyavlenskaya, O. Tsaplina.

As the main indicators of creativity are usually the following:
• speed of thinking (wealth and diversity of ideas, associations arising from any stimulus);
• flexibility of thinking (the ability to move quickly from one category to another, from one solution to another);
• originality of thinking (independence, extraordinary, original decisions);
• the breadth of categorization (remoteness of associations, unexpected usage of an object, giving it a functional or figurative meaning).

These signs of creative thinking are, in our opinion, the foundation of creative activity. The tasks of this block were solved using a set of methods in the form of tasks.
Task 1. Use items in a different quality.
Objective: To identify the level of formation children’s the main indicators of creativity
• speed, flexibility, originality, to reveal the breadth of categorization.

Objectives: a) Preschoolers are offered to list as many possible variants of usage functionally of a familiar object (pencil);
b) children are encouraged to improve a familiar object (pencil) that cannot be used for its functional purpose any longer.

Task 2. Finish painting of the figure.
Objective: to identify the level of formation of the senior preschoolers of such an indicator of creativity as originality of thinking, originality in the transformation of the given.
Material:
a) cards for each child with the image of a geometric figure or its element (O. Dyachenko);
b) cards for each child on which a glued piece of fabric of indefinite shape and different structure.
c) colored pencils, felt-tip pens.

Task: preschoolers were asked to finish painting, to supplement the items that were given.
Task 3. Problematic situation.
Objective: to determine the level of preschoolers’ speed, flexibility, and originality of thinking as they work out how to solve problems.
Material: two pictures with a similar storyline. Children were asked to identify the possible causes of the situation and to suggest solutions to the problem.

III block (volitional component). The task is to study the degree of manifestation of children’s initiative and independence.
We investigated the indicators of the volitional component of creative activity by observing children’s behavior in the process of employment and creative activities.
Purpose: to record the manifestations of indicators of the volitional component: initiative and independence.
Diagnosis of children’s creative activity of older preschool age included assessment of the formation of indicators of motivational, creative and volitional components. All indicators were evaluated by a 3-point system, in which each score expressed the content of the existing level of formation of diagnosed indicators.
3 points - a high level of development of quality (ability of children).
2 points - the average level of development of the quality.
1 point - low level of development of the quality.

To obtain more accurate data, we used the method of evaluation of independent experts (educators). They were asked to rate each quality (ability) of older preschool children who were also evaluated according to a 3-point system.
3 points - a quality that is judged to be well developed, clearly expressed and often manifested in various creative activities.
2 points - the quality that is evaluated is not noticeable, but is constantly manifested.
1 point - more clearly manifested quality opposite to the evaluated one.

The results of the diagnostic techniques and the results of the evaluation of independent experts included in the table were then summarized, and the average score of each quality was written in the summary table.
Focusing on the grade point average, we determined the level of older preschool children’s creative activity. We have identified four levels of creative activity for older preschool children:
I level - high (creative) - from 21 points and more.
It is characterized by persistent and long-term interest in creative activity, perception and reflection in the activity of the available knowledge and skills. Preschoolers are curious, often ask questions, the content of which is characterized by a high degree of cognition, the desire to know, to understand the essence of the problem. Children take initiative to use their experience, they are independent in the choice of ways of action, the promotion of ideas, the realization of the plan. Children minimally ask for help. The speed, flexibility and originality of thinking are clearly evident. This evidences the richness and diversity of ideas, associations, the rapid transition from one category to another, the remoteness of associations, the unexpected usage of the subject, ingenuity, originality of decisions.

II Level - Medium (searching) – from 13 to 20 points.

It is characterized by a steady interest in creativity, creation of a new product, initiative in the choice of ways of activity. Children often ask cognitive questions. Independence is often fragmental, especially when it is necessary to transfer skills to new conditions. Preschoolers often seek for help from a teacher, peers. Indicators of the creative component are manifested mainly in the diversity of ideas, associations, but children have difficulty in moving from one category to another, from one way to another. Children's answers often relate to one associative series, with nearly no original solution.

Level III - below average (imitative) - from 9 to 8 points.

Characterized by a deep situational interest, the initiative is often directed and supported by the teacher. Independence is either constantly stimulated by the teacher or not manifested at all. Children rarely ask questions. The desire for knowledge is weak. Preschoolers’ answers differ in the uniqueness of ideas, associations, difficulties in the transition from one category to another. Children's activities rarely have originality.

IV level - low (executive) - from 0 to 8 points.

It is characterized by virtually no interest, or its episodic nature. There is no initiative in the creative activity process. Preschoolers are independent. They constantly ask teacher’s and peers’ help. They don't ask questions, they are very passive. Easily work with templates, samples. Children’s answers are monotonous, belong to one associative series. Originality is not manifested. Preschoolers have difficulty in making logical connections between phenomena and objects. Very often they refuse to respond or do anything.

Let’s turn to the results of the diagnosis of components of preschool children’s creative activity.

Solving the problem of the first diagnostic block - determining the level of formation of indicators of the motivational component of creative activity (interest, curiosity) in the of older preschool children’s age, we relied on a number of scientific researches.

Significant material has been accumulated, which proves the role of internal motivating factors to the manifestation of children's activity (L. Bozhovich, D. Bogoyavlenskaya, V. Pryanikov, etc.). These studies prove that human behavior is stimulated by a variety of needs and motives, the totality of which characterizes a person, creates his or her motivational sphere.
Motives, according to L. Bozovich, determine the orientation of the individual, the presence or absence of creative activity in it. Therefore, in our opinion, indicators of the motivational component of preschooler’s creative activity is very important in the determination of the level of its formation.

Observations of children’s creative activity during the experiment showed that interest and curiosity were manifested in different ways.

36% of senior preschoolers had a steady, long-term interest in the performance of their work. This group of children is interested in both the process and the product of creative activity.

Some children (12%) showed unstable, situational interest at the beginning of their future activities. But in the process the creativity faded, preschoolers often distracted, then returned to the task again.

Observations show that the majority of older preschoolers have an interest in creative tasks episodically (48%). It turned out that the children of this group show interest only under the influence of any external stimuli (teacher’s remark, the example of a friend), but gradually the interest disappears, and the children finish their work without desire or do not complete it at all.

Curiosity, expressing the need for new experiences, is peculiar to any child (L. Wenger, O. Zaporozhets, N. Leites, etc.). Our observations showed different degrees of its manifestation.

Some older children (36% of the control group, 30% of the experimental group) showed a high degree of curiosity. Children ask a lot of cognitive questions. Preschoolers want to understand the essence of the problem. The group of children who we attributed to the second level of manifestation of this indicator (42% - the control group, 46% - the experimental group) also showed a desire to understand the essence of what is happening, asked questions of cognitive nature.

But a significant part of children (21% of the control group, 24% of the experimental group) showed low and below average levels of curiosity. The children asked not many superficial questions. Not trying to reveal the essence of the phenomenon, the children of this group often remained passive.

Summarizing the first diagnostic unit aimed at studying the manifestation of the motivational component of older preschool children’s creative activity, we came to the following results, which are presented in table 1.

| Table 1 |
|---|
| **Levels of manifestation of criteria indicators of motivational component of creative activity of senior preschoolers (in %)** |

| Indicators | Group                 | Levels |
|------------|-----------------------|--------|
|            |                       | I  | II | III | IV |
| Interest   | Control group         | 40 | 43 | 13  | 4  |
|            | Experimental group    | 40 | 38 | 14  | 8  |

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Based on the obtained data, we can conclude that the motivational sphere of older preschool children’s creative activity is characterized by a steady display of inquisitive, interested attitude to the activity. The majority of children show genuine interest in creative activities, while showing a rather high level of curiosity. Curiosity is peculiar to more children as it expresses a need for new experiences and discoveries. It is revealed that it manifests itself in curiosity, in the desire to know everything that is observed. It is manifested in a large number of questions, the content of which is characterized by a high degree of cognition, the desire to understand the essence of the problem. But, not all children ask questions about the nature of the object or phenomenon. Therefore, in our view, it is advisable to stimulate less active children, to ask them significant questions, to be interested in what is happening.

Significant percentage of older preschoolers have the lack of awareness and uncertainty of creativity needs. This may be due to the insufficient orientation of the pedagogical process on the importance of creativity and its results. After all, satisfaction with the product of their own creative activity leads to the formation of a stable need for the child to repeat the positive experiences of joy from its result. That is why it is so important, in our view, to build further work on the formation of this component of creative activity and to focus children's attention on the opportunities that creativity opens, the variety of ways and materials of productive activity and the importance of its results, encouraging children's initiatives.

Diagnosis of indicators of older preschool children’s creative component of creative activity (speed, flexibility, originality of thinking, breadth of categorization) was made taking into account that they serve as a basis for any kind of creative activity (A. Matyushkin, D. Bogoyavlenskaya, O. Dyachenko, O. Dyachenko N. Mikhailenko, etc.). Creativity, as the ability to creatively solve various problems that arise in a particular situation of activity, typical, in our opinion, for every child, but is realized with the availability of certain special abilities in a particular activity (N. Leites).

The creative component is fundamental in the offered structure of creative activity and implies the ability to generate new ideas, with a deviation from traditional thinking, ability to solve problematic situations quickly.

Diagnosis of indicators of the creative component of creative activity involved the execution of a number of tasks that required creative decisions of verbal and non-verbal nature. Tasks using items of a different quality when asked to dream and find a possible usage of a simple pencil. In another variant, the child had to find a way out of a problematic situation where the item is and cannot be used for its functional purpose (“The pencil is broken. But it is a pity to throw it away”).

The analysis of the results showed that in the majority of preschool children have II and III levels of formation of indicators of the creative component of creative activity (42% and 40% respectively).

Children’s responses, which were referred to Levels II and III are characterized by a lack of wealth and diversity of ideas, associations, arising from this stimulus (speed); uniformity of decisions (flexibility); standard of decisions (originality); poverty of associations, inability to convey the figurative value of the subject (breadth of categorization). Variants of solving the problem were like a template.
A certain number of children (4%) are classified as Level IV indicators of the creative component. These children either refused to answer, remained passive, or offered one, standard variant of solutions to the task.

The most interesting were responses of children who referred to level I (14%). Indicators of children’s creativity of thinking clearly expressed, clearly shows the originality of decisions, the ability to move quickly from one category of thinking to another, from one way to another, the richness and diversity of ideas, associations, the unexpected usage of the subject, preserving its functional value. Children gladly accepted the offered task, actively suggested variants of its solution.

The variants of the task "Finish drawing the figure" are aimed at indicating the level of formation of senior preschoolers’ originality of thinking. The originality of thinking is manifested in the extraordinary, witty decisions, an independent deviation from the patterns. Therefore, geometric shapes and their elements (1st variant of the task) that were offered to children meant template drawings. For example, a rectangle usually involves drawing a car, a train and other means of transport, an aquarium; triangle - targets to draw of the house, caps, etc.

In the second variant, the task was modified based on form and structure of the blank. Children were offered to add a piece of tissue of uncertain shape and different structure to the pasted pattern.

Analyzing children's work, it can be stated that the majority of preschool children tended to be tempted to solve the offered tasks. Children's drawing are the same, similar to each other. There were children who only took round the offered piece of fabric (geometric figure), and some of them even completely refused to complete the task (7%). Only a part of children can be attributed to level I of originality of decisions (14%). The works of the children of this group are characterized by unusualness. They are allocated from the total amount of work with detail, color, and mainly novelty.

Thus, diagnostics of indicators of creative component of senior preschooler’s creative activity, generalizing the results of all methods, allowed to divide children by levels as following.

### Table 2

**Levels of manifestation of criteria indicators of creative component of senior preschoolers’ creative activity of (in%)**

| Indicators | Group          | Levels |   |   |   |
|------------|----------------|--------|---|---|---|
|            |                | I      | II | III| IV|
| Speed      | Control group  | 19     | 17 | 45 | 19|
|            | Experimental   | 20     | 24 | 30 | 26|

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Quantitative analysis allowed us to speak about the greater speed and flexibility of thinking that are manifested in the richness and diversity of ideas, associations arising from the slightest stimulus, and the ability to move from one solution to another, from one category to another. Less developed in preschoolers ability to associative thinking, which gives rise to unexpected, seemingly incompatible with each other’s options for completing tasks.

Originality, as the most important indicator of creativity of older preschool children, is clearly manifested in a small number of children (11% of children in the control group and 18% in the experimental group). Children’s answers of this group are non-trivial, unusual in assessing situations or solving creative tasks. More rarely originality is found in the answers of children, which we attributed to the II level of formation of creativity indices (8% in children of control group and 12% - experimental group). The biggest number of diagnosed preschoolers do not differ in their original thinking. The variants of solving the problems offered by them are of the same type. Therefore, we think that further work on the formation of the creative component of creative activity of older preschool children should be built with emphasis on the uniqueness of each child, elements of novelty in children’s work should be emphasized, thus showing the importance and uniqueness of work, creative decisions. Such approach will allow the child to discover his personality, identity and unlock his creative potential.

Diagnosis of the older preschool children’s volitional component of creative activity involved studying the degree of manifestation of autonomy and initiative in creative activities.

Autonomy, as a quality of personality, contributes to a fuller disclosure of the developing personality of the individual, his creative potential. M. Kruleht defined the independence of the child as the ability to plan, regulate and actively carry out their activities. Creative independence is first of all related to the ability to transfer skills to new conditions and self-control.

Observations showed that only a small proportion of older preschoolers (28%) show elements of creative independence. But in most of them the independence of reproductive
nature, which senior preschoolers show, is that they either periodically seek help from a teacher, peers (36%), or mechanically copy the ways of activity, use already familiar (36%).

Considering initiative as an indicator of the willpower component of the creative activity of older preschool children, we rely on understanding it as a child's independent participation in creative activity, in which she makes the solution of any task and acts as its active leader in life. On the one hand, as V. Maralov points out, initiative is characterized by going beyond the limits of the requirement, and on the other - by accepting a person to take some measures of responsibility in solving a problem. In our case, initiative is manifested in the ability to supplement, change, give new ideas and ways of their implementation.

Observations gave an opportunity to reveal a group of older preschoolers (32%) who show initiative in creative activities, make use of existing experience, persistent in achieving the goal.

Summarizing the third diagnostic unit aimed at studying the formation of volitional component of older preschool children’s creative activity, we came to the following results, which are presented in table 3.

**Table 3**

**Levels of manifestation of criteria indicators of volitional component of senior preschoolers creative activity (in%)**

| Indicator   | Group               | Levels |     |     |     |
|-------------|---------------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|
|             |                     | I      | II  | III | IV  |
| Initiative  | Control group       | 28     | 30  | 36  | 6   |
|             | Experimental group  | 44     | 32  | 16  | 8   |
| Independence| Control group       | 28     | 15  | 45  | 13  |
|             | Experimental group  | 38     | 20  | 26  | 16  |

Based on the obtained results, we can speak about the lack of formation of indicators of the volitional component of creative activity. Thus, in some cases, the qualities which we study are occasional, and sometimes they are not manifested at all. Thus, the independence is insignificant in its manifestations in the majority of preschool children of the control group (45%) and in 26% of the experimental ones; practically no independence is shown in 13% of the preschool children of the control group and 16% of the experimental ones.

In parallel with the frequent use of patterns and patterns of creative activities, it can be noted that the task for formation of independence is often not perceived as comprehensive and systematic. We believe that in the conditions of systematization of creative tasks, their integration with education, more effective development of independence of senior preschoolers is possible.
In the prospect of building technology for the formation of senior preschoolers’ creative activity, we were interested in the results of the manifestation of each of its components (motivational, creative and volitional). Therefore, we considered it necessary to relate the percentages of all components at each level of creative activity (histogram 1).

5. Conclusions and prospects of further research

Diagnostics of indicators of motivational, volitional and creative components of creative activity of senior preschoolers made it possible to establish that the majority of subjects differ in their underdevelopment. We believe that further work on this problem should be built on the basis of individual indicators of the child and with reliance on the most unformed aspects of creative activity. The obtained data indicate that the most unformed components are creative and volitional. Development of speed, flexibility and originality of thinking, as well as stimulation of children’s initiative and independence, in our opinion, will allow us to increase the level of creative activity.

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