

## PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF CREATIVITY IMPORTANCE

DOI: 10.24234/miopap.v10i1.453

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the article is to study the perception of creativity of teachers and experts in the field of education and to present the importance of creativity among the professional psychological qualities of a teacher. To achieve this goal, we conducted a theoretical analysis of creativity and teachers' creativity and did a questionnaire study of experts in the field of education and teachers. Based on the research data we concluded that experts and teachers value creativity more than its components: curiosity, versatility, originality of thinking and ingenuity. This proves that there is no clear understanding of creativity among teachers and experts. They highlight creativity. However, they have no perception of the exact content of it. It turned out also that the importance of creativity and its components as professional qualities for teachers rises along with teachers' work experience.*

**Keywords:** Creativity, perception of creativity, teaching creatively, creativity for teaching, self-efficacy, teacher`s professional qualities.

### INTRODUCTION

In the background of rapid changes taking place in the world, the education system seems set and stable. Changes here, if they even happen, are very slow and do not coincide with the cognitive requirements and personal development of students. Systemic changes require time, which students do not have. Therefore, teacher remains the one who implements current and continuous change. The teacher becomes the initiator of the change of the external environment with his personal qualities. For such a change, it is important for the teacher to have a creative approach, creative thinking and creativity as a personal quality with its components: curiosity, imagination, not avoiding complexity and the ability to take risks.

It should be noted that today Armenian legislation gives an important place to the manifestation of creativity and creative thinking of teachers and students. With the amendments of the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia in 2021, creative thinking was included as an important standard and competence for students in general

education (RA Government Decision No. 439-N). Thus, as one of the final results of primary education, the graduate should be able to demonstrate logical and creative thinking and be able to reflect and respond to his own and others' work. A graduate of the general education program should be able to find creative approaches to solving problems and compare them, recognize different creative genres and styles, creatively express his ideas and emotions through art. A graduate of the secondary program should acquire the ability to critically and comprehensively study and analyse realities, as well as to apply creative and innovative approaches. Critical and creative thinking is emphasized in almost all subjects of the general education program, from the Armenian language to science and arts and crafts.

Moreover, in the RA Law on Public Education, creative thinking and creative results are emphasized at different levels (RA Law on General Education). First of all, the Government undertakes to promote creativity, analytical and critical thinking of students in educational institutions. Then the director of a school undertakes to encourage and promote the creative initiatives of the employees. In their turn, teachers undertake to carry out creative results and research activities on the one hand and to develop independence, initiative and creativity in students on the other hand.

Creativity researchers argue that even if a person is not creative, it is possible to develop creative thinking and the personal qualities necessary for creativity.

**The scientific novelty** of the research lies in the analysis of the concepts of creativity for teaching and teaching creatively, as well as in the results of an experimental study of teachers' and education experts' perceptions of creativity. Despite the interest in creativity, perceptions about its content and meaning are distorted and limited to its relevance more often. The research identifies the perception of creativity and its characteristics among teachers and education experts, as well as how teachers' work experience affects their emphasis on creativity.

**The purpose** of the article is to study the perception of creativity of teachers and experts in the field of education and to present the importance of creativity among the professional psychological qualities of a teacher. To achieve this goal, we conducted a theoretical analysis of creativity and teachers' creativity and did a questionnaire study of the experts in the field of education and teachers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Creativity is the ability to create a result that is novel and at the same time corresponds to the content. Such a result can be, for example, a thought, a solution to a problem, music product, a story or an advertisement. The new result should be original and unexpected. It should be different from what was created before. It should also be adaptive and meet the

different constraints of the situation. The characteristics of creativity also are technical quality of the work and the use of the creative result by society (Lubart, Mushiru, Torjman, & Zenasni, 2009, pp. 10-11).

Boden finds it controversial that the product created as a result of coincidence is creative, as she assumed that creativity is the result of complex, purposeful work (Lubart, Mushiru, Torjman, & Zenasni, 2009, p. 11). Meanwhile, De Bono mentions “chance, accident or by mistake” as the source of creativity (De Bono, 1992, p. 47).

An important aspect of creativity is the creative result. John Bayer defines the creativity as the ability to create a new, original and unexpected, high-quality and relevant, useful and problem-solving product (Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Singer, 2004, p. 226).

S. Poghosyan notes that creativity is a systemic quality, the presence of which enables a person to perceive new things, see alternatives, free the mind from "prison", propose new and unique solutions to problems, take risks, make independent and diverse decisions and formulate the conditions of the environment (Poghosyan, 2022, p. 212).

As for the teacher's creativity, the result can be the creative events organized with the students during the educational process. The result can also be the student with his/her creative thinking and personal qualities. According to Kuzmina, the teacher's creativity manifests when making decisions in unexpected situations, building the educational process according to the peculiarities of children (Puzep, 2017, p. 116).

In the scientific literature, there are two perspectives on creativity in the teachers` activities: creative teaching and teaching for creativity. In the first case, the centre is the creative personal and professional abilities of the teacher, and in the second case, the centre is the development of the student's creativity by the teacher. According to Cremin, teaching creatively “involves teachers in making learning more interesting and effective and using imaginative approaches in the classroom” (Lapeniene & Dumciene, 2014, p. 279). Teaching creatively is primarily related to the teacher's personal characteristics, personal level of creativity, and its manifestations in daily activities. Teaching for creativity “is seen to involve teachers in identifying children’s creative strengths and fostering their creativity” (Lapeniene & Dumciene, 2014, p. 279). By developing motivating materials and approaches to teaching and by using creative teaching, the teacher is able to manage the learning process and the development of innovative thinking. Teaching for creativity, on the other hand, focuses on encouraging learners to believe in their own creativity at the level of identity and ability (Daniels, Gregerson, Kaufman, & Snyder, 2013, p. 16).

These two perspectives are closely related (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). Because teaching for creativity is possible only if the teacher has the desire to teach in a creative way, to promote

creativity. After all, the teacher is a model for the students, whose example the students follow (Craft, 2005). The teacher's personal creativity is the main prerequisite for creative teaching. And in all those cases when the teacher's personal creativity is at a low level, there is a need to take steps to develop it. Therefore, taking into account our research goals, we will focus especially on creative teaching, where the teacher and his creativity are at the centre of the study.

The studies of Jeffrey and Craft show that teaching creatively includes these components:

- “using imaginative approaches;
- making learning more interesting;
- being effective” (Craft, 2005, p. 42).

Referring to the efficiency component, Rindak defines creativity in the teacher's activity as the most important and necessary characteristic and factor for the teacher's professional development and effectiveness. According to him, it is the teacher's ability to realize and overcome obstacles to professional development, to find constructive ways out of professional crises, thus achieve higher levels of professionalism (Ryndak, 2014, p. 4).

Ozkal notes that there is a positive relationships between teachers' creativity fostering behaviours and their self-efficacy beliefs (Cayirdag, 2017, p. 1962). The results of another study showed that there are positive relationships between teachers' self-efficacy on the one hand and their behaviour patterns, psychological well-being, including personal achievement, job satisfaction and commitment on the other hand (Daniels, Gregerson, Kaufman, & Snyder 2013).

According to Bandura, self-efficacy is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce outcomes (Bandura, 1997, p. 193). Teacher efficacy has been defined as "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance" or as "teachers' belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998, p. 202). According to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, teachers with high self-efficacy are more open to new ideas and teaching methods, demonstrate high-level planning and organizing skills, are more constructive in dealing with students' mistakes, and are more persistent in dealing with complications (Lazarides, & Warner, 2020).

Caprara defines the self-efficacy of the teacher as a “teacher’s belief in his/her ability to successfully cope with tasks, obligations and challenges related to his/her professional role”. Costa and McCrae mention that teachers with higher levels of openness to experience and conscientiousness have a stronger sense of efficacy (Barni, Danioni & Benevene, 2019, p. 2).

It is interesting to note that the most of the personal qualities connected to the teacher's self-efficacy coincide with the main personal qualities of creativity. They are particularly the openness for new experience, constructive approach to the students' mistakes, not being discouraged by difficulties and the persistence to overcome them.

These qualities are emphasized by the authors of the multivariate approach to creativity, represented by T. Lubart. According to this approach, the personal characteristics that contribute to creativity are:

- Perseverance. There are many obstacles in creative work, which are connected to problems and environmental conditions. It is possible to have a creative result when one can overcome those obstacles persistently.

- Willingness to take risks. The creative idea is far from the stereotypes. In case of success, it can bring public recognition or financial reward. However, there is always a risk of failure and loss.

- Willingness to tolerate ambiguity. Creative people are comfortable with uncertain ideas, stimuli, and situations and even yearn for them. Meanwhile, people who are not capable of this react to uncertainty with stress, act in a hurry and abruptly.

- Openness to new experiences. Creative people are open to the unknown and new things. They are interested in the inside and the outside world. Appearing in a new situation, they do not panic.

- Individuality, opposition to conformism.

- Psychoticism, is prone to create far and not ordinary associations (Lubart, Mushiru, Torjman, & Zenasni, 2009).

As a result of the study of creative teachers Horng mentions those personal characteristics, which influence on the teaching creatively: self-confidence, persistence, desire to learn, humour, openness to the experience, imagination, emotional sensitivity, energy and aspirations, questioning norms, being non-conformist, attracted to complexity, aesthetic orientation, flexible thinking and risk taking (Ayob, Hussain, & Majid, 2013).

Of course, teacher's creativity depends not only just on the teacher's profile, but also on the teaching environment, on the profiles of classroom, school and director, which are the external conditions of creativity. Rogers, the representative of humanistic approach, mentions those internal and external conditions, which are necessary for the creative work.

Internal conditions are:

- Openness for the experience. A creative environment should motivate, break down barriers and traditional limitations.

- Internal locus of evaluation. A creative environment allows a person to evaluate their

own new ideas or products without outside criticism.

- The ability to make unusual combinations. Ability to play with elements and concepts.

There are no strict rules, which helps to explore the problem in a playful way.

External conditions are:

- Psychological security and protection, absence of external evaluation, recognition of human value,

- Psychological freedom of self-expression (Il'in, 2009, p. 17).

Thus, the creative environment has an important influence on the formation and expression of creativity. A person shows his creativity in an environment that is open and accepts his/her thoughts, does not criticize and is not guided by stereotypes. The environment that values people and their ideas is safe for expression and creativity.

At the same time, it should be remembered that creativity contains an adaptive component, which means that the creative result must "correspond to the various limitations of the given situation" (Lubart, Mushiru, Torjman, & Zenasni, 2009, p. 11).

Taking into account the importance of creativity in the efficacy of a teacher, there are discussions on the question of which is preferable: to develop the creativity of teachers or to highlight their creativity level in the selection process.

Renzulli and De Wet state that the selection of teachers may be more important than their training because some characteristics such as openness to new experiences, flexibility, non-authoritarian personality, optimism and enthusiasm are "starting material" and difficult to develop by training. As we can notice, these are more personal qualities than external factors (Cayirdag, 2017, p. 1969-1970).

T. Borodina and colleagues also emphasize the inclusion of the formation of creative thinking during professional training as a prerequisite for the formation of a teacher's creative thinking. Their research among future teachers showed that students generally have an average level of creativity. Only 33 percent of students had a high level of creativity. It is also important to note here that along with professional training, the level of creativity decreases. It was 70 percent in the first year of professional training, and 30-33 percent in the last two years. They came to the conclusion that the teacher training program at the university has a negative effect on the teacher's creativity. The reasons, according to the researchers, are repetitive and standardized tasks that require routine solutions, and the stereotypical nature of the learning process (Borodina, Sibgatullina & Gizatullina, 2019).

Considering this fact, we can conclude that as long as university programs do not develop the creativity of future teachers, it is important to emphasize the development of creativity of teachers by trainings.

To develop the creativity of students and teachers, Davis emphasizes on forming a creative attitude, Sternberg highlights the formation of a creativity habit, and Maslow and Suchodolski state the importance of a creative way of life in general. A strong positive attitude towards creativity or a creative attitude can be expressed as a set of knowledge and beliefs about creativity, about the positive impact of creativity and about positive behavioural responses to creativity (Daniels, Gregerson, Kaufman, & Snyder, 2013, p. 16). This means that if a teacher or student has a negative opinion about creativity, he/she thinks that creativity is not for everyone. It can affect his behaviour towards creativity, and he/she will avoid creative activities.

Szmidt suggests creative techniques for teaching, which belong to three general categories:

- inquisitive thinking (generating questions, active and close observation, speculations);
- combinatorial thinking (associations, analogies, metaphors);
- transformative thinking (product/idea improvement, transforming one object into another) (Daniels, Gregerson, Kaufman, & Snyder, 2013, p. 27).

Based on the above, a necessary prerequisite for the manifestation of teachers' creativity is the awareness of the need to know and apply creative techniques and ideas for teaching and to have a positive attitude towards creativity.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

We consider it important to understand how education experts and teachers perceive creativity, which characteristics they value most in their activities. For this purpose, we conducted research involving education experts and teachers. We chose school principals, vice principals, candidates of pedagogical sciences as experts (n=10). A questionnaire was prepared, where the psychological qualities necessary for the teacher's activity were presented. According to the questionnaire's instructions, it was necessary to evaluate the mentioned qualities according to their importance with a 1-to-10-point system, where 1 point is the least important quality and 10 points is the most important one. The following qualities were included: responsibility, emotional stability, patience, curiosity, the desire for self-awareness and self-development, originality of thinking, well-rounded, ingenuity, creativity, purposefulness, thinking flexibility, impartiality, ability to empathise, tact. The list of qualities was compiled considering the set of a teacher's professional psychological characteristics (Romanova, 2003, p. 384), as well as the qualities necessary for a creative teacher. The list of creative qualities includes curiosity, originality and flexibility of thinking, versatility, ingenuity and creativity.

## RESULTS

According to the experts, the primary qualities for teachers are: responsibility, emotional stability, patience, impartiality, and tact. These qualities were evaluated with 10 points.

Purposefulness (9,3), as well as curiosity (8,7), originality, versatility, and ingenuity (9) were evaluated as the least important. Among other qualities of creativity, the flexibility of thinking was evaluated 9,3. In general, creativity as a necessary psychological quality for a teacher is evaluated by experts as 9,4. It turns out that the qualities necessary for creative thinking were evaluated lower than creativity. Thus, we can conclude that the perception of creativity does not correspond to its real content. The same problem exists among teachers (see Table 1). 50 teachers participated in the research, of which the research data of 41 teachers are valid.

**Table 1**

Creativity and its characteristics	Average mark (n=41)
Curiosity	8.8
Versatility	8.8
Originality of thinking	8.9
Ingenuity	8.9
Creativity	9.1
Flexibility of thinking	9.2

As we can see in Table 1, teachers value creativity more than its components: curiosity, versatility, originality of thinking and ingenuity. This proves that there is no clear understanding of creativity among teachers. If so, we can assume that teachers do not purposefully use creative methods during teaching, that is, theoretical approaches to teaching creatively are also not purposefully applied in practice. Here, a factor hindering the manifestation of creativity can be simply not being familiar with the content of creativity. Referring to the most important qualities necessary for teacher's activities, the teachers mentioned responsibility (9.7), impartiality (9.4), the desire for self-awareness and self-development (9.3).

The study and analyses of the research data yielded another interesting result. The importance of creativity and its components appear to be rising alongside teachers' work experience. Thus, teachers with 30 and more years of working experience evaluated creativity and its components as necessary and highly rated qualities. Teachers with 10-20 years of work experience evaluated them the lowest (see Figure 1).

Average rating of creativity and its components by teachers according to work experience

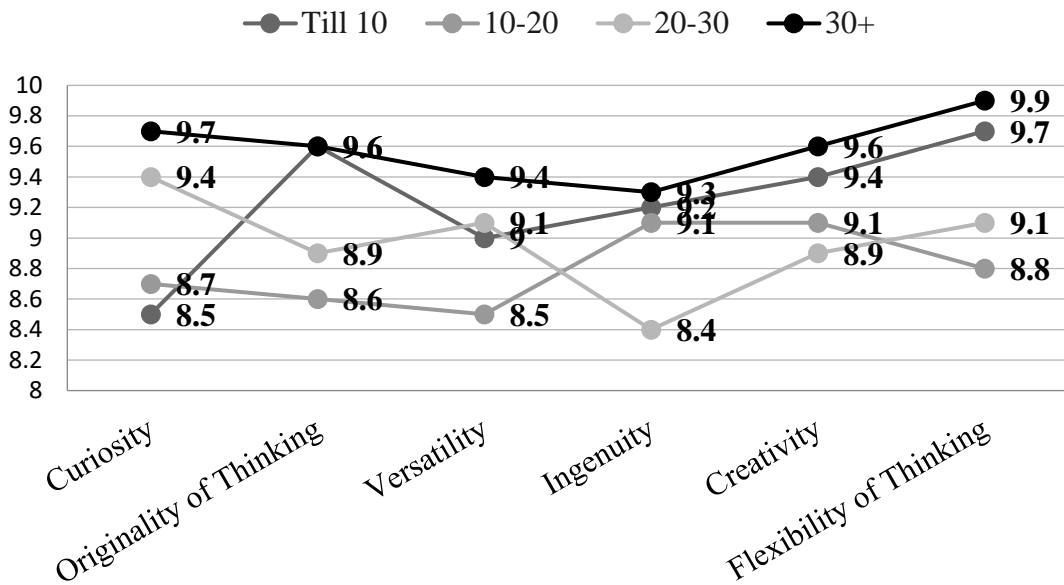


Figure 1

## CONCLUSION

Summarizing the theoretical approaches to creativity and the research on teachers' perceptions of creativity, we can come to the conclusion that although creativity is an important general educational standard in the legislative level, its application in practice faces a number of obstacles.

Firstly, the change inside the system seems slow. Secondly, creativity is not perceived in its true content among teachers and experts in the field of education. According to the results of experimental data analyses, teachers and education experts value creativity in teachers, but not as the individual characteristics of creativity, which practically makes it difficult to apply creative teaching. After all, in the case of teaching creatively, the creative personal qualities of teachers and the creative approach in their professional work are the most important aspects. This is the most important factor that enables to realise the next aspect of teaching – teaching *for* creativity. In this case, the focus is the teacher's mission to develop students' creativity.

According to Davies, Sternberg and Maslow, in order to develop the creativity of teachers, they need to develop a creative attitude, habit and lifestyle, because it is the teacher who becomes an example for the manifestation and development of the student's creativity by her/his creative activity and positive attitude towards creativity. A creative, imagination-based

approach that ensures students' involvement not only contributes to the development of students' creativity, but also to the increase of teachers' self-efficacy.

All this gives us the basis to continue our research in the direction of the study of teachers' creativity in order to understand what can promote or hinder the manifestation of teachers' creativity, to ensure the awareness of teachers about the real content of creativity and to train them by introducing creative teaching methods.

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**The article submitted and sent to review: 18/11/2022**

**Accepted for publication: 10/03/2023**

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