

The pedagogical and psychological value of artistic practices in post-secondary education classrooms

El recurso pedagógico-psicológico de las prácticas artísticas en la escuela superior

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Abstract

The article, which focuses on creative classroom activities as effective teaching tools for Master's degree students, argues that creative classroom activities enhance the quality of teaching in higher education. The article draws on theories on scholars like Hans Jurgen Eysenck, N.A. Holovan, T.M. Zelinska, S.V. Voronova, A. E. Khurchak, Kate Frank, and V. M. Kozlenko. It shows that the development of students' imagination increases their originality and flexibility. It also demonstrates that students' ease of association enhances their self-discovery and self-growth. It therefore suggests that artistic practices in higher-education classroom can help students achieve their professional aims.

key words: creative activities, metaphoric associational images, postsecondary education students

Resumen

El artículo está dedicado al problema del uso de las prácticas artísticas en el proceso de la enseñanza/aprendizaje en las instituciones de la enseñanza superior pedagógica. El efecto de usar las prácticas artísticas ha sido investigado teórica y empíricamente durante la docencia en el magisterio. Como resultado de la aplicación de diferentes metodologías tales como la metodología de la "Simpleza de la asociación" de G. Ayzenko(modificada por N.A.Golován), investigación de la imaginación creativa (T.M.Zelinska, S.V.Vóronova, A.E-Jurchák), metodología de la complimentación de de Ket Frenk(modificada por por V.M.Kozlenko) se ha resumido que se desarrolla positivamente la imaginación creativa, el nivel de la expresión de las capacidades únicas, de la flexibilidad va en aumento, así como el proceso del autoestudio, se ensanchan vías para el autoperfeccionamiento y se buscan los caminos para alcanzar los objetivos planteados por los futuros especialistas.

Palabras clave: prácticas artísticas, las imágenes asociativas metafóricas, aspirante al grado superior de la educación

1. Introduction

Nowadays, creative activities are in great demand for practical psychologists, art therapists, psychotherapists, coaches, and social workers. Meanwhile, higher education teachers seem to use creative activities less

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frequently. Postsecondary teachers might rely more heavily on creative-building classroom activities, however, if scholars further researched the developmental potential of these activities for post-secondary students. This article argues that the psychological and pedagogical potential of creative classroom activities is important for higher educational institutions. Applying creative classroom activities in institutions of higher education increases the development of student imagination, individuality, flexibility, ease of association, self-awareness, and achievement of professional aims.

1.1. Literature Review

Many scholars have discussed the use of creative-building activities by specialists on service professions. In fact, creative activities fit in with many theorists and practitioners' methods. The main goals of creative-building activities are usually to unify one's outlook on life, to enhance individuality, to move from social autonomy to close relationships, to formulate basic life-goals, to work on life perspectives, to resolve inner life crises, and to use empathy and intuition to deepen levels of symbolic communication (Tararina, 2019).

The merit of art therapy is that it allows participants to investigate new modes of behavior without experiencing the effects these new behaviors might cause in real life. This allows participants to indirectly address some urgent problems without incurring consequences that could potentially be harmful. Members of corrective psychotherapy groups which employ art therapy techniques, for example, experience different individual changes. They explore emotions in socially acceptable forms, they develop empathy and positive feelings of inner control and order, they become more attentive to other people's feelings, and they increase their own self-esteem (Terletska, 2016).

Psychologists who use game therapy, educators who use fairy therapy, teachers who use isotherapy, and music teachers who use music therapy can draw on different methods to foster personality development, self-expression, and self-improvement (Maksymenko, 2018).

One main trend in artistic practice deals with metaphoric cognition. Metaphoric cognition does not depend directly on logic, control, or the accuracy of participants' perception. Understanding the world metaphorically means getting the situation around on the level of intuition. Human experience lends a symbolic dimension to signs and signifiers, and multiple shared meanings give one another extra contextual shades of meaning (Solodukhov, 2017). The Dictionary of Symbols in Ukrainian Culture states that symbols provide powerful psychological bases for national cultures. A symbol is a mark of a certain object, notion, phenomenon, process, or literary image which express other thoughts, ideas or feelings (Kotsura, Potapenko, Dmytrenko, Kuibida, 2005).

Metaphoric cards of association (MCA) are popular because images help respondents answer their subconscious questions using metaphors and other aspects of personal creativity. MCAs are used for goal-setting, establishing motivation, and responding to limiting beliefs and threats (Beschastna, Kurhanska, Shcherbiuk, 2018). MCAs are good for group and individual work on family problems and inner conflict solutions, as well as for work with psychological trauma victims. In addition, MCAs enhance user's self-confidence, outlook, imagination, creativity, unity of body, soul and mind, coping mechanisms in critical situations and understanding of the personal values and lifestyles. In basic terms, MCAs give psychologists the chance to work simultaneously with client's emotions, minds, and bodies. Work with MCAs creates a safe space to discuss thoughts without the fear of value judgements (Miloradova, Popova, 2014).

Metaphoric cards provide one potential key for unlocking otherwise buried or hidden human stories. Using MCAs, participants can unpack the contents of their "locked" mental "rooms" thereby increase their feelings of fulfillment and contentment. Which card a person chooses and how the person presents that card tells practitioners about them as a person. From the client's human story, it becomes clearer

where the person's personal source of power is what their value system looks like, and what their threats and beliefs are. We can observe, for instance, how a person perceives themselves as a victim, a hero, an observer, or a spectator. We can imagine the obstacles the person faces and overcomes. Metaphoric cards are often called cards of association, as they evoke associations. Through MCAs, people relive their own old stories again and analyze old problems. The cards are also called project, because the person sees in the card what they want to see and what directly appeals to them. And Blinov (2016) calls the cards "therapeutic". The psychological tool of MCAs, created by a team of artists and psychotherapists, and has spread all over the world. Nowadays, art therapists consider MCAs one of their most successful tools. In fact, the first pack of MCAs has been translated in twenty-two languages (Morozovska, 2013).

Junge (1994) argues that the unique nexus of power in both art and psychology can assist in human personality development. Maksymenko (2006) considers personality a social phenomenon that develops during a person's self-integration into society, phenomenon which updates the person's biological and social potentials well as their creative perception of the world. Of course, there are many ways for a human to live and love in society. At all stages of human development, a person's personality has a lot of growth potential, but it is an individual's own responsibility to take advantage of opportunities for growth. Waller (1991) draws on art as effective psychotherapeutic tools on physical and psychological health. Champernowne (1947) examines the effectiveness of art therapy tools depends on a personal set of specialist characteristics.

Art therapy is an important tool for working with adults and children because it is based on creativity. According to Psychology Dictionary, creativity is an activity that produces new material and spiritual values. This dictionary further argues that creativity is a cultural and historical phenomenon containing some aspects of psychology, such as personal and procedural. Koporulina, Smirnova, Hordieieva, Balabanov (2003) argue that creativity means motivated person has the ability to produce something uniquely innovative, individual, and original. Imagination, intuition, subconscious mental activity, the need for self-realization, and the desire to reveal one's personal potential all appear to be qualities that play a big role in creativity.

Not all types of creativity are the same, and many scholars have created taxonomies to classify different types of creativity. Moliako (2004) taxonomy of creativity, for example, lists scientific, technical, literary, musical, educational, art, managerial, situational, and communicative kinds of creativity. Yalanska's book *The Psychology of Creativity* (2014, 2018) which was recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (order 1/11 -7542 20.05.2014), likewise discusses many types of creativity. Further, many other Ukrainian authors also discuss creativity-building exercises as good psychological tools for motivating first-year university students (for instance, Atamanchuk, Yalanska, Onipko, Ishchenko, 2019). The National Curriculum of Ukraine, when discussing the creative competency development of future teachers, explores psychological and pedagogical tools for personal creativity development in the educational process (Yalanska, Moskalenko, Marchenko, 2017).

The textbook *Leadership. Tolerance. Volunteering* (2016), part of an international education project by the American government-funded organization Peace Corps examines the challenges of tolerance education among primary, secondary, and postsecondary-level students. It discusses how to use creativity-building activities in the educational process (Kapustian, Yalanska, Nikolashina et.al, 2016).

1.2. The aim of the article

The article deals with the pedagogical and psychological value of creativity-building classroom activities at institutions of higher education. It also concerns the value of creative classroom activities for the personal growth of postsecondary students.

1.3. The tasks of the article:

1. To conduct logical and psychological analyses of creativity-building practices in the educational process.
2. To study empirically the efficiency of creativity-building activities for postsecondary education teachers.
3. To discuss the psychological and pedagogical benefits of creativity-building classroom activities in higher education.

2. Methodology

In order to conduct logical and psychological analyses of creativity-building activities in the educational process, this empirical article relies on the methods of theoretical analysis, statistical analysis, synthesis, induction, comparison, abstraction, and systematization. It draws on the methodology of Hans Jurgen Eysenck as modified by N.A. Holovan's work on ease of association, which explores the ease and speed of association as people's thoughts move from one idea to another. The article then examines the creative imagination via methods developed by T.M. Zelinska, S.V. Voronova, and A. E. Khurchak, who measure respondents' level of creativity while completing various tasks. Also, it uses the methodology of Kate Frank as modified by V. M. Kozlenko, which measures the originality and flexibility of mental activity.

The empirical methodology of this article used mathematical calculation. The arithmetic mean is the fraction of the sum of all meanings of characteristic by the number of measurements. It corresponds with \bar{x} . The calculation formula is: $\bar{x} = (x_1 + x_2 + x_3 + \dots + x_n) / n = (1/n) * \sum x_i$ where x_1, \dots, x_n is the meaning of characteristic. Here n – the number of respondents. One hundred forty-seven first-year students of Poltava Korolenko National Pedagogical University took part in the experiment where 73 students belong to the control group, 74 students belong to the experimental group.

3. Results

Within the course "The Psychology of Higher Education", the experimenters conducted the following creativity-building activities with the 147 experiment participants:

1. «Bridge: «I am a Master Student» – «I am a qualified professional» (individual study). This activity used helped to develop the student's creative imagination and flexibility. Master's students in this activity discussed the instruction. "Imagine a bridge over a river. Now you are a Master student and you are on one bank of the river. When you cross the bridge to the other river-bank, you will become a true professional. What actions do you need to perform while crossing the bridge to become a professional in your field ?
2. «Narrative product». This activity aimed to develop students' individuality and ease of association. It asked students to create an artistic product such as a poem, a story, or a song on subject that can be seen in the class room. The content of the work had to focus on future course material. Students had to present their work to the class when they are finished.
3. «Thematic image». The aim of this activity was to enhance students' ease of association, flexibility, and creative imagination. It asked students to create an image on a theme, such as the image of an eco-hero who fought to balance humanity with nature. Students were asked to create their images with readily available classroom materials such as paper, books, pens, and pencils. When they presented their work to the class, they needed to express the hero's main aims and methods, explain how the hero achieved their goals, and identify the hero's main challenges and how to overcome them. Students did this activity as a group project.

4. «Metaphoric association activities such as “Seeds” and exercises “Power” and “Cause” (individual and group work) (Tararina, 2019).

Experimenters designed this activity to improve participants’ association development, creative imagination, individuality, and flexibility.

The exercises allow cognitive development of the postsecondary students and enhance the learner’s interest in the subject. In this activity, Master’s students think over their basic life goals and possibilities for personal growth by means of self-reflection and introspection. They then look for possible ways to achieve their goals.

In the 2018-2019 course “The Psychology of Higher Education” 147 first year full-time and part-time Master’s students at Poltava Korolenko National Pedagogical University, took part in the experiment. The control group (CG) consisted of 73 people, and the experimental group (EG) consisted of 74 people. At the beginning and at the end of the course experimenters conducted two methodological evaluations, leading to the following results and conclusions.

Table 1 presents results on ease of association, based on methods developed by Hans Jurgen Eysenck and N.A. Holovan.

Table 1
Results on Ease of Association, based on methods developed by Hans Jurgen Eysenck and N.A. Holovan

Level of easiness in association (m-4)	Highest		High		Medium		Low	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
CE 1 Numbers of respondents % (x)	7	8	35,5	36,6	47,5	45,9	10	9,5
CE 2 Numbers of respondents % (x)	8,2	9,9	36	41,5	47,4	47,3	8,4	1,3

From table 1 it is clear that at the beginning of the experiment (CE 1) in the control and experimental groups the difference in ease of association was not significant. The highest level in CG was 7% respondents, in EG was 8%, a difference just 1%. The low level in CG was 10% respondents, EG was 9.5%, a difference was 0.5% less than in the control group. At the end of the experiment (CE2) 8,2% respondents in CG and 9.9% respondents in EG had high level. The difference was therefore 1,7% where the EG showed better results. It is worth mentioning that highest level in experimental group after the implementation of the creativity-building activities increased this gap to 5,5% over the control group. The lowest level showed 8,4% in control group and 1,3% in experimental group, meaning 7,1 % less than in the control group.

Table 2 presents results based on the methodology of studying creative imagination by T.M. Zelinska, S.V. Voronova, and A. E. Khurchak.

Table 2
Results based on the methodology of studying creative imagination by
T.M. Zelinska, S.V. Voronova, A. E. Khurchak

Level of creativity display (m-3)	High		Medium		Low	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
CE 1 Numbers of respondents % (x)	15	15,6	56,1	55,9	28,9	28,5
CE 2 Numbers of respondents % (x)	17,1	32,5	56,5	61,4	26,4	6,1

From table 2 it is obvious that at the beginning of the experiment (CE-1) there was only a slight difference in the display of creativity. Fifteen percent of respondents demonstrated a high level, and 15,6 % of respondents showed a high level in the experimental group, so the difference was only 0,6%. In the control group, 28,9%, of respondents achieved a low level, whereas 28,5% of respondents in the experimental group achieved a low level, or 0,4% less than in the control group. At the end of the experiment, CE2 17,1% of respondents in the control group and 32,5 % of respondents in the experimental group achieved a high level. In other words, the experimental group achieved 15,4 % more than in the control group. 26,4% of respondents in the control group and 6,1% of respondents in the experimental group demonstrated a low level, a difference of 20,3%.

Thus, it is clear that artistic practices in higher education are an efficient means of developing students' creative imagination.

Table 3 presents the results of an experiment on using methodology developed by Kate Frank and modified by V.M. Kozlenko.

The data from table 3 reveals that at the beginning of the experiment (CE1) in there was no major difference between the control and experimental groups in terms of flexibility display. Five percent of respondents in the control group and 6,5% of respondents in the experimental group showed the highest level of flexibility, a difference of 1,5%. The low level comprised 14,5% of the control group and 15,5% of the experimental group, a difference of 1%. At the end of the experiment, according to the results CE2, the highest level comprised 5,9 % of the control group and 8% of the experimental group, a difference of 2,1%. This means the experimental group attained a lower result than the control group and 8% of the experimental group, a difference of 4,9 % – a lower level in the experimental group than in the control group.

Table 3
Results of an experiment using methodology developed
by Kate Frank and modified by V. M. Kozlenko

Level of flexibility display (m-4)	Highest		High		Medium		Low	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
	flexibility							
CE 1 Numbers of respondents % (x)	5	6,5	29	28,6	51,5	48,9	14,5	15,5
CE 2 Numbers of respondents % (x)	5,9	8	29,1	29	52,1	55	12,9	8
Level of individuality displayed (m-4)	individuality							
CG 1 Numbers of respondents % (x)	2,3	2,7	23	24,5	58,1	57	16,6	15,8
CG 2 Numbers of respondents% (x)	1,4	4,2	24	26,3	59,4	64,5	15,2	5

The results of the experiment on individuality development among Master’s students showed that at the beginning of the experiment, the highest level comprised 2,3% of respondents in the control group and 2,7 % of respondents in the experimental group, a difference of 0,4%. The low level comprised 16,6% of the control group and 15,8% of the experimental group, a difference of 0,8%, less in the experimental group than in the control group. At the end of the experiment, the results of CE2 showed that the high level was 1,4% of respondents in the control group and 4,2 % respondents in the experimental group. The difference was 2,8%, that is 2,8% more in the experimental group and 10,2% less in the control group.

Therefore, after implementing the artistic activities, the experimental group showed more qualitative changes in the display of individuality than flexibility.

In sum, these experiments demonstrate that artistic practice is psychologically and pedagogically efficient tools for increasing the creativity of postsecondary students. These experiments have drawn on several methodologies, especially methodologies on association by Hans Jurgen Eysenck and N. A. Golovan, methodologies on imagination by T.M. Zelinska, S.V. Voronova, A. E. Khurchak, methodologies on flexibility and individuality by Kate Frank and V. M. Kozlenko.

Based on the experiments and suggestions of other scholars, it is clear that artistic practices can form an important part of a successful educational process. Donchenko (2016), for example, has shown that art therapy programs of postsecondary institutions have improved the professional creativity of postsecondary future students of primary-level education. According to Doncheko, students’ desire for creative self-realization and

self-improvement within their work increases due to artistic practices, as does students' ability to recognize and solve teaching problems in innovative ways, in other words, to analyze and regulate themselves through their creative professional practices. Bibikova (2014) argues, likewise, that art therapy is a technology that aids in social adaptation for people with special needs. In Bibikova's view artistic practices play an important role in the development of imagination, intuition, subconscious thought and self-realization. Because of the developmental potential, art therapy aids psychologists and other practitioners in diagnosing patients and conducting therapy. Art therapy and art pedagogy can be used in psychological consultations educators too, for instance, when educators correct student errors, facilitate student rehabilitation, and promote student development. These tools can improve students' mental health and their successful psychological and social adaptation according to Kopytin (2017). Among these innovative technologies are not only traditional creative activities like writing and drawing, but also, games, web design, and multimedia technologies (Savcenko, Marchenko, Pylnyk, 2018).

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, this article's logical, pedagogical, and psychological analyses have proven artistic practices to be an important and efficient part of the post-secondary educational process. Empirically, this article shows the developmental potential of artistic practices for postsecondary students. Using the results of several quantitative experiments, it explains how creative-building classroom activities increase postsecondary students' use of imagination, their display of individuality, their flexibility, their ease of association, and their self-cognition. Creative activities also present increased opportunities for self-realization and goal achievement of aims by future specialists.

Further study is needed, however, to explore the value of artistic practices for teachers working with different age groups, as well as the value of art-therapy in large-scale curriculum development and educational design.

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