2. Creativity

Definition of the skill

Creativity is the capacity to reinterpret, combine, or expand upon existing conventions to generate ideas or approaches that are both novel and valuable. It involves combining existing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives in innovative ways to solve problems, create art, design products, or develop solutions. Creativity is often the result of collaboration, feedback, and iteration.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Developing creativity is essential for the future because it equips individuals and societies to thrive in an increasingly complex, fast-changing world. Here are some key reasons why it is important:

1) Creativity enables individuals to approach challenges from different angles, fostering innovative solutions to complex problems in various fields. A creative mindset helps people adjust to new situations, technologies, and changing environments by thinking flexibly and embracing new ideas; it fuels innovation and helps push society forward.

2) Creativity allows individuals to express themselves uniquely through art, writing, music, and other forms of personal and cultural expression, contributing to emotional well-being. Creativity enriches our lives by making experiences more enjoyable and fulfilling.

3) As knowledge and skills rapidly become obsolete, creativity supports a mindset of lifelong learning and curiosity, ensuring individuals stay relevant and adaptable in their personal and professional lives. In the future, many routine tasks may be automated, making creativity a key differentiator for human workers. Jobs that require creative problem-solving, critical thinking, and innovation will most probably be in high demand.

4) As technology evolves rapidly, creativity will be crucial for navigating emerging challenges and opportunities. Future societies will need to be resilient in the face of uncertainty, whether due to economic shifts, pandemics, or environmental disasters. Creative thinking promotes flexibility and the ability to quickly adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

5) Creative thinking often leads to better collaboration, as it encourages sharing diverse ideas and perspectives, fostering teamwork and innovation. Engaging in creative processes also nurtures the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in novel ways, improving critical thinking skills.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Creativity at this stage often manifests as a mix of imaginative thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to generate original ideas. There are notable differences in how creativity manifests in children aged 6–8 compared to those aged 8–10 which are primarily due to developmental milestones in cognitive, emotional, and social growth.

Children aged 6–8:

- tend to blur the line between reality and fantasy, their creative works are often whimsical, with little concern for realism;
- approach problems with curiosity but may lack systematic thinking, often leading to unexpected and inventive solutions;
- creativity is often expressed through play, such as make-believe scenarios, puppet shows, or role-playing;
- collaborative creativity is limited as they are still learning to work with others and share ideas.

Children aged 8–10:

- consider others' viewpoints, leading to more collaborative and socially aware creative projects;
- engage in structured problem-solving and are better at explaining the reasoning behind their creative decisions;
- their art and stories become more detailed, with attempts to mimic real-world objects, events, or emotions;
- enjoy group projects, value peer feedback, and can adapt their ideas to fit group goals.

Observation parameters for establishing class level:

The development of creativity can be understood as progressing through different levels or stages, where individuals move from basic creative thinking to more advanced, refined, and innovative forms of creativity. While there are various models to describe the stages of creativity development, a common framework can include the following levels:

Level 1: At this level, creativity is often about mimicking or replicating existing ideas, forms, or patterns. Students may rely on known methods or examples, making small adjustments, for example painting a picture by closely following a teacher's example or writing a story that is similar to a well-known plotline. This is an important foundational stage where learners practice basic skills and gain exposure to creative processes. This level essentially involves learning through copying, which is crucial for mastering the foundational skills needed to create something original later.

Level 2: At this stage, students begin to experiment and explore different ideas or approaches, combining elements from various sources, testing boundaries and becoming more flexible in their thinking, for example, writing a story inspired by a book they've read but adding their own twists to the plot and characters. This stage is marked by an individual's ability to take something learned and make it their own, adding new elements or altering existing ones.

Level 3: At the highest level, creativity reaches mastery, where individuals are capable of producing highly original, innovative, and sophisticated work. They can generate complex, refined ideas and create new frameworks or fields of knowledge, for example, solving an environmental issue by applying conventional or unconventional methods, such as using a novel material for water purification. Transformational creativity involves creating groundbreaking or disruptive innovations that challenge established norms or perspectives.

Interconnections with other skills

- Critical thinking: critical thinking involves analyzing and evaluating ideas, while creativity generates novel solutions. Together, they enable individuals to refine their ideas and assess the feasibility of innovative solutions.
- Problem solving: creativity fuels problem-solving by enabling individuals to think from different perspectives, explore novel approaches and generate multiple solutions.
- Emotional intelligence: emotional intelligence (EI) complements creativity by helping individuals manage emotions, empathize with others, and draw inspiration from personal and social experiences. It also fosters the resilience needed to persist through creative challenges.
- Collaboration and cooperation: creativity thrives in collaborative environments, as diverse perspectives spark new ideas and solutions to achieve shared goals.
- Adaptability: adaptability involves being open to change and adjusting to new circumstances, which is essential for creativity. Creative thinkers must adapt their approaches when original ideas don't work or when unexpected challenges arise.
- Curiosity: curiosity drives creativity by encouraging exploration, questioning, and the pursuit of new knowledge. It provides the motivation to seek inspiration and experiment with unfamiliar ideas.
- Resilience: creativity often involves trial and error, which can lead to frustration or failure. Resilience helps individuals persist through setbacks, refine their ideas, and continue the creative process despite challenges.

Didactical tips for teachers

- Encourage open-ended activities such as drawing, storytelling, or building with blocks that have no single correct answer.
- Create a safe place for expression where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas without fear of judgment.
- Integrate play-based learning, e.g. role-playing, dramatization, or imaginative play.

- Incorporate divergent thinking exercises by using questions/problems that encourage multiple answers or solutions.
- Let students choose topics, activities, or ways to present their work.
- Integrate arts across the curriculum, blend creative arts like music, visual arts drawing, or drama with subjects like maths or science.
- Foster curiosity by encouraging students to ask questions and seek their own answers.
- Use outdoor activities and age-appropriate resources to inspire creative thinking.
- Teach students to view mistakes as learning opportunities which can lead to better ideas.
- Celebrate creativity by displaying students' creative works around the classroom and acknowledging their efforts publicly.