STORYTELLING AS A METHOD FOR DEVELOPING AND MEASURING CHILDREN’S CREATIVITY

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1. Introduction
Storytelling is much more than sharing information and knowledge between individuals. Through this method we can communicate feelings, establish an emotional connection, share norms and values and develop a sense of trust and commitment. It is also an enjoyable activity that has been conducted throughout human cultural history.

2. Using stories
Storytelling can be used for education and personal development in several ways. It can facilitate the learning process in language and literature classes and develop positive emotions about school activities and learning foreign languages. Creative storytelling can foster children’s creativity. When children are given a structured task which requires them to tell or write stories, they are at the same time given a chance to express themselves creatively. This allows storytelling to become a useful indicator in measuring creativity.

3. Aim of this presentation
In this presentation we will offer an overview of storytelling as a method of developing and measuring creativity in preschool and elementary school children. Different methods and activities that include storytelling will be described, while their potential to develop creativity in children will be discussed. Moreover, examples of story-telling/writing as indicators of creativity in different instances of measuring creativity will be outlined, with special consideration of its use in the Evaluation of Potential Creativity (EPoC) test.

4. Creativity
Every human being has creative potential that can be achieved in different ways, with different intensity. The creative potential is related to the concept of creativity that can be defined as an ability that “...invokes thinking that aims at producing ideas or products that are relatively novel and that are, in some respect, compelling” (Sternberg, 2006:2).

5. Different approaches throughout history
Given the fact that every human being can make creative expressions in different aspects and areas, researchers investigated creativity approached in different fields and with different approaches and methodologies. At the beginning of the 20th century, L. S. Vygotsky (1930, 2004) developed a socio-cultural approach, in which he elaborates the links between reality and imagination that make up the complete creative process. Lubart and Sternberg (1999) point out a series of traditional and contemporary approaches to creativity research: mystical approaches, pragmatic approaches, psychodynamic approaches, psychosomatic approaches, cognitive approaches, social-personality approaches, and confidence approaches.

6. Creative child
Creative action is a very complex act and depends on a whole set of very different factors. These factors affect adults and children differently because they have different interests, different relationships to the environment and different influences that encourage and guide the process of creativity. Every child has the creative potential that can be developed in an appropriate way with the personal choice of the media in which potential will be realized and transformed into creative idea, activity or the material product.

7. Developing creativity in children through storytelling
In education it is predominantly used to develop motivation for language and vocabulary learning, contributing to the development of literacy. Storytelling has much more potential as it engages important creativity skills such as curiosity, exploration of ideas, imagination, critical thinking skills and problem-solving (Education Scotland Curriculum Impact Report, 2013). Children listen to stories, and teachers gradually build children’s motivation and competence to tell and write their own stories (process described in the centrepiece of this poster). In addition to supporting creativity, other outcomes of such educational practice include children’s increased confidence to express themselves in an appropriate way, confidence in telling their own story to their peers and also learn to respect other children’s stories, and the development of emotional intelligence.

8. Developing storytelling competence
Storytelling is considered to be a complex linguistic, cognitive ability that, on the cognitive level, requires the structuring of the story, and on the linguistic level requires deconstruction and linguistic styling of the story (Kovács, 2005). Children learn to tell stories by first listening to adults. To be able to create stories children need to master several levels of narrative. The first level involves narrating familiar stories that enable the child to put together a complete story, linking the main structural elements of the story and extending the vocabulary. The next level includes telling and writing new stories. Each of these tasks requires auxiliary means, such as picture books, various illustrations, and creative story games (Čudina Obradović, 2004).

9. Storytelling as indicator of the creative potential
In assessing child’s creativity, it is important to determine what is considered to be genuine, and when evaluating a specific creative product, the age and developmental level of a particular child must be taken into account. The most common criterion for considering something creative is product innovation.

In that view, there is no absolute criteria for novelty and “new” is defined in relation to the old, the previous products or knowledge. The product or idea can be new for that specific person (child) but already known in society (Arar & Rieki 2003). Expert in the educational field (Sperzer, Lucas & Clinton, 2012) call for establishment of valid and reliable assessment framework for tracking the development of young people’s creativity in schools. Task in which children make up stories is part of Evaluation of Potential Creativity (EPoC, Lubart, Besancon & Barbut, 2012) test indicating an important role of storytelling, not only in creativity development, but also in evaluation of children’s creative potential. This development contributes to recognition of storytelling as an immensely creative act.

References