Organization of creative activities for gifted children in terms of inclusive education

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Abstract

The research is devoted to the creating conditions for the development of children's creative abilities and talents in terms of inclusive education. This article provides description and analysis of training creativity within the volunteering fulfilled by teachers and students with children-immigrants from the eastern regions of Ukraine. Principles of creative activities with children of school age are defined: tasks, games, relaxation methods are presented; their developing potential is found out; the positive aspects and negative aspects of the volunteering educational activity are concluded.

Key words: creative activities, training, gifted children, children with special needs, inclusive education, the principles of creative activities, mentoring
Psychological characteristics of the gifted are in constant sight of psychologists and educators. National creative potential is seen as a form of inexhaustible resources, rational use of which is a means of economic, political and technical problems decision. The most important thing is that a personality gets joy from creative development, self-disclosure and realization of its potential.

More than ever relevant to education in Ukraine is the problem of creating conditions for the flourishing of „special” children – spiritually and creatively developed personalities – to help them build individual path of prosperity. Important features of such individuals, in our opinion, is the ability for world creative perception, cognitive activity and initiative; ability to evaluate what he sees and hears; capacity for empathy, understanding of the position and views of other people; desire for self-improvement and lifelong education.

Special training of talented children in Ukraine started in 1991. The law “On Education” provides specialized classes (deep study of certain subjects in primary pre-professional training), specialized schools, high schools, colleges, and various types of educational institutions, associations for the abilities and talents development. The director of the Institute for Gifted Children V. Kamysyn, gives the definition for the gifted from a humanistic point of view. According to it all children are characterized as gifted.

In order to strengthen scientific research in this important and urgent sphere the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in 2007 established the Institute for the Gifted Children. Its regional centers actively work throughout the country. The main objective of the Institute is to improve the scientific and methodological, organizational and incentive provision of the system identification, development and support for children and young people who find different types of giftedness in real socio-economic and educational environment of Ukraine. It also works for the preparation of professional personnel to work with gifted children.

Chernihiv Regional Center Institute for Gifted Children under the guidance of National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Ukraine, Chernihiv Shevchenko National Teachers Training University has been functioning for the third year already. The head of this small organization is the Associate Professor of Preschool and Primary Education Konovalchuk Marina. The staff is presented by creative students who learn how to work with gifted primary school children and preschoolers. Some of our students are with special educational needs.

In summer Chernihiv Regional Center Institute for Gifted Children conducts traditional charitable and educational activities for children in after-school educational institutions: workshops, trainings, diagnostic skills measures, tutoring, promotion, organizing parties etc.

Because of the difficult situation on the territory of Ukraine, military aggression by another state, course of hostilities, the number of children moved
from the eastern regions of Ukraine – Donbass to Chernihiv Region has increased. With a specially created fund these children (60 children from the city Kramatorsk aged 7-17 years) were placed in children’s summer camps such as camp „Desna” (Ladynka village, Chernihiv region). Since September, many children of migrants have already gone to kindergartens and schools in Chernihiv.

In July-August 2014 the representatives of Regional Center Institute for Gifted Children made two trips to the migrant Donbass children on a voluntary basis and conducted two creativity trainings, individual counseling, diagnosis, psychological assistance which were aimed to prevent fears. The trainings were conducted by Marina Konovalechuk – the coach and a student volunteer – Natalia Kysil. For more information the photo report can be seen at the site of the Chernihiv Regional Center Institute for Gifted Children – access mode http://iod.edukit.cn.ua/novini/id/87.

As it was shown by the observation and conversation among children there are those who are in a state of post-traumatic syndrome. These children, as well as those with special need have the following: a violation of the musculoskeletal system (cerebral palsy), visual impairment, intellectual disabilities (mental retardation), special attention and psychological and pedagogical support.

The democratic changes in the society caused social demand for the integration of children with special educational needs and children with disabilities into community as a whole. The transition from the spontaneous to systematic integration work requires innovative approaches to the introduction of inclusive education not only in secondary schools but also in after-school facilities and children’s camps.

In 2009, Ukraine ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Individuals with Special Educational Needs (Law N 1767-VI (1767-17) of 16.12.2009). As the evidence that Ukrainian state pays proper attention to the problem is its attempt to provide citizens with disabilities with all the rights and freedoms. General principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Individuals with Special Educational Needs define equality of opportunity; availability of and respect for the abilities of disabled children in developing nations and respect for the rights of children with special educational needs to preserve their identities. Children with special educational needs are not excluded from the education system because of the disability, and have access to inclusive, quality and free primary, secondary and non-formal education. This provides people with special educational needs to live independently and comprehensively participate in all aspects of life (Convention, 2009).

The introduction of inclusive education in the region does not only require the consolidation efforts of teachers, psychologists, social workers, but also the efforts of local authorities, educational executives and business. Therefore, the ques-
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tion of strengthening internal capacity of non-governmental organizations, development of social partnership in the region, attracting students and volunteers to support children with special needs, make full implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine. In Ukraine, this practice is new, because of a general public opinion that all conditions for the gifted children education and children with special educational needs must be ensured only by the state.

During voluntary educational activities we have made the conclusions that the most effective forms of developing talent is training children with special educational needs in the same way as ordinary children through interactive potential training sessions (working in pairs, groups, brainstorming, performing certain practical problems) (Kolupaeva, A., 2012).

Training is a planned process of modifying (changing) students attitude, knowledge or behavioral skills through the acquisition of learning experiences in order to achieve effective implementation in certain type of activity (Encyclopedia of Education, 2008).

Another key provision of volunteer teaching activities was the use of tutoring (mentoring). Tutor is one who organizes the conditions for the establishment and implementation of individual educational student’s trajectory. In this case, students are paired with a teacher which helps provide training to work with children in terms of inclusive education (Encyclopedia of Education, 2008).

Here is a fragment of creativity training within the educational and volunteer activities which was carried out in July 2014 in the camp „Desna” (Ladynka village, Chernihiv region) for children of migrants from Donbass 7-13 years (including special needs). The purpose of developing creative activities for children:

— motivation of creative achievements;
— appreciation of the talents and abilities of each child, regardless of the needs of life and their development;
— promotion of creativity and non-standard thinking;
— prevention of adverse conditions, phobias, fears, increase self-confidence;
— promotion of understanding and tolerance through daily interaction of children with disabilities and without them;
— support the understanding of significant similarities between children;
— underlining the unique diversity that makes each person individual;
— psycho-pedagogical support for children.
— The purpose of this activity for student volunteers is as following:
— construction of individual trajectories for professional development;

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— enriching educational experience through active involvement in the educational process;
— increase of the motivation for educational activities, the development of altruistic thinking;
— professional competence in the educational activity.

We have identified organization principles of creative activities for children in extracurricular inclusive education, on which the developing work was built. Here are such activities, tasks, creativity games which were used at the workshop conducted for the group of mixed-age migrant children (7-14 years) in the process of extracurricular inclusive education.

I. Principle of comfortable emotional environment

Credo: Freedom creates creativity.

The main idea: In order to be creative you need emotional comfort. State of anxiety and stress decreases creative activities effectiveness.

The game “Change the places those who ...” Children change places if the answer is positive, and remain in the place in case of a negative answer. So the game allows children in a short period of time (3-5 minutes) get to know each other, create a relaxed atmosphere of cooperation. It also gives the teacher the information about the personality of participants, their interests and inclinations.

Change the places those who ... (sample questions):
— have recently seen good dreams;
— have favourite hobby;
— feel that they will do something very important for the people of their country;
— sometimes feel fearful, though there are no reasons;
— have famous people, which they want to be like;
— love doing something good to people;
— love sports more than reading;
— have a cherished dream;
— like being alone with their thoughts;
— confident in their abilities;
— think good future depends upon the person, rather than circumstances.

The game has several functions. It creates comfortable creativity environment; provides an opportunity to learn a lot about each child’s individual characteristics; develops positive thinking, encourages children with special needs into the group.
II. The principle of creative motivation achievement

Credo: If fully realize its potential, any person can achieve great success.

The basic idea: Stories about people with special needs, who became famous due to developing their talents and abilities. Such people changed the course of history. That is why such examples may help motivate creative achievements for children with special educational needs.

“Special genius”

Guess what famous person is it about? Coach offers information about the life and accomplishments of a famous person with special needs who changed the history of mankind, without naming names. Children with additional questions guess complementary information, debate and come to conclusion.

Information for discussion:

Albert Einstein was the German mathematician and physicist who had great difficulty with cognitive processes (it was difficult for him to study, to master the world in general). He hadn’t spoken till three years old. He was learning Math at school with great difficulties. The same troubles he had with written speech. Those troubles didn’t prevent him from becoming the outstanding theoretical physicist, one of the founders of modern theoretical physics, getting the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921, acting as a social activist and humanist. Albert Einstein was the Honorary Doctor of about 20 leading universities in the world, a member of many Academies of Sciences.

Thomas Edison was one of the greatest inventors of the 20-th century. He brought to life more than 1000 inventions that each of us uses in his everyday life. In our early years he was considerably underdeveloped because he could not read till 12; moreover, he had a hearing loss. He first attracted the attention of the world by inventing the phonograph, and then – a light bulb. By the way, to invent that Edison needed to make more than 10 000 attempts, which he regarded not as a 10 000 errors, as well as 10 000 opportunities that brought him success. The Telegraph is also his invention. Later he became a prosperous businessman and a wealthy man.

Vincent van Gogh was the Dutch painter-postimpressionist, one of the most expensive artists in the world. He had a mental disability regarded as illness. In one clinic he was diagnosed as an “epilepsy temporal lobes”, the other diagnosed him the acute encephalopathy (brain damage). He created about 2000 paintings and brilliant pictures.

Franklin Roosevelt was the 32-nd president of the United States (1933-1945). In 1921, Roosevelt became seriously ill in polio and was confined to a wheelchair. His name is associated now with one of the most important chapters
in the history of foreign policy and diplomacy of the United States including the establishment and normalization of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and participation of the USA in the anti-Hitler coalition.

Ludwig van Beethoven was the famous German composer, representative of the Viennese classical school. In 1796, already a famous composer, Beethoven began to lose hearing. In 1802 Beethoven was deaf but since that time the composer had started writing his most famous works: the Heroic symphony, opera „Fidelio.” Being completely deaf, Beethoven created two of his most monumental works – Solemn Mass and Ninth symphony with chorus.

Stephen Hawking (Oxford, UK) is a physicist and mathematician of a world class, the second largest after Einstein. The main area of Hawking’s research is cosmology and quantum gravity. He is the apologist of the big bang theory and the theory of black holes. It is already three decades, as a scientist has been suffering from multiple sclerosis. Almost completely paralyzed, he conducts scientific activities through computer which voices his words. He is still alive and continues his research, visits the space. He has acted in a number of research programs, serials and films. The scientist has been married twice, has got three children and grandchildren.

III. The principle of optimal energy state (streaming experience)

Credo: Filling energy inspires and enables the flow of creativity.

The main idea is to complete the work required some optimal energy state. Being tired, inspiration for creativity doesn’t come, but following certain techniques relaxation can be achieved.

Relaxation “Wings”

Close your eyes. Imagine that you walk barefoot along the sea shore. You feel warm sand. You come into the water and feel the cool sea. The sky is blue and endless. The Sun refers to the person. The wind is playing with your hair. You feel free and unlimited. You do inhale and exhale, inhale the cool sea, and exhale all the negative thoughts and worries. Life is full and beautiful. The sky is clean and clear. Make inhale and exhale, breathe easily, and feel as your wings are growing. You are on the threshold of many pleasant things. You are able to do much. You don’t know why you haven’t done many important things before. But now you have wings to do the important things. You are engaged in creative work and feel inspired every minute. Make a deep breath, exhale and return to reality. You feel that you have become stronger, breathe freely. You are open to something new and good.

“Juicy Apple”. The idea of the game is to learn how to enjoy process that is going on at its peak. When you look through the window of the night bus, enjoy
the lights. When you eat ice cream do it as if you were a child. Do not go into the past and future, be in the present and “enjoy” it.

“Breathes 2-4”. We know that our energy potential depends on proper breathing. Therefore, to be filled with creativity, perform this exercise quite regularly: 2 steps – inhale, 4 steps – exhale. Why breathe longer? Oriental sages say that people should breathe less (to the world), and breathe more (to give the world). We may say creativity is something to share with people what is inside you.

“Pollyanna’s Method”. This method takes its name after the heroine of Eleanor Porter’s novel for adults and children „Pollyanna.” Girl Pollyanna used to play a very useful game. She was looking for the joy in all situations. For example, dreaming about getting a doll for her birthday she got the crutches as a gift. She was not upset; on the contrary she was happy that she didn’t need them. The method is learning how to find a positive point in different situations (especially when the situation is negative).

“Resource status” In everyone’s life there were moments of complete happiness. We still remember them. But can they help us in the future? Unless we are a source for positive content. To do this in situations where the energy potential is at zero, there is no desire to live fully, in order to create, you need to dive into the happy memories. Let them splash around, feel the colors, smells, sounds, and fill with this entire miracle. Coming from the memories, you will feel a burst of energy, strength for new achievements.

Such relaxation is necessary for all children, especially for those who have special educational needs.

IV. Departure from the principle of stereotypes
(anti psychological inertia)

Credo “Inventors did not imitate others, and got interesting results”

The basic idea: Try to see the world from different side. Psychological inertia is the evil which has made our life monotonous. Inertia is when we put on new clothes and pockets looking at the old place. Solve the problem in a new way; look at things from a different perspective. Think of something has never occurred to anybody’s mind. When you abandon stereotypical obsessive ideas, you can create something entirely new.

“Reanimation”. The students learn to animate objects through a series of questions and ways of looking at the world from new point of view. For example, try to use mobile phone, USB flash drive, keys, etc. in an entirely new way.

1) Who is it – man or woman, child? How old is he\she?
2) What is the nature of the character?
3) What is his\her profession? Where does he\she live if he\she has a family?
4) Who are his friends and enemies?
5) What is fear? What are his/her dreams?

When processing multiple characters, it appears what relationships may be between them. You can revive sounds (creaking doors, call, laugh, cough), plants in the classroom, classroom, vehicles etc. It turns out that creative ideas live everywhere. You just need to look differently at the world, look closely and carefully. You will find out there are new paintings, stories, poems, or something completely new. Also the teacher can gain valuable information about the characteristics of children by analyzing responses (what the child is afraid of, what are his dreams, etc).

V. Principle of communication creativity with Psychosomatic

Credo “Body is associated with thoughts, emotions, energy and inspiration”.

The basic idea: We can help for children with special needs. It is known that physical activity improves children’s creativity, promotes the free self-filling energy, being in a state of “flow” (M.Chiksenmihayyi).

Creative Psychosomatics (physical exercises that involve imagination, creating images):

— Hands: circular rotations with his hands, and say „Flexibility in hand – flexibility in communication.”

— Fingers: fingers shaking with fatigue. Say ‘fingers like light feathers’.

— Shoulders: cast off the heavy coat problems.

— Chairman: imagine big ears – like an elephant, hippo, and rabbit waving gladly in different directions.

— Back: imagine silver balls that stretch the body in different directions on the head –... hip – shoulder, forehead – the abdomen, and others.

— Hips: circular rotations with the words: „Mix the warm honey.”

— Sacrum: imagine tail, which enjoys and takes pride in all directions (imaginary tail can be like bunny, squirrel, fox, giraffe, elephant merry, busy mouse).

— Feet: imagine huge feet, which we firmly stand on this earth.

— Hands to the sides, top, „Expanding horizons, expanding boundaries, many can freely breathe.”

— Inhale – exhale „Fill in with energy, enthusiasm and joy.”
VI. Principle of communication creativity with spirituality and life.

Credo: Creativity should be for the benefit of the better person development

The main idea of the creative activity should not be for non-standard, but for a change of life, environment, world, myself in it for the better.

For example, you can think of a holiday, which has never been (humor, good deeds, colored glasses, etc.), charity, environmental actions („Why buy new things when you can create them yourself”), developing flashmob („Do three good deeds” „Street poetry”) and others.

Environmentally charity project „House made of recycled materials” (used cones made of thick paper, pasta, egg shells, buttons). Task: “Create a house and give the person who needs your attention; create a postcard and write beautiful words that you would say to a friend; complete three good deeds for the day”.

In the process of group creativity children with special educational needs are easier to be engaged in normal social and friendly relations in the environment. We encourage children to cooperation and mutual exchange of services. Children need to understand that all people have certain talents; all can be helpful to each other. It must be mutual, not a one-sided process. We believe that children with special educational needs should not only receive support, but also give it to other children.

At the end of the training children receive homework to do three good deeds for people and small bracelets on the arm with the words „Thank you, you did a good deal”. The coach asked the question „And what kind of good deed have you done today?” The children answered, „We were engaged in our own development and helped each other. This was a very important point, in our opinion; give children something is half of the battle, but learn to do good to others is much more valuable. It is essential to emphasize these points because it is a great way to start self-development and self-improvement.

Based on the analysis conducted by developing creative activities, we have made some conclusions:

--- it is difficult for children to express their feelings;
--- there are clearly distinguished leaders (socially gifted children) that form not always positive attitude of the group;
--- children do not have the techniques to generate ideas, it occurs spontaneously;
--- in younger children there is extremely high motivation for creative activity, but it decreases;
— through targeted communication with peers cognitive, motor, language, social and emotional development of children improves;
— partners in game play role models for children with special educational needs;
— training is conducted with a focus on strengths, abilities and interests of children;
— children have opportunities to build friendly relationships with healthy peers and participation in public life;
— teaching activities paired „teacher-student” was extremely effective.

Conclusions

Thus, training creativity in terms of extracurricular inclusive education aims to develop the children with creative talents; give rise to their self-improvement, self-development, self-realization; satisfy spiritual and creative needs of the individual in the intellectual, emotional, volitional spheres; eliminate focus on mediocrity; provide development initiatives and social activity; create conditions for the discovery of new features in interpersonal relationships.

New forms and approaches to teacher preparation, including training, tutoring, guided by active participation in the educational process, which has techniques and strategies of creative activity, has the professional goals and reach them through spirituality and humanity.

References


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