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THE CONTENT OF THE SPECIFIC MANIFESTATIONS OF INNOVATIVE THINKING IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Annotation: this article examines the specific manifestations of innovative thinking in preschool children. While the concept of innovative thinking is often associated with adults and complex problem-solving, its nascent forms are clearly observable during early childhood. The article explores how innovative thinking in preschoolers manifests through their play, creative activities, problem-solving approaches, and interactions with the environment. Key indicators discussed include originality in ideas, flexibility in thinking, curiosity, the ability to transform familiar objects or ideas, and a proactive approach to challenges. Understanding these specific manifestations is crucial for educators and parents to identify and nurture the foundational elements of innovative thinking from an early age, thereby fostering future creativity and adaptability.

Keywords: innovative thinking, preschool children, manifestations, creativity, play, problem-solving, originality, flexibility, curiosity, early childhood development.

In an era characterized by rapid change, technological advancements, and evolving societal demands, the development of innovative thinking has become paramount. While often perceived as a complex cognitive ability primarily relevant to adults in scientific or business domains, the roots of innovative thinking are deeply embedded in early childhood development. Preschool age (typically 3 to 6-7 years old) is a critical period for the formation of foundational cognitive processes, imagination, and creative abilities. This article aims to elucidate the specific ways in which innovative thinking manifests in preschool children, providing insights for educators and parents to recognize and cultivate these crucial nascent skills.

Innovative thinking, in its broader sense, refers to the ability to generate novel ideas, find unconventional solutions to problems, and implement new approaches. For preschool children, this concept needs to be adapted to their developmental stage. It is not about inventing complex technologies, but rather about demonstrating a fresh, unconventional, and often playful approach to their immediate environment and tasks. In preschoolers, innovative thinking is closely intertwined with creativity, curiosity, and an experimental mindset. It is less about a structured process and more about an emergent quality of their cognitive and affective engagement with the world.

The manifestations of innovative thinking in preschool children can be observed across various domains of their activity and behavior:

1. Originality and novelty in play. A child using a shoebox as a spaceship, a spoon as a magic wand, or a blanket as a superhero cape demonstrates innovative thinking by assigning new functions to familiar objects. This goes beyond simple imitation; it involves transforming

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the object's perceived purpose. Instead of simply reenacting familiar stories, an innovatively thinking child might combine elements from different narratives, introduce new characters, or alter plotlines in their imaginative play. For example, a child might create a scenario where a dragon is a friendly pet rather than a fearsome beast. When building with blocks, LEGOs, or other construction materials, an innovatively thinking child might create structures that are unique in design, combine elements in unexpected ways, or serve a purpose beyond mere replication (e.g., building a "machine" that does not exist).

2. Flexibility and fluidity in thinking. When faced with a simple challenge (e.g., how to reach a toy on a high shelf, how to connect two pieces of a puzzle that don't fit easily), an innovatively thinking child might propose several different approaches, even if some are impractical. This indicates an ability to diverge from a single, obvious solution. If a planned activity is interrupted or a desired material is unavailable, an innovatively thinking child is more likely to adapt quickly, suggest an alternative activity, or find a substitute material, rather than becoming rigid or frustrated. While not always obvious, flexibility can be seen in how children group objects or ideas. An innovatively thinking child might group objects based on unconventional criteria (e.g., "things that make me happy" rather than just "things that are red").

3. Curiosity and questioning. Innovative thinkers are inherently curious. Preschoolers demonstrating this trait will frequently ask questions about how things work, why things happen, and what might occur under different circumstances (e.g., "What if we mixed all the colors?"). They are often drawn to new stimuli, eager to explore textures, sounds, and movements, and are not afraid to interact with unfamiliar objects or situations to understand them better. This exploratory drive is a precursor to experimental thinking.

4. Problem-solving approaches. While all preschoolers engage in trial and error, the innovative thinker might try unusually creative or unconventional methods to solve a problem, even if they seem absurd at first. They are less bound by conventional steps. Faced with a task, an innovatively thinking child might creatively use available resources, even those not typically associated with the task, to achieve their goal. For instance, using a toy car to push a button that is out of reach. While not solely an innovative trait, the ability to persist through challenges and try new approaches when initial attempts fail is crucial for innovative thinking. An innovative child might not give up easily, constantly re-evaluating and trying different strategies.

5. Imagination and storytelling. Children who exhibit innovative thinking often create detailed, complex, and imaginative stories, sometimes incorporating fantastical elements or unexpected twists. Giving human-like qualities to inanimate objects or animals in their narratives or play (e.g., "My doll is sad today because it didn't get to play") shows a flexible and imaginative projection of characteristics.

Nurturing innovative thinking in preschoolers. Recognizing these specific manifestations is the first step. To foster innovative thinking, adults must:

- Provide a rich and stimulating environment- offer diverse materials (open-ended toys, natural elements, art supplies, construction sets) that encourage exploration and creative manipulation.
- Encourage open-ended play- allow children ample time for free play without strict rules or predefined outcomes.
- Ask open-ended questions- instead of questions with single answers, ask "What do you think will happen?", "How else could we do this?", or "Tell me about your idea."

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- Value effort and process over product- emphasize the joy of exploration, experimentation, and trying new things, rather than focusing solely on the "right" answer or a perfect outcome.
- Model innovative behavior- demonstrate curiosity, flexibility, and a willingness to try new things in your own actions.
- Create a safe space for mistakes- ensure children feel comfortable experimenting and making errors, as mistakes are often pathways to new discoveries.

Conclusion.

Innovative thinking in preschool children is not a miniature version of adult innovation, but rather a unique and vibrant expression of their developing cognitive and creative capacities. It manifests through their spontaneous play, their unconventional approaches to problem-solving, their insatiable curiosity, and their rich imaginative worlds. By understanding and valuing these specific manifestations, parents and educators can intentionally cultivate an environment that nurtures the foundational elements of innovative thinking, empowering children to become adaptable, resourceful, and creative individuals in an ever-evolving future.

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