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APPLICATIONS OF CREATIVE EVALUATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Keywords

evaluation, creativity, creative evaluation

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Abstract

Creative evaluation is part of what defines a modern class, updated to the social realities. This article aims to provide teachers with creative assessment tools. To practice creative assessment, it is necessary to transform the professional culture, to understand and to practice around creativity and innovation in a significant way. This means more than offering traditional lessons in which pupils are largely placed in the role of information consumers; it means equipping educators and pupils with a creative disposition to be able to answer the problems of the contemporary world.

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1. Introduction

Creative evaluation is part of what defines a modern class, anchored in the social realities. It provides crucial information about what pupils understand and learn. Creative assessment can

help pupils increase their performance, constantly improve, excel and become creative.

But pupils are rarely able to express their thoughts spontaneously, and most of the time their seemingly irrelevant questions are not welcome. In education reports, creativity involves adaptability and flexibility of thinking, traits considered critical for pupils (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). Research also suggests that from the questions asked by teachers in the classroom, less than 10% solicits/requires pupils to think creatively (Cliatt, Shaw, & Sherwood, 1980).

Creative assessment generates intrinsic motivation, diminishes the pressure exerted by the teacher's personality and determines even the most reluctant pupils to participate in building their own knowledge. The use of creativity in the assessment process encourages the creation of a pleasant, relaxed learning climate, while ensuring interdisciplinary openings.

Starting from the idea that education has to stay with its face to the future and has to take into account the rapid changes in the society, this article aims to provide teachers with tools for creative assessment helping them to put passion into what they do and to eliminate the routine from their work. According to Pink (2006), creativity is the process in which changing routine and making new connections are essential. Evaluation is transformed by creativity and innovation.

2. Evaluation as a part of a bigger process

There is a close interdependence between teaching, learning and evaluation. The training process is effective only if the three processes form an organic unit. In the teaching-learning-assessment process, however, assessment has often been neglected, forgetting too easily "the fact that the training process depends largely on how the assessment is designed" (Stoica, 2003, 13-14).

Evaluation is "the process of determining the value of things" (Scriven, 1993, p. 1), an attempt to judge the value or quality of something (Coldeway, 1988). Moreover, "evaluation is a process that provides evidence of issues such as reliability, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, safety, ease of use and probity. Evaluation provides evidence and evaluative statements about the value and development of people, programs, projects, services, and organizations" (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

For the teacher, the evaluation is like a mirror in which he can look at the following relationships: proposed objectives - achieved objectives, inputs (quality of the training process) - outputs (pupils' results), his own level of training – the level of pedagogical requirement. For the primary school pupil, assessment is perceived differently than in the adult world. Piaget (quoted by Gullo, 2004, 35) describes school-age children as having an exaggerated sense of their own efficiency and performance, due to the egocentric nature of the child in the preoperational stage. At this age, children tend to focus and pay more attention to what is striking and out of the ordinary. Therefore, when they receive feedback, they focus only on what is positive, thus gaining a false sense of competence. They also use the feedback received for behaviour to assess their competence in terms of cognitive and academic performance (Apple & King, quoted by Gullo, 2004, 35).

3. Creativity analysed

In contemporary society, the development of creativity concept is overwhelmingly popular. This seems to reflect both an awareness of the importance of creativity and a recognition of the positive effects that creativity education can have on pupils as artisans of knowledge. The multitude of meanings given to creativity over time is explicable if we consider the fact that each author emphasizes a certain dimension of it: general ability, personal trait or complex cognitive process.

Among those who conceived creativity as a general ability in various fundamental areas of learning, we can mention Guilford (1967), as well as Feldhusen and Treffinger (1986). According to Hui and Lau (2010), a general ability is a fundamental learning ability for acquiring, constructing and applying knowledge in solving new problems (221). In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on creativity as a "universal skill" (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007, 7), along with the idea that everyone has creative potential (Runco, 2003). Analysed in this way, creativity can become an everyday event, visible in a wide range of everyday life contexts.

MacKinnon (1962) defined creativity as a personal trait that includes: dedication to a goal, motivation, openness, and tolerance for what seems ambiguous. Bontaş (1994, 292) considers creativity a complex and fundamental capacity of the personality which, relying on previous data or products, in combination with investigations and new data, produces something new, original, and valuable.

On the other hand, Weisberg (1986) and Boden (1992) considered creativity as a cognitive process that includes: divergent thinking, general knowledge, as well as specific knowledge and skills. Similarly, Simonton (2000) affirms that creativity is a mental process involving the generation of new ideas or connections between existing ideas or concepts.

Very interesting in this respect is Krathwohl' vision (2002) who, revising Bloom's original taxonomy on cognitive processes, includes creativity and places it above evaluation, considering it as a greater ability to think (see Figure 1).

Analysing creativity, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009, 6) have identified a developmental model of creativity with four levels. Big-C level of creativity refers to the work of an elite that transformed the world through its inventions (e.g., Van Gogh, Edison, etc.). Pro-C level of creativity involves more time (at least 10 years) and more effort for development (for example, a physicist who teaches at the university, but who also undertakes academic research). Little-C

level of creativity means acting with flexibility, intelligence and novelty in everyday life (for example, a person who can solve a complex problem at work). Mini-C level of creativity happens when a person demonstrates flexibility, intelligence and novelty in thinking (for example, when a pupil finds several different ways to solve a math problem). Considering these forms of creativity, we notice that teachers can direct their efforts to develop the Mini-C and Little-C levels. Thus, a school-age pupil can work at the Little-C level if he or she engages, for example, in taking creative photos of the class activity that can be used on a school website.

4. **The teacher as a creative person in the evaluation process**

When we consider the study of creative evaluation, a problem that arises is the definition of the creative personality.

Creativity is an essential part of the teaching-learning-assessment process, being fundamental for teachers who want to improve their professional practice. Teachers must be animated by a strong receptivity to everything that is new and important both in their area and in pedagogy. In practice, teachers need to make a continuous effort towards self-improvement, coping with the tasks that education and the new generations of pupils raise.

Since 1957, Guilford stated that creativity must meet the following four fundamental criteria: originality, relevance, fluency, and flexibility. For more than half a century, authors such as Rhodes (1961) and Torrance (1963) have emphasized the importance and urgency of teachers to be creative. Torrance (quoted by Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987) lists some specific types of behaviour as indicators of creativity: the ability to occupy your time without being stimulated by another person, overcoming given tasks, asking questions (more than simple why or how), different ways of doing things, not being afraid to try something new. The teacher should be the principal mediator between creativity and what is assessed in the classroom because he is the essential

element for the school to achieve its goal of making pupils more creative.

In the scientific literature, the features of creative personality include: strong motivation, the ability to work hard and be absorbed by work, attraction and orientation to completely new issues and problems, which involves taking the risk to solve them creatively, a great intellectual curiosity, emotional sensitivity. Also, a creative work style is characterized by: total dedication, desire to do things well, open thinking, ability to concentrate for long periods of time, ability to abandon unproductive ideas and temporarily put aside more difficult problems (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Beetlestone, 1998; Cummings and Blatherwick, 2017).

To test the importance of creativity in the teaching-learning-assessment process, Henriksen and Mishra (2013) interviewed a group of highly creative teachers and found that they had the following common didactic traits and behaviours: connecting their interests with teaching, connecting lessons with the real world, cultivating a creative mentality, evaluating collaboration and taking intellectual risks.

5. Applications of creative evaluation

In past years, the entire Western world, and not only, has put evaluation to the forefront of educational practice (Volante, 2005). The information gathered from standardized national assessments is used to measure not only pupil's learning but also to assess the effectiveness of teachers and schools. This culture of assessment has become so controversial that the learning which is not directly assessed and quantified is considered redundant. In other words, what is not evaluated is not learned.

Therefore, one of the concerns of contemporary teachers is whether this culture of evaluation does not destroy the creativity of pupils and teachers. Trying to answer this question, Beghetto (2005) states that it depends on the assessment practices used

because certain assessment practices do have a strong influence on motivational beliefs that can, in turn, undermine pupils' creativity.

For creativity to flourish even in the evaluation process, it is necessary for both teachers and pupils to be actively involved. The characteristics of creative behaviour in different situations lead to this fundamental condition: involvement. From an early age, pupils should be given as many opportunities as possible to get involved in various ways, in order to make creative connections between past and present experiences. Assessment can be fun and effective when teacher gets creative even for a simple feedback. In order for assessment not to kill teacher or pupil creativity, it is necessary to meet certain conditions.

First, teacher must provide a personal answer to the following question: "What does the creative approach to assessment mean to me?" One of the easiest ways to be creative in assessment is to turn traditional methods into something more fun and engaging. This method can require pupils to evaluate their own learning experience, can turn a test into a game, or can lead to the use of interactive digital tools to conduct interviews, projects, portfolios. Furthermore, the teacher can move from the standard and rigid format by encouraging pupils to create an artistic response, using this as a stimulus to explore new experiences. Connecting creative evaluation to various art forms is essential.

Torrance (1963) considered excessive reliance on memory-based educational strategies as an obstacle to creativity development. He stressed the importance of shifting from traditional education to creative curricula through appropriate educational strategies. Traditional methods emphasize the direct transmission of knowledge, which limits pupils' involvement in innovation, discovery and cognitive development. On the other hand, approaches such as problem solving and question orientation provide opportunities for exploring and discovering

complexities, involving pupils in the learning process and improving internal motivation. Table 1 presents the fundamental elements of evaluation that change, when a creative approach is involved.

Secondly, creative evaluation is a great way to overcome some of the challenges that evaluation work poses. Assessment can easily be seen only as a complement to the teaching process, often done at the end of a learning unit or just to meet certain standard requirements.

Third, creative approaches should not be used just for their sake or for the sake of novelty; they must be combined with other approaches. At the same time, when using creative assessment tools, the teacher must take into account the assessment plan and the proposed objectives, the pupils to whom they are addressed, as well as the climate of the classroom.

With these fundamental conditions in mind, an alphabet of creative assessment (Table 2, adapted from Angelo and Cross, 1993; Breben and colleagues, 2002; Ivanovici and Frent, 2009) containing applications for Romanian primary education will be presented below.

The fundamental centre of transforming educational culture to embrace creativity and innovation in evaluation is the transformation of professional culture (Kelly, 2012). This requires teachers to adopt a change that leads to understanding and practice around creativity and innovation. This means more than offering traditional lessons in which pupils are largely placed in the role of consumers of information. A fundamental educational challenge is not so much obtaining and accessing information, but rather endowing teachers and pupils with a creative disposition to apply and grow this information in innovative ways to all educational disciplines and, why not, to the problems raised by the contemporary world.

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Tables, figures and appendices

Table 1 – Fundamental elements in changing assessment to become creative (Adapted from Hosseini, 2011, 1811)

Traditional Evaluation	Creative Evaluation
Starting the evaluation process by focusing on the objectives	Raising authentic questions in teaching-learning-evaluation process
Evaluating because you have to, because it is mandatory to have grades	Providing motivation for involvement-based assessment and questioning
Increasing competition and individualism	Promoting evaluation through cooperation
Strictly respecting what was already planned	Organizing the evaluation flexibly according to the needs and interests of the pupils
Testing performance by using proven approaches	Testing for the evidence that pupils understood
Directly providing the knowledge, skills, etc. which will be evaluated	Involving pupils in creating or investigating knowledge, skills, etc. to be evaluated
Giving priority to content above understanding	Giving priority to the learning-evaluation process per se
Emphasizing acceptance of ideas and materials	Encouraging critical review of ideas and materials

Table 2. Creative Evaluation Alphabet

Approaches to creative evaluation through:	Applications
*A*h! You received an e-mail - Teacher prepares several envelopes on which are written questions from certain topics that have been taught; the answers are inside. The envelopes are then "sent" to the classroom. Each pupil writes the answer on a piece of paper and checks the correctness by reading the "official	*Mathematics, 4th Grade*:" Elements of Geometry" Possible questions: What are the elements of a triangle? How many angles / sides / vertices does a triangle have? Measure the length of the sides of the triangle below.

answer" before placing his answer in the envelope. After several series of "mails" and a class discussion on the subject, the envelopes are deposited in the teacher's mailbox.

Brainstorming – The pupils are coordinated by the teacher who fulfils the role of animator and mediator. Pupils issue as many solutions as possible, ideas, on how to solve a problem, hoping that, by combining them, an optimal solution will be obtained. The interest is to give free rein to the imagination, to the unusual and original ideas, to the unconventional opinions, provoking a chain reaction, constructive, to create "ideas on ideas".

Cube - The following six words are written on the six sides of a cardboard cube: describe (1), compare (2), associate (3), analyse (4), apply (5), and argue (6). One of the pupils is invited to roll the cube. For each face of the cube the teacher has prepared certain tasks. Pupils solve the task individually in a given time, after which they present, in turns, the formulated answer. All pupils analyse the answer, make comments, and request the reformulation of the question to make sure that the task is solved correctly. The comments that take place lead to the selection or reformulation of the correct answer by combining individual ideas.

Personal Development, 1st Grade:" Time Management"
You are invited to two birthday parties of two friends. The parties take place on the same day, at the same time, in different places. What possibilities do you have?

Sciences, 3rd Grade:" Water"
1. Say what you know about water.
2. Compare water with air.
3. Say how you feel when you drink water?
4. Tell how water circulates in nature?
5. How much water should you drink in a day?
6. Is it okay to drink water? Why?

Debriefing - A question is launched for debate.

The class is divided into two groups: pros and cons, each team having to look for arguments.

Both groups present their arguments.

Variants: reversal of roles, expressing one's personal position after being part of a certain group (for or against), etc.

Communication into Romanian, 2nd Grade:" **Spring**", after I. Al. Brătescu-Voinești

Was the quail' decision correct, leaving the injured baby behind?

Empathy: The thought experiment

Pupils are asked to imagine themselves in a certain situation.

They are asked questions about the situation.

Civics, 4th Grade:" Children Rights"

Think that you are in a situation where a certain right has been taken away from you. How would you feel? (Pupils should first mention the right they were deprived of and then show empathy and recount the feelings they are going through.)

Frisco is based on the roles played by children according to their preferences and the abilities that the role imposes. A problem or a situation is identified by the teacher or by the pupils to be analysed and resolved.

The roles are distributed: C = Conservative; E = Exuberant; P = Pessimistic; O = Optimistic.

Various accessories can be used to give credibility to the played character (for example, the Optimistic, being a cheerful character, wears a red hat). All pupils participate in the debate. By interpreting roles, children support

Communication into Romanian, 2nd Grade:" The Little Match Girl", by H. C. Andersen

Find another ending to the story. Pupils have different roles: conservative, exuberant, pessimistic, optimistic, etc.

their views according to the type of person they represent.

*G*uess! represent didactic procedures for stimulating creativity, in which an object, a being, a phenomenon is presented in metaphorical form, requiring its identification through logical associations

Communication into Romanian, 2nd Grade:" Final Revision"

Formulate a riddle about a character encountered in the studied literary texts.

*H*ints and kinaesthesia - Notions will be written on large sheets of paper that will be arranged on the floor according to a certain logic scheme. The assessed pupil will step on them in the order indicated by the arrows and explain the information he/she is stepping on. Verbalization supports kinaesthetic learning. Other ways of visualizing the relationships between learning contents can be imagined.

Geography, 4th Grade:" Romania - setting, neighbours, boundaries"

The following words can be written on the sheets of paper on the floor: Europe, Ukraine & Hungary, Beba Veche & Halmeu.

Ideas from a text

a) Identify the main idea of the lesson. Why is it important?
b) Explain the main idea using an analogy.
c) What is the main idea of the author / text? Bring pros and cons.

History, 4th Grade:" What is History?"

Follow the three steps: a), b), c).

*J*ournal like a chameleon - The pupils must present the same event/fact from different

History, 4th Grade:" Dacians and Romans. The

perspectives (the pupil is sad, happy, outraged, satisfied, etc.).

foundation of the Romanian people"

Know-Want-Learn

The teacher draws a table with the following columns: I know / I want to know / I learned.

Pupils make a list of everything they know about the topic to be discussed. Write down on the board the notions or aspects that everyone agrees with in the left column. Pupils ask questions about things they are not sure about.

After pupils become familiar with the new knowledge, the teacher returns to the questions they asked and passed in the column "I want to know". Questions that have been answered are entered in the "I learned" column. For unanswered questions, the teacher discusses where pupils might look for information. Finally, the pupils summarize what they have reviewed.

Mathematics, 2nd Grade:" Problems Solved by Graphics"

K: Mary and Dan have 38 years. Mary has with 4 years more than Dan.

W: How old is Mary? How old is Dan?

L: 38-4=34 (We make equal parts.)

34:2=17 (How old is Dan?)

17+4=21 (How old is Mary?)

Lottery - At the beginning of the break, each pupil writes a note with the main idea of the lesson taught that day. The teacher gathers the tickets into a box. Next class, the teacher draws lots and the pupil to whom the ticket belongs provides more details on the subject.

My opinion - Pupils are asked to make an opinion chart:

Personal Development, Preparatory Grade:" Who Am I?" At the end of the lesson, each pupil draws the main idea on a paper and, when leaving the classroom, puts it in the teacher's box. Next time, the drawings on the papers are discussed.

Romanian, 3rd Grade:" *The* written story of a text. The legend of the snowdrop"

a) In the left column list opinions about the content of the text.

b) In the right column, support opinions.

***N**ame it to a friend* - Pupils are asked to write about the assessed topic as if explaining that to a friend.

Sciences, 4ᵗʰ Grade:" Life Cycles in the Living World"

In a letter to your best friend, explain the life cycles in the living world.

***O**nly five words* - What five words would you use to describe _____? Explain and justify the choice.

History, 4ᵗʰ Grade:" Figures from the history of the Romanian people. Michael the Brave"

***P**hilips 6/6* **-** The name comes from the fact that the optimal number of members in Philips is 6 in a group, and the discussion is limited to 6 minutes. Groups of 6 are formed (4 members; 1 secretary; 1 group leader). The secretary of each group records the ideas of his/her group' colleagues. The leader guides the debate within the group and presents the conclusions.

Personal Development, Preparatory Grade:" My School. Routines and Work Tasks. Rules in School"

Task: Draw the 5 most important rules that any pupil should follow.

The topic to be debated by each group is handled to the group leader. Each member proposes an answer and, at the end, the most important ideas are retained. The leaders of each group present or write the ideas they have reached. The collective discussion is followed by the collective decision regarding the final solution, based on the hierarchy of variants on the board. The teacher draws the conclusions.

Quiz – Pupils are asked to:

a) Write ten questions on the topic / text in the order of the action.

b) Choose two of the questions in point a) and answer on half of a page.

c) Describe in 100-150 words what you think was the purpose of the author / learning of this lesson.

Civics, 4th Grade:" Romania – E.U. member"

Resume *three times* **-** To answer a question / problem, pupils write three different summaries:

The first of 10-15 words;

The second of 30–50 words;

The third of 75–100 words.

Pupils can work in groups or individually and use a word counter.

Sciences, 2nd Grade:" Landforms"

Shift partners - The class is organized in two concentric circles; the pupils being divided into pairs. The children in the inner circle remain standing still. When a new assessment task is given, the pairs always change until they reach the initial partner - the initial pair. At the end, the ideas are analysed.

Geography, 4th Grade:" The Map"

Twitter

Define.................... in less than 140 characters.

Civics, 4th Grade:" Responsibility – lack of responsibility"

Define responsibility in less than 140 characters.

Up *to one minute* - In one minute, describe the most significant thing you have learned.

Communication into Romanian, 1st Grade:" Sentence"

V*ote for a quote!* - A list of proverbs or quotations related to the taught topic is proposed. Each pupil will choose a proverb or quote that expresses an idea they agree with or one that they would choose as a motto or that expresses an important personality trait. The choices made will be argued.

X*erocopy* - List the most interesting, the most controversial or the most resonant / interesting ideas you found in your readings. Include a short argument (100 words) for your choice.

Z*one for creativity*

a) List 10 keywords from the studied text.

b) Compose a poem using the words from point a).

c) Write a summary of the text based on these words.

Civics, 4th Grade:" Generosity"

" You are good for nothing, if you are good only to yourself." (Voltaire)

" If I'm glad I'm learning something new, it's to share it with others." (Seneca)

" Be altruistic, respect others selfishness!" (S. J. Lec)

History, 4th Grade:" Historical figures" Reading from "Historical stories" by Dumitru Almaș
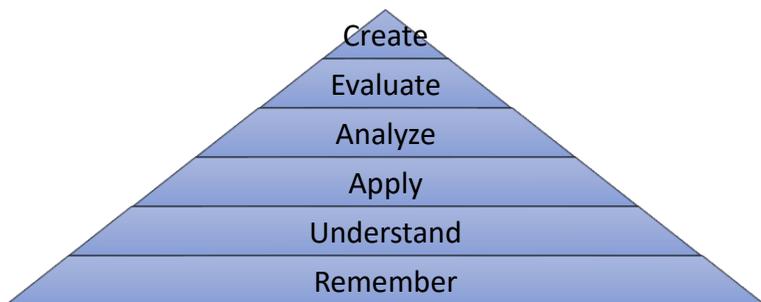
Romanian, 3rd Grade:" At the Medeleni", after Ionel Teodoreanu

Figure 1. Krathwohl' s Taxonomy (2002)