Some Issues on Improving Learners' Creative Thinking Competence

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ABSTRACT: One of the trends in the primary and comprehensive renovation of education in Vietnam today is the promotion of learner-centered teaching methods, moving from the content-based educational program to the competency-based learner approach. That is, interested in what learners can apply through learning. Therefore, studying the general problems of creative thinking skills is essential to guide the learner's approach. Within the scope of the article, the author focuses on the analysis of available theoretical concerns about creative thinking and offers some suggestions to promote creative thinking skills for learners.

KEYWORDS: competence, creative thinking, learners

1. SOME GENERAL THEORETICAL ISSUES ABOUT THINKING, CREATIVE THINKING AND CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS

1.1 Thinking

Thinking is a high stage of the cognitive process, going deep into nature and discovering the laws of things in forms such as symbols, concepts, judgments, and inferences. According to the dictionary psychology, thinking is a psychological process that reflects the essential properties, relationships and internal relationships of things and phenomena in objective reality that we did not know before. According to the dictionary of philosophy, thinking reflects the objective world in concepts, judgments and theories. Thinking appears in human social production and is indirectly responsible for reflecting reality (Dictionary of Psychology, 2001; Hayes & Stratton, 2022, p. 376).

From the above statements, it can be seen that thinking is a product of the human brain and is a process that positively reflects the objectively real world. In doing so, the author believes that thinking is a process of perceiving and remembering what people do not know about the objective world through forms such as judgment, inference, and observation. Thinking is a dynamic and creative process that leads to a specific result.

1.2 Creative thinking

1.2.1. The concept of creative thinking

Creative thinking is thinking activities that give rise to new initiatives, and these activities must be innovative, different and unique. Creativity creates anything that is both novel and valuable simultaneous (within a specific application) (Phan, 2005, p. 92). It means that in any area of everyday life of the physical and mental world, things that are different from the already existing ones of the same kind have the potential to bring about new benefits or to improve those that already exist properly applied in specific spatial and contextual conditions is called creativity. Therefore, it can be defined that "creativity is the process of coming up with a new idea or new way of looking at an issue or an existing thing in a suitable time and space. This new idea or different perspective brings the most value determined".

1.2.2. The nature of the creative thinking process

Creative thinking is a process with the following characteristics:

(1) Flexibility: The plasticity of thought is the ability to quickly go from one intellectual activity to another, from one thought manipulation to another, to use activities, synthesis, comparison, abstraction, generalization, concretization, and methods of reasoning such as induction, deduction, analogy. It is easy to switch from one solution to another and correct when obstacles arise.

(2) Fluency: The fluidity of thinking is reflected in the ability to quickly establish a relationship and synthesis between the individual elements of situations and situations and to and with new hypotheses. Fluency is characterized by the ability to generate a certain number of ideas. The more ideas they have, the more likely they will come up with a unique concept.

Faced with a problem to be solved, a person with a sound mind quickly finds and proposes many different solutions and finds the optimal solution. Fluency is also clearly demonstrated in the following two characteristics: (i) Multiple ways of dealing

with situations and finding different perspectives and positions (Gube & Lajoie, 2020). (ii) The ability to consider objects from many different perspectives, to have a vivid view of things and phenomena from many angles, not a fixed, one-sided, rigid view.

1.2.3. Features of the creative thinking process

The creative thinking process has some of the following characteristics:

(1) *Originality:* The originality of creative thinking manifests itself when we think about problems that are often not stereotyped according to rules or common knowledge and how to solve problems flexibly and improvised. For example, a person goes to buy eggs but forgets to bring his bag, only has an umbrella in his hand. Does that become that unique bag if that person's original mind knows how to open an umbrella and turn it upside down? Now, bringing back eggs is not a problem to think about. The originality of thinking requires us to try our best to eliminate the old thinking stereotypes and consider the problem from the point of fresh view from many different perspectives. Creative thinking brings about seemingly impossible things, demonstrating the limitlessness of human thought (Mumford & McIntosh, 2017).

(2) *Diffusion:* When we are asked to name round objects. Ordinary people are limited to everyday objects such as dishes, cups, and so forth. Creative thinkers include round and spherical things and car wheels and human organs, animal eggs; something as large as the sun, earth, moon or something is small, cells, atoms. When people think creatively, their thinking can be very diffuse and "strange." The degree of diffusion of thought can be considered one of the criteria to evaluate the high or low level. That is why some people call creative thinking diffuse thinking.

(3) *Flexibility:* The flexibility of creative thinking is reflected in the way of recognizing and solving problems from many different approaches. Faced with a problem that needs to be solved, creative thinking helps people to propose many ideas. However, they will choose the one that best suits the situation, space, time, not encapsulated in the approach and solve problems in a rigid, restrained manner.

(4) *Sensibility:* The sensitivity of creative thinking is the ability to spot problems quickly or lack logic in what already exists. Since then, there has been a need to explore and come up with new ideas to overcome or adjust the problem in a more complete and positive direction.

(5) *Completeness:* Completeness is the ability to plan and coordinate proposed ideas, implement them in practice, test the applicability and practicality of opinions and evaluate the feasibility thought suggested.

1.3. Competence

"competence (also competency) - the ability to do something successfully or efficiently; the scope of a person's or group's knowledge or ability; a skill or ability" "Competence is a set of characteristics or qualities of an individual's psyche, acting as an internal condition, facilitating the good performance of a certain activity" (Nguyen, 2014). Competences are the unique attributes of an individual suitable for the specific requirements of a particular activity that the activity is booming. That is, competence is something special to each person; this particular thing can bring into full play its role with a particular activity, under the characteristics of that activity and increase the effectiveness of that activity (Vu, 2002, p. 117). Similarly, Weinert states that "Competence may be understood as intellectual abilities, that is, an individual's general cognitive resources for mastering challenging tasks across different contents, acquiring the necessary knowledge, and achieving high performance." (Weinert, 1999)

According to OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), in 2006, after a significant study extensive the required competencies of high school students, it was shown that "A competence is defined as the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through the mobilization of knowledge, (cognitive, metacognitive, socio-emotional and practical) skills, attitudes and values." (Rychen, 2016)

The above approaches can be defined as competence is a separate attribute belonging to each individual, suitable for specific characteristics of a particular activity or problem, which is a decisive factor and ensure the efficiency of the operation of the matter being carried out. Competence is not a single attribute but rather the total of many interrelated and interrelated factors. Competence is formed, developed and expressed through positive human activities. It can be said that competence development is the ultimate goal of the teaching and learning process.

1.4. Creative thinking skills

1.4.1. The concept of creative thinking skills

In this day and age, when people's awareness has reached a higher level, the thinking ability also requires people in addition to the cognitive ability to create new things to improve the existing ones, constantly advocating and changing to meet the needs of society.

According to American psychologist Willson M., "creativity is the process whose result is the creativity of necessary new combinations of ideas as energy, units of information, objects or combinations of two or three stated elements"; or "creating, basing on existing ideas as documents, then cropping, selecting, synthesizing to form a new image." This concept emphasizes what is known as the basis for creativity.

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In the dictionary of philosophy, creativity is defined as "is the process of human activities creating new material, spiritual and qualitative values. Types of creativity are determined by professional characteristics such as science, technology, literature, art, organization, military. It can be said that creativity is present in all areas of the material and non-material world" (Yudin, 1976).

In short, it can be assumed that "creative thinking is the ability to create ideas and products with unique, different and efficient applications in the most space and time. determined".

1.4.2.   Manifestations of creative thinking ability
(1) Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability to switch from one mental activity to another quickly, including (i) Easy transition from one mental activity to another; ease of switching from one solution to another; (ii) Thinking without stereotypes, without mechanically applying existing knowledge, experiences and skills to new conditions and circumstances, including changed factors; (iii) Being able to escape the influence of existing experiences, methods and ways of thinking; (iv) Identify new problems in familiar terms.

(2) Maturity

Maturity represents the ability to master thinking, master knowledge and skills, and demonstrate a variety of ways to handle problems when solving problems. Maturity is reflected in the following characteristics: (i) The ability to consider the subject in many different aspects; have a multi-dimensional, comprehensive view of an issue; (ii) The ability to find many solutions to a problem from which to filter the solutions to choose the optimal solution.

(3) Uniqueness

Uniqueness is characterized by the following abilities: (i) The ability to find new associations and combinations; (ii) The ability to find connections in events. The above characteristics of creative thinking are not separate from each other. Still, they are closely related and complement each other, in which originality is said to be the most important in creative expression.

2. SOME SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTE CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS FOR LEARNERS

Creative thinking tends to discover and explain the nature of things in a new way or create new ideas without any precedent. Creative thinking has many characteristics such as flexibility, maturity, originality, problem sensitivity, criticality, independence, detail, ability to solve problems in new ways.

2.1 **General suggestions orientation**

Creative thinking skills can be developed in individuals by specific pedagogical methods and measures such as: creating a "creative atmosphere" in the classroom (Tran et al., 2016); teaching learners in their desire and interest in absorbing new things; correct learning motivation orientation; creating challenges and opportunities for students to form the habit of looking at problems from different angles; encourage students to solve problems in many ways, to systematize and apply knowledge in practice; forge the habit of finding new and reasonable solutions to the exercises; using questions to stimulate students' cognitive and discovery needs (Mumford & McIntosh, 2017; Tran et al., 2016; Walberg, 2010); develop the habit of quickly detecting mistakes, lack of logic in the solution or in the process of solving problems

2.2 Some particular recommendations
Firstly, Create a creative environment in the classroom

The creative environment in the school classroom can be understood as a classroom space that stimulates learners' creativity (Tran et al., 2016). A creative environment is considered as the external condition of creative activities. If the environment is good, it will strengthen individual psychoactive properties, developing those attributes that make up creative activities. To create a creative environment for people, we suggest the following ways:

(1) Educating learners with excitement and passion for learning new things. To be creative, students must have passion, desire to know and discover, and learning must become a need and source of joy. Learners can be influenced by satisfaction when they receive appropriate praise from the teacher—suggestions for solving problems when learners tend to be stuck.

(2) Orienting the right learning motivation for learners: Creativity is very important because it is the creative motive that motivates people to be creative. To achieve the goal of developing creative thinking, learners must learn voluntarily. Learning to be self-disciplined requires learners to have a sense of the plans to be executed and create an inner motivation that motivates the learners to carry out activities to achieve those goals. Hence, to develop and orient the learning motivation for learners, the teacher can start from the content directed at the cognitive needs life needs and mobilize high excitement so that the students can be active and self-motivated in acquiring new knowledge.

(3) Creating a challenge - spark creativity: Teaching theory indicates that it is necessary to turn the program's requirements into the cognitive needs of learners by creating mental situations, bringing learners to the climax of the "conflicts" containing difficulties that are suitable for learners. Therefore, to develop creative thinking for learners, teachers need to create challenges using situations exercises of appropriate complexity that require learners to overcome. It will mobilize the highest intellectual efforts in learners.

(4) Removing obstacles that prevent learners' creative activities: The impediments that hinder learners' creativity as fear, over-criticism, and laziness. Because fear makes people less confident in their rich imagination, which sparks creative activities, excessive criticism will make learners lack confidence, blinding all thoughts and creativity. Therefore, for learners to promote creativity, teachers should eliminate the fear and laziness of learners by educating them on courage, perseverance (determination to the end for all learning situations and problems); at the same time, and awareness of behavior towards learners.

(5) Eliminate the psychological obstacle "old thinking path." It is one of the significant obstacles to creative thinking is thinking patterns. In teaching, teachers need to help learners put aside the conventional ways of thinking, experiences to think differently, with different assumptions than usual. It will help the learners overcome the psychological "inertia" in the thinking process, an obstacle to creative thinking.

(6) Encourage creative positivity in learners—exploration and discovery (positivity is the initiative or desire to v). In the learning process of learners, creative positivity is expressed from a low level to a high level as follows: Imitation (activity shown in the effort to follow the pattern of actions, manipulations, gestures) only acts or repeats what has been done, ever done).

Second, Design guided self-study topics according to sub-modules

Self-study is utterly absent from teachers; learners have no contact with teachers and between a form of learning with no interaction between teachers and students. Therefore, learners must be self-reliant through properly designed materials by teachers to acquire knowledge. This situation requires that learners who want to learn effectively are independent. Learners cannot draw self-study, so it is necessary to study how to guide learners and create conditions to carry out self-study activities successfully. Self-study guidance shows learners how to effectively and creatively occupy knowledge and guides learners to self-assess their abilities.

Guided self-study can be done directly between teachers and students: in-class lessons (conversational methods, problem-based teaching methods, active methods of human activities); It can also be done indirectly in the form of assigning tasks (homework, worksheets) can also be done indirectly between teachers and learners through redesigning topics according to a module.

Third, Use homework

Homework and practice are two parts of the teaching job that are very familiar to teachers. These activities allow learners to deepen their knowledge and practice mastery of skills related to the lesson content taught by the teacher in class.

Assigning homework usually has two purposes practicing and preparing new lessons or improving old ones. When homework is given for practice, it needs to be structured around very familiar content. Practicing a skill that students are unfamiliar with has no effect and contributes to making many mistakes and causing misunderstandings. Secondly, as homework, they convey new content to the students or deepen what they have already learned. The effectiveness of homework assignments varies widely, in part depending on the level of detail and precision with which the teacher, as an examiner, provides evaluative comments on the completion of the assignment (Walberg, 1999). Teachers must grade homework and provide detailed feedback for homework to be effective.

Fourth, Use exercises with many solutions

The analysis of the content of the exercise proposes many different solutions, significantly contributing to training the fluency and originality of creative thinking. Depending on each learner's ability, many other solutions can be given. Therefore, teachers can choose and use practices with multiple solutions.

3. CONCLUSION

The promotion of the human factor is one of the driving forces that play a decisive role in the country's development strategy in the current period. That motivation can only turn into strength when each develops creative thinking skills. Therefore, the study of creative thinking skills has profound theoretical and practical significance. The solutions that have been given to promote creative thinking are vital and can be applied quickly to help learners truly become the center of the teaching process. Educational institutions need to increase investment in facilities with a training plan for teachers and learners, especially supporting teachers in the composition and design of lesson topics to develop learners' creative thinking skills.

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