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## **PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR IMAGINATION AND CREATIVE THINKING FORMATION IN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN**

Creativity in adults is highly valued in our society. Personal creativity contributes to inventiveness, innovation, social and cultural change as well as political development and economic progression. The creator is an innovator, a problem solver, an entrepreneur, an artist. Creative people have rapid and effective responses that help them to achieve their life goals and allow them to enjoy the journey. Creativity is both a skill set and a unique and individual character structure that is developed throughout childhood and fine-tuned in adolescence and adulthood. Education has a key role to play in its development. Positive creativity inspiring experiences at every stage of the educational journey are needed. This is especially true in early childhood. Educators who rise to the creativity challenge will be well rewarded in rich teaching experiences and the joy of seeing children reach their creative potential in supportive and integrated learning communities.

According to O. Borovyk, «imagination is the source of all human achievement, thus one of the key components of creativity is innovation. A child's imagination is more than just make believe, it is an area that sparks their creativity like no other an outlet for them, leading to open ended play and endless possibilities where they can be anything they want to be. Creativity is developed in the early years through the wide spectrum of play. As all developmental learning in the early years is centered within play as a medium for learning, here too lie the foundations of creativity development» [2, c. 112].

Play that has value for creative learning has its own set of defining characteristics which serve to intensify its value with their increasing presence. In addition to being fun and pleasure filled, it is identified that the topic should be chosen by the children or invented by the children. The centrality of the child's choices ensures that their innate knowledge of their learning needs is engaged. It is also essential that play is integrating in nature involving the minds, bodies, spirits and senses of the children involved.

The element of pretend is central to early creativity development through play. The children weave easily between real and pretend worlds, real and pretend situations and real and pretend actions with real and pretend items that have real and pretend consequences. They make symbolic transformations easily and freely and calling a sheet or a cape makes it so. L. Veker assessed this process as involving image making and image transformation. Both image making and image transformation are inherently creative skills. These creative skills are also naturally and inherently present in young children and utilized by them daily in their urge towards play that enhances their

learning. Learning gives satisfaction and a measure of how successful a play session has been from a learning point of view, is how much pleasure the child experienced during the play experience and how satisfied they were by it. This personal motivation gained through truly successful play is both stimulating and exciting for the child as they learn and learn and learn [3, c.278- 295].

A supportive educator understands the magical and transformational power of play and has respect for the directions the children lead themselves in. This is the contribution of the developmentally supportive educator – respect for the child’s choices underpinned by an understanding of and commitment to children’s wisdom in relation to their learning needs. This respect for the child’s inner wisdom is a pedagogical principle identified within several pioneering educational philosophers including Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and Loris Malaguzzi. It could be considered a universal principle of a child centered pedagogy. The balance of play activities is necessary for holistic child development and learning. If the child’s will is present within a play activity it is the better for many types of his development, particularly creative development. Free play where the will of the child is paramount is the most effective play for creative development. Making choices, making mistakes, reflecting, taking risks, being explorative, curious and playful are all distinct features of both free play and creative development. Free play also increases children’s communication and negotiation skills which have a direct impact on their developing sense of judgment and self-confidence. These skills are key elements of transformational creativity in adulthood. It appears therefore that the less rigid the play approach in the early years, the higher the opportunities for creative development. The creativity supporting early year’s educator therefore subscribes to these three pedagogical principles – adaptable play materials, attentiveness to the children and respect for the inner wisdom underpinning their own play choices

Children’s cognitive development and brain activity is mostly sensually stimulated through smell, touch, taste, sound and sight. Activity experienced through the senses internalizes the learning within the child so that it is remembered on a deep level throughout the body as well as the brain. This integration allows them to process learning in a much more meaningful and profound way than non-sensory related learning. Sensory learning is cellular learning. It is remembered and processed deep within and throughout the body. This allows for strong creative foundations upon which knowledge and skills can be built. In this way, it is the role of a creatively stimulating curriculum aimed at the 3-6 age groups, to meet the learning needs of the children across the five senses. Sensory rich activities such as cooking, baking, outdoor play, nature play, play with spices, fruits and oils, building with natural materials, celebrating festivals with a sensory theme such as the inclusion of frankincense and myrrh at Christmas and incorporating the sensory themes of light, colour, scent or sound into the varied cultural festivals will enhance the developing creative personalities within them.

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