

EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF ART THERAPY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' CREATIVE ABILITIES

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Abstract: The development of creative abilities is one of the most interesting problems attracting the attention of many researchers. The problem of developing creative abilities by means of art therapy is associated with reforms of the modern educational system. So, the latter orients teachers to developmental teaching and adherence to the learner-centered approach in teaching, which implies creating conditions for the development of each student's personality, abilities, creative self-expression in various activities corresponding to the student's capacities and interests. In the paper, the most efficient methods of pedagogical influence promoting the development of students' creative abilities by means of art therapy have been identified and scientifically substantiated.

Keywords: creative abilities, art therapy, educational space, visual art therapy, art methods, students.

1 Introduction

In the course of the educational process, teachers and psychologists have to orient to such practices of interaction with students which offer opportunities both for the development of their creative abilities and for building up their psychological health, self-knowing, and positive self-awareness. These requirements are met by the classical art therapy which is represented by visual arts (painting, graphic arts, photography, drawing, and sculpturing) and termed visual art therapy.

The principal objective of art therapy is the development of creative abilities and self-assertion in creativity. Studying art therapy is relevant owing to the very individual being changed (the individual's forms and ways of thinking, personal qualities) in the process of creation, too, which is especially important: he or she becomes a creative person, one capable of creative making.

Relevance of the research is associated with the fact that the fundamental requirement set by the society for the contemporary education implies forming individuals who will be able to solve various problems independently and creatively, to think critically, to elaborate and defend their standpoints, to improve their skills and use them in reality in a creative way.

Social demand of the society for developing creative abilities in students is worded in the statutory documents pertaining to the system of education. So, Federal law "On education in the Russian Federation" (2012) specifies that the primary general, basic general, and secondary general education is aimed at "building students' personalities, developing their individual abilities, ... and the development of creative abilities of the students" (Ch. 7, Art. 66, Cl. 1-3).

2 Literature Review

Analysis of the category "creative abilities" requires addressing the concepts of "creativity" and "abilities", first of all.

Creativity has been studied as a psychological and pedagogical phenomenon by foreign and Russian scientists. However, no

uniform interpretation for this concept has been elaborated so far.

Let a number of dictionary and author definitions be discussed.

The most general, philosophical definition of creativity is suggested by Ya. A. Ponomarev (1969) who considers the essence of creativity as a "necessary" condition for the development of matter, for its new forms to emerge, with the very forms of creativity changing alongside the said emergence" (p. 223).

L. S. Vygotsky (2011) treats creativity as follows: "Any human act that gives rise to something new is referred to as a creative act, regardless of whether what is created is a physical object or some mental or emotional construct that lives within the person who created it and is known only to him" (p. 105).

S. L. Rubinshtein (2009) understands creativity as an activity of creating something new, original, later belonging to the history of the creator himself, of science, and of art (p. 384).

In dictionary of the Russian language by S. I. Ozhegov and N. Yu. Shvedova (2015) creativity is defined as creating conceptually new cultural and material values (p. 659).

The dictionary "Psychology" edited by A. V. Petrovskiy and M. G. Yaroshevskiy (1990) also considers the concept of creativity as an activity resulting in creation of new material and spiritual values. Meanwhile, this definition has an important addition pointing to factors that contribute to performance of the creative activity as a result of which a unique and original product is generated (Petrovskiy & Yaroshevskiy, 1990, p. 397).

By creativity, L. K. Veretennikova (2019) means an activity aimed at discovering and creating the new and novel; its novelty can be both objective and subjective at that.

I. Ya. Lerner (2016) describes creativity as "a process of one's creating the objectively or subjectively new and novel by means of specific intellectual procedures which cannot be represented as precisely defined and strictly regulated systems of operations or actions". The author highlights creative thinking as the vital condition of generating art and the top level of its manifestation (Lerner, 2016, p. 184).

So, the following shared points can be singled out in all the above interpretations of creativity: first of all, this is an activity; secondly, its objective and result is the creation of a new product.

Concerning abilities, professor B. M. Teplov (2003), a doctor of sciences in psychology, noted that "these are individual properties of personality which are subjective conditions of successful performance of certain activities. Abilities cannot be reduced to the knowledge, practical abilities, and skills possessed by an individual. They are discovered in the speed, depth, and solidness of the acquisition of methods and practices of a certain activity; they are internal mental regulatory meanings conditioning the possibility of gaining them" (Teplov, 2003, p. 133).

S. L. Rubinshtein (2009) believed that "each ability is an ability for something, for an activity. One's having a certain ability means one's fitness for the certain activity. The ability must incorporate various mental properties and gifts that are essential owing to the nature of this activity and requirements proceeding from it" (Rubinshtein, 2009, p. 200).

In their works by E. K. Zimina et al. (2020) and N. S. Petrova et al. (2020) is emphasized the fact of the objective and subjective novelty attribute of the product created by a person, as well as the use of productive learning methods: using those leads to building up creativity.

3 Research Methodological Framework

The objective of the research is to study opportunities of using art therapy as a means for the development of creative abilities of students.

Tasks of the research are as follows:

1. Completing a review of foreign and Russian studies of the use of visual art therapy as the principal art therapeutic method.
2. Researching and scientifically substantiating the effect of art therapy on the development of creative abilities in students.

Methods of the research:

The materials of the research were published works of authors discussing the problems of developing students' creative abilities by means of art therapy in the academic process and creation of certain conditions for the said process to take place.

The study relies on the following theoretical methods: analysis of psychological, pedagogical, and methodological literature; systemization, generalization, and comparison.

4 Results and Discussion

For identifying the influence of art therapy on the development of creative abilities in students, the authors of the paper have made clear the concept "art therapy". Etymologically, the term of art therapy derives from two words: the English "art" and the Greek "therapeia" meaning treatment or care. Art therapy originated as a "method for treating nervous and mental illnesses by means of art and self-expression in art" (Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2015).

Art therapy did not find its way into the Russian system of education for a long enough period of time (Kasen & Aitbaeva, 2019; Aitbaeva & Kasen, 2018). The authors call the year of 1997 and the published work by Yu. S. Shevchenko and A. V. Krepitsa (1998) "Principles of art therapy and art pedagogy in working with children and adolescents", where the term "art pedagogy" was differentiated from that of "art therapy", the beginning of "inscription" of art therapy within the framework of educational system".

As defined by R. A. Verkhovodova and R. A. Galustov (2011) "art pedagogy is a scientific and pedagogical domain relying on an integrative use of various arts in the educational process for the purposes of producing an efficient cultivating influence on students' personalities" (p. 15-18).

Visual art therapy is the fundamental and hence the best explored focus area of art therapy contributing to harmonization of students' mental state.

The first studies of the effect of visual art therapy on children's development were conducted abroad.

So, Austrian and American artist Edith Kramer (2010) demonstrated in her research works that classes on visual arts activity "imply the development of a set of abilities including mastering the artistic materials in such a way that they start acting as an equivalent of human experience and mental processes" (p. 2). The author has proven that the process of drawing promotes organization of mental processes and gradual transition from relatively primitive forms of the mental activity to more complicated and efficient ones.

In Russian science, there has been a number of studies, too, representing certain questions of the use of visual art therapy in developing students' creative abilities.

For example, E. A. Medvedeva, I. Yu. Levchenko, L. N. Komissarova, T. A. Dobrovol'skaya (2001), O. M. Korzhenko, and E. A. Zargariyan (2013) name the following principal conditions for the use of art therapy in the educational space:

- Firstly, there must be a system of moral and esthetic interaction relying on the domains of psychology, pedagogy, and art review;
- Secondly, teachers must organize independent artistic creativity of participants of the educational process.

L. D. Lebedeva (2001) has explored a broad range of questions of applying art therapy in education. In particular, she considers theoretical bases of art therapy. In the book, there is also a unit on diagnosing and outlining the scope of use of the art therapeutic diagnosing method, and a series of topical art therapy classes and exercises are demonstrated as a system (Lebedeva, 2001).

Another example of using art therapy elements in the educational process are works of L. A. Ametova (2003). She has designed the be your own art therapist program which is aimed at shaping art therapy culture in students and developing their intellectual and creative capacities. In the course of fulfillment of the program, a teacher holds classes and training sessions for students, organizes their perception and discussion of works of both figural art and music (Ametova, 2003).

As E. Yu. Ilaltdinova and A. A. Oladyshkina (2020) note, teachers must create conditions for the creative principle to be made relevant in students through involving them into various activities.

Having analyzed the scientific sources, the authors come to the conclusion that the use of art therapy methods in the educational process acts as one of the means for building up healthy, socially productive, and creative individuals.

The study of theoretical approaches to the problem of creative abilities being developed by means of art therapy has shown that for the most part, its use is associated with the cultivating and harmonizing effect it produces on students. The use of visual art therapy in the system of education as an art therapy method can be justifiably presented as a health-saving innovation which can manifest itself at the level of educational programs, innovation technologies, via the system of spontaneous creativity methods involving various materials and can be integrated with other technologies of the psychological and pedagogical work.

Based on the above, the authors of the paper have developed recommended practices for implementing art methods into teaching activity with the aim of developing students' creative abilities.

The objective of using art therapy methods at classes on visual arts is the development of students' personalities, their abilities of creative self-expression.

Tasks of the methods used are as follows:

- promoting accommodation for creative activity during which artistic images are created representing the reality and embodying the students' esthetic attitude to it;
- introducing students to new artistic techniques;
- teaching them how to use various artistic materials in their drawing, to understand the idiom of fine art, to use artistic expressive means (line, shape, composition, rhythm, color and so on);
- revealing and cultivating the students' creative capacities, leading them to creating their own variations and improvised works.

So, to implement art methods in their teaching activity, teachers have to: get a clear understanding of significance of these methods, the objectives and tasks of using art therapy methods combined with solving the educational tasks of the "Visual arts" academic subject; know methods of art therapy based on the process of drawing; realize and adhere to stages of carrying out the said art technologies.

Next, let the opportunities granted by the zentangle therapy and mandala therapy methods for developing students' creative abilities be considered in more detail.

Among the present-day most interesting and popular figural methods of art therapy, the zentangle technique is notable. As defined by B. Krahula (2014), zentangle is a graphic black and white drawing consisting of a special total of repeated patterns which form an abstract image bearing no semantic load. Another interpretation suggests the origin of the term zentangle being associated with the words zen (tranquility, calmness) and rectangle.

As an art therapy method, zentangle is simple to use as no special conditions, materials, or tools are required for it. All that one needs here - only a piece (tile) of paper and a pen or pencil.

The use of the zentangle technique drawing can contribute to achieving many diverse objectives:

- in personal terms – cultivating one's artistic taste and skills of using paper as an art material;
- in meta-subject terms – building motivation and the ability to organize one's artistic and creative activity independently;
- in subject terms – broadening one's ideas about depictive activity; gaining one's own experience of artistic and creative activity via modeling new images by means of transforming the known ones; learning artistic expressive means of drawing – such as composition and its construction, color (the black and white contrast), line (thin and thick, straight and wavy, flowing and sharp, spiraled, and sweeping lines), simple shapes of geometry, and the rhythm of lines, shapes, and color.

Concerning the development of creative abilities, results of studies give evidence about benefit from creating zentangles (Krahula, 2014).

The origin of the word mandala is associated with Buddhism and Hinduism. In its broadest sense, it correlates with the following meanings: globe, wheel, disc, orbit, ring, country, society, space, total, assembly. The shared tinge within all the above interpretations is the all-encompassing sphere embracing each person. So, the complex composition of a mandala can contain the most diverse elements: squares, ovals, wavy lines, curves, diamond shapes, triangles, etc. The rhythmic character of elements placement, their different sizes, and the use of whatever colors one pleases allows creating unique and inimitable pictures. The size of mandalas is not regulated, so it can range from a small picture of several centimeters up to vast walls.

The study of the mandala therapy method and its implementation into practice of therapeutic work is associated with the name of Carl Gustav Jung who defined a mandala as a material expression of one's mental state (a projection of the Self). He believed that using mandalas, the human inner condition can be transfigured. Drawing mandalas is associated with bringing one's inner state, emotions, and feelings from the internal world out to a sheet of paper where what is happening within a person is reflected via color and line just like in the mirror. That is, drawing mandalas allows transforming one's emotions (frequently concealed as prescribed by the modern culture) into a socially acceptable format. This is where the therapeutic effect of mandala therapy consists (Kopytin & Svistovskaya, 2017).

When suggesting students to draw mandalas, the teacher completes the following educational tasks:

- introducing the students to the art of patterns and different kinds of symmetry;
- developing their sense of rhythm, harmony, and order;
- creating conditions for the development of the students' imagination and creative abilities, as the absence of strict rules for creating mandalas grants them an opportunity of expression in a spontaneous, original, and non-standard way.

Building a mandala is a creative process in which ideas about beauty and harmony are expressed in a free symbolic shape via designing a pictorial composition in a circle, selecting, and

combining the rhythmically repeated elements colored as desired by the author of the mandala according to his or her current mood.

5 Conclusion

Studying the works of Russian and foreign scientists has shown that in psychology, creative abilities are viewed as a human personal quality characterizing the degree of the person's conformity to requirements of a particular creative activity and determining the level of its effectiveness. The study of opportunities of using art therapy to develop creative abilities has shown that the use of art therapy improves the interpersonal competency, self-awareness, self-esteem and communication skills; it reveals the creative potential manifested in creating new original products; it helps shape healthy needs, too.

Recommended practices of fulfillment of art methods in teaching activity have been developed. In particular, the following methodological aspects have been determined: meaning, objectives, and tasks of using art therapy methods combined with completing educational tasks of the "Visual arts" subject; certain kinds of art therapy methods relying on the process of drawing; fulfillment stages of the art technologies.

The opportunities of use have been described for the following methods:

- the zentangle method in developing creative abilities. Alongside rules of zentangle, the list of tools and materials required for zentangle drawing, and methods for learning the zentangle technique, the authors have identified the importance of drawing using this technique, the role of zentangle drawing at classes, and its opportunities for completing diverse tasks in personal, subject, and meta-subject terms;
- the mandala therapy art method in developing students' creative abilities. It has been demonstrated that building a mandala is a creative process in which one's ideas about beauty and harmony are expressed in a free symbolic shape via designing a pictorial composition in a circle, selecting, and combining the rhythmically repeated elements colored as desired.

In general, practice of art therapy methods at visual arts classes contributes to broadening students' ideas about kinds of depictive activity and gaining their own experience of artistic and creative activity via modeling new images by means of transforming the known ones. Thus, they learn artistic expressive means of drawing, such as composition and its construction, color, line, stroke, simple shapes of geometry, and the rhythm of lines, shapes, and color.

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