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Four-Stage Methodology For Developing Creative Competence Through Visual Activities

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ABSTRACT

The article describes a four-stage methodology for developing the creative competence of preschool education students through visual activities. The specific potential of visual activities for developing pedagogical creativity is substantiated.

Keywords: Creative competence, visual activities, future preschool educator, four-stage methodology, differentiated creative tasks, master class, digital portfolio, "Ilk Qadam" curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Reforms in the preschool education system have fundamentally changed the requirements for preschool educators. The Law "On Preschool Education and Upbringing" [1] and the third edition of the "Ilk Qadam" national curriculum [2] identify children's creative development as a separate developmental area and require educators to act as facilitators capable of supporting children's initiatives and organizing play- and inquiry-based learning. Resolution No. PQ-289 [3] and Decree No. PF-73 [4], concerning the improvement of the quality of pedagogical education, establish the tasks of updating curricula based on advanced international experience and strengthening practice-oriented training.

The creative competence of preschool educators directly influences children's creative development. International studies demonstrate that teachers' beliefs about creativity and their preparation are major factors determining creative practices in the classroom [11]. Therefore, developing the creative competence of future preschool educators through visual activities, which are closely related to their future professional practice, is a relevant task. The purpose of the article is to substantiate the four-stage methodology of this process and demonstrate its effectiveness.

Local studies have examined the methodology for developing future teachers' creative competence [14] and the model of creative pedagogical thinking among future preschool educators [15]. However, visual activities are often considered solely as content to be taught to children, while their potential as a means of developing students' own creative competence has not been sufficiently explored.

The main problems in practice include the predominance of theoretical instruction in subjects related to visual activities and the limitation of practical creative work to copying samples; the lack of integration between digital tools and traditional techniques; the absence of connections between teaching practice and visual activity sessions; and the lack of tools enabling students to monitor and analyze their own creative growth.

Visual activities promote the integrated development of perception, imagination, independent thinking, and aesthetic taste. Their specific potential for pedagogical creativity is as follows: first, they offer an unlimited variety of possibilities, encouraging originality; second, they produce quick and clearly visible results, stimulating self-assessment and reflection; third, the absence of the concept of an "incorrect result" creates a psychologically safe environment and encourages creative risk-taking. At the same time, visual activities are directly related to the future professional responsibilities of preschool educators: students subsequently redesign the creative processes they have personally experienced for activities with children.

The methodology is based on the following principles: a consistent transition from theory to practice (the ratio of theoretical to practical hours is approximately 30:70); a gradual transition from reproductive to creative activities; the priority of pedagogical contextualization (each assignment is linked to preschool educational practice); the integration of digital and traditional tools; and mandatory reflection and self-assessment.

The methodology is implemented over one academic semester (18 weeks). The content of the stages is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the Four-Stage Methodology

Stage (Weeks)	Main Content	Methods and Tools	Expected Outcome
Theoretical and Cognitive (1–4)	Theoretical foundations of creativity and pedagogical creativity; the content of visual activities; materials and techniques	Problem-based lectures, clusters, brainstorming, introduction of a "creativity diary"	Cognitive component, motivation for creative activity
Practical Training (5–10)	Creative tasks at reproductive, partially creative, and fully creative levels; traditional and digital techniques	Differentiated creative tasks; Canva, Adobe Express, Procreate; weekly group creative sessions	Operational and practical component

Practical Master Classes (11–15)	Observation in preschool educational institutions; master classes conducted by experienced educators; “Supported Practice”	Observation protocols, master classes, conducting sessions together with a mentor	Creative initiative component
Final Integration (16–18)	Development and presentation of an independent pedagogical project; digital portfolio	Project-based method, “Creativity Conference,” portfolio	Reflective and evaluative component, integrated creative competence

At the theoretical and introductory stage, lectures are conducted in a “problem-based lecture” format: instead of ready-made conclusions, students are presented with a contradictory situation (for example, “A child has painted the sky green — is this a mistake or creativity?”). Beginning at this stage, each student keeps a “creativity diary” in which observations, sketches, ideas, and reflections are recorded.

At the practical training stage, a three-level system of assignments based on the classification of teaching methods developed by I.Ya. Lerner and M.N. Skatkin is applied. At the reproductive level, students master a technique by following a model (for example, the “wet-on-wet” watercolor technique); at the partially creative level, they apply it in a new context (creating a composition entitled “Autumn Mood” using the same technique); at the fully creative level, they transform the technique into an activity idea for children. Traditional techniques (watercolor, gouache, clay modeling, appliqué) are combined with digital tools: students digitize their hand-drawn pictures and use them to create didactic games or fairy-tale booklets for children.

At the practical master-class stage, students observe visual activity sessions in preschool educational institutions according to a special protocol, participate in master classes conducted by experienced preschool educators, and carry out “supported practice” under the supervision of a mentor. This stage transfers theoretical knowledge into real pedagogical situations and develops the ability to find solutions in non-standard circumstances.

At the final integration stage, students independently develop a pedagogical project over three weeks (for example, a one-month creative program for the “Art” center or a project related to national applied arts) and defend it in a “press conference” format. In addition, a digital portfolio is created, consisting of the sections “About Me,” “My Works,” “What I Have Learned,” and “My Future Plans.”

The effective implementation of the methodology requires the following conditions: a psychologically safe creative environment (a culture that allows mistakes); respect for students' individual creative styles; the teacher's own creative competence; and systematic presentation and recognition of students' creative works.

The methodology was experimentally tested between 2022 and 2025 among preschool education students at three higher education institutions (245 students in the experimental group and 249 in the control group). The diagnostic assessment employed the figural subtest of E.P. Torrance's test, a four-component system of criteria and indicators, an observation protocol comprising 20 indicators, and a 24-item questionnaire. In the experimental group, the proportion of students at a high level increased from 24% to 43%, while the proportion at a low level decreased from 39% to 14%; no significant changes were observed in the control group. Student's t-test value of 7.58 (> 1.96) confirmed the statistical significance of the results; the effectiveness indicator of the experimental group was 13.2% higher than that of the control group.

Recommendations

- Bring the ratio of theoretical to practical hours in subjects related to visual activities closer to 30:70 and organize practical sessions based on differentiated creative assignments;
- Integrate traditional visual art techniques with digital tools (graphic editors, presentation and design platforms);
- Closely connect pedagogical practice (the “4+2” system) with visual activity sessions, master classes, and mentoring;
- Include the maintenance of a “creativity diary” and digital portfolio for each student in the assessment system;
- Use the defense of an independent pedagogical project as a form of final assessment at the end of the semester.

Conclusion

Visual activities are an effective means of developing the creative competence of future preschool educators because they encourage originality, enable rapid reflection, and create a psychologically safe creative environment. The methodology, consisting of theoretical and introductory, practical training, practical master-class, and final integration stages, provides a consistent pathway that transforms students from “passive performers into active creators”: each stage develops a particular component of creative competence, while together they produce an integrated outcome. The experimental results indicate that the implementation of the methodology in higher pedagogical education is appropriate.

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