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CREATIVITY AND THE SLOW LEARNER

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an examination of the positive aspects of creativity for the slow learner. In it I set out to look at ways and means of enhancing and developing this creative ability in the slow learner. I was concerned with a "creativity" that implies problem solving in a unique, varied and original way, also with self expression based on independence, confidence and imagination.

In the first chapter I explored various definitions of the terms "slow learner" and "creativity" and I re-defined these words for use in subsequent chapters. Creativity dealt more with the aspects relating to the art class. The definition of the slow learner takes into account the class type I worked with for the practical exploration of the theories. (see Appendix B).

In the second chapter I looked at how creativity can benefit the slow learner. I explored ways of developing and enhancing this creativity by examining studies carried out in the classroom by various bodies and by examining a wide range of theories on the subjects of slow learners and creative development.

Having in the third chapter picked out the ideas I felt were most suited to my class and sequence of lessons, I set out to test their practicality in a remedial class of 27 pupils. I used questionnaires to ascertain pupils feelings and opinions of the methodology. I questioned art teachers on their perceptions of the needs and ability of slow learners in their art class. My conclusions were drawn on the basis of these questionnaires and the practical application of theories examined in Chapter II.

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION OF CREATIVITY AND THE SLOW LEARNER

Definition of Creativity

In this first chapter I will look at various definitions of the term 'slow learner' and different theories on what creativity is. I will subsequently give a definition of " creativity" and " slow learner " as I mean to use these terms in the following chapters.

It is difficult to define creativity, though many have so attempted. To the layman and perhaps even to the artist himself, the nature of the creative process is mysterious and unanalysable. To the psychologist, creative thinking is merely one of the many kinds of thinking which range from fantasy to logical reasoning.

Creativity is often seen as an abundance of ideas, or as an individual or novel way of seeing things. It is often seen as being constructive, original and something which produces a way forward, or a solution to a problem, not necessarily a totally new idea, but one that is novel for the situation or circumstances at the time. (1)

E. W. Sinnott, (1970) says man's most distinctive trait, his imagination, makes possible his creativity. He suggests that the many inventions, communication by written symbols, domestication of animals, invention of the wheel, and many more, had no sudden origin but they are all novelties that could not have appeared unless there had been someone who could imagine a situation never experienced.

He says the "creative imagination is especially active at the mind's unconscious level" (2) and along with this unconscious creativity there is always a strong preceding desire for the solution of a problem that an individual has been working on, or the construction of a work of art when only hints or cloudy outlines are in the mind.

According to Freud, (1970) creativity occurs as a result of "man's tendency to actualise himself to become his full potentialities", (3) which he believes inherent in every individual and is only waiting for the proper conditions to be released.

According to Wallas, (1970) the creative process takes place in three stages:

1) Preparation, when all stages of a problem are investigated.

2) Incubation - when the individual is not consciously thinking about the problem.

3) The 'happy idea' stage - when the individual receives some illumination, apparently out of the blue, but only after going through the initial two stages. (4)

Eisner (1972) has explored the term "creativity" and divided it into four categories. (5)

(1) Boundary pushing - this idea suggests that each individual is working within accepted and stereotyped boundaries, but some individuals extend and re-define these common limits, e.g. the person who thought of putting drink machines into colleges, toothbrush machines into toilet areas, was boundary pushing.

(2) Inventing - when the individual uses known objects to create a totally new object - e.g. when Edison invented the light bulb.

(3) Boundary breaking - occurs when the individual can reject or rearrange certain assumptions, and yet create order in the gaps he had found or the structure he created, e.g. - Copernicus in his rejection of the theory that the earth was the centre of the universe.

(4) Aesthetic Organising - he says is creating harmony and coherence by the application of order and unity. (This would be questioned by many artists) to new or existing objects.

According to Eisner, it is possible to find each of these types of creativity in a students work, although you normally find just one or two in any single work. He also said that it is possible for a student to be creative in sculpture and not in painting or some other area.

In a study of 160 pieces of work by pupils, Eisner found 'boundary pushing' was the most common type of creativity and 'boundary breaking' was the least common.

Lowenfield (1970) says that it may happen that a child will do well on intelligence tests and also do well on creativity tests but it does not necessarily follow that the child who does well on intelligence tests will always do well on creativity tests. Tests were done to prove this using childrens' drawings as a measure of creativity: (6)

> Usually the test of the effectiveness of an individuals ability to solve a problem presented in an intelligence test is whether or not the right answer is given (7)

However, in creativity tests (e.g. Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking) it is those responses that occur infrequently or not at all which receive higher scores. The measurement of creative problem solving is limited to those problems that have many acceptable solutions and, acceptable solutions are defined as unique, varied and original. Considering these differences in measurement of intelligence and creativity, one can understand why differences are found between highly intelligent and highly creative individuals, when certain measurements are used.

One basic factor in creative expression is the true expression of self. It is the individuals own experiences and ideas which come across - not what is expected or laid down in the rules. Because the individual is continually growing and experiences are continually changing, their

their expression of self will incorporate this too. (8)

The following is a definition of 'creativity' as I intend to use this term in the following chapters.

Creativity that is concerned with problem solving in a unique, varied and original way, also with self expression based on independence, confidence and imagination.

I realise these are only some aspects of creativity, but as this thesis deals mainly with creativity in the classroom, I feel these are the more relevant aspects to the study.

Studies show that parents personality characteristics, parents' expectations towards their children, their degree of acceptance and respect for the children's ideas, feelings, questions, and fantasies as well as the degree of encouragement of independence, autonomy and personal expression are important to creative achievement. (9) A second set of influences is the characteristics of the educational context. It has been observed that although teachers agree on the importance of fostering creativity, in general, teachers do not offer adequate conditions for the development of the creative capacity.

In the following chapters, I will attempt to show how adequate conditions for the development of the creative capacity may be developed in the classroom for the slow learner, and how they may benefit from these conditions and the development of their creative capacity.

Definition of Slow Learner

Firstly, I will examine the definition of 'slow learner'.

According to W.K. Brennan, (1974) 'slow learner' is a term used to "label a condition of educational failure, without either indicating or explaining its nature or causation" (10), and by our use of the term as a sole explanation, we leave ourselves open to the risk of unfair generalisations about 'slow learning children', ignoring many and varied underlying causes of school failure, with the subsequent danger of a stereotyped educational solution.

Handicap is the term used by Cohen & Cohen, (1986) when talking about children who are slow learners. They feel the definition of the term, or related terms depends on social values, prevailing in our society, a society, which they believe, considers that the practical importance of achievement and social competence, counts for more than anything else. Cohen & Cohen suggest that, instead of blindly accepting this criterion, society should look at other criteria involving the mind, heart and soul as well as the body. (11)

Geoff Sewell sees the term "slow learner" as just another label, and he says that according to the Warnock Report, (1986) as many as twenty percent of the child population could be classed as having 'special educational needs' at some time in their schooling. These children are not attending special schools, but ordinary primary and second level schools. This group comprises 1) children making up for work missed due to absenteeism, 2) children with physical or sensory disabilities, 3) children with learning

difficulties, and 4) children who need to be taken out of "normal" classes for specific purposes. (12)

According to W. K. Brennan, (1974) slow learners are pupils who are not capable of keeping up with the classwork normally done by pupils of their age, and whose ability cannot be put down to any handicap (defined as blindness, partial sight, deafness, partial hearing, epilepsy, maladjustment, physical handicap, defective speech, delicacy. (13)

If one or more of these handicaps is present, they only have it in a mild form, and it is not the real reason or cause of their learning difficulty. Neither will these children show signs of severe intellectual retardation or above average intelligence combined with learning failure. These pupils will relate to others in a normal way, though it is possible that they will be less secure and more immature as a result of their experience of failure.

In the following chapters, when I talk about slow learners, I will refer to the following type of pupil:

1) Pupils who are not capable of keeping up with classwork normally done by pupils of their age.

2) Children whose inability to do the work is not caused by any handicap (as listed above), though a handicap may exist in a mild form.

3) Children whose inability to do the work may be caused by missing classes.

4) Children who may find it difficult to concentrate due to outside circumstances (home).

5) Children who may not make progress due to lack of confidence or self esteem.

6) Children who are normal in their relations with others. (12)

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CHAPTER II

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Benefits of Enhanced Creativity

Before looking at the conditions in the classroom that especially enhance the creative capacity of the slow learner, I will look at some benefits of enhanced creative capacity.

Cropley (1970) says the highly creative individuals are characterised by:

1) Possession of wide categories (i.e. a readiness to accept the maximum amount of information from the external world).

2) Willingness to take risks.

3) Willingness to 'have a go'

4) High levels of flexibility. (3)

From a series of studies on the benefits of creative problem solving, the following was found by Parnes, (1970) that the pupils gained in dominance. By this it was meant that characteristics such as confidence, self reliance, persuasiveness, initiative and leadership potential were more obvious.

Other workers have previously found that dominance is a personality trait associated with creative persons. (5)

Following a programme on creativity learning skills given to teachers and their use of these skills in the class, it was found that the pupils' self

confidence increased. Initiative also increased, and these were not traditionally recognised factors in the educational setting. (6)
Teachers also found that they gave the pupils more positive feedback, more frequently encouraged the use of imagination and curiosity, and promoted more participation. Tests of intelligence and academic achievements are excellent for predicting success of pupils in academic settings but are not effective in predicting career success. (7) On the other hand, creativity tests have low predictive validity when used in terms of academic settings but have much higher validity for productivity in careers. (8)

Enhancing Conditions of Creative Development

The difficulties of slow learning pupils are often analysed in isolation, thus distracting attention from a whole range of factors that might have significance in helping them to learn. An approach to teaching and learning that recognises that all of us experience difficulties with certain tasks, and that a learning difficulty is something we associate with the attempts of a person to deal with a particular activity, rather than focusing on the individual as someone with "special needs", would lead us to focus attention on the context within which teaching and learning take place - the classroom. It also means giving attention to the purpose and nature of the tasks and activities that pupils encounter.

In other words learning difficulties would be seen as context related .(1)
In trying to help slow learning pupils to experience success in the classroom (and here I am concerned with successful development of creative ability) it is best to focus attention on the factors over which the teacher has significant influence, especially classroom factors associated with the planning and

implementation of the curriculum. Aims should include taking into account the individuality of pupils and finding ways to help them understand the nature and purpose of the tasks and activities they undertake. All of us learn from our experience (2) according to Maria Montessori. (1988) Consequently, it is good for pupils to reflect on and interpret the work they have done in the classroom.

According to Csikszentimihalyi, (1988):

> ...to study creativity by focusing on the individual alone is like trying to understand how an apple tree produces fruit by looking only at the tree, and ignoring the sun, and the soil that support its life. (9)

There are several aspects that need to be cultivated in schools to favour the development and expression of creative abilities, according to E.M.L. Soriano de Alencar, (1993) such as independence, self-confidence, initiative, persistence, as well as an attitude of reception to new ideas, flexibility,courage to express divergent ideas and points of view. (10).

Brainstorming is another means of enhancing pupils' ability to produce new ideas and combinations. One of the most famous American Institutes is the "Creative Education Foundation" in Buffalo, New York, which was founded by Alex Osborn, the originator of the brainstorming technique, more than thirty years ago. A large number of similar institutes were founded with the purpose of increasing the individuals creative problem solving skills and training teachers to implement this purpose. (11).

From Parnes' studies (1959) on the benefits of creative problem solving, he found that:

> In general the creative problem solving courses were found to be equally helpful to students of low and high initial creative ability, and equally helpful to those with low and high intelligence levels. This finding is in line with Guilford's conclusion that although heredity may place limitations on the skills involved in creative ability, these skills can be extended within those limitations through education. (4)

Confidence

According to R.J. Martin, (1980) a lot of uncooperative pupils are discouraged human beings and because they feel this lack of courage or confidence, they withdraw and refuse to co-operate by seeming lazy or causing trouble in the class. It is not unusual for a child to learn very early in school that he lacks certain skills and capacities, thus contributing to a limited perception of the person's own resources and abilities. This is responsible for the following comments; "I can't do it'" "I know I'm not capable of", "I was born this way", or "I don't have it in me."

One way of providing encouragement and confidence is to provide opportunities for success and avoid giving assignments that generate unnecessary mistakes. First of all, we need to strike a reasonable balance between the attainment and interest of each pupil and the activity that he/she

is required to do. (12) To do this, it is necessary to know the pupils as well as possible, especially in terms of :

: Previous experience - all pupils will have previous experience and the personal knowledge should be used by the teacher to enhance their learning.

: Existing skills and knowledge - this means an understanding of what the child already can do, and what their next learning task should be, based on this knowledge.

: Attitudes - a sensitivity is needed here, to the pupils attitudes to various learning tasks.

Some may have negative views of themselves, as pupils, based on previous experiences of failure, some may have little confidence in the teacher's ability to help them succeed in learning anything.

According to R. J. Martin, (1980) encouragement can be provided by focusing on the strengths of the student, thus enhancing a positive self-image (13) and the more the student seems unable to help themselves the more necessary it becomes to focus on strengths and avoid unnecessary dependence.

The encouragement process, according to R.J. Martin, is a means of helping students to change their views of self, others and the world. Martin says that encouragement and responsibility are linked. Pupils who learn to accept

responsibility for their behaviour, will experience a sense of power to direct their own lives and this encourages them to learn to co-operate with others and as they succeed in this area, it gives them more confidence.

Another way of encouraging and giving confidence to students is taking the emphasis off success. For many students fear of of failure holds them back because they do not think they can be successful no matter how hard they try. Many have been taught to believe that pressure to do well and fear of failure are good motivators, but observation shows that they lead more often to discouragement. The fear of failure seldom encourages students to do better. For many students fear of failure does not motivate them because they do not think they can be successful no matter how hard they try.

Teacher Expectations

Although many teachers would probably deny it, most of them form impressions early in the school year concerning the probable performance of the incoming group of students. Rosenthal and Jackobson (1968), have carried out an experiment on this theory. (14) In their experiment, "Pygmalion in the Classroom", they experimentally plant an expectation of a class and then assess to what degree it is fulfilled.

In a number of classes teachers were told to expect twenty percent of their class to show unusual intellectual gains during the academic year. In order to assess the impact of teacher expectations, the children were given an IQ test before the experiment commenced and again after eight months of classroom experience with the 'expectant' teachers. Those students for

whom the teacher had been led to expect greater intelligence gain, showed a significantly greater increase in IQ scores than did the remaining students.

According to Minuchin & Shapiro (1983), high achievers are given more praise for correct answers and less criticism for wrong ones. In contrast low achievers are not expected to know and to participate and are provided less opportunity and encouragement for doing so.

Brennan (1974) warns against narrowing the curriculum too much when deciding on objectives for slow learners. Apart from the danger of segregating the pupils, there is the added danger of pupils sensing this attitude of lowered expectation from the teacher and adopting a role that will confirm teacher expectations. There is also the danger that they will only do what they are told to do and become more dependent and less enquiring.

According to children, schools are first and foremost places of evaluation, not of learning. "Nowhere else in society is the individual scrutinised for so long a time or as intensely as he is at school" (16) and in the opinions of Williams & Hill, (1976) children have been found to work better when they are free from expectations of adult approval or disapproval based on performance.

Praise

Brophy (1983) has reviewed the extensive research evidence about the use of praise in the classroom and he advises that teachers should be aware of the danger of praising too often so that pupils find they are getting less

satisfaction from completing their tasks. He suggests that praise should be given only in "genuine cases of achievement" (18) and especially in cases where the pupils do not appreciate their achievement. The main effort must be to encourage pupils to work because they find enjoyment and satisfaction in learning. Brophy recommends that teachers should concentrate on praising well rather than often. Praise can be encouraging, but it can also be a cause of anxiety and concern, and fear of failure, if it becomes manipulative, according to R.J. Martin, (1980). He says praising indiscriminately can backfire as students come to realise that the praise they may have received and the mark at the end of term are two different things. He suggests, in this case, working out "some realistic goals" and then praising them for improvement is an approach that might work better. (19)

Expressing appreciation can be another way of praising a child, but at the same time you are not seen to be evaluating them, e.g. you can say, "I like the way you have used colour..." or "I appreciate the way you work so hard" or " keep at it". (20)

Motivation

Research (Bennett, Desforges, Cockburn, and Wilkinson, 1984) indicates that those pupils who make the least progress in schools are the pupils who have spent the least amount of time engaged in the tasks and activities set by their teachers. (21) But how do you keep pupils engaged in their task or activity? First, it is necessary to ensure the pupil understands the type of

activity engaged in and the reasons for it., (1989).

According to Ainscow &Tweddle a sense of purpose characterises effective teaching and whatever the process of determining objectives, it is essential that the intentions are communicated to the pupils. You make it clear to the pupils what you want them to do, if necessary tell them the final outcome of the activity, while a restatement of the purpose can sharpen their understanding.

In particular, during a review or evaluation pupil should be required to show that they understand and can interpret the purpose of their tasks and activities, rather than "mechanically assessing a narrow range of outcomes". (22) A benefit of involving pupils actively in coming up with their own explanations of particular activities means you can check their understanding before continuing the class.

According to Ainscow & Tweddle all tasks and activities should be designed in ways that will encourage pupil participation, and the points to remember are:

Clarification of the nature and purpose of what is planned.

Matching of tasks and material to individual pupils.

Emphasis on interest

Provision of support and feedback.

For the pupil with a very short attention span, Westwood (1975) suggests that lessons should be designed to be completed in a shorter time. For example, instead of using large sheets of paper, smaller ones can be used. Time can be broken into shorter units by varying the types of activity so that quiet ones can be followed by more active ones. There can be planned interruptions of long lessons, with evaluations and moving around for materials

Both Kounin (1974) and Brophy (1979) stressed the importance of keeping the flow going in the classroom. Brophy noted that successful teachers adopt a number of ways to ensure that maximum time was spent working on the job - these included grouping pupils, the placement of resources, and the use of group monitoring technique. (23) Consistent with Kounin and Brophy's theory on the benefits of keeping the flow going, Anderson et al. (1980) found that successful teachers quickly reviewed children's work by regularly and systematically circulating, so that each pupil was checked frequently. Less successful teachers were unsystematic in their circulation, mainly responding to those pupils who caught their attention. (24)

One reason why pupils can give up on tasks is simply because the tasks are too difficult and the level of performance required is beyond their present ability. Expecting a pupil to perform a task far beyond tolerance level can result in a breakdown in learning.

According to Ainscow & Tweddle, (1989) one of the critical factors of an

effective teaching methodology is "ensuring that activities match the pupils' interests and attainments as far as possible". (25) The business of setting tasks to match the existing attainments of pupils can be very difficult, especially in a large class. The aim should be to pitch tasks at levels that make demands that each pupil in the class can achieve, provided they make the effort. However, this is not always a possibility and so we need to be able to provide support and feedback when pupils are confused or if some have to spend time working on activities well within their competence, which leaves them bored. In the latter case it may be possible to do out a work sheet for the individuals ahead of the rest of the class. Alternatively, for the pupil who is falling behind, one of the pupils who is already finished could give some individual help.

Peer Help

Traditionally schools applaud competition and see it as climbing a ladder to success, the top of which can only be achieved by a privileged few. It encourages pupils to work for themselves, taking little account of others performance except in the case that they can be overtaken in the race for the top. For some pupils, this is undoubtedly motivating, but the pupils who are continually on the bottom rungs of the ladder soon feel discouraged.

Competition only teaches them that they are failures.

Currently, there is an increased movement towards in-class support where an additional teacher or classroom assistant provides additional help to those pupils who are seen to be having difficulty in learning. In the helper/additional teacher class, the aim is to give the pupil that trust and

opportunity to develop a close working relationship with the person helping them, and secondly the pupils can be provided with tasks and materials adjusted to suit their present attainments.

Allen and Feldman , (1973) found that the experience of being a tutor can benefit low achieving children because pupils who are low achievers often have a record of failure and tend to be passive participants in any learning exchange. Motivation and involvement will increase in the tutoring situation and so the low achiever will learn better when placed in the role of peer teacher, than when working alone.

Crockenberg (1979) has shown in an experimental study that co-operative learning experiences can lead to greater conformity and susceptibility to peer influence, as well as unwillingness to risk disagreement. This is something that would need to be carefully monitored by the teacher in charge. While helpfulness and mutual respect are important and desirable outcomes, blind conformity is not. Thomas (1986) suggests that when using adult helpers in the classroom:

> ...the aim should be to ensure that all members of a class are actively engaged in the tasks set by the teacher while at the same time providing the maximum amount of help possible to individual pupils. (26)

His idea is to have an activity manager who will attempt to keep the class involved in tasks and activities given, and also an individual helper - who will give intensive tutoring to individuals or small groups for short periods.

Another significant means of gaining time to help individual pupils, is to allow the pupils to share in the responsibility of classroom arrangements. You will often get pupils extremely anxious to help (27) and provided you do not allow them to spend too much time on these tasks, it could be beneficial.

Co-Operative Learning

In this method of learning, the pupils are encouraged and helped to work co-operatively which gives them opportunities to progress in aspects of personal development, to support one another and to seek solutions and solve problems together. Most people would agree that our ideas and understanding are significantly greater for being aired and when we have the opportunity of bouncing our thoughts off other people.

Johnson and Johnson (1989) say that this method of learning should be used:

> ...whenever teachers want students to learn more, like school better, like each other better, have higher self-esteem, and learn more effective social skills (28)

It is necessary to prepare this type of class with a lot of care. The complexity and demands of working together as a group should initially be introduced slowly, perhaps working in pairs on a simple task. Then it will be necessary to ensure that <u>all</u> pupils are actively involved and understand what is going on. It needs careful monitoring by the teacher.

Evaluation by each pupil could be in the form of them keeping a journal of what they have learned or else a discussion with groups using the opportunity to think aloud about what they have achieved. It is important that each student can draw out and record their significant learning experience during the class.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER II

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CHAPTER III

THEORIES IN PRACTICE

The following chapter will deal with the theories expounded in Chapter II, in practice in the classroom. The particular class with which I am working are classed as remedial. (Appendix B)

Enhancing Conditions for Creative Development

Visual Aids

E.M.L. Soriano de Alencar (1993) says that one of the aspects needing cultivation to favour development and expression of creative abilities in schools is "an attitude of reception to new ideas" in pupils. I found that one way of doing this was by providing a wide range of visual aids at the beginning and throughout class, (6) thus enlarging and broadening the pupils' experiences. (of course, every visual aid must be relevant, otherwise it will only confuse). In the lesson plan sequence dealing with shape and colour through the printing process, I tried to expose them to as wide a range of relevant patterns and prints as possible, from wallpaper samples to the Book of Kells. According to Cropley (1970) , highly creative individuals are characterised by certain abilities. One of these is the possession of wide categories (i.e. a readiness to accept the maximum amount of information from the external world). (1) But I found they needed to be given information to develop this capacity. At the beginning of the class on pattern, I put up seven different types of pattern as visual aids. After discussing how shapes can create pattern if they are changed, I asked them how many different patterns do you think you could have ? The answer they gave was 'seven'. Therefore, to help them develop a readiness to accept new ideas, I found it helpful to broaden their experiences.

While I did not get a chance to organise a display table for the class in question (because it did not suit the type of class), I did do it with a group of second years. The class was on construction, and I set up a table with a variety of materials and tools, each tool placed beside the appropriate material, together with a sample of what was possible, e.g. wire with wire cutters, and wire shapes alongside. I also interspersed visual aids among the different materials. (Fig. 1) I asked the pupils to take five minutes to walk around and just look at the different things on the table - then I followed this with an introductory talk on construction. While this class had no problems and were quick to understand, I feel it would work well with slow learning pupils, as long as it was very clear which material was with which tool etc. It would also need to be reinforced with slow learning pupils. With the second years, I found it developed their knowledge of different media and gave them a wide range of options to choose from when constructing their design.

Confidence

In agreement with Ainscow and Tweddle (1989) who see learning difficulties as context related, (2) I set out to plan the structure of lessons and tasks in a manner that would be best suited to the group as a whole.

I tried to enhance confidence by providing opportunities for success and avoided giving assignments that would generate unnecessary mistakes (3) by simplifying tasks. When planning the sequence with the aim of developing the pupils' understanding of line, shape, colour and pattern, I first introduced the pupils to a number of ways of printing and encouraged them to explore print in each class. With each class I found that they became more confident with the technique, so that when they came to do a

Fig.1.

Display materials attractively and informatively.

final print, they were more confident and were more creative and individualistic about the shapes and colours they used. (Fig. 2) They particularly enjoyed the cut out abstract stencilling which was quick and very simple to do. They did these simple stencil printing exercises before they did their final pattern. Children need to be able to learn from a previous class and build on this in the following classes. Eisner (1972) says :

> ...to expect students to work in (woodblock) printing without providing for the development of skills necessary for such work, is to court frustration in the class (4)

I found morale was improved by putting up all the pupils work on display. Normally, there is only room for the best 4 pictures and on several occasions they had said things like "I never have anything on the wall" or if it was good, "will you put that up". So instead of putting up just 4 pieces, I photographed them all and got an enlarged colour photocopy of 2 pictures and mounted these with their names printed alongside.

Following this there was a rise in morale, and the feeling that they could produce something worthwhile.

Encouragement

R.J. Martin (1980) says that the encouragement process is a means of helping pupils to change their views of self, others and the world. Very often the discouraged pupil withdraws or refuses to co-operate and instead

Fig. 2
Leaf prints, rubbings and stencil prints by First Year Remedial Class.

causes trouble in the class. One pupil in the class (Pupil B, Appendix B) was continually making noise and disrupting the class by shouting out loud. I had spoken to her on a couple of occasions but it made no difference.

During one class she had fallen behind, so I moved her beside one of the pupils who knew what she was doing and was ahead of the others. At the end of the class, the work of the pupil who was shouting had improved dramatically. I asked her if she would like to stay in that seat and suggested that maybe she was able to work better over there. She said "yes" and has consistently improved since then. She has also become very enthusiastic and she does not shout anymore. Her confidence has improved because her performance has improved. R.J. Martin (1980) says that encouragement and responsibility are linked. Pupils who learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, will experience a sense of power to direct their own lives and this encourages them to learn to co-operate with others and as they succeed in this area, it gives them more confidence.

Peer Teaching

After the second class in lettering, I went through their work and found that almost half had fallen behind, while the other half of the class were gone well ahead. Rather than hold the others back, or keep them going at different tasks (which would have been virtually impossible with 27 pupils in the class), I decided to divide them into two groups. I matched up a pupil who needed help with one who was ahead.

I found it worked very well - mainly because the numbers were almost even. In fact the one or two pupils who were not 'needed' were disappointed. It

Fig.3.
Stencil prints by First Years -
Bottom Row, middle print was done by Pupil B.

worked in this particular class because the subject matter was block lettering. If they had been at the stage of designing letters it would not have been so successful, because at the design stage, each pupil would be developing their own ideas. At a later stage there is the danger that the pupil who is behind, will conform blindly to peers' suggestions.

I found, in this case however, that the pupils who were given the task of helping someone, took it seriously, and I found it enhanced their confidence and self-respect, and this confidence and self-respect will favour the development and expression of creative abilities, according to E.M.L. Soriano de Alencar (5).

Assistant Teacher

In order to try out the ideas of Thomas (1989) (6) on helpers in the classroom, I asked the other Art Teacher to help during one of the classes. The pupils were working at three different stages and I found it was an ideal class to introduce an assistant teacher. I planned out the class and took two groups while the other Art Teacher looked after six or seven of the pupils who were furthest behind. She gave them individual help and as soon as they were ready, they joined one of the groups I had. It worked very well, though it was necessary to plan it carefully, and discuss it with the other Art Teacher so that she knew what was happening.

Fig.4.
Rubbing by a First Year pupil.

Although I thought success would be almost guaranteed with a rubbing - some of the pupils had difficulty in gauging the correct amount of pressure.

School Description

The school is an all girls Convent School, with good facilities in all departments, art included. Art is highly thought of in the school. When the building was extended in 1978, they built 3 good sized art rooms, one of these is the pottery room with a kiln. They have good storage facilities, though they adhere to strict budgets.

The fifth year students are taken on a trip to France every year to visit Art Galleries. During Arts Week, pupils are encouraged to enter a fashion competition and Junior Certificate pupils are given a workshop by a visiting outside artist.

There is no entrance test, as such, for the school, but once they are accepted, pupils must sit an examination in English, Irish, Maths and an aptitude test of forty minutes each. The classes are mixed ability, but where pupils have shown a need for remedial teaching they are grouped into one special class. The remedial teacher is also school counsellor. Of the 160 pupils entering 1st year, all take Art as a subject. In 2nd year, about half of these will chose to take Art in the Junior Certificate. Of the 40 pupils doing Art in 5th year, 10 have expressed interest in pursuing it as a career. The art teacher gives extra tuition to pupils compiling a portfolio. Of the 20 pupils in 6th year, three quarters want to pursue art as a career.

RANDOM SAMPLE OF 4 PUPILS

PUPIL A

Ability - other subjects	:	Very weak - failed 5 subjects in Christmas tests.
Reading ability	:	8-10
Home Problems/Other	:	Poor memory and hand/eye co-ordination.
Contact with School Counsellor/Remedial Teacher	:	English Classes
	:	Also visits to counsellor

PUPIL B

Ability Other Subjects	:	Weak - failed 3 subjects in Christmas Tests.
Reading Ability	:	10-3
Home problems/Other	:	Attendance poor,not much support at home easily distracted.
Contact with Remedial Teacher/Counsellor	:	English Classes.

PUPIL C

Ability - other subjects	:	Weak - failed 3 subjects in Christmas Tests.
Reading Ability	:	12-1
Home problems/other	:	Difficulties at home - also has hearing disability - poor concentration.
Contact with Remedial	:	English Classes
Teacher/Counsellor	:	Also sees specialist for hearing.

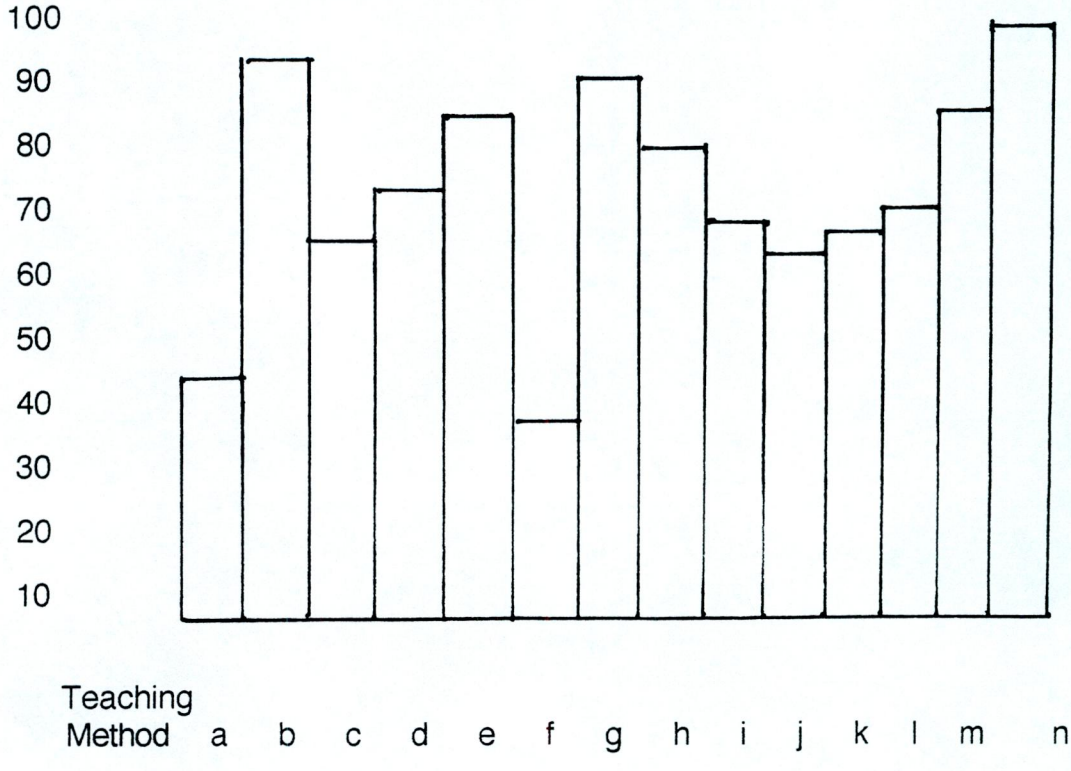
PUPIL D

Ability - other subjects	:	Weak - partly due to high absenteeism.
Reading ability	:	11-2.
Home Problems/other	:	Very severe problems at home - concentration poor.
Contact with Remedial Teacher/Counsellor	:	English Classes.

APPENDIX C.

Results of a questionnaire given to Art Teachers and student art teachers on the importance of certain methods of teaching art (see Appendix G) to develop the creative abilities of slow learning pupils.

Percentage in favour
(considered degree of importance)



See page 40 for Teaching Methods.

Teaching Methods (see Appendix G)

a) Freedom to explore

b) Definite guidelines

c) Less freedom - more control from teacher

d) More Time

e) More Individual help from teacher

f) Keep the whole class at a slower pace

g) More encouragement

h) More praise

i) Display of Work

j) Integration with other classes and not segregation (i.e. slow learners or remedial class)

k) Help from their peers

l) Wide range of materials

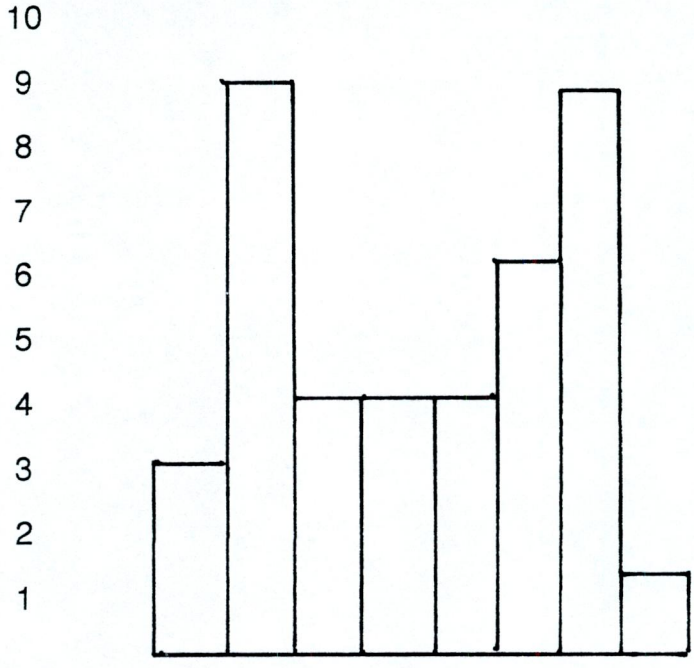
m) Wide range of visual aids

n) Motivation

This questionnaire also showed that teachers found slow learning pupils to be better at imaginative work, than solving design problems or figure/object drawing. All teachers considered their performance in the design problems area to be low, while their ability in object/figure drawing was somewhere between the two.

APPENDIX D.

Results on questionnaire given to pupils (classed as slow learners) on which class they liked best. (see Appendix H)



Class Types

a = Leaf Printing class

b = Printing fan shape with cut-out stencil (repeat pattern)

c = Cutting paper in various shapes & printing

d = Drawing letters A - Z on graph paper

e = Drawing big letters and cutting out

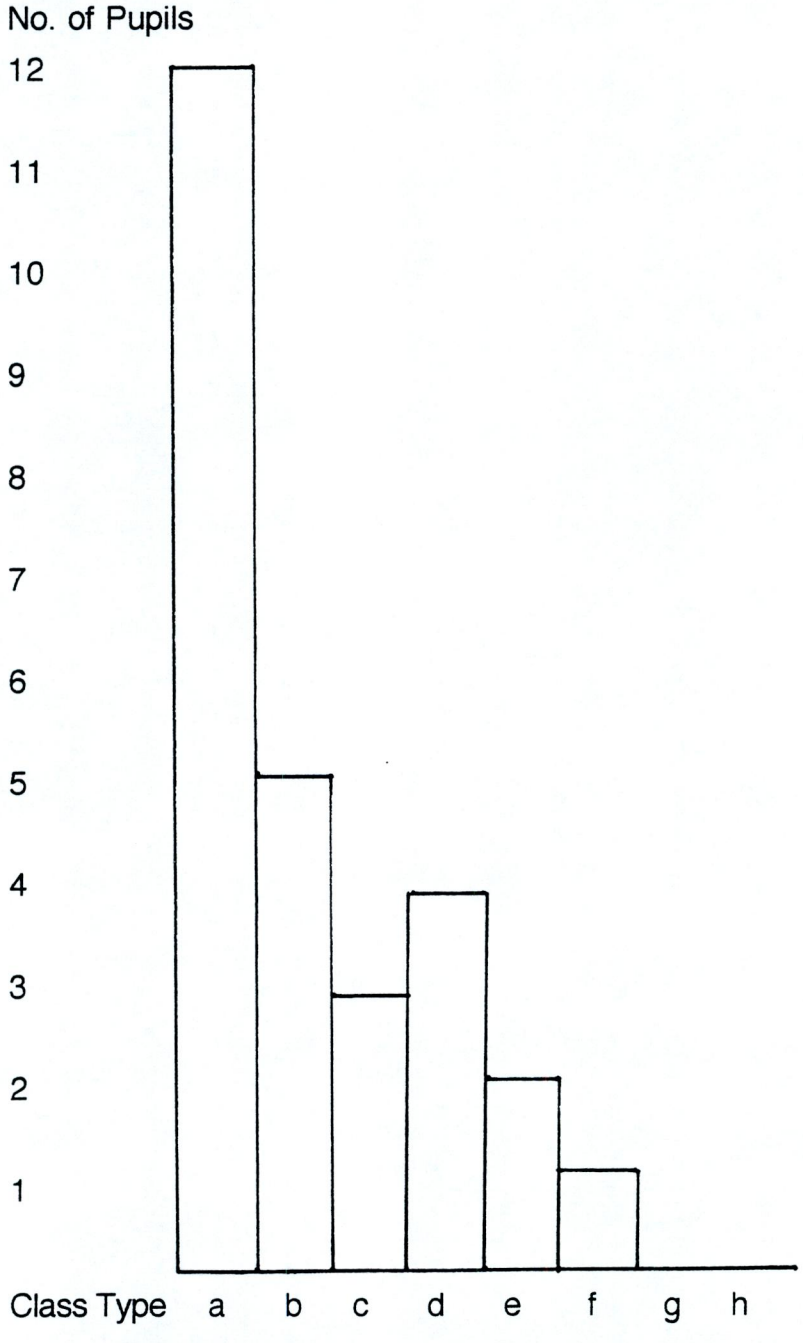
f = Drawing images on lettering

g = Exercise on shades and tints

h = Painting the letters. (Only a few pupils have reached this stage)

APPENDIX E.

Results of questionnaire given to pupils (classed as slow learners) on which class they found <u>easiest.</u> (see Appendix H)



For Class type see previous questionnaire.

Other information from these questionnaires showed that in 9 cases, the class they liked best was also the class they found easiest. Other reasons for liking it best were:

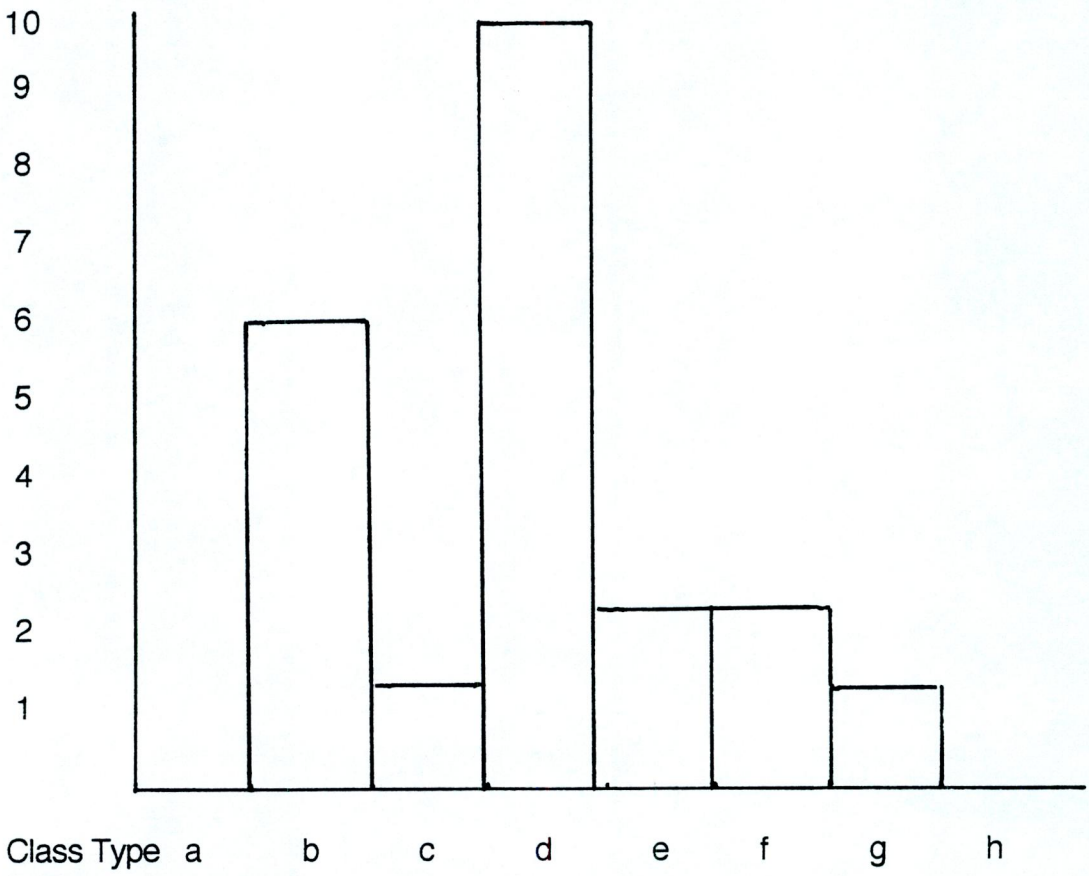
- It was different
- It was fun
- They liked cutting out
- It was interesting
- They were good at it
- Liked printing with stencils

Other reasons why it was easy:

- They just had to 'dab' on paint
- They just had to copy the shapes

APPENDIX F.

Results of questionnaire given to pupils (classed as slow learners) on which class they found most difficult. (see Appendix H)



Class Types - see previous two questionnaires.

Reasons Pupils gave for why it was difficult

- Hard to draw the shape of the fan
- You had to concentrate to get letters right
- Cutting the stencil was hard
- You had to concentrate to get shades right
- Printing the fan shape because it did not work out right.

- Also, out of 25 pupils, 16 preferred to draw their own ideas, 9 preferred the teacher to tell them what to draw.
- 21 Pupils think it is a good idea for pupils to help each other, while 4 think it is not.
- 23 pupils prefer to work slowly and take their time, 2 do not.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III

1. A.J.Cropley, "Psychology and Cognitive Psychology" in Creativity , ed. by P.E. Vernon (Suffolk :The Chaucer Press, 1970) p.124.

2. M. Ainscow and D.A. Tweddle Encouraging Classroom Success (London:David Fulton Publishers, 1989) p.4.

3. Ibid., p.65.

4. E.W. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision (New York : MacMullan, 1972) p.163..

5. E.M.L. Soriano de Alencar "Thinking in the Future", p.94.

6. Ainscow and Tweddle, Encouraging Classroom Success, p.64.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I set out to examine the relationship between creativity and the slow learner. In chapter one, I looked at various definitions of the term "slow learner" and different theories on what "creativity" is. I gave a definition of "creativity" and the "slow learner" as I would use them in Chapters two and three. Chapter two was an exploration of different views and theories on the slow learners performance in the classroom. It examined their needs and ways of enhancing conditions for creative development of the slow learner. It looked at the benefits of enhanced creativity for the slow learner. Chapter three documented the results of putting these theories into practice in the classroom situation. It referred to my own work with a remedial class of twenty seven pupils. In order to apply the research, I designed two questionnaires to elicit information from pupils and art teachers on enhancing conditions for creative development. Questionnaire No. 1 (Appendix G) examined teachers perceptions of the slow learner and the importance of certain conditions for fostering creative development. Questionnaire No. 2 (Appendix H) examined the slow learners attitude to certain teaching methods that could enhance their creative development.

As a result of my studies on creativity and slow learners, and following my work in the class and the questionnaire results, I have made the following conclusions.

To enhance conditions for the creative development of slow learning pupils, art classes need to be very well planned, taking into account what pupils have learned already, and each lesson building on this knowledge. This concurs with the view of Ainscow and Tweddle (1989) that pupils should be able to develop their knowledge based on what they have learned in a previous class. I would also support their view that "one way of providing encouragement and confidence is to provide opportunities for success".

This is consistent with the fact that, in the Questionnaire given to pupils, the art class the pupils liked best was the class that gave the best results, though this was not necessarily the class they found easiest.

I found that pupils need step by step guidance in any skills if they are not to become discouraged. This concurs with Eisner's view that pupils need to be given the necessary skills to avoid frustration.

Exposing pupils to a wide variety of visual aids and experiences (relevant to the class) increased motivation and developed the pupils ability to think creatively. This is in agreement with E.M. Soriano de Alencar's (1993) belief that pupils need to develop an attitude of reception to new ideas, to favour creativity.

In support of R.J. Martin"s (1980) theory that encouragement and responsibility are linked, I found that once a pupil realised she could do something about her performance, she was encouraged and responded positively. Consistent with this and also the view of Allen and Feldman (1973) I found that the experience or being a tutor (or a peer teacher) can benefit low achieving children.

Although I did not do the brainstorming technique directly with the first years, they did it as a group. I feel they could develop this technique with practice, and it would increase their ability to provide their own ideas and solution.

While I found that learning difficulties are sometimes context related (Ainscow & Tweddle believe all learning difficulties are context related) and I believe close attention needs to be given to the purpose and nature of the tasks and activities that pupils encounter, I do not think that Ainscow and Tweddle's view on "matching of tasks and materials to individual pupils" is practical in a large remedial class. But if there is a pupil more advanced than the others, I found it more beneficial to give that student a worksheet

and let her go ahead. If there is a pupil very far behind the rest of the class, the task could be adapted to suit her needs. Alternatively she could be helped by a "peer teacher". While I agree with the view of Williams and Hill (1976) that children work better when they are free from expectations of adult approval or disapproval based on performance, I found the slow learning pupil needed very definite guidelines also. I did not think it was possible to give them as much freedom in the initial stages as I would have liked to, but this was partly due to the size of the class (27 pupils). When they had been given direction and guided to a certain extent, and then given plenty of freedom, their work showed originality, confidence and the ability to think for themselves.

In conclusion my approach to developing the creative ability of the slow learner would be in agreement with the philosophy of Csikszentimihalyi (1988) - to study creativity and its development by focusing not on the individual (pupil) alone but on the elements that support - class structure and methodology of the art teacher.

APPENDIX G.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In one of your art classes, how many pupils would fit into the following categories:-

	Performance	No. of Pupils
a.	High	
b.	Average	
c.	Low	

2. How well do the pupils in Group c. above do in the following areas ? (please tick)

	Better than average	Average	Low
Imaginative Work			
Design Problems			
Fig./Object Drawing			

3. How important are the following to develop the creative abilities of pupils from Group C? Please rate on a scale of 1 - 10,

(1 = not important - 10 = extremely important)

a) Freedom to explore before starting project

b) A clear brief

c) Less freedom - more control from teacher

d) More time

e) More individual help from teacher

f) Keep the whole class at a slower pace

g) More encouragement

h) More Praise

i) Display of Work

j) Integration with other classes and not segregation (i.e. as 'remedial class')

k) Help from their classmates.

L) Wide range of materials

m) Wide range of visual aids.

n) Motivation.

APPENDIX H.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Which Art class did you like the most ? - tick the box was it.....**

   The Leaf Printing
   Printing the fan with a cut-out stencil
   Cutting paper in all sorts of shapes and printing
   Drawing out the letters A - Z on graph paper
   Drawing out big letters and cutting them
   Drawing pictures on the letters
   Doing the exercise on colour shades & tints
   Painting the letters

2. **Why did you like that class best ?**_____

   _____

   _____

3. **Which class was the easiest** _____

   _____

   _____

4. **Which class was the most difficult ? Explain why**_____

   _____

5. **Do you think it is a good idea for one pupil to help another in the class**_____

   Explain_____

   _____

6. **Do you like it when the teacher tells you what to draw, or do you prefer to think up your own ideas.**

_____

7. **Do you prefer to take your time when doing something in the art class.**

_____

8. **Which class gave you the best results.**

_____

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