FOREIGN SCHOLARS' EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT: THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND PEDAGOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract. This article analyses the development of the creative engagement of students in higher education institutions on the basis of the scientific and theoretical views of foreign scholars and contemporary pedagogical approaches. The main aim of the study is to systematise international research experience in fostering creativity, to identify its pedagogical potential, and to develop methodological recommendations applicable to the higher education process. The study employs literature analysis, comparative analysis, theoretical generalisation and conceptual modelling. J.P.Guilford's theory of divergent thinking, E.P.Torrance's approach to assessing creative thinking, T.M.Amabile's componential model of creativity, E.Deci and R. Ryan's self-determination theory, and J.Dewey's and L.S.Vygotsky's views on education and creative development are examined in their interrelation. The article also highlights the potential of problem-based learning, project-based learning, collaborative learning and reflective practice to support students' independent thinking, generation of original ideas, and non-standard solutions to problems. The analysis substantiates that the development of students' creative engagement depends on the interaction of individual motivation, domain-specific knowledge, creative-thinking strategies and a supportive learning environment. The article proposes a conceptual model and practical recommendations for adapting foreign experience to national higher education practice.

Keywords: creative engagement, creativity, divergent thinking, creative thinking, higher education, intrinsic motivation, problem-based learning, project-based learning, reflection, international experience.

Introduction

In the context of globalisation, digital transformation and the knowledge-based economy, the task of the higher education system is not limited to transmitting ready-made knowledge to students. A modern specialist is also expected to apply existing knowledge in new situations, to analyse complex problems independently, to develop original ideas and to justify innovative solutions. For this reason, developing students' creative engagement is regarded as one of the important pedagogical tasks of higher education.

Although the concept of creative engagement is closely related to creativity, it is not appropriate to treat them as one and the same phenomenon. Whereas creativity denotes the ability to produce ideas or products that are novel and appropriate in a given context, creative

engagement also encompasses the student's manifestation of these abilities in the learning process: taking initiative, investigating problems independently, trying out different solutions and striving to improve their own work. Thus, creative engagement is a complex pedagogical phenomenon that manifests itself through the harmony of knowledge, thinking, motivation and practical action.

The cognitive, motivational, social and pedagogical aspects of creativity have been widely studied in the foreign literature. Guilford (1950) drew attention to the importance of divergent thinking in creativity research. Amabile (1983, 1996) substantiated the interaction of domain knowledge, creative-thinking skills and motivation in producing creative outcomes. Deci and Ryan (2000) explained that the individual's needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness influence the quality of motivation. These theories show that it is not sufficient to explain students' creative engagement solely in terms of individual ability.

Contemporary international analyses of higher education also pay particular attention to fostering creative and critical thinking in the learning process. Saroyan (2022) analysed the relationship between the professional development of higher education teachers and teaching practices that support creativity. Bouckaert (2023), reviewing policies and practices for assessing creative and critical thinking in higher education, highlighted the gap between developing these competences and assessing them systematically.

From this perspective, a systematic analysis of the scholarly legacy of foreign researchers, the identification of effective pedagogical approaches, and their adaptation to the conditions of higher education in Uzbekistan are of scientific and practical significance.

The aim of the study is to conduct a comparative analysis of foreign scholars' theoretical views on developing students' creative engagement and, on that basis, to propose a conceptual-pedagogical model suited to higher education practice.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To clarify the content of the concepts of creative engagement and creativity.
2. To analyse foreign scholars' theories of creative thinking and motivation.
3. To compare pedagogical approaches that support students' creative engagement.
4. To develop methodological recommendations for adapting foreign experience to national higher education.

The main research question is formulated as follows: what pedagogical opportunities do foreign scholars' theories of creativity, motivation and experiential learning offer for developing the creative engagement of higher education students?

J.P.Guilford and the theory of divergent thinking

The American psychologist Joy Paul Guilford was one of the scholars who laid important theoretical foundations for the scientific study of creativity. His presidential address entitled

"Creativity", published in 1950, gave impetus to the development of creativity as a distinct field of psychological research (Guilford, 1950).

Divergent thinking, that is, the ability to generate several possible ideas or solutions to a given problem, occupies an important place in Guilford's approach. Such thinking is usually characterised by indicators such as fluency of ideas, flexibility of thought, originality and elaboration of ideas.

In higher education, this approach can be applied through open-ended questions, generating alternative solutions, brainstorming, concept maps and problem-based tasks. For example, students may be asked to propose at least three ways of solving a single pedagogical problem and then compare them in terms of effectiveness and feasibility.

However, divergent thinking does not cover all aspects of creativity. Generating many ideas is not enough in itself; their novelty, relevance to the requirements of the problem and practical value must also be evaluated. It is therefore advisable to combine divergent thinking with critical analysis and the refinement of ideas.

E. P. Torrance and the development of creative thinking

Ellis Paul Torrance is known for his research on identifying and assessing creative thinking. His system of tasks, known as the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, is designed to examine various manifestations of creative thinking through verbal and non-verbal tasks (Torrance, 1974).

The pedagogical significance of Torrance's approach lies in the fact that it allows creativity to be studied not merely as an innate talent, but as a set of abilities that can emerge through appropriate tasks, experience and support.

To develop students' creative engagement, exercises such as open-ended tasks, analysis of ambiguous situations, developing the concept of a new product or service, and reinterpreting a text from different perspectives can be used.

At the same time, it is not correct to accept the results of creative-thinking tests as the sole criterion fully reflecting a student's overall creativity. In assessing creativity, the relevance of the task to the subject area, the student's prior knowledge, the features of the situation and the practical value of the solution produced must also be taken into account.

T. M. Amabile and the componential model of creativity

Teresa M. Amabile developed a componential model that plays an important role in explaining creativity. According to her theory, creative activity arises from the interaction of several factors. These include domain-relevant knowledge and skills, creativity-relevant thinking processes, and task motivation (Amabile, 1983, 1996).

This model yields several important conclusions for higher education. First, to generate creative ideas, a student must possess sufficient knowledge of a particular subject area. Second, knowledge alone is not enough to create a new solution; the skills of combining existing

knowledge in unusual ways, looking at a problem from different perspectives and reconsidering existing approaches are also necessary. Third, the student's interest in the task and intrinsic motivation are of great importance in the creative process.

For example, when working with prospective teachers, instead of reproducing a ready-made lesson plan, students may be asked to design a new lesson suited to the interests and needs of learners of a particular age group. In this case, subject knowledge, methodological independence and personal initiative are manifested together.

An important pedagogical implication of Amabile's theory is that simply increasing the number of creative tasks is not sufficient to develop creative engagement. The student must also be given the opportunity to make independent decisions, a meaningful task, constructive feedback and time to refine their idea.

E. Deci and R. Ryan: intrinsic motivation and self-determination theory

Self-determination theory, developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, explains the quality of human motivation and its influence on activity. The theory considers autonomy, competence and relatedness to others as basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Autonomy means that the student has a certain degree of choice and the opportunity to make independent decisions in their activity. Competence relates to applying one's knowledge and skills effectively, completing tasks of appropriate difficulty and experiencing growth in results. Relatedness is expressed through mutual respect, cooperation and a sense of belonging in the study group.

On the basis of this theory, the teacher can give students the opportunity to choose the direction of a project within a topic, determine how to complete the task and present the result in various forms. At the same time, independence does not mean depriving the student of pedagogical support. Clear criteria, the necessary resources, step-by-step feedback and timely assistance remain important.

Thus, a learning environment that supports intrinsic motivation can contribute to the development of creative engagement. However, the relationship between motivation and creativity cannot be assumed to be the same in every subject, task and group of students; it must be examined in a specific educational context.

J. Dewey and experiential learning

John Dewey interpreted education as a process linked to activity, experience and reflection. In his work *Experience and Education*, the quality of educational experience and its influence on subsequent learning opportunities occupy a central place (Dewey, 1938).

Drawing on Dewey's views, theoretical knowledge can be linked to solving real or near-real problems in developing students' creative engagement. In such an approach, the student does not remain a recipient of ready-made information but becomes an active participant in identifying the problem, collecting data, testing solutions and evaluating results.

For example, economics students may analyse the marketing problem of a local business, engineering students may create a prototype aimed at saving resources, and education students may design a lesson intended to increase pupils' engagement.

The effectiveness of such tasks is ensured not by simply keeping students busy with activity, but by connecting their experience with theoretical knowledge, discussing the results and reconsidering subsequent decisions.

L.S.Vygotsky and the sociocultural approach

In Lev S. Vygotsky's views on learning and development, social interaction, language, cultural tools and the support of adults or more experienced peers play an important role. His idea of the zone of proximal development helps explain tasks that the learner cannot perform independently but can accomplish with appropriate support (Vygotsky, 1978).

In applying this approach to the development of students' creative engagement, collaborative project development, peer review, group discussion and mentoring activities can be used.

For example, group members first analyse the problem individually and then bring their ideas to a general discussion. Instead of presenting a ready-made solution, the teacher asks questions that deepen students' thinking, recommends the necessary sources and indicates the direction for the next stage.

At the same time, group collaboration does not always automatically enhance creativity. The dominance of some participants, reluctance to express opinions or an uneven distribution of responsibility may limit creative potential. It is therefore important in group work to identify each student's individual contribution and to value different perspectives.

Research methodology

This study is theoretical and analytical in nature. Its methodological basis is a comparative study of scholarly views on the psychology of creativity, theories of motivation and experiential learning.

The following methods are used in the study:

- Literature analysis: studying the main scholarly works on creativity and on fostering creative thinking in higher education, as well as international analytical publications.
- Comparative analysis: comparing the aims, key concepts and pedagogical applications of different theories.
- Theoretical generalisation: identifying common and distinctive features found in individual theories.
- Conceptual modelling: proposing a structural model for developing students' creative engagement based on the results of the analysis.

In selecting sources for analysis, priority was given to fundamental works that made a significant contribution to the formation of creativity theory and to contemporary international publications devoted directly to creative and critical thinking in higher education.

No new empirical data were collected for this article, and no surveys or experimental studies were conducted among students. The results should therefore be interpreted not as conclusions confirming statistical effectiveness, but as a conceptual generalisation and pedagogical recommendations developed on the basis of theoretical analysis.

Comparative analysis of foreign scholars' approaches

The theories analysed explain students' creative engagement from different angles. Guilford focuses on the cognitive mechanisms of creative thinking, Torrance on the identification and assessment of creative thinking, and Amabile on the structural factors of creativity related to knowledge, thinking strategies and motivation. Deci and Ryan highlight the conditions that support motivation, Dewey the importance of experience and reflection, and Vygotsky the developmental potential of social collaboration and pedagogical support.

Applying these approaches in interrelation makes it possible to understand creative engagement more broadly than explaining it through a single method or individual ability.

Scholar and theoretical approach	Main focus	Application in higher education
J. P. Guilford	Divergent thinking and alternative ideas	Brainstorming, open-ended questions, generating multiple solutions
E. P. Torrance	Identifying and assessing creative thinking	Open-ended tasks, analysing original ideas, monitoring progress
T. M. Amabile	Knowledge, creative thinking and motivation	Meaningful projects, independent choice, constructive feedback
E. Deci and R. Ryan	Autonomy, competence and relatedness	Opportunity for choice, tasks of appropriate difficulty, collaboration
J. Dewey	Experience, problem solving and reflection	Practical projects, real-life situations, analysing the results of experience
L.S. Vygotsky	Social collaboration and pedagogical support	Group projects, peer review, guiding questions

The table shows that the scholars' approaches do not contradict one another; rather, they complement different structural aspects of creative activity. For example, a student needs divergent thinking to generate an original idea, but refining that idea on the basis of subject content requires sufficient knowledge and critical analysis. The student's active participation in this process, in turn, may depend on their motivation and on the opportunity to express their views freely.

Conclusion

The theoretical analysis shows that developing students' creative engagement is a multifactorial pedagogical process. The scholarly views of foreign researchers make it clear that creativity cannot be reduced to innate ability or to the number of original ideas. Creative engagement manifests itself through the interaction of knowledge, thinking, motivation, social collaboration and reflective activity.

Guilford's theory of divergent thinking highlights the importance of generating alternative ideas. Torrance offers methodological foundations for identifying and assessing creative thinking. Amabile's componential model explains the interrelation of domain knowledge, creative-thinking strategies and motivation. Deci and Ryan's theory shows the importance of an environment that supports the student's autonomy, sense of competence and relatedness. Dewey's and Vygotsky's views, in turn, serve to substantiate the developmental potential of experience, reflection, collaboration and pedagogical support.

By generalising the results of the analysis, a conceptual model for developing students' creative engagement has been proposed that integrates cognitive-resource, creative-operational, motivational, socio-pedagogical and reflective-evaluative components. Within the model, it is recommended to combine problem-based learning, project-based learning, giving students choice, collaboration, peer review and reflective activity.

The theoretical and practical significance of the article lies in systematising foreign scholars' views within a single pedagogical logic and showing ways of adapting them to the conditions of national higher education. At the same time, the effectiveness of the proposed model needs to be tested through empirical research.

Overall, to develop students' creative engagement, it is advisable to move the learning process from a model oriented towards mastering ready-made knowledge to an approach that combines independent investigation of problems, generation of alternative ideas, collaborative work and reflective evaluation of results. Such an approach can help develop creative thinking not as a separate exercise, but as a competence integrated into the everyday pedagogical practice of higher education.

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