

## **STIMULATE THE CREATIVITY OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL ADHD STUDENTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES OF COMPOSING**

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**ABSTRACT.** In this article there are presented the experiences valorized after a study on stimulating the creativity of the primary school students with ADHD through activities of composing. In the last decade there have become visible the Romanian school efforts for adaptation in order to ensure the respect of the right to education for all children and to equalize their chances of success. The integration of the students with ADHD syndrome can be realized successfully if it is adopted by a complex committee made up of special psycho-pedagogues, pedagogues/teachers, doctors, kinetotherapists, who should work in close relation with the family. Hyperactivity and attention deficit are two different characteristics of the syndrome, which are often found simultaneously at the same subject, but can also exist one without the other.

**Key-words:** stimulation, creativity, students with ADHD, primary school, composition, integration.

**RÉSUMÉ.** Dans cet article, sont présentées des expériences valorifiées à partir d'une étude sur la stimulation de la créativité des élèves atteints de TDAH du cycle primaire par des activités à composer. Au cours de la dernière décennie, sont devenus visibles les efforts de l'école roumaine d'adaptation pour assurer le respect du droit à l'éducation pour tous les enfants et pour égaliser leurs chances de succès. L'intégration des élèves atteints du syndrome TDAH peut être réalisée avec succès si il est adopté par un comité complexe composé des psycho - pédagogues, pédagogues/enseignants, médecins, kineto-therapists qui doivent travailler en collaboration étroite avec la famille. L'hyperactivité et le déficit d'attention sont deux caractéristiques du syndrome, qui se trouvent le plus souvent simultanément au même sujet, mais ils peuvent aussi exister un sans l'autre.

**Mots-clés:** stimulation, créativité, enfants atteints par/du TDAH, cycle primaire, composition, l'intégration.

### **1. Integration of students with ADHD in main stream school**

In the last decade there have become visible the Romanian school efforts of adaptation in order to ensure the respect of the right to education for all children and to equalize their chances of success. It has been emphasized more and more the need to change the vision on students with special educational requirements and the

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attempt to offer them a normal life by transforming the social representation and renouncing to social tagging and stigmatization. The study concerning the development particularities of children with ESC, undertaken in order to determine the educational strategies adapted to their needs, has become one of the priorities of preparing specialists in the field of special psycho-pedagogy. Special education requirements refer to the necessary support given to children in order to overcome the difficulties they face; these difficulties represent obstacles in the process of social adaptation. The specialist should know the problems faced by those in difficulty, find and determine concrete ways of solving them, promote alternative methods of overcoming the obstacles. The integration of students with ADHD syndrome can successfully be achieved if it is approached by a committee made up of special psycho-pedagogues, teachers, doctors, kinetotherapists, who should act in close relation with their family.

Hyperactivity and attention deficit are two different characteristics of the syndrome, which can often be found simultaneously at the same subject, but can also exist one without the other (Cîrneai, 2000).

**a. Attention disorder** represents the central element of the syndrome, considered as being the physio-pathological basis of dysfunction. It is illustrated by a difficulty to concentrate and a quasi-constant distractibility with the inability to grasp the relevant information when there are factors of diverting the attention (background noise, conversations, television). Children indispose their parents and teacher by their inability to maintain their attention over time. It seems that they don't pay attention to their teacher, start activities (various tasks or games) which they don't finish and do not fulfill their school duties. The inattentive child does not follow the instructions that are given to him/her, neglects the details, tends to lose the items necessary to perform a task and is easily distracted by events that do not disturb the others. Sometimes, although he/she may be involved in an activity he/she likes, he/she doesn't hear what it is said any more. The attention deficit disturbs especially his/her learning ability.

**b. Hyperactivity disorder** manifests in different ways depending on age – that is why it is often difficult to determine whether the incriminated behavior is inappropriate for their age. The child is always in motion, unable to remain seated (in the classroom, during family meals, etc). They have a disorganized, non-constructive and less coordinated activity. Like the little babies who learn to walk, they occupy the space environment, because they like to discover. They run and jump, fidget constantly, and are unable to remain seated at the table or get some rest. Restless, they can not play alone and ceaselessly solicit the adult to whom they spend all the time. In general, they receive many remarks from school related concerning their behaviour, call the emergency services for minor but repeated injury. They can not stop talking and have a tendency to make noise during calm activities, disturbing the others. If they are scolded, they apologize, promise it won't happen again, but they resume. They fidget all the time and are not able to

keep still at the blackboard. If their teacher asks them to stop balancing or moving in their desk and try to fulfill their task, the child will devote all his energy to stop balancing, being thus unable to do his homework anymore. For this child hyperactivity is a risk to physical health (Cîrneai, 2000).

**c. Impulsivity** is a dimension that is found at the motor, cognitive and social level. This disorder is especially found in the attention deficits, as well as in the provocative oppositionism and conduct disorder. Both cognitive and behavioral impulsivity stand out. Cognitive impulsivity is characterized by a rapid and incorrect manner of answering to a task, without waiting the end of the advice or being able to follow the successive stages in an orderly manner. Behavioral impulsivity corresponds to the inability to correct or inhibit the inadapted verbal or physical behavior. Impulsivity is translated by a difficulty to obey, a search of immediate pleasure, an impatience which becomes problematic: to wait for their turn. There are known the following types of impulsivity: impulsive behavior without precise purpose (the child stands up without any reason), inadequate behavior with precise purpose (they sharpen their pencil amiss) and impulsive behavior with positive attention seeking (they answer without waiting for their turn). Therefore, there is a non-intentional impulsive behavior (which touch the property, the subject himself or another person), and deliberately offensive behavior (aggression, opposition, conduct disorder). Impulsivity should not be confused with qualities such as spontaneity and flexibility. It is related to entertainment. Most often associated with hyperactivity, impulsivity is responsible for the fact that the child is rejected by his/her circle of friends. It disturbs his/her driving functioning (impatience, rudeness) and cognitive development (the difficulty to anticipate the consequences of their acts). Impulsive child is unable to wait for his/her turn (when he/she plays, or in different situations and school activities, including sports), answers forgetting to raise his/her hand and often hurries to answer without being asked, breaks off the conversation of adults and interferes with their discussions. He/she abandons an activity before finishing it. His/her great difficulty to comply with the orders is immediately interpreted as rejecting the rules and indications. Intolerant to constraints and aggressive when frustrated, he/she seems insensitive to rewards and punishments. Impulsivity has consequences on the emotional level, producing rapid and frequent changes of mental status. He/she has no strategy. It is hard for him/her to organize his/her work, he/she needs a list of priorities and plans of action. Impulsivity embarrasses him/her especially on the social level.

These behavioral problems end up in school learning disorders, family disruptions, secondary psychological disorders at child (loss of self-confidence) and may also be the source of various accidents.

There are cases when, although the child seems a priori to present the ADHD symptoms, such a diagnosis will not be established. It is about situations in which another psychiatric diagnosis would explain the symptoms better. Also, in

the case of associated disorders (bipolar disorder, anxiety, specific learning disorder) each diagnosis must be established separately. In the case of mental retardation, diagnosis ADHD is not established unless the behavior is inadequate to the mental age of the child. This diagnosis will be established independently of the psychiatric diagnosis. That is why the differential diagnosis and associated disorders are particularly important.

Depending on the field of expertise and to some various extents, the physician or psychologist assessment must allow the removal of health, social or psychological problems which can:

- Simulate an ADHD (for example: physical or sexual abuse, diabetes, thyroid problems, learning disorder, deafness, etc.),
- Involve/entail an ADHD (for example: perinatal asphyxia, meningitis, cranial trauma, fetal-alcohol syndrome, fragile X syndrome, etc.),
- Coexist with an ADHD (for example: oppositional disorder, conduct disorder, learning disorder, language disorder, anxious disorder, depressive disorder, etc.).

## **2. Composition - The way of stimulating students' creativity in primary school**

The analysis of the primary school education curriculum highlights the main objectives pursued in this stage of schooling. This training aims at the following competences:

- transversal competences - concerning the attitude of children, the construction of fundamental concepts of space and time and of methodological acquisitions (initiation in the techniques of intellectual work and learning activities);
- competences in the field of the disciplines concerning the acquisition of some knowledge, abilities, skills and methods specific to each large field;
- competences in the field of learning the Romanian language (tongues) and modern language (oral expression, reading, writing, literary composition).
- the teaching staff aim to ensure the instrumental, informative and formative character of their activities by achieving the following objectives:
- to ensure a harmonious development (physical, intellectual, moral-volitional and aesthetic) by stimulating the artistic and creative valences of students taking into account firstly the level of culture of each one;
- to inure students to understand the phenomena of the material and cultural environment, and to initiate them in the learning techniques, by stimulating positive attitudes in the activity of learning;
- to give students the opportunity to form their own attitudes, to imprint them the respect for the opinions of others, to develop the spirit of tolerance and solidarity, the feelings of belonging to the communities in which they live.

The study of the Romanian literature and mathematics occupy together 66% of all the educational activities during the four years of primary education. The students' creativity can be stimulated during all educational activities, but especially during the courses of Romanian literature, because their importance is greatest (Magheru, 2003).

Education is the result of the complex contribution of all educational factors and disciplines. Stimulating the creative ability is an objective to be pursued in all disciplines of study. The art of educating creativity supposes on the part of the teacher the existence and intuition of a balance to equilibrate the support necessary for writing the composition and the freedom that must be given to the student in order to express his/her own impressions, ideas, feelings, in a style as close as possible to his way of being. Neither the free compositions stipulated in the 4<sup>th</sup> class curriculum, can be absolutely free. It is necessary the intervention of the educator even if it is reduced.

Written or oral compositions are also used during 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> classes, oral activity preceding the written one. This is the most suitable way of carrying on an activity, especially during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes. Time and curriculum permitting, it is ideal to reserve two hours to write a composition. In the first hour, there will be done a series of preparatory exercises. For example, new words and artistic expressions will be selected from texts and introduced in new sentences and contexts. There will also be created texts which may be used in the next composition or in the plan of the next work. By making oral compositions, students have the chance to apply the aforementioned and organize their ideas in a story as credible as possible. In doing so, during the second hour, there will be given more time for thinking and evaluating while writing the composition. Students can find out what they did well and wrong, what they could have made to elaborate a better and more beautiful composition. Thus, in the future, they will be able to elaborate their next composition in better conditions. Gradually, they will acquire the capacity of self-analysis and self-evaluation of their own works.

In accordance with the written expression level of students, there are elaborated the following types of compositions in the primary school:

1. depending on the material support, they are divided into: compositions based on illustrations, pictures or slides; compositions on students' observations, impressions and imagination; compositions based on a known literary text; compositions based on some proverbs, sayings and riddles; compositions by analogy, compositions with already given beginning; composition with already given ending; compositions with support sentences and words;
2. after giving the students the working techniques and elaborating the written composition, it is time to make free compositions;
3. in the 4<sup>th</sup> class, there can be elaborated compositions-correspondence and official composition;

4. although they are especially elaborated during grammar classes, the grammatical compositions contribute substantially to the development of students' written expression.

Another classification of compositions is the following:

- a) depending on their agent or on the participation level of students: collective compositions (when the plan and the elaboration of the composition are realized with the contribution of all the students in the class); semi - collective compositions (when the plan is realized collectively and the elaboration is made individually), individual compositions (when both the plan and the elaboration of the composition are made individually)
- b) depending on the content or on the material upon which the composition is based: free compositions, compositions based on literary texts, compositions with special destination.

### **3. Scope, objectives and research hypotheses**

#### **Scope of Research:**

Become aware of the importance and efficiency of stimulating the creativity of the students with ADHD, of educating in the creative spirit of students through composing lessons.

#### **Objectives of research:**

- know and apply the rules concerning the content and the form of composition;
- express correctly, orally and in written, from the point of view of the linguistic structures;
- elaborate compositions - description and characterization;
- realize original and creative compositions by respecting the techniques of elaborating a composition: documentation, drawing up the plan of ideas, elaboration, composition analysis.

#### **Specific objectives:**

- identify the level of knowledge, skills and abilities from the very beginning of the experimental period;
- optimize the process of creativity /stimulate children's creativity through methods, means, strategies of improving the ADHD students' process of integration;
- highlight the school progress of the students with ADHD.

#### **Research hypotheses:**

- the elaboration of composition is an effective way to capitalize the life experience of the students with physical disabilities, to give free rein to their imagination and their creative fantasy;

- the stimulation of developing the creativity of students with physical disabilities by elaborating compositions, emphasizes the value of their creative potential.

#### **4. Research methodology**

##### ***4.1. Groups of subjects***

The experimental group consists of 20 students of which 7 have certified ESC, issued by the County Child Protection. The group is homogeneous in terms of age and all children speak Romanian.

The group of control is also composed of 20 students. It includes two students with ESC and 18 students with good and very good results at school. The children have approximately the same age and all speak Romanian.

The research was conducted during the first semester of 2007-2008 school year in the School with the classes I-VIII No. 25, Sibiu. The activities were planned and established by the class teachers and the support teacher who carried on their activity in that school. The creative activities were alternated with ludic-therapy activities and activities of psycho-pedagogical counseling for children and their families.

##### ***4.2. Instruments (methods) of Investigation***

The students' creative potential was highlighted by using several related methods: the method of analysing the students' activity products, the biographical method, the observation method, the study of personal documents, the anamnesis, the free and directed conversation, the creativity tests, case study.

##### ***4.3. Experimental design***

###### **Stages of research**

The psycho-pedagogical investigation was conducted in three stages:

**A. The observation stage (the investigation stage).** This stage was conducted over four weeks and aimed at knowing the groups of children, at making individual observations concerning the personalizing of children, their physical development, deficiencies, condition of health. It was also aimed to apply a test both on the experimental and control group in order to find out the students' creativity level (originality, innovation, beauty of expression). There were used exercises and compositions based on some support materials (Bocoş, 2003).

**B. The experimental stage (the formative stage).** The main method applied in the research was the experimental method. The dependent variable consists in the subjects' responses, which represented the object of the observation. The independent variable was represented by the methods of stimulating the creative abilities of students with ADHD through compositions. The experiment was conducted over three months, aiming to stimulate the creativity of students with ADHD through compositions. The experiment was based on developing a

wide range of compositions which ensured the children's active participation and increased their interest in creation.

**C. The final stage (the evaluative stage)**, held at the end of the first semester, consists in applying an evaluating test on both the experimental and control group.

## **5. Analysis and processing of data**

### ***5.1. Presentation and analysis of data***

Initially there was used the method of observation in order to know the students and their behavior towards the children with ESC. There were also studied the products of students' activity. Additional data were obtained from teachers and other members of the team work: doctor, special psycho-pedagogue, parents, support teachers. The psycho-pedagogical evaluation of the students with ESC was realized by means of the tests of intelligence. After having determined the experimental and control group, it was applied a test to evaluate the students' creativity level before starting the activity of stimulating the creative abilities.

The program for stimulating the students' creativity included four psycho-pedagogical counseling sessions conducted by the teachers and support teacher. The activity of stimulating the creative abilities included the following topics: the beginnings of composing activity, the relation between composing and reading, the improvement of speech and grammar as methods of stimulating the creativity by means of lessons of composing: compositions based on support materials, free compositions, others activities which are carried on during the composing class (description, characterization), grammatical compositions, correspondence compositions. The students' creativity was also stimulated by carrying on extracurricular activities such as trips, visiting the art museum, listening to music during the drawing classes, walking in the park (Molan, Peneş, 2004).

After having implemented this program, it was highlighted a real progress in the students' capacity for creation. It was also pointed out the distinct value of the works of some students educated for this purpose. After having compared the results of the two groups, there could be noticed a substantial increase of some cognitive capacities, such as: the use of some artistic expressions, correct and clear wording of sentences, correct writing of punctuation marks, respect of paragraphs and compliance with the writing requirements (nice and neat), and creative skills: logical sequence of ideas and logical combining, descriptions, the creative use of the known figures of speech (Stoica, 1983).

### ***5.2. Interpretation of results***

The first stage began by gathering the results obtained from tests applied on children which, after being calculated and transformed into percentages, led to a better processing of them. Taking into account the fact that the experiment consisted in solving a test, in the first conclusion there were compared the results of the two groups

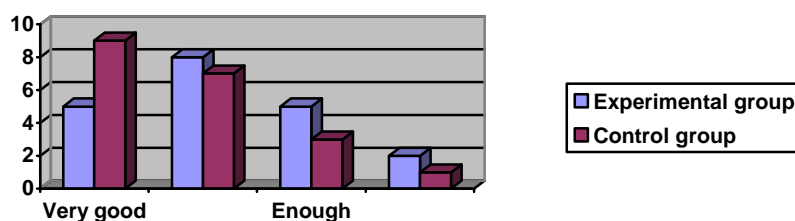


obtained after applying the test during the observation stage of the experiment. The results of the initial test pointed out the level of the children at that moment.

The results of the investigation in the observation stage (initial test):

Class	Qualification			
	Very good	Good	Enough	Insufficient
Experimental group	5	8	5	2
Percentage	25%	40%	25%	10%
Control group	9	7	3	1
Percentage	45%	35%	15%	5%

The chart with the students' results obtained at the initial test:

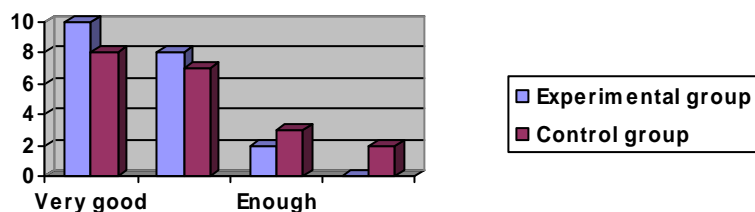


It can be noticed the fact that more students in the control group got "very good" qualifications. A number of 8 students in the experimental group got "good" qualifications. Also, the number of students who got "sufficient" and "insufficient" qualifications is greater in the experimental group compared with the control group. After multiple ways to stimulate creative capacities, it can be seen the value of formative activities; that is why the students in the experimental group obtained better results than students in the control group.

The results of the investigation in the final test are:

Class	Qualification			
	Very good	Good	Enough	Insufficient
Experimental group	10	8	2	0
Percentage	50%	40%	10%	%
Control group	8	7	3	2
Percentage	40%	35%	15%	10%

The chart with the results of the students from the two groups obtained in the final test:



In the final tests, several students from the experimental group got "very good" and "good" qualifications. No student in the experimental group got "sufficient" qualifications. It underlines the importance of stimulating the creative capabilities through composition. For a better observation of the qualitative leap registered by the students of the two groups at the initial tests and at the final test, we will present graphically and tabularly the qualifications in percentages obtained by the students.

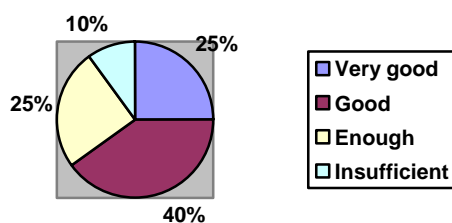
The results obtained in the initial test (in percentages):

Experimental group	Qualification			
	Very good	Good	Enough	Insufficient
Percentage	25%	40%	25%	10%
Control group	Very good	Good	Enough	Insufficient
Percentage	45%	35%	15%	5%

The results obtained in the final test (in percentages):

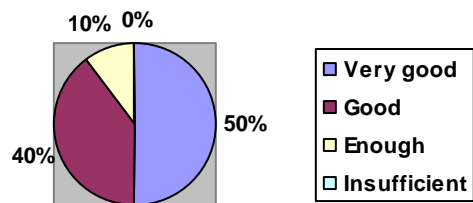
Experimental group	Qualification			
	Very good	Good	Enough	Insufficient
Percentage	50%	40%	10%	%
Control group	Very good	Good	Enough	Insufficient
Percentage	40%	35%	15%	10%

Initial experimental group chart

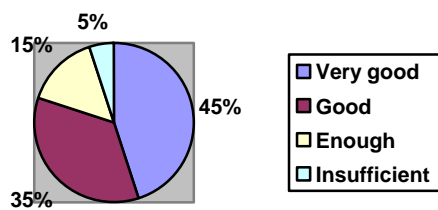


STIMULATE THE CREATIVITY OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL ...

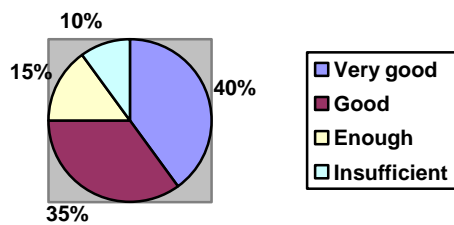
Final experimental group chart



Initial control group Chart



Final control group chart



By making a comparative analysis between the results of the initial test and the results of the final test, it is noticed an increase in the results of the experimental group who got "very good" marks, in a rate of 50%. At the same time, it is noticed a decrease of the number of students who got sufficient and insufficient marks. The results of the Research outline the importance of stimulating creativity.

### **6. The necessity of treating students differently**

The necessity of treating students differently in terms of mass education is supported by three basic aspects:

- from psychological point of view - in a group of students, the intellectual abilities and skills, the possibility to intercept differently some disciplines, the speed of learning, the motivations and attitudes towards learning, differ from one individual to another.
- from social point of view - the influence of the environment in which the child is born and lives, causes different reactions in adapting him/her to the activity of the group;
- from pedagogical point of view- the efficiency of education reaches the maximum level provided that the training and education stimulate at maximum the possibilities of each student.

These conditions make necessary the organization of the curriculum according to the particularities of students. The differentiated activity ensures the active participation of students and the acquisition of an own and individual speed of working. It stimulates their interest in learning and creates a positive attitude towards working. The main features which define the organization, conduct and content of the differentiated activity are the following:

- it is conducted according to the organization of the teaching-learning process (classes and lessons);
- it covers the entire group of students (those who encounter difficulties as well as those who have great possibilities);
- it is characterized by a unitary and common content materialized in unique school programs/curricula;
- it is carried on by adapting the teaching technologies to the individual particularities;
- the educational objectives and tasks are mainly realized through the activities carried on during the lesson;
- the frontal activity is combined and alternated with the individual activity and with the activity on groups of students.

The tools that proved to be effective in knowing the students' training level and which were within each teacher's reach, were the following: the oral expression verification, written work analysis, comparison of students' knowledge with the curricula requirements, typical mistakes record, study of the causes of these mistakes.

The differentiated treatment must be realized from the very beginning of the activity of composition. Those who aren't able to write correctly are not involved in elaborating the composition. They may be asked to develop an oral composition. For those who have a poor vocabulary, there are used specific exercises for improving their expression. For example, some phrases may be selected from literary texts and use them in other structures. Those students may also be asked to develop simple sentences or make sentences with certain words. Not all students can acquire the technique of writing a composition at the same time because their level of training, their speed of working is different. In this case, students are divided into groups. Depending on the level of assimilating the knowledge, some students may receive the content and the ending, others are offered the introduction or the plan of ideas. To have these materials within their reach, the teachers shall keep different models of compositions from the previous series. Aiming at acquiring a correct expression and technique in making a composition, the same topic can be realized in a number of variations equal to the number of students in class.

### **7. Conclusions**

Regardless of the type to which it belongs, the composition should be verified and noted by the teacher. The verification, correction and assessment of the composition are very important in forming the students' habits of expression. Recurrent correction removes and prevents mistakes, creating a positive attitude towards work. Due to it, a permanent guidance is ensured and the students' skills for assessing their work are formed in time. At the first forms of the primary school, there is usually made a first verification of the composition during the respective lesson. After reading one or two of the students' compositions, the teacher and the class make observations concerning the content and the form of those compositions.

When teaching Romanian, teacher must take into account the fact that the lessons of composing represent activities adequate to form skills and abilities of independent work. In the case of an organized activity, the students with ESC may elaborate imaginative and sensitive compositions. The study highlights the role that the lessons of composing have in improving the students' language and way of thinking, their spirit of initiative, independence in work and creation, which are absolutely necessary for forming their personality.

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