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The Impact of Specific Instruction vs. Generic Instruction for Expressive Arts Assignment on Creativity and Self and Co Regulated LearningS

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Abstract

The main question we have examined in this study is: Does the type of instruction given to kindergarten children in an art project have an impact on creativity, self regulated learning (SRL) and co-regulated learning (CoRL)?

In the opinion of educators, kindergarten children using materials in art assignments develop initiative and creativity, stimulate imagination, foster pride in their work and develop planning skills. In some fields of art this assists youth to learn to work together.

In the kindergarten environment, every day preschoolers create art assigments thru freedom of choice using a variety of materials available to them. At their disposal they have a variety of art media. This variety of materials and art methods allow the children to create according to their inclinations, alone or in collaboration, while freely exploring and experiencing (Ministry of Education, 1995). Although the emphasis according to the Ministry of Education and researchers is to leave the freedom of choice with the children without giving any specific instruction, the creative process in the kindergarten depends on the preschool teacher: There are preschool teachers who use generic instruction for children and guide them to draw or create on any topic of their choice. There are preschool teachers who give specific and closed instructions ("draw a butterfly") and there are preschool teachers who give an open specific instruction ("create a project that relates to the Spring theme").

This study seeks to examine the impact of specific versus generic instructions for expressive arts assignment on preschoolers (ages 5-6) on creativity, self-regulated learning (SRL) and co-regulated learning (CoRL).

Developing creativity has great importance in research and education, as it is essential for developing new and original ideas and for problem-solving procedures. In addition, learners' creativity was found to be a positive predictor for future achievement in school. The creative think ¡ research suggests that creativity can be developed and that it is teachable. The best time to start developing creativity is in early childhood, as children are naturally more curious and sensitive to changes in their environment. Thus, their creativity can be enhanced and developed more effectively in early childhood. To improve the creative potential of children, kindergarten teachers must know how to encourage them to develop new and diverse ideas. The type of instruction of which subject or how to choose one can influence the development of children's abilities and creativity. A teacher's knowledge of or lack of how to promote the creative process can affect classroom instruction and thus influence students' creative development.

Another important factor in promoting creativity in carrying out a learning assignment is the degree of SRL and CoRL of the student. Recent studies have shown that there is a correlation between the characteristics required for creativity development and the characteristics required for SRL, and a person with better SRL abilities will be more successful in the creative thinking process.

Self regulated learning refers to the concept of monitoring and controlling individual performance. A self-regulated learner has a repertoire of strategies they appropriately apply to tackle the day-to-day challenges of academic tasks. Co-regulated learning is the interaction between group members during learning. Co-regulation relates to the situation in which one partner masters a key element of the task but the other(s) does not, so that one partner instructs the other, thus improving his SRL abilities. These abilities have been found to contribute to optimal learning and are of crucial

importance in developing academic skills that include regulated learning, problem solving and creativity. Research indicates that these skills can be fostered and should be taught from an early age.

As far as we know, the impact of specific versus generic instructions for Expressive Arts Assignment on SRL, CoRL and creativity has yet to be tested, especially with preschoolers.

This study included 42 children aged 5-6 who studied in two preschools coming from similar socioeconomic background in the Gush-Dan area. The preschool classes were selected according to their age group and because both had the same art experience of working with materials on a daily basis. For the purpose of the study, a research set was built that included two research groups: one group *n*=21 that was given specific instructions for carrying out an expressive art assignment (which topic to create, for example: Passover), and the second group *n*=21 was given generic instructions (to create on any topic of their choice). Each group carried out 4 art assignments.

The research uses mixed-methods: quantitative and naturalistic qualitative research methods. The collection of data was done by analyzing observations, recordings and videos into quantitative coding based on a research tool developed by **Whitebread et al. (2009) Scheme: Verbal and Non verbal Indicators of Metacognition and Self-Regulation in 3- to 5-Year-Olds** that was adapted for this research. In addition, the finished art products created by the children were coded by a creativity code that was developed specifically for this research. The creativity code includes indicators on a scale of 1-5 which measure: Originality and Flexibility, Elaboration (materials), Repleteness (variety and details) and Fluency (composition and intelligent use of materials and creative tools).

The results indicated that in the Specific Instructions group a greater degree of SRL

reflected in the categories of Metacognitive Monitoring, Metacognitive Control and Evaluation was found. In addition, a greater degree of CoRL was found reflected in the categories of Metacognitive Monitoring, Metacognitive Control and Emotional and motivational regulation, as well as a greater number of times addressing a friend. Moreover, in the specific instructions group, there was a greater degree of creativity that was reflected in materials Elaboration and Repleteness, but a lesser degree of creativity that was reflected in Flexibility. Finally, a correlation was found between SRL and creativity.

The results of this study may have theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical point of view, the results of the present study may indicate the impact that teachers and parents have on the development of a child's regulated learning process. The results can help understand the impact and the importance of the type of instruction given before a task, on children's creativity, SRL and CoRL. From a practical point of view, the research will promote and develop creativity, self-regulated and co-regulated learning in preschool by adapting the instructions given to children when performing tasks. The practical importance of the study is also reflected in the innovative measurement methods for measuring the types of regulated learning and creativity, which have been especially adapted in this study for early childhood. Therefore, the study completes a new slot in the complexity of 21st century learning in preschool education.