DEVELOPING CREATIVE THINKING AND PEDAGOGICAL INDEPENDENCE IN PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of developing creative thinking and pedagogical independence among prospective teachers. The study examines the relationship between creativity, teacher autonomy, self-efficacy, metacognition, and reflective practice. Based on the analysis, scientific and practical recommendations along with a 5-stage conceptual model have been developed to enhance prospective teachers' professional agency, modernize the learning process, and foster an innovative pedagogical environment in teacher education institutions.

Keywords: prospective teachers, creative thinking, pedagogical independence, teacher autonomy, teacher education, self-efficacy, reflective practice, innovative pedagogy, professional agency.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada bo‘lajak o‘qituvchilarda ijodiy tafakkur va pedagogik mustaqillikni rivojlantirishning nazariy va pedagogik asoslari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda ijodkorlik, o‘qituvchi avtonomiyasi, o‘z-o‘ziga ishonch (self-efficacy), metakognitsiya va reflektiv amaliyot o‘rtasidagi o‘zaro bog‘liqlik o‘rganilgan. Tahlillar asosida bo‘lajak o‘qituvchilarning kasbiy mustaqilligini oshirish, o‘quv jarayonini modernizatsiya qilish va ta’lim muassasalarida innovatsion pedagogik muhitni shakllantirish bo‘yicha ilmiy-amaliy tavsiyalar hamda 5 bosqichli konseptual model ishlab chiqilgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: bo‘lajak o‘qituvchilar, ijodiy tafakkur, pedagogik mustaqillik, o‘qituvchi avtonomiyasi, ta’lim tizimi, o‘z-o‘ziga ishonch, reflektiv amaliyot, innovatsion pedagogika.

Аннотация: В данной статье анализируются теоретические и педагогические основы развития креативного мышления и педагогической самостоятельности будущих учителей. В исследовании изучается взаимосвязь между креативностью, автономией учителя, самоэффективностью, метапознанием и рефлексивной практикой. На основе проведенного анализа разработаны научно-практические рекомендации и 5-этапная концептуальная модель по повышению профессиональной самостоятельности будущих учителей, модернизации учебного процесса и созданию инновационной педагогической среды в образовательных учреждениях.

Ключевые слова: будущие учителя, креативное мышление, педагогическая самостоятельность, автономия учителя, педагогическое образование, самоэффективность, рефлексивная практика, инновационная педагогика.

INTRODUCTION.Contemporary education is undergoing a fundamental shift due to technological advancement, globalization, changing labor markets, and increasing classroom diversity. In this evolving context, teachers can no longer act merely as transmitters of standardized knowledge; they must serve as learning designers, facilitators of inquiry, reflective practitioners, and agents of educational change. Consequently, initial teacher education programmes face the challenge of developing both subject-matter expertise and higher-order professional competencies.

Two critical competencies in this regard are **creative thinking** and **pedagogical independence**. The OECD PISA 2022 framework defines creative thinking as a developable capacity to generate, evaluate, and improve ideas to produce original and effective solutions. Pedagogical independence refers to a teacher’s ability to make autonomous, ethically sound, and context-sensitive professional decisions

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regarding instructional methods, resources, and assessment. Although international bodies like UNESCO emphasize the necessity of teacher autonomy and creative pedagogy, conventional teacher preparation frequently relies on teacher-centered, reproductive instruction.

Research Questions

1.What is the theoretical relationship between creative thinking and pedagogical independence in prospective teachers?

2.What key pedagogical conditions and instructional strategies support the development of these competencies?

3.How do mediating psychological constructs (such as self-efficacy and metacognition) influence the translation of teacher autonomy into creative practice?

4.What structural implications does this hold for contemporary teacher education programmes?

METHODS.This study employs a **qualitative theoretical-analytical methodology** involving systematic conceptual analysis and thematic synthesis of contemporary international literature and educational policy frameworks.

➢**Data Sources:** Peer-reviewed academic articles, systematic reviews, and policy documents published by recognized global institutions (e.g., OECD, UNESCO).

➢**Analytical Procedure:** The analysis was executed in four structured stages:

1. *Conceptual Differentiation:* Clarifying the core constructs of creative thinking and pedagogical independence.
2. *Interrelationship Mapping:* Examining connections among creativity, autonomy, self-efficacy, metacognition, and reflective practice.
3. *Pedagogical Strategy Identification:* Synthesizing effective instructional methods (e.g., problem-based learning, microteaching, portfolio assessment).
4. *Model Construction:* Developing a conceptual cyclical model for initial teacher education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. **The Interdependence of Creative Thinking and Pedagogical Independence**. The analysis indicates that creative thinking and pedagogical independence are mutually reinforcing dimensions of professional agency rather than isolated skills.

➢**Creative Thinking** provides the cognitive capacity to generate diverse, original, and adaptable educational ideas.

➢**Pedagogical Independence** provides the professional autonomy and judgement needed to select, implement, evaluate, and refine those ideas in real-world classrooms.

This dynamic operates as a continuous cyclical process:

Mediating Factors: Self-Efficacy and Metacognition. Providing prospective teachers with formal autonomy does not automatically lead to innovative instruction. Recent empirical research highlights that autonomy affects creative pedagogy indirectly through **trust** and **self-efficacy**. Furthermore, **metacognition** (thinking about one's own thinking) ensures that creative innovations are critically evaluated rather than applied randomly. Without reflection, creative teaching risks becoming ungrounded novelty.

Key Pedagogical Strategies and Assessment. Traditional reproductive models—where student teachers merely follow fixed lesson plan templates—constrain professional agency. To foster creative independence, teacher education programmes must adopt:

➢**Guided Autonomy:** Combining clear professional standards with meaningful choices in instructional design.

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➢**Problem-Based and Project-Based Learning:** Exposing prospective teachers to authentic, open-ended classroom scenarios.

➢**Microteaching and Action Research:** Allowing low-stakes experimentation, peer feedback, and iterative lesson revision.

➢**Process-Oriented Assessment:** Utilizing teaching portfolios, reflective journals, and performance-based evaluations that value both novelty and appropriateness.

Proposed 5-Stage Pedagogical Model To integrate these findings into practice, a five-stage cyclical model is proposed:

1. **Pedagogical Problem Presentation:** Exposure to authentic classroom challenges.
2. **Creative Idea Generation:** Brainstorming, mind-mapping, and multi-scenario planning.
3. **Independent Decision-Making:** Evaluating and selecting optimal contextual solutions.
4. **Implementation & Feedback:** Microteaching, practicum, or simulated instruction.
5. **Reflection & Redesign:** Analyzing outcomes and systematically improving practice.

CONCLUSION. Developing creative thinking and pedagogical independence in prospective teachers requires systemic reform across curricula, pedagogy, assessment, and institutional culture. Autonomy alone is insufficient; it must be supported by professional self-efficacy, metacognitive reflection, collaborative learning, and guided practice. Teacher education institutions must transition from reproductive instruction to autonomy-supportive, inquiry-driven environments. Before future teachers can foster creativity and critical thinking in school pupils, they must first experience and practice professional agency within their own teacher education programmes.

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