METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING THE CREATIVE COMPETENCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: THE CASE OF MOTHER TONGUE AND READING LITERACY

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Abstract: The development of teachers' creative competence is an important condition for improving the quality of primary education, particularly in Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons. Creative competence enables teachers to design learning activities that encourage pupils to generate ideas, interpret texts, communicate independently, compare alternative viewpoints, and produce original responses. Contemporary international frameworks consider creative thinking a developable competence that involves generating, evaluating, and improving ideas [1; 2]. In primary education, these processes are closely connected with reading comprehension, oral and written communication, vocabulary development, interpretation of literary texts, and problem-based learning. This thesis analyzes methodological approaches to developing primary school teachers' creative competence through Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy instruction. The analysis is based on international assessment frameworks, pedagogical research, methodological literature, and recent studies conducted in Uzbekistan. Particular attention is paid to text transformation, open-ended questioning, alternative endings, collaborative learning, problem-based tasks, reflective practice, and formative assessment. The thesis argues that teacher creativity should not be understood simply as the use of entertaining classroom activities. Rather, it should be considered a professional competence involving pedagogical flexibility, purposeful task design, reflection, adaptation, and the ability to create conditions in which pupils can independently construct meaning.

Keywords: primary education, teacher creativity, creative competence, Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy, reading literacy, pedagogical methodology, creative thinking, text analysis, competency-based education, primary school teachers.

Introduction

Primary education plays a fundamental role in the development of pupils' language, reading, communication, cognitive, and social competencies. Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons are particularly significant because they provide opportunities for pupils to work with language, texts, meanings, ideas, arguments, and different forms of communication. Consequently, the professional competence of the primary school teacher directly influences the quality of pupils' learning experiences.

Contemporary educational research increasingly treats creativity as a competence that can be developed rather than as a fixed personal characteristic possessed only by exceptionally talented individuals. The OECD defines creative thinking as the competence to engage productively in the generation, evaluation, and improvement of ideas that can result in original and effective solutions, advances in knowledge, and meaningful expressions of imagination [1]. The OECD framework also emphasizes that creative thinking can be developed through education and purposeful practice [2].

The importance of creativity is especially relevant to language and reading education. Reading literacy is not limited to decoding written symbols or reproducing information. Modern approaches emphasize comprehension, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and the use of information for different

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purposes. The PIRLS assessment framework, for example, conceptualizes reading comprehension through processes such as retrieving information, making straightforward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas, and evaluating content and textual elements [3].

In Uzbekistan, the development of Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy instruction has also increasingly emphasized competency-oriented and interactive approaches. Research on the organization of primary-school Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons has highlighted the limitations of teaching based exclusively on memorization and reproduction and has emphasized comprehension, communication, and active learner participation [4].

Therefore, developing the creative competence of primary school teachers should be regarded as an important methodological task. A creative teacher does not merely introduce unusual activities into a lesson. Instead, such a teacher is able to formulate meaningful problems, select appropriate texts, encourage alternative interpretations, design open-ended tasks, provide constructive feedback, and adapt instruction to pupils' needs.

Methodology

The thesis employs a theoretical and analytical methodology. The research is based on analysis, comparison, synthesis, and interpretation of scholarly publications, international assessment frameworks, methodological literature, and research concerning primary education and Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy.

The conceptual basis of the study includes the OECD framework for creative thinking, PIRLS reading-literacy frameworks, research on teacher creativity, and methodological studies concerning Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy instruction [1; 2; 3]. Recent Uzbek research on primary teachers' creative competence was also considered [5].

The methodological analysis focuses on several interconnected components of teacher creative competence:

- the ability to generate alternative instructional ideas;
- the ability to design open-ended learning tasks;
- pedagogical flexibility;
- creative use of literary and informational texts;
- ability to organize inquiry and discussion;
- reflective professional practice;
- integration of interactive and digital educational resources;
- formative assessment of pupils' creative responses.

The study does not present an independently conducted experimental sample or fabricated statistical results. Instead, it synthesizes findings and methodological principles documented in existing sources.

Results

The analysis demonstrates that the development of primary school teachers' creative competence can be organized around several methodological directions.

The first direction is **creative transformation of texts**. Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons provide extensive opportunities for teachers to transform ordinary text-comprehension activities into creative tasks. After reading a story, pupils may be asked to propose an alternative ending, retell the story from another character's perspective, formulate questions for a character, identify an alternative solution to a conflict, or convert the narrative into a dialogue. Such activities move learners beyond simple reproduction of information toward interpretation and meaning construction. Research on Mother

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Tongue and Reading Literacy instruction in Uzbekistan emphasizes the importance of moving away from mechanical memorization toward understanding and active response to texts [4].

The second direction is **open-ended questioning**. Conventional questions often have one expected answer. Creative pedagogy, by contrast, allows questions that encourage pupils to explain, justify, compare, predict, and propose alternatives. For example, instead of asking "What happened in the story?", the teacher may ask "Why do you think the character acted in this way?" or "What could have happened if the character had made another decision?" Such questions create opportunities for multiple reasonable answers and evidence-based discussion.

The third direction is **problem-based learning**. Creative thinking becomes particularly important when learners face problems for which routine procedures do not provide an immediate answer. The OECD identifies creative problem solving as a form of problem solving involving novelty, unconventionality, persistence, and difficulty in problem formulation [2]. In Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons, teachers can use problematic situations connected with characters, communication, vocabulary, moral choices, or interpretation of information.

The fourth direction is **integration of folklore and literary materials**. Research on the use of folklore in primary Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons indicates the methodological potential of proverbs, fairy tales, riddles, narratives, and other folklore genres [6]. Such materials allow teachers to organize comparison, interpretation, continuation, dramatization, creative rewriting, and discussion activities.

The fifth direction is **collaborative learning**. Creative competence is strengthened when teachers organize conditions in which pupils can exchange ideas and respond to different interpretations. Research on creativity in primary education emphasizes the importance of classroom interaction, cooperation, inquiry, and teachers' confidence in supporting pupils' creative potential [7].

The sixth direction is **reflective professional practice**. A teacher's creative competence requires continuous analysis of teaching decisions. After a lesson, the teacher may examine which tasks generated diverse responses, which questions stimulated discussion, which pupils remained passive, and how instructional activities could be modified. Teacher reflection therefore becomes an instrument for professional creativity.

Analysis and Discussion

Creative competence should be distinguished from the simple application of innovative teaching techniques. A teacher can use games, digital technologies, presentations, or group activities without necessarily developing pupils' creative thinking. Creativity depends primarily on the pedagogical purpose and cognitive demands of the activity.

The OECD framework stresses that creative thinking involves three central processes: generating ideas, evaluating ideas, and improving ideas [1; 2]. This principle can be directly applied to Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy. For example, pupils may initially generate several possible endings to a story, evaluate which ending is most consistent with the text, and subsequently improve their chosen ending by adding evidence or developing the characters.

Teacher competence is therefore particularly important because pupils' creative opportunities depend partly on how teachers formulate learning tasks. Research concerning primary teachers' conceptions of creativity has shown that teachers may value creativity while simultaneously experiencing difficulties in translating this value into classroom practice [8]. This demonstrates the need for systematic professional development rather than isolated training sessions.

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A recent scoping review of teacher-education initiatives for early childhood and primary educators examined research published between 2015 and 2025 and identified teacher creativity and teachers' confidence in their creative abilities as important areas of professional development [9]. This supports the view that teacher creativity should be deliberately addressed within initial teacher education and continuing professional development.

Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons offer particularly favorable conditions for such development because language and literature naturally involve interpretation, expression, communication, and multiple perspectives. Recent research in Uzbekistan has identified creativity-supporting conditions in Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons, including effective use of learners' creative potential, cooperation and inquiry, and strengthening teachers' confidence regarding creativity [7].

Another important methodological principle is the combination of creativity with assessment. Creative learning should not mean the absence of criteria. On the contrary, pupils can be evaluated according to clear criteria such as relevance to the text, originality, logical consistency, argumentation, language accuracy, and ability to explain an idea. The PISA 2022 Creative Thinking assessment itself uses open-ended tasks and scoring procedures based on rubrics and response characteristics [1; 10]. This demonstrates that creativity can be assessed systematically without reducing it to subjective impressions.

For teacher development, professional portfolios can also be used. A portfolio may include lesson plans, examples of creative tasks, pupils' written responses, teacher reflections, assessment rubrics, and evidence of revisions made to instructional activities. Such a system allows creative competence to be considered as an observable professional process rather than an abstract personal quality.

The Uzbek educational context also demonstrates the importance of methodological modernization. Studies of Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons have highlighted interactive methods, information technologies, student activation, and communicative approaches as important elements of contemporary instruction [11]. Methodological research has further emphasized the role of text analysis, questioning, discussion, essay writing, vocabulary activities, and didactic games in developing pupils' analytical and practical abilities [12].

Thus, a methodological model for developing primary teachers' creative competence can be represented as a sequence:

diagnosis → professional learning → creative task design → classroom implementation → formative assessment → reflection → improvement.

This sequence should be continuous. The teacher first identifies existing professional strengths and difficulties, studies appropriate pedagogical approaches, designs creative learning activities, implements them in the classroom, evaluates pupils' responses, reflects on the effectiveness of the activities, and modifies subsequent lessons.

The central methodological principle is that creativity should be integrated into ordinary curriculum content rather than treated as an additional activity. Creative thinking can be developed while pupils acquire vocabulary, study grammar, analyze texts, develop reading comprehension, and practice oral and written communication [2].

International assessment evidence also demonstrates that creative thinking has become an explicit area of educational measurement. PISA 2022 assessed the creative thinking of 15-year-old students, focusing on their ability to generate diverse ideas and evaluate and improve ideas [13]. Uzbekistan participated in PISA 2022, and the OECD published a country-specific creative-thinking factsheet for Uzbekistan [14]. Although PISA concerns a different age group from primary education, its conceptual

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framework provides relevant principles for understanding creativity as a teachable and assessable competence.

Conclusion

The development of creative competence among primary school teachers is an important methodological condition for improving Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy instruction. Creative competence should be understood as an integrated professional capacity that includes pedagogical flexibility, generation of instructional ideas, design of open-ended tasks, organization of inquiry and cooperation, effective use of texts, assessment of creative responses, and systematic professional reflection.

The analysis demonstrates that Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy lessons provide substantial opportunities for developing creative teaching practices. Text transformation, alternative endings, open-ended questions, problem-based tasks, folklore materials, collaborative discussion, vocabulary activities, creative writing, and reflective assessment can all be incorporated into regular lessons.

The development of teacher creativity should not be reduced to the introduction of isolated "innovative" methods. Its methodological foundation is the teacher's ability to create learning situations in which pupils generate, evaluate, justify, and improve ideas. This approach corresponds with contemporary international conceptualizations of creative thinking [1; 2] and with methodological research on Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy education [4; 7].

Therefore, teacher education and professional-development programs should systematically incorporate creative task design, reflective practice, text-based inquiry, formative assessment, and collaborative pedagogical experimentation. Such an approach can strengthen teachers' professional autonomy and create more favorable conditions for the development of pupils' reading, communication, analytical, and creative competencies.

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