**STUDY OF CHANGES ASSOCIATED WITH**

**THE "CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS" MODEL IN SCHOOLS**

# REPORT SUMMARY

# **Research Aim**

The goal of the research is to evaluate the changes related to the implementation of the “Creative Partnerships” model in schools.

# Research Task

1. To analyse the changes of the skills and learning attitudes of the schoolchildren, who participated in the process of creative learning projects;

2. To analyse the changes of the skills and professional activity attitudes of the teachers, who participated in the process of creative learning projects;

3. To analyse the changes in the school climate in the process of the creative learning project;

4. To analyse the interaction of the National Curriculum with the projects of creative learning.

# Research Design

The skills and attitudes for the analysis have been presented by the Customer. The analysed skills, attitudes, and climate aspects are in conformity with the Curriculums of National Education and Teachers’ Qualification Development (TQD).

Key definitions:

* **Skills** describe what is practically applicable while acting in analogous or new situations, analysing, creating new things, and justifying one’s opinion (National Curriculum, 2008).
* **Attitude** is a conviction or feeling, which prepares the reaction towards things, people or events in a certain way (Dictionary of Psychology Terminology, 1986).
* **Organisational** (School) **climate** is totality of psychological factors that influence effective team activity, productivity, personal development, employee life quality, etc. The base of the Organisational climate is people’s feelings and emotions (Robbins, 2003).

1. The analysis of the **schoolchildren skills** included the evaluation of:
   * Learning to learn;
   * Cooperation;
   * Creative thinking.

The analysed skills also include:

* School children’s subject competencies, and
* Attendance.

The analysis of the **schoolchildren’s attitudes** included the evaluation of:

* Interest in the subject;
* Apprehension of the importance of learning;
* Desire to investigate;
* Disposition for knowledge and improvement of one’s skills;
* Self-reliance;
* Courage to ask questions and seek help;
* Willingness to share one’s thoughts, opinion, feelings, and experience;
* Disposition for listening to others and respect for different opinions.

1. The analysis of the **teachers’ skills** included the evaluation of:

* Suggesting and accepting educational challenges;
* Experimenting in the educational process: employment of new ideas, knowledge, skills, environment, and attitudes;
* Schoolchildren’s empowerment (Teachers’ strive to know the specifics of their schoolchildren’s learning);
* Use of reflection;
* Monitoring, recording, and evaluation of the schoolchildren’s creativity;
* Cooperation with schoolchildren (with a special focus).

The analysis of the teachers’ attitudes included the evaluation of:

* Attitude towards professional activity;
* Motivation aspects.

1. The analysis of the school climate included the evaluation of the following aspects:

* Emotional environment;
* Tolerance;
* Apprehension of the schoolchildren’s merit;
* Stimulation of the variety of thoughts and opinions;
* Conditions providing for critical thinking of schoolchildren;
* Emotional evaluation of being part of the community;
* Freedom for experiments;
* Playfulness, humour, good mood.

1. The analysis of the interaction of the National Curriculum with the creative learning Projects included the evaluation of the following elements:
   * Whether the updates of the content and form of the National Curriculum provide for the conditions of creative learning process;
   * Whether and how the teachers and school administration use National Curriculum in organising and adjusting the education process;
   * How the educational environment is adapted to the creative learning.

Table 1. Schedule of Research Stages

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research (stage)** | **Type of School (Number of Schools)** | **Qualitative Methods** | **Quantitative Methods** |
| **Diagnostic Research 1 and 2** | Enquiry Schools (20)  Change Schools (12) | **In-Depth Interview** (IDI) with School Coordinator and Subject Teacher.  **Focus Group** (FGD) with Schoolchildren participating in the Programme.  **Class Observation** by teachers and schoolchildren of the Programme. | **Research Method:**  On-line questionnaire.  **Target Groups:**   * Teachers of the Programme * Teachers outside the Programme * Schoolchildren of the Programme\* * Schoolchildren outside the Programme\* * School administration representatives participating in the Programme |
| **Data Nationalisation for Instrument Validation.** | | | |
| **Diagnostic Research 3 and 4** | Enquiry Schools (20)  Change Schools (20) | **In-Depth Interview** (IDI) with School Coordinator and Subject Teacher.  **Focus Group** (FGD) with Schoolchildren participating in the Programme.  **Class Observation** by teachers and schoolchildren of the Programme. | **Research Method:**  On-line questionnaire.  **Target Groups:**   * Teachers of the Programme * Teachers outside the Programme * Schoolchildren of the Programme\* * Schoolchildren outside the Programme\* * School administration representatives participating in the Programme |
| **Research Data Analysis and Preparation of Final Report** | | | |

\* With respect to age differences of the children in the Programme, two different questionnaires were used in Stage 1: for 1-6 grade schoolchildren and for 7-12 grade schoolchildren. After the first diagnostic research, decision was taken to include 4-6 grade and 7-12 grade schoolchildren in the quantitative research. The opinion of 1 – 3 grade schoolchildren was examined only by the qualitative research methods.

# SUMMING-UP AND CONCLUSION

1. **”Creative Partnership“ Project and the tools used in it develop schoolchildren’s skills: learning to learn, cooperation, and creative thinking**. The Project participants singled out learning benefits more often than those outside the Project. The Project undoubtedly influenced creativity that is more favourable: creation of “friendlier” atmosphere in schools. Higher-grade children pointed out very clearly more favourable aspects of non-formal communication and cooperation. The changes related to leadership and interest in the teaching process as well as involvement in the teaching process were evaluated more positively. The creative thinking skills of the Project participants are also distinguishable compared to the schoolchildren control group. The schoolchildren in the Project are more motivated; they seek new, unknown things, and are able to connect and synthesise knowledge.
2. **The analysis of the schoolchildren’s attitudes shows that the most prominent Project-related changes are noticeable in the interest in the teaching subject, in apprehension of the importance of science, and in the intentions of knowing and improving one’s skills.**  The Project schoolchildren are more inquisitive and more interested in the teaching process and in the chosen subjects. The most prominent valuation differences are noticed in the schoolchildren’s motivation to seek new, unknown things and in their skill to connect and synthesise knowledge.
3. **The integration of the subjects in the course of the Project allowed the schoolchildren to understand the connection between theoretical (acquired during the classes) knowledge and its implementation in daily activities.** The adoption of non-traditional, more democratic forms of teaching stimulated interest, i. e. to ask questions more often, and consistency in the activities, clear understanding of the goal and future result were essential factors that strengthened the attitude during the Project that learning is not a goal in and of itself, and that acquired knowledge is beneficial for the learner.
4. **The implementation of the Project activities stimulated the schoolchildren to go out of their comfort zone and take an interest independently, thus improving their skills, work in pairs or groups.** Group assignments as out-of-class activities provided for the less active schoolchildren to be involved in the activities and become integrated into the school community. At the start of the Project, the activity initiative and motivation belonged to the Creative Practitioners and teachers, while at the end of the Projects the teachers noticed that the number of initiatives, ideas and suggestions form the schoolchildren considerably increased. The changes in the area of self-confidence were most prominently exposed in the children, who seemed to be shy, silent, or excessively active, even aggressive at the beginning of the year. At the end of the year, they demonstrated the skill to integrate into the group and accept the rules of joint activity.
5. **The possibility in the Project to work with “the people from outside the school”, who used non-traditional methods of accumulation and presentation of information, stimulated the selection of more liberal forms of communication that suggested more freedom and self-confidence.** It also encouraged more active questioning and request for help or attention. The schoolchildren who experienced difficulties to adapt acquired opportunity to be involved in common activities, to talk and work in groups, and to participate in joint activities on equal basis with other classmates at the end of the Project.
6. **The schoolchildren’s attitude towards themselves and the education process also changed in the course of the Project.** At the start of the academic year,the skill to learn was related to the discipline, apprehension of the importance of education, concentration, efforts, and diligence. In the course of the Project, this approach changed with the focus moved to perseverance, courage, curiosity, pursuit of the goal, cooperation with other people, self-confidence, interest, etc. Even if these features are not fully manifest, the fact that they are considered significant shows actual change. The apprehension was there that **personal contribution in the activity makes that activity beneficial and important. In this respect, the stimulation of independent collection of information and experimenting places the focus not only on the result, but also on the process of achieving the result, and promotes creative thinking.** The example of the teacher’s personality in the stimulation of communication and cooperation is of utmost importance for this process.
7. The analysis of the teachers’ attitudes and skills with the help of qualitative instruments shows that key changes related to the Project participation embrace the areas of the schoolchildren’s empowerment, creative observation, evaluation, and cooperation. Especially noticeable are the teachers’ attitudes to stimulate leadership and courageous actions. **The Project teachers placed more focus on the schoolchildren’s resolution to act in complex environment, their leadership, and communication. Prominent Project-related valuation differences can be observed in the areas linked to leadership, direct communication, and promotion of independence.**
8. **Before the start of the Project activities as well as after their completion, the teachers rarely were willing to discuss with their schoolchildren in the class the evaluation of the class progress, the way the schoolchildren felt or their own accomplishments.** The schoolchildren had more positive evaluation of their teachers at the end of the academic year saying that they were more often encouraged to express their opinion and to make self-evaluation about how much they had learnt; they also said less often that the teacher “does not like when he/she is challenged”. However, the general attitude of the schoolchildren towards their role during the class and their level of activeness remained unchanged.
9. **Classes were observed in the course of the research, where the teacher can be described as a very active person, who keeps the initiative in his/her own hands and the children are given the role of a performer/executer of assignments.** Open questions are rare, and the given questions more often are related to reproduction of knowledge rather than to its creative use. As far as the teachers role as a catalyst of idea generation and opinion diversity is concerned, no noticeable difference was observed between the class progress before the start of the Project activity and after its completion. The assignments more often are formulated in the form of direct questions and answers, when the teacher presents a direct feedback about the answers without particular attention to possible different attitudes or alternative solutions.
10. The areas where the teachers evaluate themselves more favourably than the schoolchildren include leadership and direct, equal communication. The Project teachers pointed out that the joint work with the Creative Agents at the start of the Project and in the course of its progress showed how important simple, every-day cooperation was and what benefits a teacher may gain from it for the results of his/her professional activity. The participation in common activities with the schoolchildren on equal basis provided for the teachers to be revealed as personalities, who are inquisitive, fallible, and eager to explore. **Participation in joint activities with the schoolchildren provided the teachers with opportunities to create close relationships and acquire the reputation of those who are easy to communicate with and who are able to better understand the schoolchildren.**
11. **Interactions of teacher-to-schoolchild remain much more frequent than those of schoolchild-to-schoolchild during the classes. Essentially, the situation has not changed considerably after the Project, because often they started with the essentials –** the teachers tried to accept all the opinions of the schoolchildren without criticizing them, listen actively to what the schoolchildren were saying, and stimulating them to listen actively when others were talking. Although it all was known theoretically, the teachers acknowledged that such practices are rarely sustainable in the educational process.
12. The core positive changes are related to personal communication: “destruction of walls“, openness to new activities and working methods, skill to relate theoretical knowledge to practice. Experimenting in the educational process was going on at the initiative of the Creative Partnership Agents. **All the Project teachers noticed that the application of new teaching methods and change of the environment strengthened the apprehension of practical benefits of the knowledge acquired, stimulated curiosity and willingness to go deeper into a relevant subject.** This was also confirmed by the schoolchildren. The teachers also experienced in practical terms how the group work allows to evaluate not only the schoolchildren’s knowledge, but also the skill to communicate, distribute the workload, and stimulate responsibility. Having evaluated the importance of personal contribution and impact on the quality of the final outcome as well as having appreciated common goal of the team, the schoolchildren found personal skills and inner motivation for the performance of certain activities that had been unacceptable and unattractive for them.
13. **Although the teachers were interested in the new methods, they only partially projected to apply them on their own in the future. The key factor that restrained them was the ratio of the time used for preparation and the expected benefit.** They realise that it is not enough to formulate a task for the schoolchildren in order to observe creativity manifestations; they need time for the process itself. This consideration stops many teachers from the application of the methods that stimulate creativity.
14. Before the Project activities started, the teachers did not pay much attention to the presentation and discussion of the evaluation outcomes with the schoolchildren. However, after the completion of the activities, attempts were observed to apply alternative evaluation methods: stimulation of the schoolchildren for self-evaluation of their progress and suggestions for the evaluation of each other’s achievements. **Both the teachers and the schoolchildren stated that the evaluation as a process was defined anew after the Project completion with the focus not only on the final outcome, but also on intermediary achievements, which are not necessarily given a mark.**
15. **The outcomes of the general psychological climate evaluation revealed positive changes in many researched areas: emotional environment, tolerance, stimulation of thought diversity and critical thinking, direct communication and playfulness.** The principal tendencyis a positive change in the feeling of safety and decrease of bullying. The upper-grade schoolchildren of the Project, compared to those outside the Project, singled out the factors related to general feeling of oneself, being within a group, increased feeling of safety, and decreased level of bullying. Comparison of the answers of the “Creative Partnerships” Project schoolchildren and those outside the Project of 7 – 12 grades shows that **the evaluations of the psychological climate by the Project participants in many areas are somewhat higher than those of non-participants. A similar tendency is observed in the motivation for pursuit of new, unknown things: the Project schoolchildren are more motivated.** The schoolchildren and the teachers positively evaluated the conditions, which stimulate critical thinking and empowerment: promotion of leadership and courageous actions. The schoolchildren and the teachers clearly defined more favourable aspects of informal communication.
16. **The impact of the Project on the schoolchildren’s progressiveness and attendance is evaluated positively by the teachers: the indications at the start of the Project and at its completion show a positive balance of evaluations to the benefit of the Project impact.** Both the evaluations of the possible impact on the schoolchildren’s marks and their attendance were higher in 2014 compared to those in 2013. The biggest positive effects of the Project were observed in the cases of “Enquiry Schools” and “Enquiry Schools TM³”. The evaluation changes are least noticeable in the “Change Schools” that have been most involved in the Project activities. Most probably, the Project has become already a part of the school environment and it has not been evaluated as a novelty.
17. **The effectiveness of the National Curriculum is evaluated with the view of how they present clearly formulated evaluation criteria and instructions as well as the way to achieve required results.** In this respect, the programme effectiveness is evaluated with reservation. At present, **the National Curriculum are related only to the development of subject competencies, and the goal is to achieve the level of knowledge as defined by the Curriculum.** However, the non-subject competencies remain at the discretion of the teachers, who prefer to have precise instructions and outcome measurement criteria for their development.
18. **The Project activities showed that creativity stimulation through educational process and cooperation among experts of different areas yield considerable outcomes even in short-term.** The dissemination of trusted methods and the definition of a clear possible outcome would help the teachers’ community achieve better results of their activity, especially in the groups that require higher attention and more efforts (e. g. those who learn in accordance with adapted Curriculum). Long-term cooperation among the teachers of different areas has assured a wider range of ideas, broader variety of activities, and more positive outcomes.