



Project: Developing Creativity: Research and Methodology
Nr.VP1-2.2-ŠMM-05-K-02-029

**DEVELOPING STUDENT CREATIVITY IN THE LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE
CLASSROOM:
A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Vilnius
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The Modern Didactics Centre

Kaunas regional Domeikava Gymnasium

Klaipėda Vydūnas High School

Trakų regional Onuškis High School

Ukmergė regional Siesikų High School

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Introduction

Contemporary society emphasizes the efficient use of knowledge and speedy innovation, as well as the necessity of developing individual creative abilities. It is therefore important to develop personal qualities that enable people to embrace change as an opportunity to implement new ideas that promote innovation and active participation in a knowledge-based society (European Parliament and Council Decision on the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, 2009). Society is interested in the activities of creative personalities because the evolution of culture and continuity is dependent on their creativity. Creativity is significant not only to society, but also to the individual as a means of surviving and adapting in the world that surrounds him or her. Creativity is associated with each individual's quest to find themselves, to find their free, authentic, humanistic, sense of self-expression. According to the Lithuanian philosopher A. Maceina (1992), creating oneself enhances one's being, and the physical and mental powers necessary to create new forms, habits, inclinations. This process is what makes life meaningful.

It is natural, that in such a dynamic society, schools are required to educate an individual's creative abilities in order to respond to the challenges of the modern world, so that each individual student's life would be more meaningful. The European Commission Communication "A broad-based innovation strategy" (2009) states that without additions to educational innovation creativity cannot take root.

In their work of scholars analyze creativity as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Some researchers associate creativity with individual thinking skills, while others analyze the creative process and its results. Still other researchers strive to reveal the characteristics of the creative personality. In recent decades, creativity is analyzed within the context of the complex personality, society, and culture. In the holistic view, creativity includes many creative processes and influencing factors (talents, abilities, personality characteristics, motivation, creative experience, and so on.).

The work of researchers in the field of creativity unanimously recognizes that creativity is an innate personal characteristic and the result of educational opportunity. To a great degree the development of creativity in an individual depends upon the direction in which an individual's activities are used and are given meaning through acquired knowledge and skills. This is why analysis of the creative process is given so much attention in scholarly literature,

as well as in educational practice (Ferrari, Cachia, Punie, 2009)¹. This is also the reason why the project, *Developing Creativity: Research and Methodology*, is associated with creativity and creative thinking development training opportunities in the Lithuanian language classroom in Lithuanian public schools.

In order to prepare methodology for the development of creativity and creative thinking in the Lithuanian language classroom, it was necessary to conduct a multifaceted analysis of creativity and creative thinking. This multifaceted study of the situation helped to highlight shortcomings in the development of creativity and to strategize for educational opportunities for improvement.

¹ Ferrari, A., Cachia, R., Punie, Y. (2009). *Innovation and Creativity in Education and Training in the EU Member States: Fostering Creative Learning and Supporting Innovative Teaching*. Literature review on Innovation and Creativity in E&T in the EU Member States. ICEAC.

1. Research methodology

1.1. Logical sequence of the research

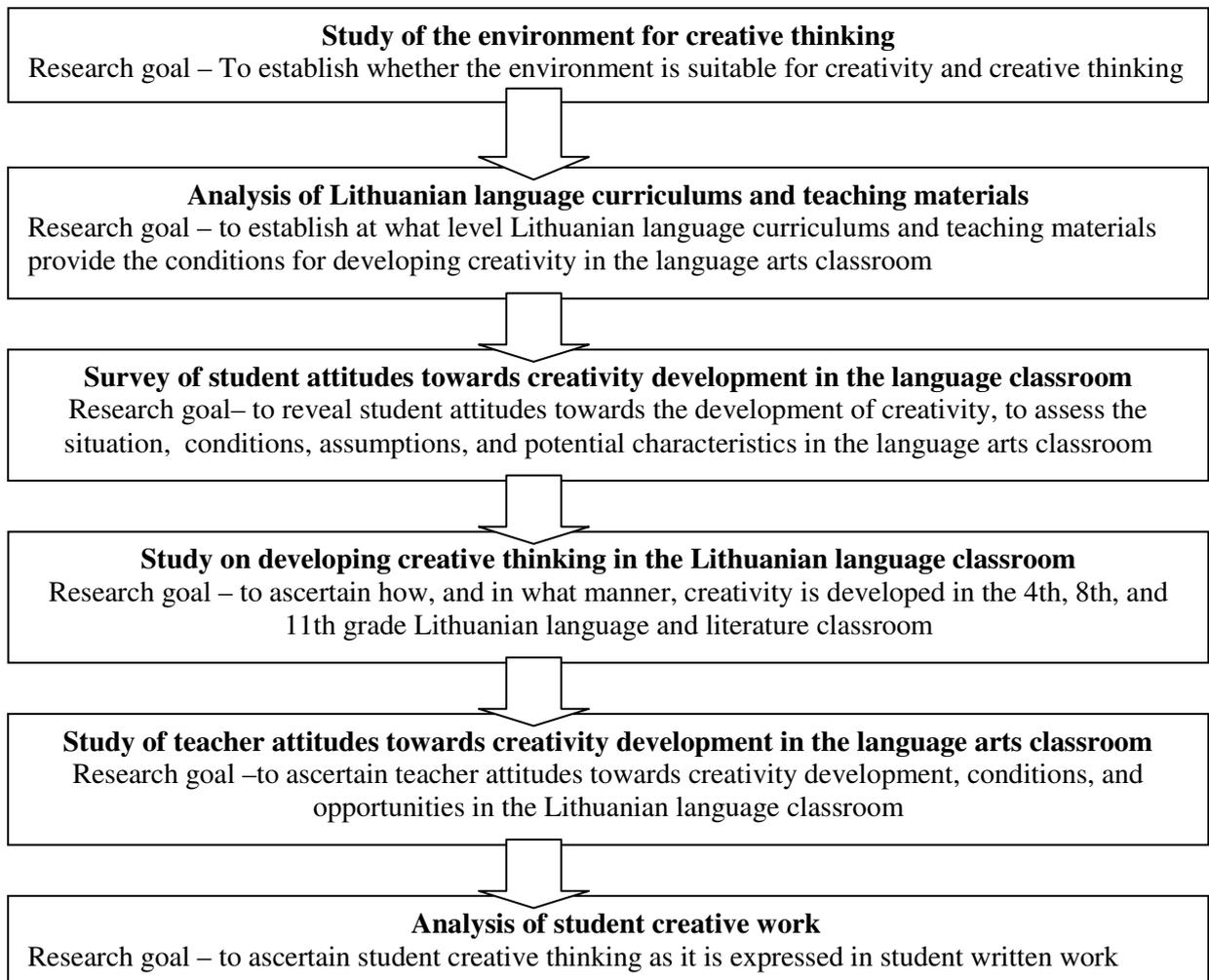
In order to ascertain the situation regarding creativity and creative thinking in the Lithuanian language classroom, an integrated research strategy was chosen that combined qualitative and quantitative research. Each survey's results revealed differing aspects of creativity and creative thinking in the Lithuanian language classroom. This helped prepare for the next stage of the research, which was to choose an adequate research methodology, and to formulate relevant and clarifying research questions, as well as to deepen understanding of the problems.

The results of the completed research are presented in summarized conclusions. Recommendations have been formed on the basis of this research.

Five schools participated in the project and participated in six studies:

- 1) A written survey was distributed to establish favorable conditions in the classroom for creative thinking. This survey helped to establish and clarify teachers' attitudes towards creative education and the relevant conditions for creative education to take place, as well as external and internal variables in the areas of creativity. It also helped to formulate situational analysis of creativity education with important in-depth questions;
- 2) The analysis of teaching methods in the Lithuanian language classroom highlighted strategic assumptions regarding creativity and the development of creative thinking;
- 3) A written survey that sought to gain information regarding student attitudes to the development of creativity in the Lithuanian language classroom created the necessary conditions to identify student problems regarding developing their creativity and educational opportunity;
- 4) Classroom observation of the Lithuanian language classroom helped reveal practicalities regarding the realization of developing creativity and the creation of a creative classroom environment;
- 5) Interviews with teachers established teacher attitudes, comprehension of creativity development, educational strategies, and helped to identify a plethora of problems.

- 6) The analysis of student creative writing revealed the level of student creativity and helped to identify and prepare areas for improvement. The study provides a logical sequence in Figure 1.



1 figure. Logical sequence of the research

1.2. Research methods

1. Written survey for educators. In order to understand the state of creativity and creative thinking in a favorable environment, teachers from participating schools answered a questionnaire, which consisted of closed and open-ended questions. Five closed-ended questions helped the group find out: How many respondents have knowledge about creativity in education; whether teachers believe that their school environments are conducive to creativity; whether schools provide teachers with conditions for creative expression; whether morale and the psychological climate of the school is such that is conducive to creative expression for both students and teachers.

Teachers were also asked to answer five open-ended questions: How do you recognize whether a student is a creative thinker? What sort of environment fosters creativity? In your

opinion, what prevents creative thinking in your school? What support do you expect to receive from your school administration, your colleagues, and your students in order to foster the development of creative thinking for yourself and your students. What are you willing to do in order for teacher and student creative thinking to develop at its highest potential?

Educators provided one to three explanations for each answer.

The study accounted for the fact that a teacher's view of a student and his/her belief in his creative abilities strongly influences creativity. The survey provided nine qualities that define a creative individual (openness to new experiences and a need for novelty; curiosity and a thirst for knowledge; a large quantity of ideas; a rich imagination; originality and the ability to present interesting ideas, non-traditional assessments and/or variations of solutions; trust in one's creative abilities; endurance, perseverance). Educators were asked to evaluate each question on a scale of 10 with 0 indicating that the quality is non-existent and 10 indicating that the quality is very strong. Only side options were outlined; interim figures were described.

2. Analysis of curriculums and teaching materials. In order to find out to what extent Lithuanian language and literature curriculums and teaching materials for 4th, 8th, and 11th grades create the conditions to foster creativity, an analysis was made of the primary teaching aids (textbooks, teacher's manual, exercise book) that are used by all the schools that participated in the study. The newest editions of the textbooks were analyzed. In total 40 positions were analyzed. An analysis method was chosen to examine aspects of fostering creative thinking and creativity in the Lithuanian language and literature curriculums.

While analyzing Lithuanian general education programs, the question was raised whether the authors of the programs provided sufficient guidance / insight / links in order for students' creativity and creative thinking to develop.

Educational programs were analyzed to find out what creativity assumptions can be seen in the individual programs (grades 3-4, 7-8, 11-12) of the Lithuanian language curriculums and how those assumptions come to a resolution. The aims, objectives and structure of the program (the possibilities of integration of didactic terms, learning environment), student performance, content, scope, assessment were considered.

In order to search for the answer as to what extent preconditions to raise the creativity of teaching aids exists original research methods were created. Based on the studies of A. Reints and H. Wilkens (2011)² the analysis was divided into three structural parts: content, didacts,

² Reinas, A., Wilkens, H. (2009). Evaluating the equality of textbooks from the perspective of the learning process. *Local, National and Transnational Identities in Textbooks and Educational Media. 10th International Conference on Textbooks and Educational Media.* International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media, IARTEM.

design and presentation of material. Problem-solving oriented questions were formed for each based on creative thinking, creativity and its development, and the insights of educational researchers.

2. Interviews with Lithuanian language teachers. The goal was to ascertain the experiences of those interviewed and to learn about their opinion regarding creativity and the development of creative thinking. In order to gather information a standardized individual and open interview method was chosen. When the rules were followed neither the questions nor the word order was changed. Teachers were asked:

1. What is creativity development to you personally? What do you think it is?
2. Why do you think it is important to foster creativity?
3. What type of environment, in your opinion, encourages/discourages creativity? Why?
4. How would you evaluate your school's environment? Why?
5. In your opinion, what opportunities are provided for your students to develop their creativity in Lithuanian language classes? Why?
6. What difficulties or road blocks prevent a teacher from fostering creativity in the Lithuanian language classroom? Why?
7. What would you propose changing or/and improving on the national/school/classroom level in order to obtain quality in terms of developing creativity in the Lithuanian language classroom?
8. Give some examples of your most successful instances of developing creativity? Explain.
9. What would you personally want to change or do differently? Why?
10. What information about creativity, creative thinking, and developing creative thinking would you find helpful? What would be the most effective means of you getting that information?

4. Observation of Lithuanian language classes for grades 4, 8, and 11.

Two lessons were observed for each class. In one instance a language class was observed and in the other a literature class was observed. There was a two to four week interval between observing the first and the second lesson. If possible, two researchers would both observe the same lesson. During the time of the classroom observation, all the teachers and students' actions were recorded, as well as their reactions, moods, and the interpretations of the observers. After the lesson was finished, researchers would ask: how did the teachers

themselves evaluate their own class and whether they successfully achieved all of their goals. Teachers were asked about how they evaluated student work during the lesson and so on.

When observing lessons the researchers wanted to see and understand how teachers create an environment in the classroom that is conducive to creativity; how teachers plan lessons and how they lead those lessons; how teachers reflect on their own work and their students' work that is completed during Lithuanian language classes.

When judging whether a teacher created a classroom environment that was student-oriented and conducive to creativity the following observations were made and examined: 1) The teacher encourages students to express their opinion, supports their ideas; accepts the ideas of everyone in the class and encourages students to take risks and educated guesses when they do not have a clear opinion; 2) Encourage and support students with learning disabilities, students who are too shy to express their opinion; create opportunities for learners to test their new knowledge and habits; encourage interaction between the student and the teacher; build an atmosphere based on trust, tolerance, and respect; encourage students to make use of various materials that foster creativity; make sure that the learning process is illustrated with student work.

When evaluating the lesson plan, researchers observed and analyzed whether plans were made to implement methods and strategies that encourage creativity and noted how they were used; considered whether opportunities provided for students to work individually, in pairs, in groups, and/or to change those learning formats; considered whether actions and exercises are planned that are in tune with student needs and abilities; whether elements of surprise are incorporated into the lesson; are there activities planned that require non-traditional, original decision-making skills that make it possible for all students to express themselves and to reveal their strongest creative sides.

When assessing the course of instruction, researchers observed and analyzed how and if: 1) Teachers use teaching methods and strategies, and teach students to use them to promote their active involvement, their willingness to learn and to develop their own independent thinking; 2) Continually observe their own teaching process and react to student reactions so as to correct their teaching strategies; 3) Chose teaching methods that help maintain student interest, curiosity, foster their imaginations and inspire them to search for new solutions (to solve problems, work on exercises, etc.) and help students independently strive for learning goals; 4) Use reading and writing as a tool to begin to research and understand ideas; 5) Provide teaching materials that compliment the textbooks, as well as other materials, and which enrich educational content and which are interesting to students and encourage interpretation; 6) Create exercises using a variety of sources, materials, which encourage

students to continue learning outside of the classroom; 7) Encourage students to express a variety of ideas, thoughts and opinions, formulate open-ended questions that encourage higher level thinking; 8) Provide students with enough time to think through their answers to questions and don't interrupt them when students express their thoughts; 9) Create an environment in which learners are encouraged to formulate and ask their own questions, ones which would require higher level thinking skills to answer; 10) Actively listen to their students and encourage them to listen carefully when others are speaking.

When analyzing the process of evaluating lessons the following were observed: 1) Whether the teacher together with the students sets clear criteria for evaluation, which are based on the educational process, as well as the students' learning results; 2) Use authentic strategies for evaluation that are constructive and that clearly and objectively measure a student's progress; 3) Evaluate student understanding in a multifaceted way by understanding their position, knowledge, habits, and abilities; 4) Teach and encourage learners to evaluate their own and other students' learning results; 5) Correct the learning process by paying close attention to their own work and to student progress and evaluations.

5. Written surveys answered by 8th and 11th grade students. This survey was accessible over the Internet. Students were asked to express in writing their views on the following:

1) The classroom environment in terms of education (are students given the opportunity to express themselves and their opinions freely; are they given the opportunity to raise ideas, to express their thoughts, even then when they are unsure of those same ideas; are student encouraged to express the development of their ideas, their evaluations; is the classroom atmosphere positive, so that students are accepting of ideas and actions; is the atmosphere in the class based on trust, tolerance, respect; are a variety of learning materials assessible to the student; are students given the opportunity to present their creative work to their classmates in the classroom environment; are enough opportunities provided in the Lithuanian language classroom for students to develop their creativity and creative thinking skills).

2) Opportunities for developing creativity and creative thinking skills (are students given the opportunity to complete an assignment together with another student or in small groups; are students given the opportunity to exchange ideas, opinions, and experiences with other students; are students given the opportunity to complete assignments in which they must themselves think of something and allocate considerable time to the completion of that assignment; are students given the opportunity to complete assignments in which they must explain an idea, present their thoughts, evaluate propositions; are they given the opportunity to create a variety of questions in order to analyze creative work and to engender discussion;

are they given the opportunity to think through their answers, provide detailed explanations, express their thoughts; are students given the opportunity to complete assignments that are different than those of their classmates; are they encouraged to show their work and to try their best; are they given the opportunity to learn skills that they can use beyond the classroom; are they given the opportunity to take on the teachers role and teach others). Students were also asked if, in their opinion, a relationship between emotion and will was formed in connection with activities that required creativity (do students have a variety of ideas about possible ways of executing assignments, discovering a variety of solutions or explanations; do they want to express their idea and original ideas on how to solve problems; are student opinions closely listened to; do students listen closely to the opinions of others; do students want to learn more about what was discovered or learned during the lesson; do they understand what they are expected to learn and by what means it would be possible for them to effectively achieve their learning goals).

3) The manner in which student work is evaluated (does the method of evaluation have any bearing on the student's learning and on the development of their creativity; are evaluation criteria clear; is time allocated for students to share their work in class; are opportunities provided for the teacher to comment on an individual student's creative work or the creative work of the group, especially in those instances in which students are requested to create something original, unique, and interesting; are opportunities provided for the student to comment on his or her own creative work and their creative process).

In order to obtain a more in-depth view of student experiences and their attitudes towards creativity development in the Lithuanian language classroom, students were asked to respond to three open-ended questions: 1) What ideas have you shared with others in class that have made you feel happy and proud; 2) What exercises do you enjoy working on the most during Lithuanian language and literature class; 3) What evaluation have you received in your Lithuanian language and literature class that has made you feel the most happy.

6. Creative assignments for students in grades 4, 8, 11. Creative writing assignments were devised in such a manner as to allow students to express themselves freely, without any inhibition on their imaginations, creativity, or creative expression. The creative writing assignments were designed in such a manner as to give students the opportunity to express their values, hopes, dreams, opinions, and convictions. When designing these assignments, attention was paid to the students' grade level and to grade-appropriate curriculums. Fourth graders were asked to write a story, using a brief story line and guiding photographs as a starting point. Using their imaginations, students wrote stories in the fantasy genre. Eighth grade students were asked to create a diary entry based on one of two situations and themes

presented to them. Eleventh grade students were asked to write a short story that makes use of internal monologue based on a scene that was provided for them. All the students were given instructions on how to complete the assignments and general guidelines. Teachers were provided with instructions on how to prepare students to complete the assignments and on time restrictions.

Student work was analyzed and evaluated according to the following criteria: 1) Originality, novelty, meaning, whether students created an unusual, convincing, and enticing story, one that maintains creative tension; 2) Resolution: Does the plot offer a conclusion that follows logically from the plot and which is motivated; 3) Elaboration: was enough detail and imagery and convincing dialogue used to support the plot and characterization that the student created; 4) Synthesis: are all elements of story woven into a harmonious whole and does the creative work maintain continuity.

These evaluation criteria were specified according to the nature of each assignment, genre, and the age of the students. Work written by 11th grade students was analyzed according to all four criteria. When analyzing the creative work of 4th and 8th grade students, the criteria for resolution and synthesis were combined because these qualities were difficult to differentiate.

1.3. Study sample characteristics

Schools and students from participating schools took part in the study. These schools were: Ukmergė regional Siesikų high school, Vilnius Gerosios Vilties high school, Kaunas region Domeikava Gymnasium, Trakų region Onuškis high school, Klaipėda Vydūnas high school. Depending on the nature of the study, participants varied.

Characteristics of participants of the study of an environment conducive to creativity and creative thinking.

The survey was completed by 101 teachers. Teachers who teach Lithuanian language classes in grades 1 through 12 and school administrators were invited to complete the survey on favorable environments for the development of creativity and creative thinking skills.

1 figure. Data on educators who participated in the study (%)

GENDER (%)		RESPONSIBILITIES (%)			
Women	Men	Teachers	Representative from the school administration		
92,1	7,9	90,1	9,9		
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING (%)					
1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26 and more years
5	6,9	11,9	26,7	16,8	32,7

NUMBER OF CLASSES TAUGHT (%)			
1-4 classes	5-8 classes	9-12 classes	5-12 classes
42,6	13,9	19,8	23,7

In order to understand creativity and creative thinking skills in the Lithuanian language classroom in total 67 lessons were observed in 34 classes: in 33 of those classes two lessons each were observed and in one class one lesson was observed. A total of 34 teachers were observed.

In order to understand teacher attitudes towards developing creative thinking skills and creativity in the Lithuanian language classroom 30 teachers from 5 participating schools were asked to answer surveys. The average number of years the participating teachers had been teaching was 17.6 years.

In order to understand student attitudes to developing creativity in Lithuanian language lessons 385 students from the 8th and 11th grades answered survey questions. The break-down of students according to grade level and gender is outlined in figure 2.

2 figure. Distribution of students according to grade and gender

		Female		Male		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Grade	8	108	28,5	105	27,7	213	56,2
	11	89	23,5	77	20,3	166	43,8
Total		197	52	182	48	379	100

513 students from all the participating schools completed the **creative writing assignments**.

2. Summary of the research findings

Study of what constitutes a favorable environment for creative thinking

The results of a theoretical analysis of what constitutes an environment favorable to creativity showed that in scholarly literature the following characteristics are considered significant: A positive attitude towards change, mutual relationships based on trust and respect, freedom to act and independence, cooperation, a flexible measure of evaluation, examples of creativity, an appropriate physical environment.

School culture is also important, namely fostering a tolerant environment, encouraging participation, recognizing the value of creativity, encouraging open communication, risk taking and support of experimentation. The psychological climate of a school, the classroom atmosphere, and the greater school community must be founded on trust and good

relationships with a strong teacher and functional learning spaces in order to foster creativity and creative thinking.

Results from the empirical study, in which 101 educators from the five participating Lithuanian schools participated, showed that educators considered originality and flexibility to be the two most important characteristics of creative thinking.

At the same time, the student who is a creative thinking must have the following qualities: Activity, motivation, curiosity, the ability to problem-solve, and a wide range of interests. Educators admitted that they have only an average amount of information about creativity and creative thinking. Educators indicated that the sources of their knowledge about creativity came from personal experience and their private study of educational resources. Institutions of higher education were cited as the least influential source of information and experience about creative thinking for educators. Also noted was that there is limited information flow between colleagues.

When describing the most important features of an environment conducive to creative thinking, educators cited a positive psychological climate in the school, the freedom to work uninhibited, the encouragement of creative efforts, an appropriate physical environment and adequate school supplies, as well as collegiality and the conditions to collaborate with colleagues.

In the opinion of the teachers, their school environments were far more conducive to creativity and creative thinking than the context of the educational system of the entire country.

A large percentage of those surveyed agreed that in their schools there was a clear goal set to support individuals who were creative thinkers. Their schools willingly took measures to initiate innovations. There were many educators in their schools who were creative thinkers. There was far less positive feedback given or encouragement given to motivate educators to think creatively and to encourage them and praise them for their innovations and originality.

Most of those surveyed recognized that the students in their schools were encouraged to think creatively and a variety of activities were organized in order to foster student creative thinking, as well as to provide a forum for students to present the results of their creative endeavors. However, a third of the educators indicated that in their school there was not enough respect shown to those who thought differently and behaved differently. These students did not always garner the necessary understanding and respect from their teachers and their peers. Almost half the educators who answered the survey expressed that in those

instances in which they were not successful, they did not receive enough support. They felt that their school environments lacked patience, tolerance, and support.

When creating a school environment that was supportive of creativity and creative thinking, educators were supportive of their students' initiatives and did their best to help students trust in their own creative abilities, and evaluate themselves positively. However, it also became apparent that not all students were invited to participate in activities that required creative thinking skills and that there was not enough importance placed on the significance of the creative process.

In the opinion of educators, the greatest impediments to creativity and to creative thinking in the schools are broad curriculums, a psychological climate in the school that is not conducive to creativity, the indifference of students, and the lack of motivation. In order to foster creative thinking in both teachers and students, first of all educators would like their colleagues and the school administration to provide them with support and understanding, and with good-natured collegiality. They would ask students for more initiative and stronger motivations to learn. In order to foster creativity and a school environment that is conducive to creativity, teachers made the following recommendations: change the curriculums, encourage educational innovations, create a school environment that is open to novelty and is benign, provide the latest materials and texts, and scale back the teaching load.

Analysis of Lithuanian language curriculums and teaching materials

Having analyzed whether enough attention is paid to developing creative thinking skills through close analysis of teaching materials, the conclusion was reached that fourth grade teaching materials were designed to foster creativity and creative thinking.

However, eighth grade and eleventh grade textbooks do not do enough to find links and connections between literature and the students' personal experiences; to present ideas from a variety of perspectives; to examine things from different perspectives. The greater number of questions and activities in these textbooks require one correct unilateral answer.

Texts provided in the learning materials give enough opportunity to recognize the qualities of the creative individual; however, there is a distinct lack of exercises and questions that could direct students towards an understanding of the creative individual. An exception can be made for fourth grade teaching materials. The texts in these textbooks are filled with characters that are recognizably open, curious, full of ideas and originality, and have a rich imagination. The creative process is not adequately addressed in all the grades' textbooks.

In all the grades (except for the fourth grade) limited information regarding the creative process is provided. Students are not encouraged to experience the creative process in any organized way. They are not asked to produce a finished and noteworthy creative product that can be evaluated in any measurable manner. Students are not taught to evaluate their own activities, to strive for results, to consider future learning projects.

When comparing individual textbooks, the conclusion was made that even in the same class very often learning materials have differing levels of attention paid to developing creativity. At the same time, when comparisons of textbooks were made between grade levels, it was found that the fourth grade textbooks were the most oriented towards fostering creativity and the eleventh grade textbooks were least oriented towards developing creativity.

The authors of the educational curriculums included enough guidelines indicating the need to develop creativity and creative thinking. However, the goals of the textbooks are not oriented enough towards educating an individual to be a creative thinker. Therefore, it is important to search for means in which students and teachers alike can take steps in the direction of finding and developing their creative skills, albeit the road is not an easy one.

Study on conditions for fostering creativity and the development of creative thinking skills in the Lithuanian language classroom

Teachers create a safe, secure, mutually respectful environment in the Lithuanian language and literature classroom. They respectfully listen to what all students have to say. They encourage students and provide support irregardless of learning aptitude or other individual factors. They are accepting of students the way they are.

Only in very rare instances was disrespectful behavior towards students observed. Most of the time the classroom environments were conducive to student learning, providing the student with the freedom to work creatively in various forms and aspects. In many classes student creative work was illustrated with examples. More and more Lithuanian language and literature classrooms are equipped with computers, multimedia, and Internet connections.

However, students are not given enough opportunity to take risks – to guess, to conjecture without having a firm opinion or information base. The teachers also are not prone to risk taking. Only a few instances were observed in which teachers were not afraid to admit that they had made a mistake, or in which they revealed their emotions, or in which they shared their own creative work.

Most often creativity was encouraged through supplemental materials (student creative work, creative assignments designed by the teachers, music and artwork, supplemental literary sources and so on) that the teachers, and not the students, made use of. The students

used these supplemental sources only in a very limited way, with the exception of the fourth grade classroom, which was more hands-on.

Teachers of Lithuanian language and literature often planned their lessons in such a manner in which they were able to apply only certain teaching methods that encourage creativity. The most commonly used strategies were as follows: Open-ended questions, presentation of problems and analysis of those problems, discussions, and the assignment of project-based activities. Students work individually and in pairs or in small groups, as well as the entire class. However, those work formats were linked to the differentiation of lessons and with individualization in order to suit the needs of diverse students. Elements of surprise are considered to be the use of supplemental teaching materials and the opportunity for students to share personal experience, emotions, anecdotes. However, these elements are rarely planned ahead, but instead seem to spring up spontaneously in the course of the lesson.

Students have many opportunities to actively participate in activities in the Lithuanian language and literature class. Teachers use certain strategies that encourage students to want to participate in classwork. Teachers support students during the entire learning process.

However, not all opportunities are put to use. Most often, teachers participate more actively in the lesson than the students themselves. They raise questions themselves and make use of a variety of sources and materials, as though they were attempting to encourage student participation through modeling such behaviors themselves. However, the students often remain observers, passively observing teacher activity and interest, rather than themselves becoming active participants in the lesson. Student independence and independent thinking remains silenced, undeveloped, and is not demonstrated very often because of the lack of time and a lack of attention. In the lessons there is less focused and individual research and interpretation practiced by the students themselves. Throughout the lesson, most of the time students are asked closed-ended questions, which require a certain specific and correct answer. Teachers ask students open-ended questions at times, but the students themselves never formulate and ask open-ended questions. Most of the time open-ended questions are utilized to recall information, to transmit information, to analyze, and to interpret. Only sometimes are open-ended questions used to evaluate. Very often teachers give the students the impression that they are required to answer the questions in exactly the way the teacher expects them too. This is also true when teachers ask questions about the student's individual opinion. Lesson time is conserved, thus making it difficult for students to take the time for reflection or for more in-depth analysis.

The evaluation of the learning process is very difficult for teachers. Teachers are not sure how to evaluate an individual student's progress; how to evaluate an individual's

contribution to group work, and in general find it difficult to evaluate knowledge, views, ability and habit as a whole. It is also difficult for teachers to evaluate student creative work in a more diversified and wholistic manner. In the fourth grade a variety of evaluation approaches were observed in which the uniform symbol system was implemented.

Teacher attitudes towards research on the development of creativity in the Lithuanian language classroom

When making generalizations about creative thinking, teachers identify one central aspect of creative behavior, thinking, and personality – originality and novelty. Creativity is also associated with a student's self expression, with his or her ability to participate in the creative process, in shaping creative results. Teachers comprehend the development of creativity as the process of encouraging student self-expression, as developing creative thinking skills, as making the creative process something enjoyable. The most important characteristics of creativity in the educational process is identified as the integrity of the educational process and optimality of the creative performance. According to teachers, creativity helps one achieve a good career, a good quality of life, and builds character (inventiveness, independence, collegiality, initiative and so on). Creativity helps an individual adapt to their environment. Creativity helps an individual effectively solve life problems.

Educators identified the following as the most important characteristics of an environment conducive to creativity: a creative atmosphere, relationships with other students, colleagues, and the school administration that are based on shared projects, shared creative work, the attitude of the teacher, and the teacher's role in creating a creative atmosphere).

When creating an environment conducive to creativity, in the opinion of teachers, the following are important: student involvement and motivation, teacher support of students and teacher trust in students, the opportunity to raise ideas and to express opinions, tolerance of mistakes and failed attempts, pride in student success and student creative work.

The relationship between teachers and students must be based on respect of divergent opinions, on sincerity, and on trust. Teachers expect the following from their colleagues: creative partnership, an open exchange of pedagogical experience, assistance and support. From the school administration teachers expect conditions to be provided for further professional development, collegiality, understanding.

The physical school environment has a bearing on creativity: The aesthetic of the school and the classroom affects creativity, as does the presentation of examples of student creative work on display in common areas. Also important are functional learning spaces. Teachers also note that influences outside of school have an impact on creativity. In their conversations,

teachers expressed the importance of the influence of family, of extra curricular learning institutions and cultural institutions, such as libraries, theaters, museums, and television, on the development of student creativity. The experience of various school and city-wide cultural events also influence student creativity.

In order to develop creativity, Lithuanian language teachers use a variety of different teaching strategies: Drama, reading, role-playing, in-class presentations of creative work, advertising and/or playwriting, composing music according to literary texts, drawing, various projects, oral presentations and contests, film/photography.

Teachers consider the most important activities in the creative development of student literary work (poetry, essay, stories, and short story) to be the following: Writing practice, participation in literary contests, encouraging participation in olympiads, implementing teaching methods that foster active participation in the writing process, integrating the writing process with other subjects.

The most significant road blocks to implementing developing creativity in the Lithuanian language classroom are associated with content: The curriculum is too broad, there is too much information and too much material to cover; the content is not interesting to students; lack of attention paid to differentiated education. Another problem lies with how the creative process is organized: Not enough attention is paid to the finished product, not enough student discussion, poor classroom culture, lack of scheduled time for creative work, large class sizes. Yet another problem that was cited was a negative environment.

Several teachers responded in the survey that an essential problem lay in the difference between the nature of literature classes and language classes. The teachers explained that there was no link between language classes and creativity.

While discussing ways of optimizing creativity development in Lithuanian language classes, educators suggest the following solutions to textbook authors, the committee that developed the curriculum, and to the committee that organizes the national literature exam.

According to survey participants, Lithuanian language and literature textbooks should be adjusted according to the following criteria: The educational content must be designed to serve student ability and student interest; an adequate amount of methodology that develops creativity must be included; clear educational goals; better selection of readings.

Information presented in student textbooks should be complimented with contemporary teaching materials. Teachers suggest that the committee that develops curriculum should cut back material covered in the curriculum so that it wouldn't be too broad to be realistically covered in the course of an academic year. Student creative efforts should be included in the national exam; students should be tested using assignments that ask them to apply the knowledge they have acquired in the learning process.

In the opinion of teachers, the following changes should be made on the school-wide level: Administration should ensure strategies to develop creativity in the school; reduce class size; students must be better equipped with supplies and learning aids.

Changes in the ability to develop creativity in the classroom is linked to availability of professional development and the motivation to work creatively. Educators admitted that they are eager to acquire more knowledge about how creativity is developed and about education. Educators emphasized that concrete examples and practical teaching materials are essential for them to learn about how to foster the creative process. Teachers would like to receive information on creativity development either through independent study (methodological books and teaching materials) or by participating in professional development conferences, or by observing other teachers' lessons, or through discussion. Teachers cited information technology as a source of disseminating information and obtaining information on creativity and fostering creativity.

Study on student attitudes towards creativity development in the Lithuanian language classroom

When evaluating what constitutes a creative environment, students expressed that the most positive aspect of a creative environment is the opportunity to express their opinions without reservation and make use of educational materials. However, a number of students feel that their classroom environment lacks tolerance for their opinions. When evaluating creativity development and fostering of creative thinking skills in the Lithuanian language class, students admitted that they were provided with the conditions to work on activities that fostered creativity: They were able to work in pairs or in small groups on projects; they were able to express their opinions, ideas, and to share their experiences. They were given the opportunity to complete exercises in which they had to think of something on their own or create something. Some of the students surveyed expressed that they were not given enough time to reflect on their answers, to provide thorough explanations, to express their thoughts.

The greater number of students were pleased that they were given the opportunity to express their thoughts about literary works that they were studying, as well as on social problems, and on their personal experience. Only a small group of students expressed that it was a positive experience for them to present their creative work to the class. Most often students stated the following reasons why they avoided expressing their thoughts in class: They were afraid of being criticized and they were afraid of losing credibility with their classmates. The greater number of students surveyed expressed that they like working on creative projects and activities that required collaboration. However, there were not enough opportunities provided to present their work to the school community. Students expressed that it was important to them during class not only to receive a good grade, but to be praised by their teacher and their classmates. They wanted to hear their classmates explanations, good-natured observations, or even constructive criticism. In the opinion of the greater number of students surveyed, evaluations in the Lithuanian language classroom was noteworthy for clarity and for how much attention was paid to discussing student creative work. However, not enough class time is allocated for evaluation. Students rarely have the opportunity to evaluate their own work or the work of their classmates.

Although when analyzing the data of this study according to gender and grade, no significant statistical differences were found, upon close and detailed examination of data it becomes apparent that more attention is given to developing student creativity in the eighth grade rather than the eleventh.

Study results and conclusions drawn from analysis of student creative exercises

Analysis of creative work produced by fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade students makes it clear that creative expression decreases with each increasing grade level. Much more opportunity for creativity is provided in the fourth grade curriculum and this is evident in their creative work, which was completed with more imagination and creativity. This is significant when one considers that reading and writing in these students' lives competes for attention with computer games and other activities and entertainment.

Eighth grade students were eager to share their ideas and emotions. They provided interesting solutions for problems. However, only a small percentage of eighth graders completed the creative writing assignment with originality and novelty. The main characteristic of their assigned creative activity was originality, novelty, innovation, originality of voice. These characteristics were only found in the work of a fourth of those studied (out of 513 students who participated in the activity, only 103 fit in this category. That was 54 fourth graders, 15 eighth graders, and 34 eleventh graders).

Elaboration of narrative in which the main plot of the creative work was maintained, and synthesis was noted in 237 student works (113 – from the fourth grade, 83 – from the eighth grade, 41 – from the eleventh grade). It was noted that there were 111 student works in which the narrative was fragmented, lacked logic, and lacked imagery and an interesting narrative (18 – fourth grade works, 46 – eighth grade works, 47 – eleventh grade works). There were 62 works that did not satisfy most of these criteria (5 from the fourth grade, 31 from the eighth grade, and 26 from the eleventh grade).

Having evaluated all student work submitted according to the above characteristics of creativity, researchers came to the conclusion that the greater part of all student creative work submitted belonged to the second category of evaluation (adequate evidence of creativity) and to the third category (little evidence of creativity). The 237 student works in the second category had the potential to be much better written, had the students avoided cliché, and if the students writing them had exhibited more freedom and originality. Of the 111 creative works in the third category, it was clear that these students did not know how to elaborate on a narrative or how to create a clear narrative. The work in the third category lacked detail and original means of expressing ideas. Our team's researchers came to the conclusion that 348 creative words out of 513 had the potential to be developed in such a manner as to have been included in the highest category of criteria that satisfy what we have established as benchmarks for creativity, if these students had been given the opportunity to learn in a learning environment in which they were given more time and attention, and if they'd had practiced writing creatively and without inhibition, and if they had been allocated enough time during class to develop and express their thoughts.

The creative works examined reflect a realistic situation in which creativity is found at both extreme ends of the bell curve—in other words, very few students are completely uncreative and very few are very creative. The majority of students are somewhere in the middle of the bell curve.

3. Conclusions

Creativity and the development of creative thinking is closely related with the established understanding of creativity. Teachers who participated in the study provided differing conceptions of creativity. Most of the educators related creativity with characteristics of creative thinking, but identified originality and flexibility as the most important characteristics of creativity. Other survey participants identified activity and motivation as characteristics indicative of creativity in a student. Other participants emphasized psychological characteristics, such as a rich imagination, a wide breadth of interests, intellectual activity and so on. Although differing understandings of creativity is mentioned in literature that deals with the problematic aspects of studying creativity, there is still a common opinion that the lack of creativity makes it difficult to identify a creative student and to choose an appropriate strategy for fostering creativity and applying it. The teachers who participated in the study on developing creativity understood creativity as encouraging self-expression, developing creative thinking, and making the educational process more attractive.

Educators admitted that they lack information about creativity and do not have enough access to information regarding developing creative thinking skills. Usually they develop their own competency on how to develop student creativity by individual study or through trial and error in the classroom. Teachers are seeking to expand their knowledge of creativity in the classroom and do this in the manner mentioned above. Educators are especially interested in having access to practical examples and concrete teaching materials. Teachers expect to acquire more knowledge about creative teaching methods by participating in professional development events. However, educators noted that the most valuable resource for acquiring skills about creativity is creative collaboration and cooperation with colleagues. Teachers expect open sharing of educational experience and expertise in the form of classroom observation, discussion, assistance, support and so on.

Teachers note that one of the strongest influences on implementing creativity in the schools is documentation that support creativity. Therefore, a lot of attention is paid to discussion of educational literature and educational practice and to the curriculum. Analysis of the above mentioned documentation showed that the authors of Lithuanian language curriculums made adequate allowances for the development of student creativity and for fostering creative thinking skills. However, the teaching materials that are assigned for the fourth, eighth, and eleventh grades did not provide enough support for creativity development. For example, in the designated textbooks there was very limited discussion of the creative process; very rarely were students given the opportunity to experience the creative process in

a hands-on manner; or to present a finished creative product; and there was a lack of exercises and discussion questions that would lead a student to a creative analysis of creative individuals; there was a lack of questions and exercises that encouraged students to formulate their own questions or to look at a concept from a variety of viewpoints; most questions and exercises required one unilateral correct response; there was a lack of questions and exercises that would encourage students to present their own ideas in a variety of manners, to interpret, or to present their own arguments, to express their opinions or viewpoints; students were not taught to evaluate their own work, to set goals, to evaluate future assignments. Educators made the following critical evaluations when providing their opinions on teaching materials and curriculums in terms of creativity development: Curriculums are far too broad; students are burdened with too much information and too many materials that they are required to cover; material presented to students was not at all interesting or relevant to the students' lives; there was little attention paid to differentiated learning.

From the perspective of successful creativity development, out of all teaching materials that were analyzed, fourth grade textbooks received the highest marks. It was also established that when comparing textbooks assigned to the same class, the level of attention paid to developing creativity varied greatly from one textbook to the next. However, in most situations the level of focused and systematic creativity development in the classroom boiled down to the teachers' ability to use teaching materials creatively and to supplement teaching materials and the teacher's manual with questions and exercises and activities that supported creativity.

When developing creativity in the Lithuanian language classroom, teacher used a variety of self-devised methods that encourage and support creativity. Teachers considered participation in literary contests, literary olympiads, and writing literary analysis to be their most significant contributions towards developing student creativity. Students also recognize that teachers create opportunities for them to participate in creative endeavors: They are given the opportunity to work in pairs or in small groups, to exchange opinions, ideas, and experiences, to express their opinion without restraint, to make use of a variety of learning materials, and to also complete assignments in which they must think of solutions on their own and create something on their own.

During class observations, it was noted that students are not given enough opportunity to take risks. Students are not given the opportunity to do research and to interpret and analyze literature. Students are not given exercises that require divergent thinking and they are not given the opportunity to reflect on and answer open-ended questions.

Class time is rationed. Not enough class time is allocated for lengthier reflections and interpretations. Teachers are more actively involved in the lesson than their students. It also became apparent that not all students are drawn into activities that require creative thinking skills. There is a lack of differentiation in consideration of student needs and interests and learning opportunities. Typically, the more talented students participate in class and the others do not. A contingency of students are not encouraged to participate in creative classroom activities. This observation was also confirmed by the greater number of student responses in the student survey. Although the greater number of students surveyed agreed that they receive a satisfactory amount of opportunity in Lithuanian language and literature class to develop their creativity, almost a sixth of students surveyed noted that they were not encouraged to participate in such activities. One of the most pertinent problems of learning differentiation is this problem of not all students being included in the lesson.

Evaluation of student work was identified as one of the problems associated with developing creativity in the Lithuanian language and literature classroom. Although the greater number of teachers and students who participated in the study expressed that they felt there was enough criteria for the evaluation of student creative work, classroom observation revealed that not enough attention was allocated to evaluating student work and students were very rarely given the opportunity to discuss their own work or that of their classmates. It is not easy for teachers to evaluate student creative work, the progress of individual students, and the input of individual students in group work, integration of knowledge, opinions, and habit as a whole.

Educators indicated that the following were the most important elements necessary to create a classroom environment that is conducive to creativity: Student freedom to work on individual projects at their own pace; encouragement of the creative process; an appropriate physical environment; appropriate distribution of learning materials; collegiality and cooperation.

When evaluating their school environments, most teachers agreed that their school administration has set developing creativity and creative thinking skills as a clear goal. The school willingly participates in making innovation happen, and there are many teachers in their schools who are creative thinkers. Lithuanian language and literature teachers themselves create a safe classroom environment in which there is mutual trust and tolerance between students and teachers. The teachers encourage the students to think creatively and are supportive of their efforts. These teachers express positive attitudes towards the quality of their work. The physical classroom environments observed are often conducive to

encouraging freedom of expression in students and towards creative work in a variety of forms and approaches. Student creative work is often displayed in the classroom.

The greatest impediment in the school towards developing creativity, in the opinion of teachers surveyed, is student apathy and lack of motivation. Too much emphasis is placed on results and not enough on classroom discussion and the work ethic in the classroom. Not enough time is allocated towards creative activities in the classroom. Class sizes are too large.

Several teachers surveyed cited that an especially difficult obstacle was that there was too much of a difference between material that needed to be covered in the literature class as opposed to the work load of the language class. These teachers indicated that there was too much of a difference between teaching methods necessary to teach grammar as opposed to creativity development.

There is a lack of patience, tolerance, and support in the schools. A third of the teachers surveyed indicated that there is not enough respect in their schools for individuals who think differently and who behave differently. Students do not always receive the understanding they deserve from other teachers and peers. Almost half the teachers in the survey responded that they did not receive appropriate support in times of difficulty. A similar number of students expressed that they did not receive support and tolerance for their ideas. Students cited that the most common reason why they failed to take creative initiatives was because they feared losing the trust of their peers and the teacher and they feared criticism.

Although from a statistical viewpoint there is very little difference in the data collected in terms of comparisons between age and gender, a more detailed analysis of the data revealed that favorable conditions for developing creativity dramatically decrease from the fourth grade to the eleventh grade. In other words, the most favorable conditions for creativity are in the fourth grade. Those conditions decrease for eighth grade and decrease even more for eleventh grade. Fourth grade textbooks provide the most opportunity for developing creativity, while eleventh grade textbooks provide the least amount of opportunity. Creative methods were more likely to be used in the fourth grade classroom rather than in the upper grades. Analysis of student creative work revealed that student creative ability decreased from the fourth to the eighth to the eleventh grades. Fourth grade students delved into the creative writing assignment with more focus and imagination than students in the upper grades. Eighth grade students also willingly shared their thoughts and feelings and were capable of providing interesting problem-solving techniques. However, only a small percentage of eleventh graders were able to complete the creative writing assignment in an original and innovative manner.

4. Recommendations

When evaluating the results of analysis of curriculums and learning materials, the following was recommended:

- The breadth of curriculums should be curtailed, so that there would be enough class time remaining for teachers to spend time on activities that build creative thinking skills and on creative writing assignments.

- Tasks that necessitate student creativity and the application of knowledge in a creative manner need to be included in exams.

- To bring up to date documentation that affects how curriculums are written, so that areas of the curriculum that require strengthening creative thinking and stress evaluation of creative thinking can be made current.

- The learning process and the evaluation of learning results in terms of creativity is a field that is quite subjective. There is no clear consensus in this field. However, if creative efforts are not evaluated, then it will be difficult to implement in any systematic manner in the schools. Therefore it is important to create a detailed system of evaluation of the creative process, one that would emphasize creativity and provide criteria for evaluation. The purpose of such a formalized system of evaluation would be to create common points of reference, which would enable schools to systematically foster student creativity.

- The criteria for choosing literary texts must be improved. Contemporary texts that reflect the realities of today's student's lives must be included in the eleventh grade curriculum. Information that is presented in student textbooks must be supplemented with modern teaching materials.

- The curriculum must be expanded so that it suits the needs of students and the realistic interests and abilities of students. There should be more activities and exercises in student textbooks that foster creativity. Teaching materials must allocate more attention towards the learning process and the development of metacognitive abilities. Textbooks need to include more open-ended questions and activities, which encourage students to undertake research. Students should be encouraged to formulate open-ended questions and ask teachers those questions. The number of questions and activities that require an undebatable correct answer or solution must be limited.

When considering the results of classroom observations in the qualitative study the following recommendations were made:

- Conditions for educators to receive professional development in the area of developing student creativity should be provided. This would include: organizing seminars and practicums in which teachers would have the opportunity not only to learn about and understand creative thinking, but would be provided the conditions in which to participate in creative activities themselves and thus learn how to adapt that experience to fostering strategies and methods for developing creativity in the classroom.

- To prepare and implement a strategy for developing creative thinkings that would be used in the schools. This strategy would be designed to help ensure the dissemination of materials that make optimum use of innovation, to publicize the results of creative work, and would support and encourage creative teachers, as well as discussion and sharing, and cultural development.

- To supply teachers with methodological materials and aids; to create conditions that make it possible to meaningfully and accurately make use of contemporary information technology aids to search for information, to select information, and to use that information to support student creativity.

- To find means of effectively solving problems associated with spreading student creativity: to encourage planning content, to encourage student creative activities, as well as support teaching materials that influence creative development; to develop forms of evaluation of student creative activity and the creative process; to address differentiation in education; to publicize student creative works; to provide a diversified opportunity for the development of creativity, creative motivations, and make satisfying student needs a more accessible process.

- To foster a school environment that is conducive to creativity, that is psychologically safe for students, in general, a school environment that fosters cooperation and mutual support and respect.