CREATIVITY AND SELF-ESTEEM DEVELOPMENTAL TREND AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Primary school years are important for the development of children's creative potential (see eg Charles & Runco, 2001; Claxton et al., 2005). Empirical evidence on its trend is somewhat inconclusive and subject to different interpretations (see Runco, 1999, 2014). Torrance, in this regard, highlights the so-called fourth grade slump of creativity around 8-9 years, in correspondence to the emergence of an increasingly logical and conventional thinking. The exercise of creative thinking, therefore, could lead to a distress, with potential development of anxious symptoms and lowering of self-esteem. The main aim of our study was to assess creativity trend during primary school years, with a clear expectation for a negative peak around the age of 8 (Torrance, 1968; Darvishi e Pakdaman, 2014). A second critical goal was to investigate on the correlation between creativity and self-esteem, supposing an indirect association.

384 children (189 boys) between 7 and 11 years (mean=8.63; SD=1.16) were administered: Incomplete Figures sub test of TTCT (Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, Torrance, Sprini & Tomassello, 1989) assessing Fluency, Flexibility, Originality, Elaboration; CFSEI (Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Children, Battle, 1992, It. Adapt. Tressoldi & Vio, 1996) evaluating a global measure of Self-esteem and four sub dimensions: Personal, Interpersonal, Emotional, Behavioral.

The results suggest that during primary school, while the scores Elaboration increase, the scores of Originality decrease. The negative correlation of Originality with global Self-esteem and Interpersonal sub-scale and the positive correlation between Elaboration and Emotional sub-scale suggest that “divergent” children feel less adequate in social relationships, otherwise, “convergent” children feel more emotionally self-confident.

These results stimulate a deeper reflection about the role of the educational system in fostering or inhibiting the development of creativity and promoting children’s wellbeing.