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## EXPLORING CREATIVITY AND LEARNING: WORKS DEVELOPED BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS A LONG TIME AGO

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### ABSTRACT

Creativity is one of the most striking characteristics of schoolchildren. In primary school, they demonstrate an incredible ability to imagine, innovate and transform the world around them. From vibrant drawings to fantastical stories, creativity is an essential tool for cognitive, emotional and social development. The school environment plays a fundamental role in stimulating this creativity. Teachers who encourage experimentation, curiosity and freedom of expression help students to develop their own ideas without fear of making mistakes. Artistic, musical and playful activities are essential so that children can explore different forms of creation. Moreover, creativity is not restricted to the arts. In solving mathematical problems, in spontaneous play and even in the way they interact with their peers, children constantly demonstrate their ability to think outside the box. Stimulating this ability from an early age is essential in order to form adults who can face challenges with flexibility and originality. That is why it is essential that school and family work together to create an environment rich in stimuli, where each child feels safe to express their imagination. After all, children's creativity is not just a passing phase, but the basis for a future full of discoveries and achievements.

Over the last 40 years, elementary school children in Portugal have been the protagonists of a dynamic educational process, full of innovation, creativity and community involvement. This study is dedicated to the first author's mother who was the teacher and presents a collection of works developed by her elementary school students, highlighting creativity, critical thinking and interdisciplinarity in the school environment. Through activities that include visual arts, creative writing and scientific experimentation, the students demonstrate their capacity for innovation and collaboration. The analysis of the works reveals how work-based learning contributes to the development of children's socio-emotional and cognitive skills, encouraging autonomy and engagement with knowledge. The results show that valuing student work not only strengthens learning, but also contributes to the formation of active and aware citizens. The study reinforces the importance of an education that respects the past, understands the present and prepares for the future.

**Keywords** Creativity · Primary Education · Creative learning · Teachers

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