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Imagination in Education: A comparative Study of Government and Private School Students

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Abstract
Imagination is a vital component of creativity and learning, encompassing the dimensions of vividness, originality, and transformativeness. The present study investigated differences in imagination between government and private school students in India. The research followed a descriptive survey, sample of 100 students (50 from government schools and 50 from private schools) was selected. An imagination test was administered to measure the three dimensions. Results revealed that private school students scored significantly higher than government school students on vividness, originality, and transformativeness. These findings suggest that differences in school environments, resources, and pedagogical practices may contribute to variations in students' imaginative capacities.

Keywords: Imagination, Government School Students, Private School Students.

Introduction

Creativity is inborn but it does not develop unless the proper environmental conditions are provided. Therefore, every individual is born with creativity (Majid et al., 2003; Poon et al., 2014). Every individual expresses his/her creativity in different ways. Imagination is regarded as a cornerstone of creativity and cognitive development in children. Young children are accepted to have the curiosity, imagination and creativity abilities and this type of creativity is called as little creativity (Craft, 2002). This kind of creativity, also called as creativity at the individual level, is concerned with solving the problems in everyday life.

Educational settings play a crucial role in shaping imagination. According to Piaget (1951), "play is the work of childhood," through which imagination becomes a central mechanism of learning and adaptation. Similarly, Torrance (1981) emphasized that schools that provide opportunities for imaginative expression cultivate creativity, curiosity, and flexibility of thought. The contrast between government and private schools provides an important lens to examine how different educational contexts may foster or constrain imaginative development. Studies in the Indian context indicate that "variations in teacher–student interaction, classroom resources, and exposure to enriched activities significantly influence children's creative performance" (Kumar & Ahmad, 2008). Creativity requires imagination. Playing with ideas, establishing unusual and new connections, and investigating different possibilities require the use of imagination (Duffy, 2006). Imagination is the ability to visualise something that does not exist at that moment (Gundogan, 2019). Creative imagination is the ability to rearrange and manipulate existing

information and convert it into unique and original mental images (Eberle, 2008; Lindqvist, 2003). Creative imagination is the visualisation of the unique and original ideas with mental images. The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) in India emphasizes creativity as a fundamental learning outcome, noting that education must develop not only cognitive skills but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities, alongside creativity and critical thinking. Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) argued that "classrooms rich in dialogue, collaboration, and problem-solving tasks nurture creative expression more effectively than rigid, rote-learning environments". Private schools often report higher access to enriched learning resources, smaller class sizes, and activity-based pedagogy (Srivastava, 2010). Government schools, by contrast, may struggle with large class sizes and limited materials, which can constrain imaginative opportunities. Kumar & Ahmad (2008) also showed that innovative teachers in government schools can foster creativity despite resource limitations. Mishra and Singh (2019) observed that students in private schools scored significantly higher on originality and flexibility dimensions of creativity than their counterparts in government schools. Similarly, Jindal (2016) found that exposure to extracurricular and co-curricular activities in private schools positively correlated with children's imagination scores. Yet, not all studies report stark differences; some suggest that variations within classrooms, such as Nair & Menon (2018) teacher motivation, peer interactions, and parental support, may outweigh differences between school types. The present study, therefore, aims to compare the imagination skills of government and private school students.

Objectives

- To compare the vividness scores of imagination among government and private school students.
- To compare the originality scores of imagination among government and private school students.
- To compare the transformativeness scores of imagination among government and private school students.

Hypotheses

H1. There is no significant difference in vividness scores between government and private school students.

H2. There is no significant difference in originality scores between government and private school students.

H3. There is no significant difference in transformativeness scores between government and private school students.

Method

The research method of the study was descriptive survey in nature. As descriptive survey method focuses on studying the existing conditions as it prevails and makes comprehensive descriptions of the same, the present study also focuses on studying the existing imagination of the

government and private school students and obtaining a comparative picture of the imagination of the government and private primary school students.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all the school students studying in Class V in both government and private schools of Jalandhar district, Punjab. From this population, a total of 100 students were selected as the sample of the study. The sample was drawn in equal proportion from both types of schools, with 50 students from government schools and 50 students from private schools.

Tool

Test of Creative Imagination (self-developed tool by researcher) was used for students in the age group of 10-12years to make non-existing schematic formations by using 12 concrete shapes. The scoring of TCI-CF is like in Test of Creative Imagination (TCI). TCI-CF has three subscales: vividness, originality, transformativeness. Scoring is obtained by the number of shapes used in a drawing. In the originality subscale, the originality of the ideas that are drawn is evaluated. The originality score is obtained by the rater's assessment on the originality of the ideas. In the original version of the scale, the reliability coefficient calculated by using the analysis of variance was 0.75 (Gundogan, 2019). In this study, the reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.76.

Technique

The collected data were tabulated and analysed by adopting statistical technique of 't' test i.e. finding out the significance of difference between the concerned means with respect to the hypotheses mentioned in the study.

Procedure

Once the school authorities provided their formal consent and the eligibility of the students was verified, the data collection process was initiated. The self-developed Imagination Scale was administered to the selected school students with the assistance of the class teacher and under the direct supervision of the investigator. Each student was allotted 30 minutes to complete the scale in a calm and distraction-free classroom environment. Prior to the administration, the investigator carefully explained the purpose of the activity and provided clear instructions on how to respond to each item of the scale. The instructions were also reinforced with examples wherever necessary to ensure proper understanding. During the entire session, the investigator, along with the class teacher, remained present in the classroom to monitor the process, maintain discipline, and provide clarification if students faced any difficulty. This ensured that the responses were authentic, unbiased, and collected in a systematic manner.

Results & Interpretation

H1. There is no significant difference in vividness scores between government and private school students.

Groups	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Government school (vividness)	38.42	6.25	2.15	Significant
Private school (vividness)	41.10	5.92		

Table 1 Comparison of vividness dimension of imagination between government school students and private school students

Interpretation: The mean score of private school students (M=41.10) was higher than that of government school students (M=38.42). The difference was found to be statistically significant ($t=2.15$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that private school students exhibit greater vividness in their imagination.

H2. There is no significant difference in originality scores between government and private school students.

Groups	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Government school (originality)	36.85	5.78	2.92	Significant
Private school (originality)	40.22	6.10		

Table 2 Comparison of originality dimension of imagination between government school students and private school students

Interpretation: The mean score of private school students (M=40.22) was also higher than that of government school students (M=36.85). The obtained t-value ($t=2.92$, $p < 0.01$) shows a highly significant difference, suggesting that private school students demonstrate greater originality in imagination compared to their government school counterparts.

H3. There is no significant difference in transformativeness scores between government and private school students

Group	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Government school (Trans formativeness)	37.60	6.05	1.48	Not Significant
Private school (Transformativeness)	39.05	5.72		

Table 3 Comparison of Transformativeness dimension of imagination between government school students and private school students.

Interpretation: Although private school students scored slightly higher (M=39.05) than government school students (M=37.60), the difference was not statistically significant (t=1.48, p > 0.05). This implies that both groups are similar in terms of transforming ideas creatively.

The analysis reveals that private school students perform significantly better in two dimensions of imagination: vividness and originality, whereas no significant difference was observed in the transformativeness dimension. Thus, the results partially reject the null hypothesis and highlight that schooling context influences certain aspects of imagination.

Educational implications

- The findings highlight the need to integrate activities that foster imagination (such as storytelling, role-play, art, and creative writing) into the school curriculum.
- Both government and private schools can benefit from embedding creativity-based exercises across subjects, not just in language or arts, but also in science and mathematics.
- Teachers should adopt student-centered and activity-based approaches that stimulate curiosity and divergent thinking.
- Use of techniques like brainstorming, SCAMPER, problem-solving tasks, and project-based learning can significantly enhance students' imaginative skills.
- A flexible, open, and resource-rich classroom environment supports the development of imagination.
- Providing children with opportunities to express ideas freely without fear of being "wrong" encourages originality and transformation in their thinking.
- Teacher education programs must emphasize the importance of nurturing creativity and imagination in children.

Conclusion

In today's fast-changing world, imagination is not only a personal ability but also a vital skill for future learning, innovation, and problem-solving. Therefore, teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers must recognize imagination as a core educational objective and embed it meaningfully in classroom practices. By fostering vividness, originality, and transformativeness in learners, education can contribute to shaping creative, adaptable, and forward-thinking individuals. Findings indicated that private school students performed significantly better in vividness and originality, whereas no significant difference was found in transformativeness. This shows that the type of schooling has an impact on some aspects of imagination but not on all. The results suggest that while private schools may provide more opportunities and exposure to enhance imagination, government schools too have comparable potential in certain areas. Strengthening creative teaching practices across both types of schools is essential for fostering imagination among learners.

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