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ARTISTIC PLASTIC EDUCATION THROUGH THE CONTEST
WINDOWS TOWARDS THE LIGHT

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Abstract

The colour moves the world, spirituality can be seen through it. It is not only useful but also inevitable, we can express and model ourselves through it. Everything that surrounds us is color. Color - does not exist in itself, it is only perceived by the senses. It is the response of a sense to a stimulus that being either extrinsic or intrinsic. Color is neither light nor pigment, it is a psychic effect, a sensation. Colors are visualized feelings, they create impressions, emotions, different psychic states. The sight is not a mere adding of visual sensations, but it includes a generalizing visual judgment. Colored vision depends on multiple factors, beyond the psychophysiological profile of each person, it occurs immediately after birth, evolves and diversifies with age, education, experience, sensitivity, memory, mental states, etc. The need for color is felt because it is a tool with which one can discover and model both the human interior and exterior. Who does not need light? Who does not need color?

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1. Introduction

Do we need art?

As a component of culture, the metaphorical discourse of art responds to the demands of the new vision of contemporary pedagogical humanism and has the capacity to activate our own interiority. Art helps us understand what is going on inside us and in the world, it cultivates our tolerance towards ourselves and others, it brings us closer to the experiences of reality and it teaches us to confront or change it. Art cultivates and refines sensitivity. At the educational level, applying the principles of art, exploratory behaviours are encouraged together with individual learning activities based on personal experiences, and those with high agility and independence of spirit that has been exercised, are more likely to adapt in any context.

Art builds a world. Art informs and guides perceptions, builds the imaginary, sublimates emotions. The aesthetic education, together with the moral one, is an indispensable component of the personality formation through which the development of the capacity to receive, interpret and create the beautiful is sought. What we can call art in some children is, either just its involuntary expression, prior to the systematic learning of plastic language elements, or the conscious result of an effort for the organic assimilation of the means, processes and techniques of developing creative powers “aesthetic culture is not just a matter of native predispositions or personal aptitudes, but the result of specific knowledge acquisition with multidisciplinary and multilevel character - from history, anthropology, philosophy of art to artistic techniques, artistic languages, even scientific theories...” (Cucoş, 2014, p. 21).

1.1. Color and creativity

Plastic artistic creativity is a long and complex process of training and instrumentation in a language that, as a form of spontaneous manifestation, precedes the others, and as a form of learning-aprofundation begins with early education. The childhood opens windows to the magical realm of imagination and creative spirit. The first age of man is under the sign of the LIGHT-COLOR, of the solarly which has been fully affirmed by the amazing ability of any child to reinvent the world through word, sound, color, fascinating through the beauty of thought - image and purity of speech.

Humans evolved in the same chromatic environment that determined them to develop capacities and reactions to specific stimuli. Color has become for humans a means of expression, of communication, of projection of the inner tendencies, of the experiences and attitudes corresponding to the structure of his personality. The artist must take into account his chromatic language which includes at least partially a number of reversible meaningful signs for both the transmitter and the receiver. When the way of communicating information is symbolic, the receiver must perform the decoding of the hidden meanings. Thus, for educational purposes, the effects of color on people are dissociated into sensory and psychological, physiological and emotional, each oscillating according to the native endowment and the education of the subject. Vîgotski (1973) in the work ‘Art Psychology’ demonstrates the changing character of art (of color) through the words of Lev Tolstoi who compared the action of the artwork with the contamination, it is a very convincing comparison in this case, “I became infected with typhoid from Ivan, but I'm sick of my typhus, not Ivan's typhus. And the Hamlet I carry with me is mine, not Shakespeare's ... Every generation, every reader has a Hamlet of his or her” (Vîgotski, 1973, p. 52).

The palette of possibilities for color interpretation can be much more nuanced if by individual effort each of us adds a touch of color or personality. The affective valences of the colors are communicable by their impressive and expressive qualities. This is why the reception of art also demands creation: “in order to receive art it is not enough to truly relive the emotion that touched the author, it is not enough to understand the structure of the work itself - in addition, you must creatively overcome your own emotion , to find the catharsis, only then will the action of the art be fully manifested” (Vîgotski, 1973, p. 318).

1.2. Windows towards Light

The need to approach a competition for literary and artistic-plastic creations ‘Windows towards Light’ is explained by the fact that the attitude, often reluctant, of the student towards art (literature, painting, music, etc.) must be changed, and the resulting behavior must be motivated in a special way, preferably playful, specific to the age of the children, taking into account their individual characteristics. Through this competition, I set out to attract schoolchildren towards the (re)discovery of art and to determine them to appreciate not only the action, the beauty of the images, of the artistic expressions that the book implies, but also the visual-plastic image created by the literary message. The window that the book opens is an inspiration for artistic-plastic creations. In its turn, the spring, (the season when the competition takes place), opens windows to the LIGHT of the soul, the Easter holidays becoming an inspiration for stimulating the imagination, creativity and originality. The main activities of the WINDOWS TOWARDS LIGHT competition, registered in CAERI 2019, have reached the eighth edition, and are oriented towards the development of communicative skills and artistic-plastic skills in students. Participation in the activities of the project, dissemination of the results on different educational communication channels and in the magazine WINDOWS TOWARDS LIGHT have a high educational impact on the target group, that are students from primary education throughout the country.

The contest is intended to be a window open towards ‘light’, during the Easter holidays, towards the mind and the soul of the children, and the artistic-plastic creations, the products of the participants, are the RESPONSE in COLOR to everything that it proposes. The papers are classified and exhibited following a rigorous judgement, presented in this study through:

- The qualitative analysis (Table 01)
- The quantitative analysis (Figure 01)

The qualitative evaluation, in this competition, follows the analysis of the works in each edition, according to certain parameters of creativity.

Table 01. The quality analysis – Creativity parameters

Getting to know the reality through color	Artistic-plastic creativity quantitative evaluation	Artistic-plastic creativity qualitative evaluation	Visual-plastic creativity
Impressiveness of colors	Fluidity	Emotional expressiveness	The creator (the pupil) or intrapsychic reality (intellectual and personality factors)

			Sensitive reality (environment, objects, beings, relationship with nature);
Color expressiveness	Flexibility	The degree of complexity of the drawing	
	Originality	Movement and action in the drawing	The abstract reality (specialized information, treaties, theories from books, magazines, films etc.)
	Elaboration	Title expressivity	The imaginary (archetypes, myths, legends, dreams)
		Internal visual perspective	Plastic language: plastic language elements, plastic language tools, plastic techniques, original plan and virtual cube
		The richness of the imagination	Creation - product, opera, plastic fact
		Speed of creative engagement	
		Emotional expressiveness	

The quantitative evaluation analyzes different indicators depending on the number of participants, gender, social environment, etc.

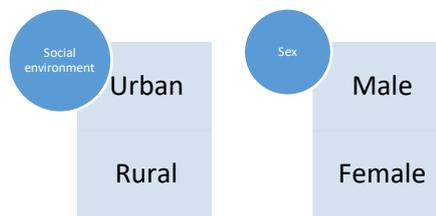


Figure 01. The quantitative evaluation - Indicators

2. Problem Statement

The issue addressed is relatively limited ‘the development of the creative potential of students in primary education’ and has an immediate practical applicability, operating inductively by directly confronting reality, but also deductively. The study circumscribes the dimensions of the aesthetic education, the field of approach being from the curricular areas Arts and Technologies, more specifically the discipline Visual Arts and Plastic Skills (AVAP). The components of the educational action are realized from a systemic perspective and represent the teaching-learning-evaluation relational field. The perspective of the analysis is interdisciplinary, using as a means of achievement the ‘Windows towards Light’ competition. The students' works are judged according to the evaluation grid, respecting the parameters of creativity. Conclusions, generalizations, predictions are formulated by exploring this educational reality.

2.1. The necessity of this study

The need to carry out this study is justified, in the context of the integrated approaches of the curricular contents of the primary education in Romania. The extracurricular activities, the artistic-plastic creation competitions, come to complete the motivational palette of the students that are eager to develop their creative potential.

2.2. Research premises

Creativity is a complex phenomenon determined by a number of factors (intellectual, related to personality, social, related to skills, etc.), and the development of the creative potential can only be done by encouraging freedom of expression using active-participative methods, working techniques, varied strategies. Using the principles of student-centered education, through this competition (through this study), individual or small groups experiments are encouraged, both in common and chosen activities, so that the students evolve at their own pace.

3. Research Questions

The proposed theme ‘Windows towards light’ looks at the development of the creative potential of the students through recreational or extracurricular activities and answers punctually to the following questions:

- What is the artistic-plastic creative potential of the students participating in the competition?
- Does the socio-cultural climate in which the child grows up and develops influence only the formation and affirmation of creativity or also the manifestation of creative performances?

3.1. The research coordinates

The direction of the approach is longitudinally supplemented by a ‘panel study’ with successive measurements, at different times, more precisely every year, at each edition. The function performed is projective, for orientation. The level of intentionality is for practical-applied research that implies a high degree of intentionality and involvement, with self-reflexive approaches and interventions on a relatively small scale in the functioning of the real world, realized by the participants in the action, intentionally designed, organized and unfolded. The form of organization of the students is combined and intensive. The study is performed on a different sample from year to year, depending on the number of students enrolled in the competition. The results obtained are recorded in the tables and graphs that lead to the formulation of the conclusions. The beneficiaries of this study are the school where I work, the Baia Mare College of Arts and the ‘Education, reflection, development’ Doctoral School, where I am currently studying.

3.2. The research characteristics

The research is experimental with a specific purpose and it proposes an inductive approach, from a certain given situation to educational conclusions and decisions, to a more general objective. The

contribution made by the ‘Windows towards light’ competition in developing the creative potential of students in primary education is the most important feature of this study.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to unleash the creative powers and to develop the creativity of the small school children, energizing the individual creative potential in the sense of the appropriate use of talents and cultivation of attitudes. The development of the creative potential can only be done by encouraging, guiding the freedom of expression, on the basis of varied active-participative methods, working techniques, strategies.

4.1. The research objectives

The research objectives are constituted as ‘curricular cuts’ from the curricular areas Arts, Technologies, Language and Communication in the primary education, each contributing to the outline of the theme as a whole – ‘Windows towards light’, which is also reinforced by the metaphorical significance. These are:

- developing the capacity of plastic, metaphorical expression of the soul experiences, of the influences suffered from the outside through sensations and perceptions, using the valences of imagination and creativity to the maximum;
- consulting rich and diversified (with a theoretical but also practical character) information source about color, sensory and mental effects of color, elements of plastic language, visual-plastic creativity, etc .;
- applying diverse active-participative methods, working techniques, strategies to stimulate creativity on the sample of students;
- recording the progress achieved by applying the evaluation grid, year by year;
- drawing conclusions
- issuing predictions, suggestions for the future.

4.2. Hypothesis

The freedom of the chromatic expression and the freedom of the visual-plastic expressiveness of the children in response to certain stimuli (visual, auditory, etc.) through the ‘Windows towards Light’ contest leads to the development of the creative potential of the students in primary education. It is opposed to the null hypothesis that the freedom of chromatic expression and the freedom of visual-plastic expressiveness, without guidance, direction, leads to artistic-plastic works subject to chance, chance, without message, etc. Therefore, only strict coordination, through appropriate and creative teaching methods and strategies, can achieve the expected results.

- The independent variable is the ‘cause’ that leads to change, in this case the contest ‘Windows towards Light’, the contest being organized through games or extra curricularly.
- The dependent variables are the performance and the results obtained from the contest ‘Windows towards Light’, the artistic-plastic skills discovered during the competition and after, the difficulties encountered, the behaviours and attitudes of the students.

5. Research Methods

The psycho-pedagogical experiment consists of testing, verifying the hypothesis, the formulated assumption and it is introduced in the form of the extracurricular school competition, having rules of organization approved in the CAERI starting with the 2011-2012 school year. The purpose of the contest-experiment is a guided process of investigating the relationships between an independent variable (cause) and the dependent variables (effect). The dependent variables are the results of the artistic-plastic compositions, the behaviours, the attitudes recorded by the experimenter, and the independent variable is a manipulation of the environment, controlled by the teacher through methods and techniques to stimulate creativity. From the 2016-2017 school year we introduced in the contest presentation a digital story made from award-winning creations, in order to inspire all participants (Coviza, Elena Carmen, Digital story 'Windows towards Light' <https://studio.youtube.com/video/s7NM1dDLXtE/edit>).

5.1. Some research methods used

The (systematic) observation was used in all stages of the research in order to obtain additional data related to various aspects of the investigated phenomena. The systematic observation was conducted according to the purpose of the research, the research hypothesis, all the pedagogical facts were recorded as accurately as possible and they were interpreted from the perspective of their intrinsic meanings.

. The method of analysing the portfolios / products of the activity of the subjects of the education involves the analysis, in terms of product, but also of process, from the perspective of the parameters of creativity, established in accordance with the purpose and objectives of the research, of the data offered by the components of the portfolio of the students participating in the competition. I believe that it is essential that the analysis carried out on the student portfolios should take into account both dimensions of the products of the students' activity, but also of the 'product-processes' which refer to the information, the search, the curiosity, the analogy, the power of essentialization, etc.

6. Findings

This study has as its starting point the 'Windows towards Light' Competition organized and held for eight consecutive years, with the approval of the Ministry of National Education, starting with the 2011-2012 school year and up to the present. Under the influence of the extracurricular competition, the creative potential of the child is formed, developed and restructured, the contest having a universal human character, being a manifestation in which a fight of the opposites, an effort of overcoming, with the role of propelling in the development process is obvious. The artistic-plastic skills of the students participating in this study led to better results, in intensity and quality, and they put their mark in a positive way on the creative potential but also on their creative personality. The competition and the experience of the competition in the students of primary education are equally work and art, reality and fantasy.

6.1. The teacher's activity

I initiated this contest led by the thought that the metaphor 'Windows towards Light' will lead to an explosion of ideas in the minds of the students, being intentionally organized around the Easter holidays. Aided by the teachers whose students entered the competition, the multitude of methods to

stimulate creativity, the various working techniques and the desire to be ‘creative’, we started our journey. The entire activity has been designed, coordinated, realized and evaluated year by year. Recording the results and storing them, allowed me to make them known through this article.

6.2. The students’ activity

During the eight years, 3745 students enrolled in the contest were motivated to bring the imaginary into the real plan and to develop it, to develop their creative imagination and artistic-plastic skills. They showed their chromatic and visual-plastic expression in response to certain stimuli (sensations and perceptions), through play and extracurricular activities thus developing their creative potential (Table 02).

Table 02. The evaluation grid - the factors of creativity

Fluidity Fl	Flexibility Fx	Originality O	Elaboration E
- number of elements included in the composition and number of colors; - considered as the ability to produce a large number of ideas;	- understands the theme from all perspectives; - the ability to produce varied responses from different fields; - here, special aptitude;	- is measured according to the statistical rarity of an answer; - the way to build a composition; - here, the ability to produce ideas far from common / common;	-transformation of the ideas received into complex products processed by cognitive and imagination processes; - represents the ability to develop, expand and enrich ideas; - number of details used in the elaboration of the work;

The diagnosis regarding the level of the creative potential of the students was carried out following the parameters / factors of the creativity throughout the eight editions (Figure 02).

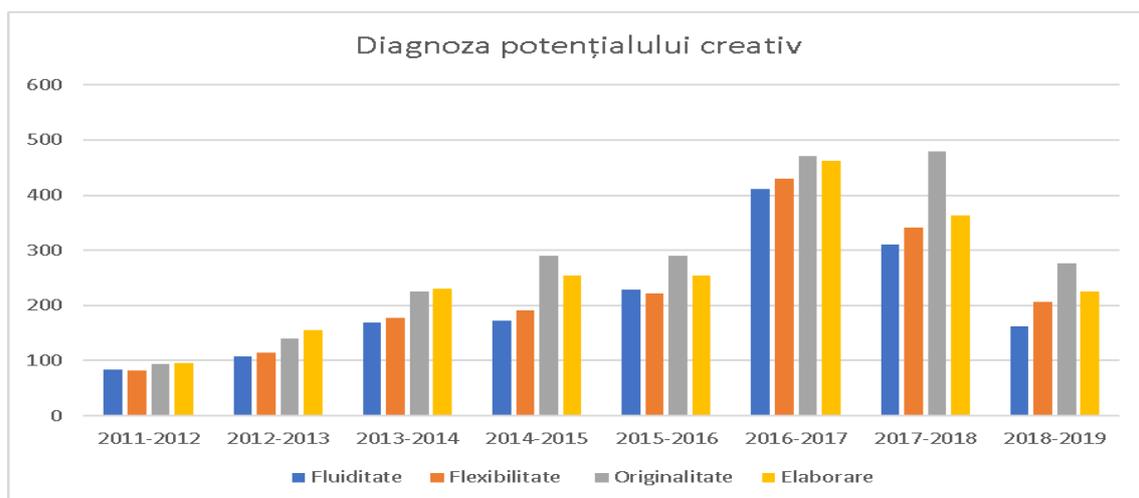


Figure 02. Diagnosis of creative potential

From the diagnosis of the creative potential, one can observe the increased interest for the theme of this competition, year by year. Speaking in qualitative terms, Originality and Elaboration are the factors

of creativity that demonstrate the ability to produce new ideas and develop them through their own filter, so that the final product is of great depth. There is a qualitative explosion of works in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. This is due to the introduction of a new independent variable, namely the presentation of the contest in the form of a "digital story", made with the help of creations from previous editions (Coviza, n.d.). Fluidity and flexibility are relatively constant characteristics represented in this diagnosis, representing the ability to include in the composition a large number of elements, respectively colors, understanding the subject from different perspectives, and the ability to produce varied responses, through different analogies in different fields. Here we can talk about the special artistic-plastic aptitude, of the students enrolled in the contest, the average, from year to year, being between 80% -95%.

7. Conclusion

At the young school age, the development of the creative potential, as a manifested act, finalized-elaborated in a product of great originality, is only for the children endowed with special abilities. Following this study it was shown that a significant number of participants in the contest have artistic-plastic skills.

7.1. Aesthetic aspect

The behaviors and attitudes of the students, the performance and the results obtained from the study, the artistic-plastic skills, have registered a considerable evolution, demonstrating the development of the creative potential in the thematic context of the 'Windows towards Light' competition.

7.2. The utility of the study

Through this study it was shown that the intervention of the teacher in the creative process, with all his personality, his mastery and the baggage of methods, working techniques and strategies used, helps and develops the creative potential of the children with artistic-plastic skills until reaching the potential at the level called talent, respectively genius. This finding is reinforced by Cioca (2007) "visual-plastic activities can play an important role in unleashing creative powers and developing human creativity, especially between 2-16 years of age" (p. 14).

The participation and the provenance of the schools from different environments is shown in Table 03:

- Urban
- Rural

Social factors play a decisive role in stimulating creativity. The school environment can influence creativity, teachers can exert a positive or a negative influence on students.

Heredity, age, sex and mental health are biological factors that condition the manifestation of creativity. The role of heredity in creativity is demonstrated by the existence of 'wonder children' who have shown special abilities with superior performances from very young ages: Mozart, Chopin, Enescu, Goethe, Eminescu, Grigorescu, Luchian etc. The occurrence of talents within the same family for several generations (Strauss, Bach, Dumas, Darwin, etc.), can show that they are influenced by heredity and environment.

Non-intellectual factors most commonly involved in creativity are: motivation, affectivity, temperament, character and intimate resonance. Creative motivation is the most important in this whole process because, on the one hand, it is subject to external influences, on the other hand, intrinsic motivation plays a fundamental role in creation. The special importance of affectivity in the human psychic system in general and in creativity in particular, results also from the association that Roco (2001) made between the two notions: ‘creativity and emotional intelligence’. Character is the way of being, feeling and creating of an individual.

Table 03. Schools and teachers

School year	Numbers of counties	Schools from urban areas	Schools from rural areas	Teachers from urban areas	Teachers from rural areas
2011-2012	6	10	7	25	5
2012-2013	11	19	14	29	8
2013-2014	16	21	9	63	26
2014-2015	12	18	14	66	23
2015-2016	22	46	11	56	31
2016-2017	29	109	26	135	52
2017-2018	18	53	17	93	37
2018-2019	15	32	9	58	38

We found out that the participation of schools from urban areas, but also of the teachers, had a close connection with the subject, but also the external motivation, respectively the culture and the specific of the school. It cannot be said that the participation of schools and teachers from rural areas is insignificant; in the meantime, many awards have been distributed to students from rural areas.

We noticed that the participation of a great number of schools in 2016-2017, the year in which the independent variable ‘digital story’ was introduced (Figure 03).

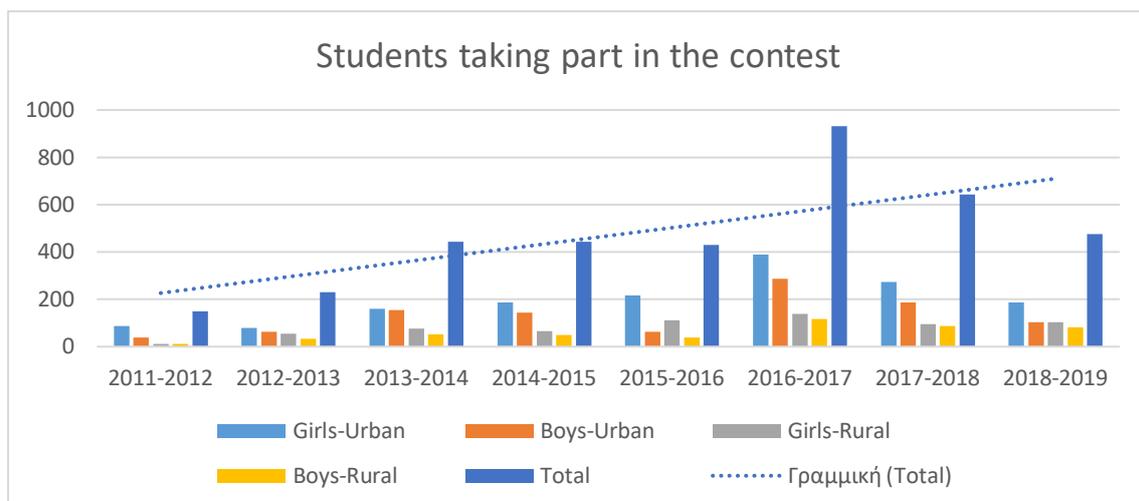


Figure 03. Students taking part in the contest

The prizes were awarded according to the result obtained in the qualitative evaluation grids, having as a starting point the factors of creativity - Fluidity, Flexibility, Originality and Elaboration. A diagram

of the winners in terms of environment and gender is shown in Figure 04. Girls and boys from urban areas hold over 60% of the number of prizes, mainly girls, year by year. Girls and boys from rural areas are awarded a relatively small percentage, but not insignificant.

We observe a large number of participants in 2016-2017 when the independent variable "digital story" was introduced.

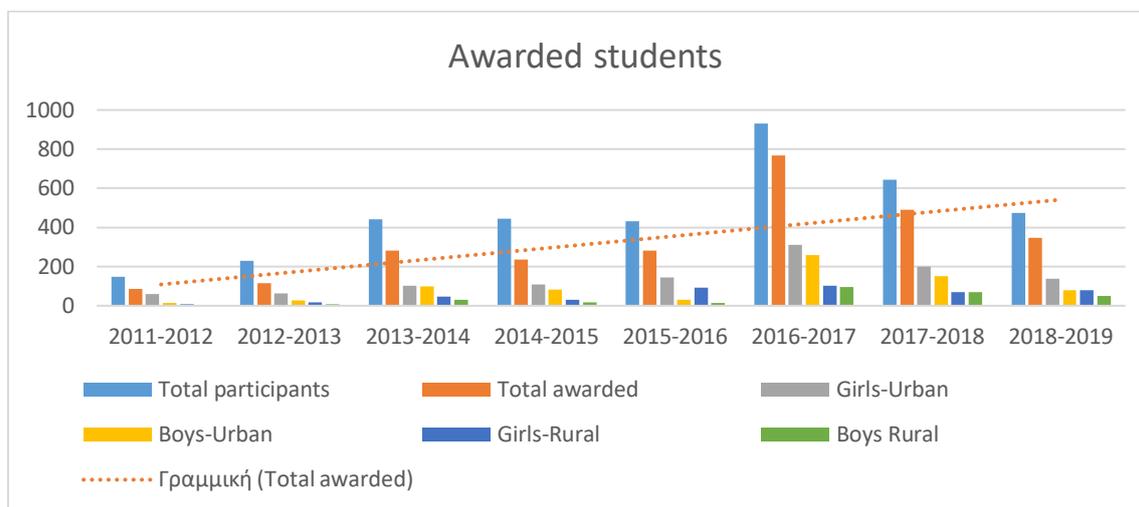


Figure 04. Awarded students

The process of creation is “the inner psychological aspect of the collective activity, it includes all the moments, mechanisms and internal psychological dynamics: from the generation of the problem, the hypothesis, to the realization of the creative process” (Anucuța & Anucuța, 2005, p. 24). Creativity is not a chaotic phenomenon, it is a process that goes naturally through several phases and is influenced by different factors.

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