A Quasi-Experimental Study on the Development of Creative Writing Skills in Primary School Students

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of using an educational program on the development of creative writing skills in fourth-grade students. Creative writing is an important component of teaching, learning, and assessment at the level of primary education. The objectives of the study aimed to identify the general level of development of creative writing skills and establish any significant differences in the development of specific components of creative writing skills (narrative voice, characterization, mood and atmosphere, language and technical aspects of writing, dialogue, narration, setting, image and plot). A quasi-experimental design with intervention and control groups was used. A total of 146 students from 3 public school institutions in the city of Bacau, Romania, that include elementary grades participated in the study. The research group consisted of 73 students in the intervention group and 73 students in the control group. A paired-samples *t* test was used to compare the scores for two paired variables. The research results have shown that creative writing skills are developing in young school-age students. Also, it was found that there are significant differences in the students from the experimental group, compared to the students in the control group, at the level of the nine components of creative writing skills.

Keywords: creative writing skills; quasi-experimental design; primary education

1. Introduction

It has been found in recent years that, at the level of educational practice, the role of developing creative writing skills in language and literature is neglected due to the complex, dense content but also the pressure of national assessments. According to Maninji [1], the problems related to the formation of creative writing skills that students present are related to cohesion, fluency and creativity. At the level of Romanian education, the development of creative writing skills is necessary because the preparation of students for the national assessment exam also involves the elaboration of a composition in which students narrate a real or imaginary incident. The school curriculum for the Romanian language and literature discipline focuses on encouraging primary school students to develop their skills in understanding the written message and creative expression in writing. Creative writing is an important component of teaching, learning, and assessment at the level of primary education. However, there is global evidence to suggest that creative writing is often neglected [2]. International research on the teaching of writing has found a loss of innovative or creative pedagogical practices due to pressure on teachers to teach prescribed writing skills that are assessed in tests [3,4]. The data from some studies [5] show that in the primary cycle, teachers do not have enough time to practice students' creative writing skills, which is closely related to the curricular content of the school curriculum.

The development of creative writing skills offers students and teachers from primary education multiple opportunities to exploit and capitalize on these abilities. There are positive effects of using creative writing on the development of logical reasoning and analytical skills in learning grammar. Involving students in the writing process will help them explore ideas before creating a written product. Creative writing can facilitate language acquisition [6], but it can also help increase students' motivation and engagement in classroom activities [7]. Through creative writing exercises, learning within the group is also stimulated [8]. The creative writing process involves students speaking productively in accordance with language development-specific learning tasks in primary education. At the same time, assessment is facilitated to experience different types of analyses and to reflect on the writing process.

According to Santosa et al. [9], creative writing activities need ongoing guidance. Teachers should support students to develop creative writing skills both in school and outside the classroom [10]. In primary education, creative writing activities are conducted in a guided way, so teachers must design learning to help students compose original texts [11]. The teacher's role is to enhance their understanding of the creative writing process through personal experience and to refine their teaching practice accordingly. Teaching for the development of creative writing skills involves several requirements [12]: devising creative planning, enabling relevant and interesting experiences, establishing a context for creative engagement, stimulating innovation and carrying out specific activities for the development of creative thinking.

It is necessary that the innovative approach to language and literature be reshaped and reconsidered, so that didactic approaches take into account, in addition to the cognitive side of learning, the affective–attitudinal dimension and the creative–imaginative capacities of the students. The novelty element of the study consists in the elaboration of an innovative pedagogical model based on the development of creative writing skills. An experimental study is initiated to improve these skills in primary school students.

2. Innovative Pedagogical Approach to Creative Writing Skills

2.1. Creative Writing between Pedagogical Practices and the Tradition of the Workshop Model

Creative writing is popularly perceived as writing that comes from the imagination. According to Sălcudean and Stănescu [8] (p. 74), creative writing is "the art of inventing, devising, conceiving in the most creative and convincing way possible, it is telling untruths in order to reveal truths about the world and about our place in the world". Wang [13] defined creative writing as an original form of expression that involves use of an author's imagination to engage a reader. Creative writing encourages and develops writing skills by exploring genres and stimulates creativity at different levels: creative reading, creative interpretation/analysis, and creative writing [8]. It can include poetry, fiction and non-fiction, but also writing specific to journalism [14].

Although it is on the rise, creative writing is still looking for its place as a discipline, between pedagogical practices and the tradition of the workshop model [8]. The theories that are based on pedagogical practices highlight the author–text–reader triangle, with the aim of approaching the meaning and the process of composition. The workshop model involves expanding this approach and collaborating with other disciplines, such as performance art, digital technology and film studies.

The characteristic elements of creative writing are analyzed according to the five criteria developed by Tolstoy [15], as represented in Figure 1.
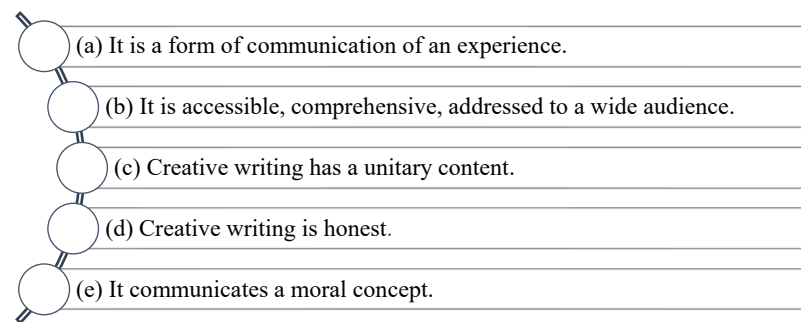
Figure 1. The characteristic elements of creative writing [15].

(a)   This is a form of communication of an experience because it is based on the personal experiences of the authors and their ability to convey them through the words of the readers.

(b)   Creative writing is not exclusive, it is not academic, and it does not require a major. Therefore, it is accessible, comprehensive, and addressed to a wide audience.

(c)   The content of creative writing is unified with the idea and feeling it wants to convey and represents. Creative writing is recognized for its freedom of form. A text can only be built from a list of words if they together convey a unified message, a feeling, or a state that the author wants to communicate to the reader.

(d)   Creative writing forces the writer to be honest, open, and free. To be creative, writing requires a subjectivity that technical and scientific texts lack.

(e)   Likewise, creative writing can communicate a moral concept, but is not defined by its presence in the text.

As a language activity, creative writing involves a systematic process starting from determining ideas, developing an outline, making a complete piece of writing, and making improvements [16]. This process helps students learn to write and be motivated to write, especially for primary school-age students [17]. It is recommended that the process of creative writing is carried out in several stages, through the stages of pre-writing, writing and post-writing [18]. Creative skills are part of the most complex cognitive competence according to Bloom's taxonomy, through which students try to create ideas and concepts in order to obtain a product [19]. Creative writing products such as poetry, rhymes and prose at the primary school level clearly require these skills so that students can produce original writing and develop their appreciation of written literary works. Therefore, Sălcudean and Stănescu [8] specify that creative writing represents both the process, when it refers to the act of writing using the creative skill, and the final product.

2.2. Creative Writing Skill

Writing skills are related to literacy skills as a measure of the outcome of the individual literacy process [20]. Writing skills are divided into four levels, namely imitative writing, intensive, responsive and extensive writing [21]:

-    Imitative writing involves the fundamental skills that students should be able to achieve, including writing letters, words, punctuation, and simple sentences. Additional activities of writing words in the blanks in a list and solving a spelling test can be proposed.

-    Intensive writing involves concern for selecting the right word for a particular context. The main activities include grammatical transformation such as changing all verbs to the past tense, sequencing pictures, describing pictures, completing short sentences and ordering tasks.

-    Responsive writing is differentiated by the development of sentences in paragraphs. Specific activities include the development of short reports and summaries.

-    Extensive writing is characterized by the effective use of all procedures and techniques. The main activities are those of writing an essay, producing a paper, and drawing up a

report, a research project or even a thesis. The student is able to clearly formulate the purpose, objectives, main ideas, and conclusions in order to write a coherent paper.

Vaezi and Rezaei [22] developed a validated instrument for the assessment of creative writing skills. The grid is based on nine components (Figure 2): narrative voice, characterization, mood and atmosphere, language and writing techniques, dialogue, narrative, setting, image, and plot.
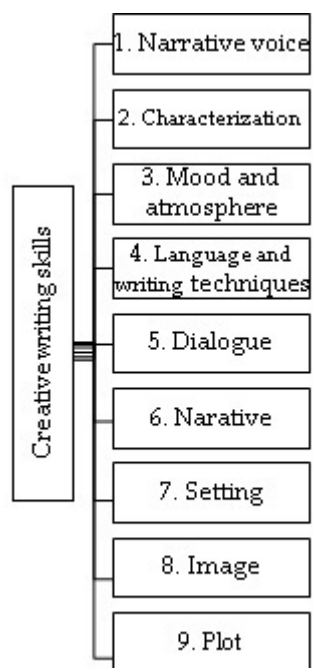
Figure 2. Components of creative writing skills [22].

The specific elements of the narrative voice refer to the relationships between the heroes, the narrator and the author. These are questions of "the temporal relationship between the narrative act and history, narrative embeddings, the relationships between narrator and story, as well as those between author and narrator". [23] (p. 466). Voice is the tone and feel that applies to the entire story, as well as to each character. The overall voice is dictated by the audience, the subject, as well as the overall theme of the story. Voice is also the term used to describe the writer's voice, which represents a unique writing style. It creates the way the story looks and feels, that is, its unique properties. The narrative voice belongs to the person telling the story. According to Chen et al. [24], the narrative voice has a major impact on how readers interpret the narrative plot and connect with the characters.

Characterization represents "the artistic modality through which the author presents the features that define, individualize a character in his development along the actions of the literary work" [25] (p. 79). This is achieved either directly by the writer, by another character or by the character himself, self-characterization, or indirectly, through the way he speaks, through actions and attitudes, through the environment, etc.

The type of person that is adopted in the narrative depends on "what kind of story is told and what kind of emotional atmosphere is created" [26] (p. 152). The person telling the story is asserted through of the narrator's personality and attitude, as expressed through the narrator's choice of words and descriptions. When an entire world is built, much more than atmosphere is generated: a civilization or a culture is created.

The language determines that certain scenes are bewildering and others lack luster [26] (p. 166). It is not just about what words are used but how they are used. Written communication competence implies, on the one hand, "the development of aesthetic writing skills in students (legible, neat, with uniform slant), and on the other hand, practicing the ability to use grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules" [27] (p. 173).

Dialogue refers to "the mode of literary exposition that is achieved in compositional terms by alternating the lines of two or more people; the conversation between characters in a literary work" [25] (p. 133). It is used to energize the action, make it more alive, and make its characters more truthful. "Good dialogue does not imitate real speech, nor does it attempt to educate the reader by means of long speeches. Good dialogue in a story should be somewhere in the middle. While it should be read as a flowing conversation, the dialogue remains a means of deepening the plot or one meant to enlighten us on the character's values. No conversation unfolds in a perfect linear progression. People interrupt each other, talk over each other, often do not answer the questions that are put to them or avoid them, not answering directly. All of these can be used by the writer to establish character, tension, and connection" [26] (p. 31).

The narrative is based on recounting, in a certain sequence, the actions, events, and happenings in which one or more characters are involved. The purpose of narrative is to inform or entertain the reader or listener.

The setting is "the image of space created to support the atmosphere in which the action takes place; ambience, picture, view" [25] (p. 127). Its role is to reproduce the tone and atmosphere of the narrative. It can have characteristics "with eccentricities and attributes that make it memorable and also relevant to the whole story and its characters" [26] (pp. 12–13).

The artistic image is "the plastic and sensitive representation of reality in literature with the help of words, signifying with aesthetic value" [25] (p. 238). This is a product of the imagination and fantasy of the artist, who will recreate the real and reconfigure the suggestions and impressions received from around, from his own existence and experience, particularizing the general and concretizing the abstractions.

The plot "marks the emergence or intensification of the conflict, the knotting of the threads of the action, containing the premises of the denouement" [25] (p. 255). The plot is made up of events that are significant to a particular story. According to Dibell [28], the plot is what happens in the story.

2.3. Current Studies on the Investigation of Creative Writing Skills in Primary Education

Researchers' interest in investigating creative writing skills has increased in recent years as a result of innovative studies conducted in the last five years Most studies were based on the use of experiment as a research method. Ulu [29] assessed creative writing and story elements in narrative text writing skills. The purpose of the research started by Babayigit [30] was to examine the effects of creative writing activities on attitudes toward reading and writing in fourth-grade students. Segundo Marcos et al. [31] conducted another experimental study to measure the effects of a structured program of reading and writing activities in the context of a cooperative learning classroom on improving students' creative thinking. The research proposed by Uslu and Uslu [32] on examining the impact of using collaborative digital storytelling on creative writing and social–emotional learning skills in fourth-grade students. Al-Tamimi and Jaber [33] evaluated the effects of using the cubism strategy on the development of creative writing skills. Fourth-grade students participated in all the experimental studies, which shows that the development of creative writing skills is possible toward the end of primary school classes.

Along with the experimental studies, some questionnaire-based research was also carried out. Kumar [34] explored the difficulties and effectiveness of creative writing in language learning in primary education. The purpose of the research carried out by Hashim et al. [35] consisted of identifying the students' perception toward the use of an iPad to improve creative writing skills. The studies for the development of creative writing skills among teachers can also be noted, according to the studies carried out by Maclusky and Cox [36], Akkaya [37], and Rachmajanti et al. [38].

2.4. The Pedagogical Model Based on the Development of Creative Writing Skills

At the base of the pedagogical model for training creative writing skills, there is a systemic analysis of the educational intervention that is carried out at the curriculum level:

- general competences at the level of the language and literature discipline, which fulfill the function of orientation, planning of the instructional–educational activity [39];
- curricular contents, which fulfill the function of designing the activity;
- didactic strategies, which fulfill the function of implementing didactic methods, appropriate techniques, didactic means and forms of organization for the fulfillment of educational objectives;
- school evaluation, which fulfills the function of the regulation–self-regulation of the educational activity.

The combination of general competences, curricular content, didactic strategies, school assessments and the creative writing skills leads to the creation of a new pedagogical model (Figure 3). The conceptual framework of the innovative model derives from the need to provide a holistic view of the curricular components involved in the development of creative writing skills.
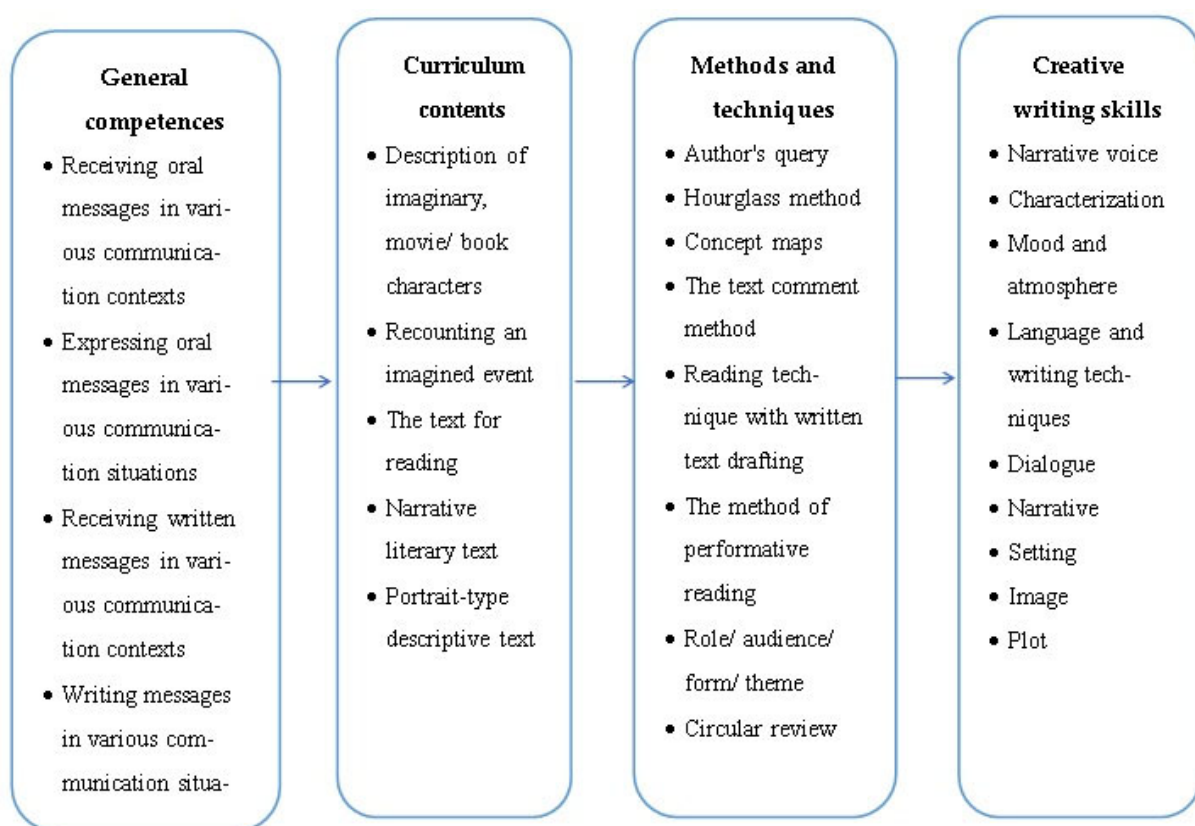
Figure 3. The relationship between the curricular components of the pedagogical model for the development of creative writing skills.

As a component of the creative writing skills training process, the evaluation highlights the authentic function of assessment to identify, analyze, determine and plan for the most effective learning needs of students [40]. Assessment of creative writing skills involves students in the evaluation process through self-assessment and peer assessment [41]. During self-assessment, students are asked to evaluate the acquisition of skills based on specific indicators [42]. Regarding peer assessment, students are asked to evaluate the learning outcomes of their peers based on specific indicators. Self-assessment has a positive impact on improving writing skills because it involves students in the evaluation process so that they become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in learning [43]. In line with these goals, self-assessment for creative writing is used as a tool for students to learn to write better, especially at the revision stage [44]. The main purpose of this assessment is

to improve, strengthen and develop students' writing skills through these experiences, so students are expected to learn from the results of the assessment.

2.5. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The main objective of this research is to measure the impact of the educational program on the development of creative writing skills. The specific objectives of the study are as follows: to identify the general level of development of creative writing skills in fourth-grade students and to establish any significant differences in the development of specific components of creative writing skills.

The research hypotheses are the following:

General Hypothesis 1—The level of development of writing skills is high in fourth-grade students.

General Hypothesis 2—There is no significant difference between the mean of the scores for pre-test and post-test, referring to the level of development of writing skills, after implementation of the program.

3. Methods

A quasi-experimental design with intervention and control groups was used. Quasi-experimental methods involving the creation of a control group are used when it is not possible to randomize individuals or groups into intervention and control groups [45]. This design was chosen because it was difficult to conduct a randomized controlled trial. The participants in the intervention group received the educational program, while the participants in the control group received the regular school curriculum. The main evaluations were conducted both before and after the program intervention for both groups.

3.1. Participants

In total, 228 students from 3 public schools from Bacău County, a city in the north-eastern part of Romania, were recruited. Both the intervention and control group schools did not drop out during the study. Absent participants and those who did not complete the pretest were excluded. The research group consisted of 73 students in the intervention group and 73 students in the control group (Figure 4).
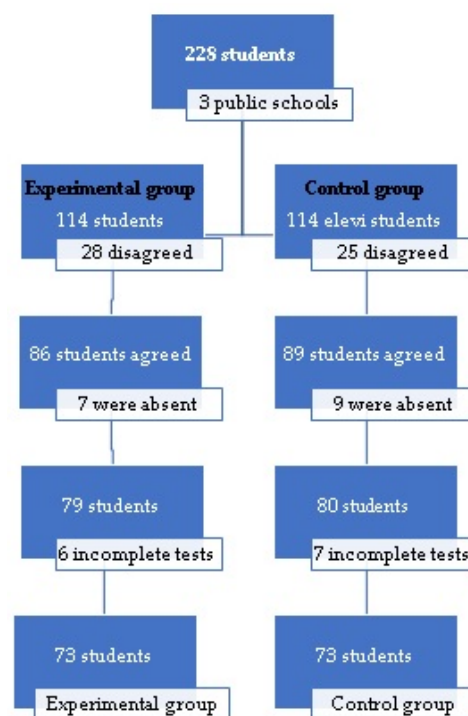
Figure 4. Selection of the research group [46].

In Table 1, the distribution of the research group, according to the independent variables, for the experimental group and for the control group is shown. The socio-demographic questionnaire included some data regarding gender (female/male), age (10 years/11 years), participation in school competitions in the discipline Romanian language and literature (yes/no), and reading frequency (daily/weekly/monthly/very rarely).

Table 1. The distribution of the research group according to the independent variables.

	Gender: 38 female and 35 male
Experimental group N = 73 students	Age: 49 10-year-olds and 24 11-year-olds
	Participation in Romanian language and literature competitions: 59 yes, 14 no
	Reading frequency variable: 33 daily, 21 weekly, 7 monthly and 12 very rarely
	Gender: 43 female and 30 male
Control group N = 73 students	Age: 58 10-year-olds and 15 11-year-olds
	Participation in Romanian language and literature competitions: 52 yes, 21 no
	Reading frequency variable: 19 daily, 31 weekly, 15 monthly and 8 very rarely

3.2. Research Instrument

Pre-test and post-test tests were administered to evaluate creative writing skills [47] (Appendix A). As a tool for measuring the degree of development of creative writing skills, the grid developed by Vaezi and Rezaei [22] was used. The grid was validated before being applied (Appendix B). A number of advantages of using the grid can be delineated as a result of improving the degree of involvement and responsibility of the students and facilitating the level of understanding of creative writing techniques.

3.3. Research Procedure

In order to verify the effects of using the educational program on the development of creative writing skills, three main stages were completed: the pre-test, the intervention stage and the post-test.

The pre-testing of the experimental group and the control group was carried out between 19 and 30 September 2022 in order to assess the level of development of creative writing skills. In the intervention stage, which took place between 3 October 2022 and 5 May 2023, the specific methods and techniques were applied in the experimental group in close connection with the requirements of the school program in the discipline Romanian language and literature [39]. The students in the control group completed the school curriculum for the discipline Romanian language and literature. For these students, traditional teaching methods were used, such as explanation, conversation, exercise, and explanatory reading. In school textbooks, there are very few learning tasks that are based on practicing creative writing skills.

The activities within the intervention program were designed with the help of specific tools to stimulate creative writing skills [48–53]. In Table 2, the activities carried out for the development of creative writing skills in fourth-grade students are presented.

The post-test of the two groups took place between 15 and 19 May 2023. This stage was necessary to compare the performances in order to highlight the role of the intervention program in stimulating creative writing skills.

Table 2. The activities carried out within the intervention program for the development of creative writing skills.

Period	Activities	Components of Creative Writing Skills	Creative Writing Methods and Techniques
3–21 October 2022	Tell an interesting story, Tell a boring story, Tell a dream, Tell a picture	Narrative voice	Concept maps [54]
31 October–18 November 2022	Describe the hero of the story, Personality of the hero, Name of the hero, Positive characters, Negative character, Create an imaginary character	Characterization	Author's query [55] The text comment method [56]
21–29 November– 5–9 December 2022	Play with different happenings in your life, Overcome challenges, Keep readers entertained	Mood and atmosphere	Author's query [55] The method of performing reading [57]
12–22 December 2022 9–13 January 2023	Write a story, Ocean Corner, Woodland, Desert Valley	Language and writing techniques	Role/audience/form/ theme [58]
16 January–3 February 2023	Stage, Emotion Detective, Sugar Land, Dream Car	Dialogue	The text comment method [56] Circular review [58]
6–17 February 27 February–3 March 2023	Think of different worlds, Outer Space, Scary Spectral City	Narrative	The hourglass method [59] Circular review [58]
6–24 March 2023	Describes the story world, Mega-metropolis, Animal Kingdom	Setting	Reading technique with written text drafting [60]
27 March–5 April 2023 19–21 April 2023	Magical objects, Punctuation park, Favorite food mountain	Image	The text comment method [56]
24 April–12 May 2023	Disturbance of equilibrium, Obstacles that the villain puts in the hero's way, Unexpected events and characters	Plot	The method of performing reading [57]

3.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out using the SPSS 20 program. For the statistical analysis of the data, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequency and percentages regarding the general level of creative writing skills and the paired-samples *t* test [61] in order to compare the scores for two paired variables.

The creative products were objectively evaluated by the researcher based on the validated grid. A score was assigned for each component of the creative writing skills, as well as a total score, as a total of the nine scores.

3.5. Research Ethics

Ethical approval is required according to the Declaration of Helsinki, considering that the conducting of the study involved human subjects. To carry out the study, the approval of the Ethics Commission of Petre Andrei University in Iași, Romania, was obtained (No. 4/21 November 2023). Written consent was obtained from the principals of the schools where the research took place, as well as from the teachers and parents of the 146 students.

4. Results

Descriptive Statistics

In order to verify the first general hypothesis, the frequencies and percentages of data on the development of creative writing skills in fourth-grade students were analyzed. According to the data obtained, it is found that 125 of the students, which represents 85.6%, present a developing level of creative writing skills (Table 3).

Table 3. Statistical data on the general level of development of creative writing skills in fourth-grade students.

The Level of Development	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Needs improvement	17	11.6	11.6	11.6
Developing	125	85.6	85.6	97.3
Above average level	4	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	146	100.0	100.0	

A total of 17 students, representing 11.6%, registered the Needs improvement level, and 4 students, representing 2.7%, obtained the Above average level. No student achieved the Excellent level in terms of creative writing ability.

To test general hypothesis 2, the paired-samples *t* test was applied. It is observed that in the experimental group, the average regarding the development of creative writing skills before the intervention is 1.96, and after the intervention, it is 3.15 (Table 4).

Table 4. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the variable creative writing skills development, before and after the intervention, in the experimental and control groups.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental group (EG)	Pre-test	1.96	73	0.389	0.045
	Pos-test	3.15	73	0.593	0.069
Control group (CG)	Pre-test	1.98	73	0.158	0.018
	Pos-test	2.01	73	0.228	0.021

It is found that there is a significant difference in terms of the development of creative writing skills, between the pre-test and post-test, in the experimental group [t(72) = 20.764, $p = 0.000$] (Table 5).

Table 5. Paired-samples *t* test statistics on the development of creative writing skills, before and after the intervention, in the experimental and control groups.

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Experimental group	−1.192	0.490	0.057	−1.306	−1.077	−20.764	72	0.000
Control group	−0.023	0.146	0.019	−0.058	0.009	−1.318	72	0.137

It is found that there are significant differences in all the components of creative writing skills according to the paired-samples T-test statistics and the means of the components of creative writing skills, before and after the intervention (Tables 6 and 7). If, at the pre-test stage, both groups started at similar levels in terms of the level of development of creative writing skills, at the post-test stage, only the experimental group recorded a significant improvement in results (Figure 5), compared with the control group (Figure 6).

Table 6. Arithmetic means and standard deviation for the components of the creative writing skills, before and after the intervention, in the experimental group.

Components		Intervention Stages	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Narrative voice (1)	EG	Pre-test	2.01	73	0.353	0.041
		Post-test	3.26	73	0.553	0.065
	CG	Pre-test	2.00	73	0.167	0.020
		Post-test	2.03	73	0.234	0.027
Characterization (2)	EG	Pre-test	1.64	73	0.562	0.066
		Post-test	3.04	73	0.633	0.074
	CG	Pre-test	1.52	73	0.503	0.059
		Post-test	1.53	73	0.502	0.059
Mood and atmosphere (3)	EG	Pre-test	1.96	73	0.389	0.045
		Post-test	3.15	73	0.593	0.069
	CG	Pre-test	2.00	73	0.167	0.020
		Post-test	2.03	73	0.234	0.027
Language and technical aspects of writing (4)	EG	Pre-test	2.56	73	0.500	0.058
		Post-test	3.41	73	0.523	0.061
	CG	Pre-test	2.52	73	0.503	0.059
		Post-test	2.55	73	0.501	0.059
Dialogue (5)	EG	Pre-test	1.18	73	0.385	0.045
		Post-test	3.21	73	0.526	0.062
	CG	Pre-test	1.32	73	0.468	0.055
		Post-test	1.48	73	0.556	0.065
Narrative (6)	EG	Pre-test	1.97	73	0.372	0.043
		Post-test	3.26	73	0.528	0.062
	CG	Pre-test	2.43	73	0.498	0.046
		Post-test	2.44	73	0.496	0.048
Setting (7)	EG	Pre-test	1.99	73	0.514	0.060
		Post-test	3.01	73	0.514	0.060
	CG	Pre-test	1.65	73	0.612	0.068
		Post-test	1.68	73	0.617	0.070
Image (8)	EG	Pre-test	1.93	73	0.451	0.053
		Post-test	3.00	73	0.500	0.059
	CG	Pre-test	2.51	73	0.502	0.053
		Post-test	2.53	73	0.504	0.055
Plot (9)	EG	Pre-test	1.78	73	0.507	0.059
		Post-test	2.86	73	0.535	0.063
	CG	Pre-test	2.12	73	0.179	0.031
		Post-test	2.23	73	0.246	0.042

Table 7. Paired-samples *t* test statistic for creative writing skills, before and after the intervention, in the experimental and control groups.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Narrative voice	EG	−1.247	0.434	0.051	−1.348	−1.145	−24.541	72	0.000
	CG	−0.027	0.164	0.019	−0.066	0.011	−1.424	72	0.159
Characterization	EG	−1.397	0.571	0.067	−1.530	−1.264	−20.906	72	0.000
	CG	−0.014	0.117	0.014	−0.041	0.014	−1.000	72	0.321
Mood and atmosphere	EG	−1.192	0.490	0.057	−1.306	−1.077	−20.764	72	0.000
	CG	−0.027	0.164	0.019	−0.066	0.011	−1.424	72	0.159
Language and technical aspects of writing	EG	−0.849	0.462	0.054	−0.957	−0.742	−15.720	72	0.000
	CG	−0.027	0.164	0.019	−0.066	0.011	−1.424	72	0.159

Table 7. *Cont.*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Dialogue	EG	−2.027	0.687	0.080	−2.188	−1.867	−25.228	72	0.000
	CG	−0.164	0.373	0.044	−0.251	−0.077	−3.764	72	0.000
Narrative	EG	−1.288	0.485	0.057	−1.401	−1.174	−22.669	72	0.000
	CG	−0.019	0.151	0.007	−0.056	0.011	−1.387	72	0.148
Setting	EG	−1.027	0.164	0.019	−1.066	−0.989	−53.405	72	0.000
	CG	−0.031	0.270	0.029	−0.057	.032	−1.146	72	0.455
Image	EG	−1.068	0.385	0.045	−1.158	−0.979	−23.729	72	0.000
	CG	−0.023	0.164	0.018	−0.062	0.022	−1.411	72	0.153
Plot	EG	−1.082	0.400	0.047	−1.175	−0.989	−23.129	72	0.000
	CG	−0.032	0.175	0.027	−0.078	0.021	−1.498	72	0.211

Span header: Paired Differences covers Mean through Upper columns. t, df, Sig. (2-Tailed) are separate.
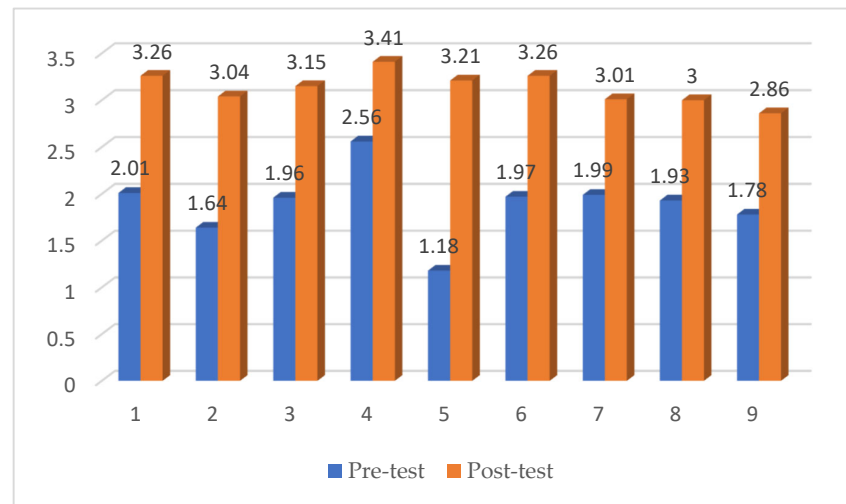
Figure 5. Graphical representation of the arithmetic means for the components of creative writing skills, before and after the intervention, in the experimental group.
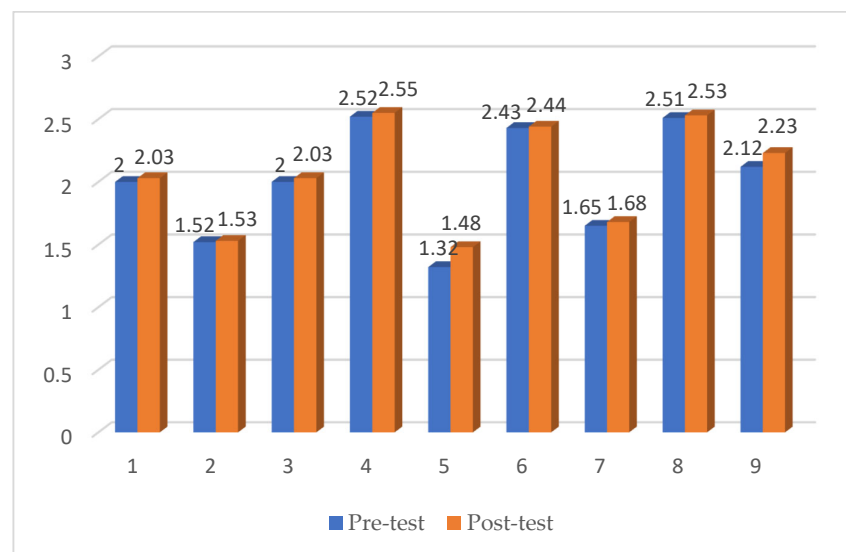
Figure 6. Graphical representation of arithmetic means for the components of creative writing skills, before and after the intervention, in the control group.

5. Discussion

The objectives of this research were both to identify the level of development of creative writing skills in fourth-grade students and to evaluate the impact of using an educational program based on specific educational activities on the development of creative writing skills in fourth-grade students. The research data showed that the level of development of creative writing skills is low in fourth-grade students. In a similar study, Ulu [29] observed that fourth-grade students' creative writing levels were not adequate in terms of originality, fluency of thought, flexibility of ideas, story organization, richness of vocabulary, sentence structure, style of writing, and adherence to grammatical rules.

The results of this research showed that there are significant differences in the students in the experimental group, compared to the students in the control group, in terms of the general development of creative writing skills. There are other studies that have highlighted the achievement of optimal results in terms of the development of creative writing skills after the participation of primary education students in intervention programs. The results of the research carried out by Segundo Marcos et al. [31] revealed a significant increase in creative thinking scores in students in the experimental group compared to those in the control group and a moderate positive correlation between creative thinking and academic achievement. As a result of carrying out some creative writing activities in the study implemented by Babayigit [30], an improvement in the attitude toward reading and writing, as well as toward language and communication lessons, in elementary school was found. In another study [62], it was shown that there is a difference between groups of students in terms of success in creative writing depending on the variable related to the time allocated to reading. Recent studies [32] highlighted the positive impact of using digital storytelling on creative writing skills in students in the experimental group. In a similar way, it was found that the methods and techniques used in the intervention program at the level of the experimental group, such as the author's question, concept maps, the text comment method, the reading technique with written text drafting, the performative reading method, and the circular review, contributed to making real progress in developing creative writing skills. Also, the data from the research carried out by Hashim et al. [35] demonstrated that students have a positive perception of using an iPad to improve creative writing skills. However, there are also studies [33] that show that there is no statistically significant difference between the average scores of students in the experimental group and the average scores of the control group regarding the development of creative writing skills.

The results clearly indicate that there is a significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores for all nine components of creative writing ability (narrative voice, characterization, mood and atmosphere, language and technical aspects of writing, dialogue, narration, setting, image and plot). If, at the pre-test stage, the average scores are lower in the experimental group, as well as in the control group, in the post-test phase, higher averages were recorded in the experimental group. Therefore, creative writing skills can be improved considerably as a result of the use of different didactic methods and creative techniques within the intervention program.

Data from other studies [34] show that students' interest is to have extra activities to help them improve their creative writing skills. The results of the research initiated by Vazir and Ismail [63] are still valid as they signaled an urgent need to improve the practice of teaching and learning creative writing in primary education. There are also studies that focused on the training of primary education teachers, from the perspective of developing creative writing skills. Maclusky and Cox [36] focused on developing approaches to teaching creative writing in primary schools so that it contributed to teacher training and continuing professional development. Akkaya [37] assessed fourth-grade teachers' views on the creative writing process. Rachmajanti et al. [38] implemented a program based on reflective training to improve teachers' creative writing skills in a single cycle that includes planning, action, observation, and reflection. Therefore, developing and practicing creative writing skills is important for both students and teachers in primary education

6. Conclusions

Pedagogical approaches to creative writing have become an important area in the development of young schoolchildren, as they stimulate imagination and the ability to solve problems and think deeply. The innovative combination of the specific elements of the pedagogical model (educational purposes, curricular contents, didactic strategies, school assessment) contributes to the development of creative writing skills in students from primary education.

According to research data, the level is developing in fourth graders in terms of creative writing skills. It was also observed that there are significant differences in the students in the experimental group compared to the students in the control group in the nine components of the creative writing skills (narrative voice, characterization, mood and atmosphere, language and technical aspects of writing, dialogue, narration, setting, image and plot). The mean scores for the nine components of the creative writing skills were considerably higher in the post-test phase, in the experimental group, in contrast to the pre-test phase, when the mean scores were lower in the experimental group and the control group. Therefore, it is recommended to carry out these activities in language and literature to encourage students to express themselves creatively, as well as to stimulate the ability to write as originally as possible.

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Appendix A. Creative Writing Skills Assessment Tests

Pre-test: Imagine you've arrived on the Planet of Friendship. Write a text, of 35–50 lines, in which you describe what you saw and how you felt there.

Post-test: Imagine a fantastical event, taking place in the Chocolate Forest, in which you are the character. Write a text, of 35–50 lines, in which you present this incident.

Appendix B

Table A1. Creative writing skill assessment grid [21].

Components	Needs Improvement	In Development	Above Average	Excellent
1. Narrative voice	The voice is crafted through the use of a language and vocabulary that are **poor**, inadequate for actions and emotions.	The voice is crafted through the **minimal** use of a rich and flexible language and vocabulary, suitable for actions and emotions.	An original voice is crafted through **multiple** uses of a rich, flexible language and vocabulary, suitable for actions and emotions.	An original voice is crafted through the **maximum** use of a rich, flexible language and vocabulary, suitable for actions and emotions.

Table A1. *Cont.*

Components	Needs Improvement	In Development	Above Average	Excellent
2. Characterization	Readers are directly told about a character without **any explanation** of the character's thoughts and actions, contributing **nothing** to the story's meaning.	Readers are often directly told about a character with **minimal explanations** of the character's thoughts and actions, contributing to the story's meaning at a **minimal level**.	Characters are **sometimes** revealed indirectly through their physical appearance, actions, thoughts, dialogue, setting, and symbols, contributing to the story's meaning at an **acceptable level**.	Characters are **often** revealed indirectly through their physical appearance, actions, thoughts, dialogue, setting, and symbols, contributing to the story's meaning at a **maximum level**.
3. Mood and Atmosphere	The actions, thoughts, dialogues of characters, and the setting in the story are presented using **inappropriate** language and vocabulary that **does not** contribute in any way to creating the intended mood and atmosphere.	The actions, thoughts, and dialogues of characters, as well as the setting in the story, are **rarely** presented using language and vocabulary that contribute to creating the intended mood and atmosphere.	The actions, thoughts, and dialogues of characters, as well as the setting in the story, are **often** presented using language and vocabulary that contribute to creating the intended mood and atmosphere.	The actions, thoughts, and dialogues of characters, as well as the setting in the story, are **often** presented using language and vocabulary that contribute to creating the intended mood and atmosphere.
4. Language and Technical Aspects of Writing	Rules regarding punctuation, spelling, and grammar are followed to a **minimal level**, and there are **numerous** errors.	There is a **higher number** of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors.	There are only a **few** grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors.	The writer adheres to punctuation, spelling, and grammar rules to a **maximum level**, and there **are no** errors.
5. Dialogue	Dialogues are **never** used to develop characters; they are used **as filler** to decorate the story.	Dialogues help in character development, introduce a sense of tension, create scenes, and guide the actions in the story to a **minimal level**.	Dialogues help in character development, introduce a sense of tension, create scenes, and guide the actions in the story to an **acceptable level**.	Dialogues help in creating characters, introduce tension, create scenes, and direct actions in the story to a **maximum level**.
6. Story	**No** preliminary presentation of characters and settings, no dialogue, summary, mention, or detail is used before introducing any conflict, **without** connecting and disconnecting patterns or the difficulty and effort of overcoming them.	An initial presentation of characters and settings, dialogue, a brief summary, mention, or detail is **seldom** presented before introducing any conflict, with connecting and disconnecting patterns, the difficulty and effort to overcome them are presented to a **minimal level** in the story.	An initial presentation of characters and settings, dialogue, a brief summary, mention, or detail is **often** presented before introducing any conflict, with connecting and disconnecting patterns, the difficulty and effort to overcome them, presented to an **acceptable level** in the story.	An initial presentation of characters and settings, dialogue, a brief summary, mention, or detail is **always** presented before introducing any conflict, with connecting and disconnecting patterns, the difficulty and effort to overcome them, presented to a **maximum level** in the story.

Table A1. *Cont.*

Components	Needs Improvement	In Development	Above Average	Excellent
7. Setting	The setting does not convey information and emotion; if information or emotion is conveyed through the setting, it is in **total discord** with the story's purpose.	The setting conveys information and emotion, evokes the mood, and signals change to a **minimal level, deviating** from the story's intended purpose.	The setting presents both information and emotion, evokes the mood, and signals change to an **acceptable level, somewhat aligning with** the story's intended purpose.	The setting presents both information and emotion, evokes the mood, and signals change to a **maximum level, perfectly** aligning with the story's intended purpose.
8. Image	Concrete and meaningful details that appeal to the senses and suggest ideas beyond the surface are **not utilized**.	Concrete and meaningful details that appeal to the senses and suggest ideas beyond the surface are used to a **minimal level**.	Concrete and meaningful details that appeal to the senses and suggest ideas beyond the surface are used to an **acceptable level**.	Concrete and meaningful details that appeal to the senses and suggest ideas beyond the surface are used to a **maximum level**.
9. Plot	Actions, events, and scenes are arranged in an **illogical order**, while **a large number of irrelevant factors** that do not contribute to the progress of the plot are included.	Actions, events, and scenes are arranged in a **somewhat acceptable order**, while **several irrelevant factors** that do not contribute to the progress of the plot are included.	Actions, events, and scenes are arranged in an **acceptable order**, while a **few irrelevant factors** that do not contribute to the progress of the plot are included.	The plot of the story has artistic unity. Actions, events, and scenes are arranged in a **logical order**, while **irrelevant factors** that do not contribute to the progress of the plot **are not included**.

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