
ROBERT F. EBERLE

Developing Imagination Through Scamper*

OVERVIEW The past decade has witnessed a tremendous growth of interest in child-rearing. The perceptive, imaginative and creative abilities of youngsters have received their overdue share of attention from educators and psychologists.

The Need All too frequently, adults who come in contact with children are obsessed with an urgency to prepare them for the 'real world' as quickly as possible. The pressures often generated by this feeling, perhaps more than anything else, tend to slow down if not entirely extinguish some children's imaginative and creative potential.

If we are to remedy the situation and effectively nurture creative behavior in children, then adults must: (1) be made aware of the conditions that tend to hamper creative-imaginative expression and (2) possess a working knowledge of the attitudes and behaviors that encourage this intellectual activity. Furthermore, we must expand our approach to education from (1) simply acquiring and retaining basic knowledge, to include (2) exploring the undetermined, revising the known and creating what might be.

Dr. Frank E. Williams, then Director for the National Schools Project, and his colleagues developed and tested techniques designed to encourage creative-imaginative expression in children. When exposed to these instructional strategies (which focused upon specific thinking-abilities) in a classroom environment which encouraged expression of particular kinds

* The letters forming the word *Scamper* are taken from the initial letters of the Checklist found in APPLIED IMAGINATION, pp. 286-287, by Alex F. Osborn. Used by permission of the publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons.

of feelings, the youngsters made statistically significant gains in their performance. These thinking processes—Fluent Thinking, Flexible Thinking, Originality, Elaborative Thinking—and the feeling processes—Willingness to take a calculated risk, Preference for complexity, Intuition—are the premises for newly devised *Scamper Games*.¹

Scientific investigation has shown that individuals—whether children or adults—continually draw knowledge from their personal information-bank and adapt, combine, rearrange or otherwise manipulate it to form creative ideas. Although the process does occur at the unconscious level (termed incubation by some), it is most frequently practiced at the conscious level.

Checklists—any form of questions or suggestions that stimulate ideation—have been found to be invaluable in the formation of creative ideas. Thus, the Scamper technique draws quite heavily on a list of Idea-Spurring questions developed by the late Alex F. Osborn founder of the Buffalo-based Creative Education Foundation.

SCAMPER
FOR ADULTS

During the development stage, Scamper games were tested on youngsters from three years of age to college students and teachers. Aside from its intended use at the lower age levels, the technique was found to be applicable to people of all ages and in different situations. As a form of 'intellectual calisthenics,' the technique is capable of (1) developing group spirit, (2) arousing curiosity, (3) stimulating involvement, and (4) providing strategies for creative listening and the development of imagination.

The directions are relatively simple. As few as two or as many as thirty-five can participate. Players are encouraged to meet the conditions of detachment, concentration, and reverie. A designated leader then reads a prepared script containing cues and directions followed by pauses. The pauses provide necessary time for the players to form eidetic images. During the pauses the leader observes the emotions, reactions and gestures of the participants as a means for determining when to continue with the next cue. By way of example, the following is the "Light Bulb"² game which can be used either with youngsters or adults.

¹ *Scamper, Games for Imagination Development* is published by the D.O.K. Publishers, Inc., 771 East Delavan Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14215. (Paper — 64 Pages, \$2.00)

² The Light Bulb game is reprinted with permission from D.O.K. Publishers, Inc., 771 East Delavan Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14215.

LIGHT BULB
EXAMPLE

We have so many wonderful things to help us live comfortably that we really don't give much thought about it. But if somebody hadn't given some thought to these things they would have never been invented. Have you ever thought what it would be like if light bulbs had never been invented? . . . I wouldn't like that, would you? . . . Light bulbs help us in many, many ways. But I think we could make them even better than they are now. I'm sure we could make them better . . . if we use our imagination.

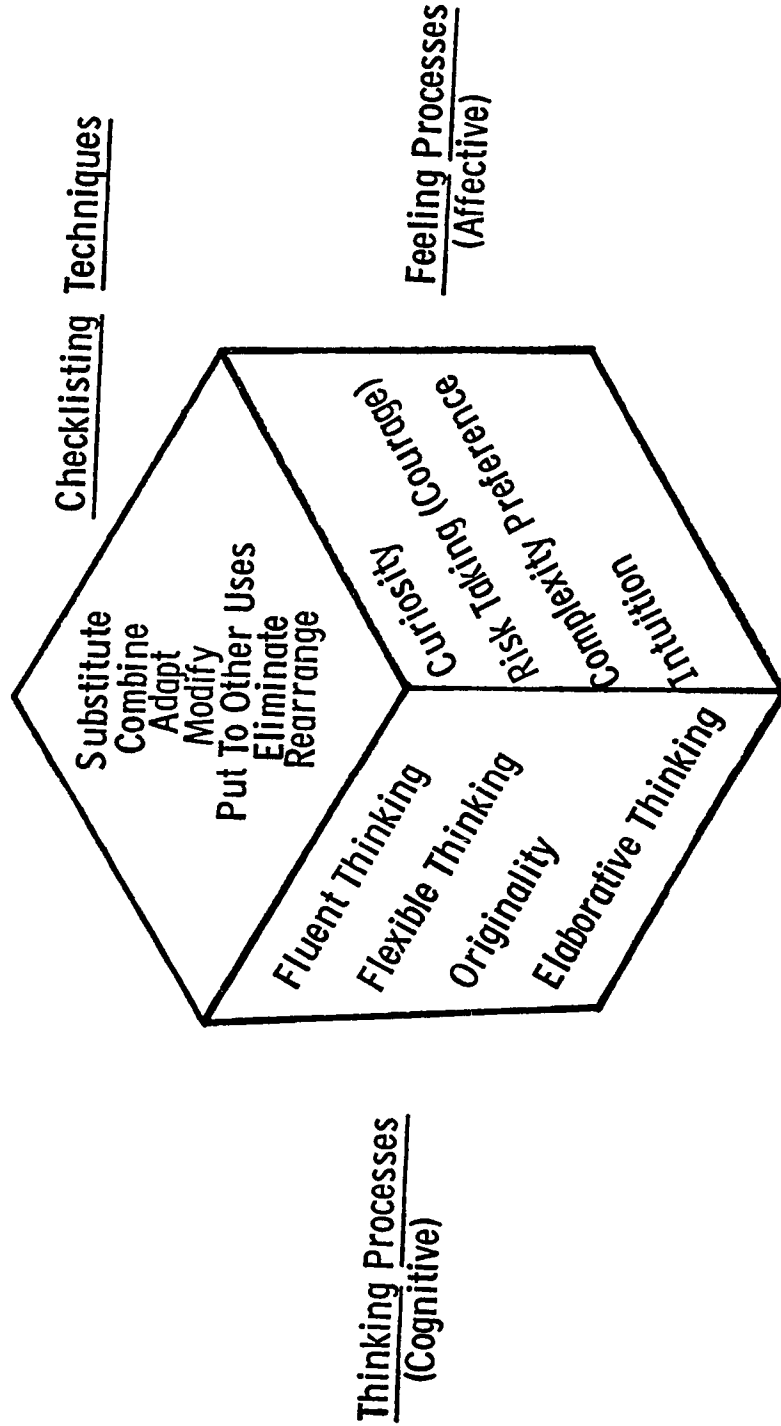
Put a light bulb in your left hand. . . . Hold it out in front of you. . . . Very good. Now we are going to ask the light bulb to do whatever it is that we wish it to do. You may have to wish very hard for the light bulb to get your message, but let's try it and see if the light bulb will do what we desire it to do. . . . Wish for the light bulb to turn on. . . . Is it on. . . . Turn it off. . . . Now let's have the light bulb shine different colors. What color do you desire? Red? Green? Blue? Orange? Is there any other color that you desire? . . . Wish for the light bulb to shine whatever color you want it to shine. . . . Did it shine your color? . . . Would you rather the bulb shine warm or cold? . . . Take your choice and have the light bulb shine the way you want it to. . . . Do you feel the temperature changing in the room? . . . Put the light bulb aside. . . .

Get another light bulb and unscrew the bottom of it. . . . Take the bottom off and pour in some fly spray. . . . Screw the bottom back on. . . . Hold it out in front of you and wish for it to start shining. . . . As it shines have it kill all of the flies. . . . Now make the light bulb bigger and flat like a television tube. . . . Blink your eyes and have a program come on. . . . Blink your eyes and change the picture to another program. . . . Blink them again for another program. . . . Now blink your eyes and have the "Next Saturday Program" come on. . . . Are you going to be happy next Saturday? . . . Blink your eyes and turn off the T.V. . . .

Take another light bulb. . . . Make it about half as big as it is now. . . . Let's pretend that it is a magic flashlight. . . . Shine it at a cat and make the cat as small as a mouse. . . . Shine it on a mouse and make the mouse as big as a cat. . . . Have the mouse chase the cat. . . . Shine it on the dog and have the dog mee-ow like a cat. . . . Shine it on a bird and have the bird bark like a dog. . . . Shine it on a cow and have the cow grunt like a pig. . . . Shine it on a pig and have the pig sing like a bird. . . . Put your magic lightbulb on the shelf. . . .

Now put a light bulb in each hand. . . . Hold your arms out straight to the side. . . . Pretend that your light bulbs are jet

FIGURE 1 Scamper model for creative imagination development.



engines and run down the street for a take-off. . . . Run faster. . . . Faster yet. . . . Zoom yourself up into the air. . . . Higher. . . . Higher. . . . Circle over your house. . . . Look down. . . . Do you see anyone you know? . . . Now zoom over town and look down. . . . Do you see any stores? . . . Zoom away from town and look down at the river. . . . Zoom away and look at the mountains. . . . Look at the ocean. . . . Zoom back toward home. . . . When you are over your house let loose of the light bulbs and have them zip away into space. . . . Open your parachute and float slowly to the ground. . . . As you float down, look all around you. . . . You are heading toward your back yard. . . . Touch your feet down, take off your parachute, and go tell people that you are home. . . . I'll bet you never thought you could make a jet plane out of light bulbs. . . . Nothing is very hard to do . . . if you use your imagination.

SUMMARY Scamper is a great leveling activity in which all players may become personally involved. Whether employed with children or adults, these creative-imagination games will lift individuals to new heights of learning and living enjoyment.

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