

## WALT DISNEY'S EMOTIONAL STATE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CREATIVE THINKING OF LEARNERS

### ЕМОЦІЙНИЙ СТАН ВОЛТА ДІСНЕЯ ТА ЙОГО ВПЛИВ НА ТВОРЧЕ МИСЛЕННЯ УЧНІВ

*In contemporary models of skills and educational outcomes, as well as in studies of educational policy and standards in different countries, critical and creative thinking are identified as key competencies and skills for the 21st century. The article is devoted to analysing Walt Disney's emotional states and determining their influence on the formation and development of creative thinking in students. The study aims to justify the possibilities of using Disney's emotional patterns and his three-component approach to creativity (the positions of the Dreamer, the Realist and the Critic) as a tool for pedagogical support of creative thinking. The research methods include a theoretical and analytical review of psychological concepts of the relationship between emotions and creativity, an analysis of Disney's personal and emotional characteristics, a summary of studies on emotional regulation, and pedagogical modelling for adapting an emotionally oriented creative strategy to the educational process. The scientific novelty lies in combining the analysis of the emotional dynamics of Disney's creative activity with modern educational methods, which allows interpreting his 'three roles method' as an emotional-cognitive model for the formation of flexible thinking. The paper demonstrates that switching between emotional modes – the inspired thinking of the Dreamer, the rational focus of the Realist, and the detached criticism of the Critic – fosters the development of both divergent and convergent thinking, enhances self-assessment skills, and improves the ability for metacognition and constructive analysis. The findings confirm that Walt Disney's emotional patterns of creativity can be effectively integrated into the educational process, contributing to the creation of an emotionally safe environment in which students develop the ability to engage in productive creative exploration. Emotions, viewed as a resource rather than an obstacle, are a key factor in activating creative potential and forming a sustained interest in learning activities.*

**Key words:** emotional states, creative thinking, Walt Disney, Disney method, emotional regulation.

У сучасних моделях навичок та результатів навчання, а також у дослідженнях освітньої політики та стандартів у різних країнах критичне й творче мислення визначено як ключові компетенції та навички для ХХІ століття. Статтю присвячено аналізу емоційних станів Волта Діснея та визначенню їх впливу на формування й розвиток креативного мислення здобувачів освіти. Мета дослідження – обґрунтувати можливість використання емоційних патернів Волта Діснея та його трикомпонентного підходу до творчості (позиції Мрійника, Реаліста й Критика) як інструмента для педагогічної підтримки творчого мислення. Методи дослідження охоплюють теоретико-аналітичний огляд психологічних концепцій взаємозв'язку емоцій і творчості, аналіз особистісно-емоційних характеристик Діснея, узагальнення досліджень з емоційної регуляції, а також педагогічне моделювання для адаптації емоційно орієнтованої творчої стратегії до навчального процесу. Наукова новизна полягає в поєднанні аналізу емоційної динаміки творчої діяльності Діснея із сучасними освітніми методиками, що дає змогу інтерпретувати його «метод трьох ролей» як емоційно-когнітивну модель формування гнучкого мислення. У роботі доведено, що перехід між емоційними режимами – натхненним мисленням Мрійника, раціональною фокусованістю Реаліста та дистанційованою критичністю Критика – сприяє розвитку дивергентного й конвергентного мислення, поліпшує навички самооцінювання, підсилює здатність до метакогніції і конструктивного аналізу. Висновки підтверджують, що емоційні патерни творчості Волта Діснея можуть бути ефективно інтегровані в освітній процес і сприяти створенню емоційно безпечного середовища, у якому студенти здобувають здатність до продуктивного творчого пошуку. Емоції, розглянуті як ресурс, а не перешкода, є ключовим чинником активізації творчого потенціалу та формування стійкого інтересу до навчальної діяльності.

**Ключові слова:** емоційні стани, креативне мислення, Волт Дісней, метод Діснея, емоційна регуляція.

UDC 159.923.2-053.6:159.955-026.15]:  
[37.013.8:7]  
DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/hbts.79.1.14>  
Стаття поширюється на умовах  
ліцензії CC BY 4.0

**Rybinska Yu.A.**

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences,  
Professor at the Department of Pedagogy  
and Educational Management  
Odesa Regional Academy of In-Service  
Education  
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2185-7890

**Statement of the problem.** In the context of rapid technological development and increasingly complex social processes, creative thinking is recognised as a crucial component of professional competence for contemporary specialists. However, educational theory and practice are still dominated by a cognitive approach, in which the emotional states of learners are perceived as a secondary or incidental factor. Meanwhile, numerous psychological studies demonstrate that emotions play an essential role in initiating and sustaining creative activity, influencing the ability to think both divergently and convergently,

as well as the level of motivation, persistence, and the quality of reflection. The insufficient integration of the emotional component into creativity development techniques results in fragmented approaches and reduced effectiveness. In this context, it is interesting to analyse the emotional and creative legacy of Walt Disney, whose professional activity demonstrates a striking example of the interaction between personal emotional patterns and creative, productive thinking. Optimism, resilience in the face of disappointment, vivid imagination, and the ability to switch emotions all played a significant role in shaping his innovative

approach to generating ideas. The three-position method, which was developed by Disney – Dreamer, Realist, and Critic – is a unique model. In the model, each role implies a specific emotional and cognitive state that shapes the stages of the creative cycle. The problem requiring scientific consideration lies in the absence of instrumentally formulated pedagogical strategies that can adapt the emotional component of this method to the educational process. The relevance of the study is determined by the need to identify how emotional modes, consistently used in creative activities, can contribute to the development of flexible, productive, and conscious creative thinking in students. The scientifically based integration of emotional states into the structure of educational practices will enhance the effectiveness of developing creative competencies and strengthen the role of the emotional factor as a resource, rather than an obstacle, in the creative process.

#### **Analysis of recent research and publications.**

Both in our country and abroad, scientists pay considerable attention to the theory and practice of educating the younger generation through creativity. It is essential to acknowledge that the topic of creativity and creative thinking has become the subject of extensive research by numerous domestic and international scientists, among whom notable names include J. Guilford, I. Voloshchuk, Ya. Rudyk, O. Soloviova, L. Delgado-Valencia, B. Delgado, I. Navarro-Soria, M. Torrecillas, M. Rosales-Gómez, MdC. Sánchez-Herrera, M. Soto-Díaz [2; 12]. Their scientific works examine various aspects of this issue, in particular: creativity as a necessity in research activities, the essence of the creative process and the peculiarities of creative thinking, the ability to think constructively and outside the box, intellectual reflection, as well as the issue of optimising creative thinking. Research examining personal and motivational factors as sources of creative abilities is described by K. Urban, M. Urban, M. Benedek, C. Stevenson, M. Baas, H. van der Maas, Mumford, D. Michael, et al. [1; 10; 11]. In addition, creativity in the context of the concept of giftedness as a complex phenomenon has been studied by M. Piddiachnyi, H. Onopchenko, O. Onopchenko [6; 7]. Research in the field of creative psychology consistently confirms that emotional states have a significant impact on the processes of generating and processing ideas. According to the theories of B. Fredrickson, A. Osborn, G. Wallace, and other scientists, positive affect expands cognitive abilities by stimulating divergent thinking, which is necessary for finding new combinations of meanings and non-standard solutions [3]. Positive emotions increase attention flexibility, improve associative thinking, and promote the emergence of new conceptual connections. At the same time, emotions associated with tension or moderate frustration can increase analytical accuracy and support a more structured approach to tasks, which is an essential aspect of convergent thinking.

**Task statement.** Walt Disney is one of the most iconic figures in the history of the world's art and entertainment industry. His creative legacy combines innovation in animation, unconventional approaches to creating artistic worlds, and the ability to form emotionally rich images that have had a lasting impact on the cultural space. Disney, being a creative personality, was distinguished by a unique combination of imagination, high productivity, and emotional stability. That allowed him to transform his own experiences into a source of creative solutions.

The relevance of studying Disney's emotional models lies in the fact that modern educational systems aim to develop students' ability for independent, creative exploration and flexible thinking. However, methods for fostering creativity do not sufficiently account for the emotional mechanisms that largely determine students' ability to transition from generating ideas freely to comprehending and critically analysing them. Integrating the emotional component into the educational process enables the development of holistic approaches to creative skills. 'Fostering creativity is a major challenge for teachers, and it is crucial for the personal and professional development of students, which promotes emotional intelligence, self-expression and mental well-being' [4].

**The purpose of this article** is to examine how the emotional models inherent in Walt Disney's creativity can be adapted for implementation in educational practice. Particular attention is paid to analysing how the emotional structure of the 'three roles' method contributes to the development of flexible, conscious and productive creative thinking in students.

#### **Outline of the primary material of the study**

Over the past decade, artificial intelligence has made great strides in data processing, but it still lags behind humans in its ability to generate new ideas! In modern life, we often encounter tasks that require constant creative thinking and imagination to solve. For example, it is almost impossible to complete students' assignments without some level of creativity. The development of creative thinking, broadening horizons, and erudition has become fundamental in educational institutions. The strategy of modern education is to provide all students with the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and creative potential, which implies the possibility of realising their personal qualities; the emphasis is on developing creative abilities. Creativity, like any other ability, can not only be lost but also created, gradually revealing a person's personal potential. There are many ways to develop creativity today, including brainstorming, synectics, focal objects, and several others. The most modern models of creativity emphasise the role of emotional regulation as a condition for productive creative activity. The ability to manage one's emotional responses allows the subject to move between the stages of free generation of ideas, their critical reflection, and rational planning. Thus, creativity appears as a dynamic process in which emotions are not a random factor but a functional component of

thinking. It is Walt Disney's creative strategy, authored not by Walt Disney himself, as one might think, but by Robert Dilts, that is considered one of the most famous, popular and effective methods of unlocking creative potential. Robert Dilts is one of the pioneers of neuro-linguistic programming, author of numerous NLP techniques (generative NLP techniques, reprogramming, competent writing strategy, and others), articles and books on the subject, as well as a trainer and consultant in the same field.

It is evident that both Robert Dilts and Walt Disney are not merely professionals but individuals with remarkable creative potential and an enviable degree of creativity. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the strategy under consideration deserves close attention. The Walt Disney Method is an approach to developing ideas that combines creativity, realism, and critical thinking. It helps teams generate bold ideas, turn them into actionable plans, and find solutions to overcome obstacles. This structured process is often used for strategic planning, innovation, and project management.

Walt Disney developed this method because he was a master of the creative process. His technique involves switching the roles of participants, allowing them to view a task from different perspectives. This method can be helpful in a wide variety of areas, from developing new products to transforming business processes. The application of this strategy in education is critical for students. 'To help them develop their creative potential, educators can introduce activities that foster out-of-the-box thinking' [8]. Walt Disney is one of the most studied figures in the context of creative personality. Self-sacrifice, empathy and love are the three driving forces in the life of the famous cartoonist. These are the components of human emotional intelligence. His emotional style was characterised by a combination of pronounced optimism, great perseverance, developed imagination, and the ability to remain motivated even in the face of severe difficulties. Emotional vulnerability associated with experiencing failure did not hinder his activities; on the contrary, it stimulated him to seek new ideas and develop his ability to cope with disappointment. These qualities created a special emotional foundation that allowed Disney to combine inspiration, artistic intuition, and rational management of creative projects. Disney's emotional outbursts often became a source of innovation. Periods of enthusiasm led to new ideas and characters, while moments of hesitation and critical self-assessment contributed to their refinement. This internal emotional dynamic enabled him to develop a unique style of managing creative processes, which was later formalised in theory as the three-role method. The essence of Walt Disney's creative strategy lies in the precise division of the creative process into several stages, and its extraordinary effectiveness can be attributed to the following characteristics.

Unlike most people, Walt Disney did not think in two stages, which involves generating ideas and

then criticising them, but in three stages (generation, then searching for ways to implement them, and only then criticism). Each stage requires the performance of a specific role: the Dreamer forms new ideas and goals, the Realist transforms these ideas into concrete proposals, and the critic acts as a filter and stimulus for improvement. The coordination of all links determines the result – the Critic is unproductive without the realist, and the realist does not know where to go without the Dreamer. To achieve a special effect, it is essential to assign a specific place in space to each role. In neurolinguistic programming terminology, this is referred to as establishing spatial 'anchors' that secure the internal resources necessary to perform the task. In other words, a conditioned reflex is formed: the Dreamer position evokes a state of inspiration, the Critic position activates critical thinking, and the Realist position activates common sense and a practical, pragmatic approach. Each state (Dreamer, Realist, and Critic) corresponds to specific psychological and physiological characteristics – including posture, gestures, and the type of information with which one primarily works, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. Each of us has aspects of the Dreamer, the Realist, and the Critic. Unfortunately, however, these characters are rarely in harmony, participating equally in problem-solving, and imbalances in favour of specific roles lead to various unpleasant consequences. The fundamental principle of Walt Disney's creative strategy is the identification of four distinct thinking positions. One could even say positions of perception. These positions are the Dreamer, the Observer, the Realist, and the Critic. In ordinary people, these positions are always mixed, but by deliberately distinguishing between them, it is possible to maximise their inherent potential independently of each other.

The following important principle assumes that all positions represent a single mechanism, the task of which is to develop the optimal approach to implementing any project.

The inclusion of emotional attitudes in the learning process is gradually becoming a crucial element of modern pedagogical concepts that aim to foster creative thinking. Walt Disney's emotional approach model, based on a sequential transition between the roles of Dreamer, Realist and Critic, is a tool in which emotions function as a mechanism for regulating students' mental activity. The process of transitioning from a phase of enthusiasm and free imagination to one of structured analysis and then to critical reflection ensures a deeper assimilation of the material and develops flexible thinking skills. The emotional dynamics in this model help students understand that the creative process is not linear: it includes both emotional highs and moments of rational control and critical reflection. Constant switching between emotional modes fosters the development of emotional flexibility—the ability to adjust one's emotional state to meet the demands of the task. This quality is essential in an educational

environment where students are faced with the need to simultaneously generate new ideas, systematise them, and evaluate the quality of their work. A crucial factor in the emotional approach is creating a safe emotional atmosphere in the classroom. Students express their ideas more freely when they are not afraid of criticism or evaluation. A teacher who makes a favourable emotional atmosphere encourages all participants to actively engage in the creative process and develop a positive perception of their intellectual efforts.

To develop something, Walt Disney first imagined himself in different roles, moving from room to room. The room narrowed to the size of a chair, and then, from being tied to a place, Walt Disney moved on to thinking, imagining himself sitting in one chair or another as a dreamer, a realist, or a critic. According to the concept of the method, creativity is the interaction of different thinking strategies characteristic of three positions of human perception of the surrounding world: the Dreamer, the Realist, and the Critic. Practical thinking, according to Disney, entails a consistent and controlled approach to problem-solving, which involves these steps. The Dreamer position is crucial for generating and presenting innovative ideas and concepts during the creative process. The Realist is needed for the practical implementation of ideas. The Critic serves as a filter, encouraging the overall improvement of the creative process. All three positions represent separate, independent thinking strategies, which, when they conflict with each other, ultimately bring the creative process to a satisfactory level.

Walt Disney's creative cycle can be used for both individual creative processes and group sessions. For group work, specific areas in a large room (or even separate rooms) can be designated to serve as spatial anchors. It would be helpful to choose a perceptual position. Applying Walt Disney's method in educational practice involves using exercises aimed at mastering three roles and the corresponding emotional states. At the Dreamer stage, students are given tasks to generate free ideas through brainstorming, visualisation, and creating associations. Here, it is essential to emphasise the value of any idea and encourage an emotional state of inspiration and openness. The following application of the method can be suggested:

1. The teacher asks the students to discuss a particular problem from three different points of view: Dreamer, Realist, and Critic. To do this, the group is divided into three teams.
2. The Dreamers come up with crazy and even fantastical ideas for solving the problem (the ideal solution using ideal methods).
3. The Realists comment on the Dreamers' ideas from the point of view of real possibilities (how to implement the 'ideal idea' in an imperfect world).
4. The Critics analyse the Realists' comments, identifying errors in the ideas and proposing alternative solutions to the problem.

At the Realist stage, learners move on to structuring the proposed ideas, analysing resources, forming a step-by-step implementation plan, and identifying possible ways to put them into practice. This is done through planning exercises, modelling real-life situations, and group discussions. Emotionally, this stage develops a sense of responsibility, confidence, and concentration in learners.

The Critic stage aims to develop skills for objectively evaluating proposed solutions. It uses tasks that involve identifying risks, limitations, and potential weaknesses in a project. A crucial pedagogical task is to create conditions in which criticism is perceived not as a means of suppressing ideas, but as a constructive tool for enhancing them. The emotional state of students at this stage is associated with analytical thinking, restraint, and the ability to distance themselves from their emotions reflectively.

The proposed pedagogical strategies allow students to develop the ability to regulate their emotions, which is necessary for the successful acquisition of creative thinking skills. The alternation of emotional states and the consolidation of effective working methods create a comprehensive approach that contributes to the improvement of educational activities' effectiveness and the development of a conscious attitude towards creative processes.

One of the key effects of applying Walt Disney's emotional approach is the stimulation of divergent thinking – the ability to generate multiple ideas, options, and conceptual solutions. The emotional state characteristic of the Dreamer position fosters creative enthusiasm, motivating individuals to seek new and meaningful connections. At this stage, positive emotions serve as a catalyst, expanding cognitive boundaries and enabling students to move beyond their usual patterns of thought. The pedagogical use of this mode helps students feel freer to experiment, allows for a high level of variability, and teaches them to perceive uncertainty not as an obstacle but as a condition for creativity. Thus, emotional activation in the Dreamer phase increases the likelihood of original ideas and stimulates creative initiative.

The second important area of influence is the strengthening of convergent thinking – the ability to focus on the most reasonable decisions, identify logical connections, and develop realistic strategies. The Realist position involves an emotional state of focus, rationality, and confidence, which allows students to move from freely generating ideas to structuring and analysing them in practice. At this stage, students develop skills in setting tasks, planning, assessing the necessary resources, and predicting possible outcomes. Emotional regulation helps students stay focused and avoid cognitive overload when working with large amounts of information. Thus, this phase contributes to the formation of sustainable problem-solving skills and strengthens the ability to make rational decisions.

The final stage, corresponding to the Criticism position, is aimed at developing metacognitive



abilities – analysing one's own thought processes, evaluating the quality of decisions, and recognising the limitations of each approach. The emotional state at this stage is characterised by moderate detachment, analytical thinking, and self-control. Students learn to perceive criticism as a tool for improvement and view it not as a threat to their self-esteem, but as an integral part of the creative process. This attitude fosters the development of critical awareness, which is crucial for the objective evaluation of ideas, the identification of potential risks, and the improvement of the quality of final decisions. Pedagogical support plays a vital role at this stage, as it helps students maintain emotional stability in the face of critical analysis and recognise its constructive potential.

**Conclusions.** In conclusion, Walt Disney's emotional approach helps students develop a comprehensive framework for creative thinking, in which divergent, convergent, and metacognitive processes are interconnected. Switching between emotional modes enables students to flexibly manage their thinking, adapt to various types of creative tasks, and comprehend the logic of transitioning from an idea to its implementation and subsequent evaluation. This approach promotes not only productive and creative thinking but also a high level of self-reflection, a crucial benchmark in modern education. When learners regularly apply Walt Disney's method to solve a wide variety of creative tasks, they begin to automatically separate states to generate ideas, find ways to implement them, and critique them, as the corresponding skill is formed, yielding remarkable results.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Benedek M. On the relationship between creative potential and creative achievement: Challenges and future directions. *Learning and Individual Differences*. 2024. Vol. 110. Article 102424. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2024.102424>.
2. Delgado-Valencia L., Delgado B., Navarro-Soria I., Torrecillas M., Rosales-Gómez M., Sánchez-Herrera M. del C., Soto-Díaz M. The Identification of Giftedness in Children: A Systematic Review. *Education Sciences*. 2025. Vol. 15, No. 8. Article 1012. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15081012>.
3. Fredrickson B.L., Branigan C. Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. *Cognition and Emotion*. 2005.

Vol. 19, No. 3. P. 313–332. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930441000238>.

4. Kakarla U. Fostering Creativity in Education. *International Journal of Innovative Scientific Research*. 2024. Vol. 2, No. 3. P. 83–88. URL: <https://ijisr.net/ijisr/article/view/13>.

5. Mumford M.D., McIntosh T. Creative Thinking Processes: The Past and the Future. *The Journal of Creative Behaviour*. 2017. Vol. 51. P. 317–322. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.197>.

6. Онопченко Г., Онопченко О. Інтегрована модель розвитку креативності в освітньому середовищі закладів наукового спрямування. *Освіта та розвиток обдарованої особистості*. 2025. Т. 3, № 98. С. 28–34. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.63437/3083-6425-2025-3\(98\)-04](https://doi.org/10.63437/3083-6425-2025-3(98)-04).

7. Піддячий М.І. Сутність поняття наукового мислення обдарованих учнів, його характеристики, особливості та структурні компоненти. *Osvita ta rozvytok obdarovanoi osobystosti*. 2025. Т. 3, № 98. С. 5–12. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.63437/3083-6425-2025-3\(98\)-01](https://doi.org/10.63437/3083-6425-2025-3(98)-01).

8. Puchala-Ladzińska K. Unlocking students' potential and building rapport: how to integrate elements of coaching and NLP into translator training. *The Journal of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series: Foreign Philology. Methods of Foreign Language Teaching*. 2025. No. 101. P. 139–146. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26565/2786-5312-2025-101-15>.

9. Sun M., Wang M., Wegerif R. Effects of divergent thinking training on students' scientific creativity: The impact of individual creative potential and domain knowledge. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*. 2020. Vol. 37. Article 100682. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100682>.

10. Stevenson C., Baas M., van der Maas H. A Minimal Theory of Creative Ability. *Journal of Intelligence*. 2021. Vol. 9, No. 1. Article 9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence9010009>.

11. Urban K., Urban M. Metacognition and motivation in creativity: examining the roles of self-efficacy and values as cues for metacognitive judgments. *Metacognition and Learning*. 2025. Vol. 20. Article 16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11409-025-09421-5>.

12. Voloshchuk I., Rudyk Ya., Soloviova O. Measurement of Giftedness: Annoying Failures and Great Discoveries. *Science and Education*. 2017. No. 4. P. 91–100. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-4665-2017-4-16>.

Стаття надійшла у редакцію: 01.11.2025

Стаття прийнята: 18.11.2025

Опубліковано: 22.12.2025