Chapter One: Introduction

Aim of the Research

The intention of this research was to conduct a meticulous replication of the (1928-1934) Vygotsky and Sakharov functional method of double stimulation for the study of new concept formation (Vygotsky's Blocks) using the 22 wooden blocks and a combination of the scoring and methodological techniques of Hanfmann and Kasanin (1937; 1942), as translated and adapted by them from this earlier work of Vygotsky and Sakharov.

Rationale for the Research

This replication, as a cross-sectional study from early childhood to adulthood, aimed to demonstrate that this more than 70-year-old procedure continues to have validity for contemporary cognitive psychology and psychology in education. It sought to draw renewed attention to the strategies that human beings employ in the formation of new concepts as first described by Vygotsky in Leningrad in January 1930 and elaborated on elsewhere in his works. The study intended to find out whether contemporary children and adults produce the same or similar patterns as described by Vygotsky (1986), as well as those findings of a selection of researchers who used the adapted procedure of Hanfmann and Kasanin (1937; 1942). In this way, this research aimed to contribute to a renewed understanding of how people of all ages form new concepts; to resituate the value for educationalists and others involved in cooperative enterprises of understanding the paths from preconceptual to truly conceptual thinking; and to highlight the importance for constructivist educators and key personnel to be conversant with these specific theoretical and empirical constructs of Vygotsky’s.

Structure of the Research Report

As this research was a replication study, the Theoretical Framework was therefore of great importance, and, because of this, is presented before the Literature Survey. The Literature Survey (Chapter Three) is followed by Research Method (Chapter Four). Chapter Five is a presentation of the results of each age group in this study, and Chapter Six is a presentation in table and graph form and a discussion of the findings of the entire study. The final chapter, Chapter Seven, comprises the conclusions and a discussion on the limitations of this study.