

FAMILY, RELIGION, PEDAGOGY AND EVERYDAY EDUCATION PRACTICE

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WROCLAW 2022

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CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY CREATIVITY AT SCHOOL AS AN INSPIRATION FOR ACTION RESEARCH ON EDUCATION OF PEDAGOGY STUDENTS¹

ABSTRACT:

The study is a presentation of the author's research project. It concerns a critical analysis of the everyday school life of a child at a younger school age and of pedagogy students as candidates for primary education teachers, in the context of shaping their creative skills. The analysis revealed the shortcomings of the Polish education system and its ineffectiveness in the area of shaping the creative skills of pupils and students. This gloomy diagnosis prompted the author to undertake qualitative research based on the action research method. The entire research process was carried out in accordance with the theoretical, practical and social research objectives formulated (before and during the research). The main goal of the research was to develop the professional skills of pedagogy students through the practical implementation of 30-hour classes in creative thinking and action training and to examine the relationship between participation in training and acquiring professional skills. The results of the

¹ Originally published: Iwona Paszenda, "Szkolna codzienność twórcza dziecka inspiracją badania w działaniu w edukacji studentów pedagogiki", [in:] *Dziecko i dzieciństwo w badaniach pedagogicznych*, ed. M. Magda-Adamowicz, E. Kowalska, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2020, p. 295-313.

research showed that the mastery of creative skills by future educators may be the basic factor of their professional success.

KEYWORDS:

everyday school life, creativity, action research, professional preparation, teacher training

INTRODUCTION – INHIBITORS OF CREATIVITY IN THE SCHOOL EVERYDAY LIFE OF PUPILS AND STUDENTS

Everydayness forms the unique life-world of each person; it is always a particular individual's, but what it consists of is always social and cultural. "Everydayness is here and now. It is happening in the world of life, in the place of communicative action (in Jürgen Habermas's terms)², where in a specific time-space there are active subjects that interact socially and where they perform all kinds of *praxis*"³. Everydayness can therefore be understood as a "*habitus* made up of ways of thinking, feeling and acting observed in the form of social practice"⁴. In relation to lifelong processes, the term 'everydayness' is quite capacious. Nevertheless, it is possible to express by it some features which allow us to speak about everyday, ordinary, common life⁵.

In contemporary science, everydayness is an interdisciplinary category. For example, it is described by sociologists as "a new window through which to look at old problems and see something more"⁶. This

² The communicative action here is "action oriented towards intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and unforced consensus about what to do. It is the kind of communication that occurs when people turn aside from strategic action (getting something done) to ask 'what are we doing?'" (S. Kemmis, "Critical Theory and Participatory Action Research", [in:] *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research. Participative Inquiry and Practice*, ed. P. Reason, H. Bradbury, Los Angeles, Singapore 2008, p. 127).

³ M. Dudzikowa, M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, "Codziennosc w szkole. Szkoła w codzienności", [in:] *Wychowanie. Pojęcia. Procesy. Konteksty*, vol. 5, ed. M. Dudzikowa, M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, Gdańsk 2010, p. 10.

⁴ E. Hałas, "Powrót do codzienności? Szkic problematyki socjologii życia codziennego", [in:] *Barwy codzienności. Analiza socjologiczna*, ed. M. Bogunia-Borowska, Warszawa 2009, p. 57.

⁵ See K. Ferenz, "Edukacyjne dylematy codzienności", [in:] *Kultura i edukacja (konteksty i kontrowersje)*, ed. W. Jakubowski, Kraków 2008, p. 13.

⁶ See *Socjologia codzienności*, ed. P. Sztompka, M. Bogunia-Borowska, Kraków 2008, cover.

'window' can also serve social psychologists, cultural anthropologists, representatives of family sciences, researchers of social work problems and educators. The everyday, seen through the eyes of a teacher, brings the image of contemporary education closer. Concentration of educators on everyday life increases the possibility of crossing borders, eliminating differences between disciplines or research areas⁷. It also creates a chance for opening up pedagogy to other disciplines, their cooperation and convergence. Therefore, as Mirosław J. Szymański implies, "it is worth looking at everyday life even more often than before, finding in it what eludes our attention, discovering unknown faces, learning new senses and meanings"⁸, and change what it has been criticised for.

This observation inspired me to embark on a research study that critically examines the school everyday life of the younger school-age children and pedagogy students, as candidates for their teachers, in terms of forming their creative skills⁹. Why am I focusing on these two levels of education? First and foremost because, as early childhood education research specialists have argued, "limiting research reflection to only the higher levels of education runs the risk of distortion and artifactual manipulation, since a student in the older grades is not a student 'in general', but one who has already been singularly shaped by previous school experiences"¹⁰. In addition, the first years at school indisputably determine who the child becomes and reinforce the child's habits of thinking and understanding. They become the source of later difficult changes in knowledge structures, intellectual strategies, motives for cognitive action and capacity for reflection¹¹. The person of the teacher plays a significant role in this process. It will depend on his/her level of

⁷ See E. Bochno, I. Nowosad, M. J. Szymański, "Wprowadzenie", [in:] *Codziennosc szkoły. Uczeń*, ed. E. Bochno, I. Nowosad, M. J. Szymański, Kraków 2014, p. 9.

⁸ M. J. Szymański, "Problematyka codzienności w badaniach społecznych i pedagogicznych", [in:] *Codziennosc szkoły. Uczeń*, ed. E. Bochno, I. Nowosad, M. J. Szymański, Kraków 2014, p. 24.

⁹ Attempting to present the multi-faceted, intricate phenomenon of the formation of creative skills, or lack thereof, both among students of younger school age and students of pedagogy as candidates for their teachers, exceeds the scope of this article. Therefore, I will only refer to the description of research using the active method - action research, to which I involved early school education students.

¹⁰ D. Klus-Stańska, M. Nowicka, *Sensy i bezsensy edukacji wczesnoszkolnej*, Gdańsk 2014, p. 10.

¹¹ See *ibidem*, p. 8-9.

creative skills whether in the future he/she will have sufficient competences to unlock the creativity of his/her students. Hence, it is so important to analyse and evaluate the formation of creative capacities not only in the environment of students, but also in the environment of future educators.

The analysis of the relevant literature indicates that the school reforms introduced from time to time were supposed to revolutionise the school, which turned against the students¹². Researchers of everyday life in early childhood education prove that the teacher is the most active person in the classroom. It is the teacher who is most often heard speaking, explaining and demonstrating. On the other hand, pupils sitting at their desks listen, repeat, follow instructions, transcribe from the board, fill in the empty boxes in their exercise books, which may be treated as the logo of early childhood education. Moreover, the youngest pupils do not ask questions, do not develop their own ideas and strategies, do not cooperate in teams, except for a few 'festive' occasions, do not experience independence. In everyday school life, they

enclose their world in a circle of windows, gaps in sentences, puzzles and pictures to colour and count. They prepare for further stages of education, whose developmental goals have shifted to selection and segregation, and testing has reached its apogee. This is the school that ever younger children enter due to school reform¹³.

Such a school model based on the managerial role of the teacher, who relieves the students of both the formulation of problems and the search for their solutions, has little in common with a climate conducive to the emergence and development of creativity. It makes "deep layers of creativity hidden under a thick layer of ignorance"¹⁴. These conclusions are consistent with the observations made by the creativity educator Krzysztof J. Szmidt. The researcher draws attention to the ubiquitous 'key-based' assessment and 'test-based' learning. As a result, secondary

¹² See D. Klus-Stańska, M. Nowicka, "Wstęp do wydania nowego uzupełnionego", [in:] D. Klus-Stańska, M. Nowicka, *Sensy i bezsensy edukacji wczesnoszkolnej*, op. cit., p. 13.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 14.

¹⁴ T. Ziewiec, "Stymulacja kreatywności w nauczaniu", [in:] *Innowacyjność, kreatywność a rozwój*, ed. J. Kleer, A. P. Wierzbicki, Warszawa 2012, p. 34.

school students often astonish their university lecturers with ignorance of the rudiments of humanistic knowledge. This way of evaluation and learning, he stresses, both fails to appreciate and inhibits the manifestation of independence and originality of students' thinking, increases their cultural illiteracy and encourages cognitive conformity and mediocrity¹⁵.

The examples mentioned above reveal that the Polish school is invariably a place where social hopes and social criticism intersect. On the one hand, it is the only tool available to society for maintaining social order, transmission of cultural heritage, building cultural identity, preparation for the labour market and efficient functioning in the knowledge society. On the other hand, it is criticised for its educational and upbringing inefficiency, inhibiting intellectual initiative or even blocking the development of pupils' thinking¹⁶.

Currently, despite the fact that the basic tasks of a teacher include stimulating and initiating activities conducive to the development of creativity, the realisation of these assumptions remains a mere postulate. The review of research concerning various aspects of developing creativity in the course of formal education shows that teachers are aware of the importance of creativity and generally believe that the school should create conditions for its development. Unfortunately, few of the teachers surveyed feel responsible for initiating such activities. Teachers lack knowledge on creativity, are unable to adequately define the profile of a creative pupil, have problems diagnosing creative abilities and talents, and have insufficient competence to foster creativity in their pupils¹⁷. Dorota Klus-Stańska highlights that "uncreative teachers are not merely unable to trigger students' creativity; they do not understand creativity and do not know how to react to it. They feel anxious, helpless and in extreme cases hostile towards it"¹⁸. These findings are consistent with the results of other studies on the creative competence of early childhood education teachers¹⁹.

¹⁵ See K. J. Szmidt, *Edukacyjne uwarunkowania rozwoju kreatywności*, Łódź 2017, p. 32–33.

¹⁶ See D. Klus-Stańska, "Dokąd zmierza polska szkoła? Pytania o ślepe uliczki, kierunki, konteksty", [in:] *Dokąd zmierza polska szkoła?*, ed. D. Klus-Stańska, Warszawa 2008, p. 7–9.

¹⁷ See J. Gralewski, "Kreatywny uczeń w oczach nauczyciela. Kilka słów o tym, czy nauczyciele trafnie rozpoznają twórczy potencjał swoich uczniów", [in:] *Wychowanie we współczesnej szkole*, ed. R. Kowalski, O. Szykarczyk, Siedlce 2014, p. 66–96.

¹⁸ D. Klus-Stańska, "Dokąd zmierza polska szkoła?", op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁹ See *Kompetencje kreatywne nauczyciela wczesnej edukacji*, ed. I. Adamek, J. Bałachowicz, Kraków 2013.

Possibly, it so happens since despite much innovation and curricula changes, the qualitative progress in pedagogical universities continues to be unsatisfactory. It is marked by excessive reliance on tradition, routine and inadequate critical thinking and concern for professional development and practical training²⁰. Many schools lack activities that would enable future educators to look creatively at their own professional and social role already during their studies, while preparing for exercise of this role²¹. In some universities neither the education process nor the process of implementing a professional role contributes to the development of students' creative capacities²². This is due to the fact that the list of subjects being the module of curricula standards for pedagogy does not include creative education²³.

This cultural inadequacy of the school and the related helplessness of teachers, turns the Polish outdated school which is unable to change and unaware of its own role and mechanisms of action into a non-creative environment which does not foster creativity²⁴. Besides, "school classes are so much about forcing students to regurgitate that talk of stimulating creative behaviour in the classroom seems an extreme naivety, a pedagogical hypocrisy or even a grim joke"²⁵. Probably for this reason so much is written and said about modern school being a school of appearances²⁶, which enlarges the gap between the expected teaching outcomes and their implementation in educational practice. Traditional schooling is often criticised for its uniformity and for its one-size-fits-all approach. If there are proposals for alternative solutions, they

²⁰ See Cz. Banach, "Ewolucja funkcji i kompetencji zawodowych nauczyciela", [in:] *Pedagogiczno-psychologiczne kształcenie nauczycieli*, ed. E. Sałata, Radom-Warszawa 2005, p. 24.

²¹ See A. Cudowska, *Kształtowanie twórczych orientacji życiowych w procesie edukacji*, Białystok 2004, p. 159.

²² See J. Uszyńska, "Postawa twórcza jako składnik kompetencji osobowościowych nauczycieli przedszkoli i kandydatów na nauczyciela", [in:] *Edukacja alternatywna. Nowe teorie, modele badań i reformy*, ed. J. Piekarski, B. Śliwerski, Kraków 2000, p. 338.

²³ See D. Ekiert-Oldroyd, "Pedeutologiczne konteksty dydaktyki twórczości i ich pragmatyczne implikacje (pedeutologia twórczości i dydaktyka twórczości)", [in:] *Dydaktyka twórczości. Koncepcje – Problemy – Rozwiązania*, ed. K. J. Szmidt, Kraków 2003, p. 138.

²⁴ See D. Klus-Stańska, "Dokąd zmierza polska szkoła?", op. cit., p. 9.

²⁵ D. Klus-Stańska, "Obszary zgody na twórczość dziecięcą we wczesnej edukacji", [in:] *Gdyby Einstein chodził współcześnie do szkoły... Dziecko i twórczość w pedagogice wczesnoszkolnej*, ed. E. Szatan, D. Bronk, Gdańsk 2008, p. 59.

²⁶ See *Sprawcy i/lub ofiary działań pozornych edukacji szkolnej*, ed. M. Dudzikowa, K. Knaściecka-Falbińska, Kraków 2013.

are only a trace 'islands of educational resistance'²⁷. Although they are still a margin of public life of education, concepts are increasingly seen to disseminate innovative educational initiatives, thanks to which it will be possible to radically change the paradigms of the current traditional school. Contemporary reality has radically changed the way of thinking about education. Today there is a huge demand for creative people, who can flexibly adapt to the changes of everyday life. If pupils/students completing their education are not in the habit of being creative, they will probably not establish it in everyday life. However, this behaviour will be indispensable to them. It is therefore regrettable that they will not acquire it during the 5-7,000 hours spent on average at school.

This gloomy diagnosis that reveals deficiencies of the Polish educational system and its incompetence in the area of forming creative skills of pupils and students led me to undertake research based on the method of research in action. My primary goal was to try to improve existing practices in the education of prospective educators.

INVESTIGATING EVERYDAY LIFE AS A 'JOURNEY' – RESEARCH IN ACTION IN THE EDUCATION OF TEACHER CANDIDATES FOR GRADES 1-3

Research of everyday social life can be compared to and the described via the travelling metaphor. In this sense cognition, understood as a theorising process "can be seen as a *never-ending journey*, as a kind of *moving forward*". A journey seems here more as a way of "being in the world" than moving between two fixed points²⁸. The research process takes the form of a journey in which the subject 'guides' the researcher through

²⁷ See B. Śliwerski, *Wyspy oporu edukacyjnego*, Kraków 2008; M. Hawranek, *Szkoły, do których chce się chodzić są bliżej niż myślisz*, Kraków 2021; M. Budajczak, *Edukacja domowa*, Gdańsk 2004; *Polska szkoła uznana za najlepszą na świecie. Znajduje się w Konstancinie-Jeziornej*, Wiadomości (onet.pl), <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/polska-szkola-uznana-za-najlepsza-na-swiecie-znajduje-sie-w-konstancinie-jeziornej/3rsyd7j>, access: 22.07.2022.

²⁸ Z. Melosik, "Teoria i społeczne konstruowanie rzeczywistości", [in:] *Normatywizm – etyczność – zaangażowanie. Współczesne dyskusje o praktyczności pedagogiki*, ed. M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, E. Kurantowicz, *Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja* 2001, special issue, p. 161.

their life or a part of it, spins a story, reflects on an issue, expresses an opinion. The researcher “wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of *conversation* as ‘wandering together with’”²⁹. In this context, the research situation resembles a journey in which the researcher, visiting countries and exploring many regions, follows a path leading to a story which they will tell on their return home³⁰. The activities experienced during this ‘journey’ are coordinated by a specific research model, which can be metaphorically described as a GPS (Global Positioning System). Its task is to determine the subsequent stages of research. The study is contingent on a particular philosophy, a methodological tradition which the researcher uses. The adopted ideology constitutes the original perspective of experiencing the research reality, especially in the context of relations with the research subjects and oneself in the capacity of a researcher.

In empirical research in pedagogy newer and newer ‘maps’ of positions, methodological approaches are being created, which enable effective access to interesting social phenomena and problems³¹. Of crucial importance in this multi-paradigmatic way of research is a comprehensive and critical perception of the ‘methodology map’³². Therefore, research practice should play the role of reflective practice, involving conscious and critical reflection on the individual trajectory of the research conducted. These conditions are fulfilled by the study method referred to in Poland as research in action. It is based “essentially on the synergy of understanding cognition and constructive change. Thus, it is a particular expression of epistemology, methodology and praxiology of practically oriented social science”³³. It can be applied when we recognise a crisis situation in a particular institution, environment or social group³⁴.

²⁹ S. Kvale, *InterViews. An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 1996, p. 4.

³⁰ See *ibidem*, p. 4–5.

³¹ See *ibidem*, p. 12–13.

³² See *ibidem*.

³³ D. Kubinowski, *Idiomatyczność – synergia – emergencja. Rozwój badań jakościowych w pedagogice polskiej na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, Lublin 2013, p. 171.

³⁴ See *ibidem*, p. 171.

At this point, it should be added that any scientific research understood as a set of synchronised activities that offer new knowledge³⁵ makes sense provided its outcomes may contribute to humans' deliberate actions in their life-worlds³⁶. Therefore, one can only speak of the usefulness of research work when "one's own everyday experiences are confronted with rational knowledge on the one hand, and with scientific hypotheses on the other, and make it possible to verify them and improve one's own practice"³⁷.

Specific opportunities in this area are offered by action research. This procedure of cognition and change promotes the integration of thinking and acting, reflection on and in action and the improvement of professionalism. The researchers involved ask themselves questions about "the effectiveness of their own practice, observe their own actions, give them specific meanings, come to their own conclusions, which are transformed into sources of initiatives. As a result, further questions and ideas for action are generated"³⁸. Such a perspective reveals that "action research consists in the real empowerment of the process of cognition and change"³⁹. This procedure ensures that practitioners participate in discovering and explaining the mechanisms that govern their practice, rather than simply makes them users of discoveries. Metaphorically, it can be said that action research "enables you to smell the flowers with your nose rather than with your imagination"⁴⁰. This is because the researcher has the opportunity to scientifically explore the space in which he/she performs his/her professional role.

THE PRACTICE OF ACTION RESEARCH

I adopted such a position in my own research, whose detailed procedure I will describe later on. At this point, I will mention that the context of the

³⁵ See K. Konarzewski, *Jak uprawiać badania oświatowe. Metodologia praktyczna*, Warszawa 2000, p. 14.

³⁶ See M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, "Badanie w działaniu", [in:] *Podstawy metodologii badań w pedagogice*, ed. S. Palka, Gdańsk 2010, p. 319.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 320.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 320–321.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 322.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

research was set in the environment of one of the higher education institutions in Lower Silesia which educates pedagogy students. The source of inspiration for the research was the criticism of the contemporary education system dominating both in literature and in everyday life. Traditional education is not infrequently accused of more or less justified misconduct. The most important of these transgressions include the transmission character of teaching, the continuous domination of encyclopaedic education and administration methods, as well as the emphasis on convergent⁴¹ and non-creative thinking, which inhibits cognitive curiosity, inquisitiveness and questioning⁴². Furthermore, this “creative university tendency does not produce adequate changes in the selection of teaching content and methodologies and is often limited to a make-believe modification of teaching objectives to correspond to so-called challenges of the present day”⁴³.

This assumption was confirmed in my interviews with pedagogy students. On their basis I formulated the hypothesis that in the course of their education, next to the activities conducive to the formation of professional skills, there are also those of a reproductive character (papers, work with text). As a consequence, creative thinking and creative activities do not find an appropriate place in the education of future educators. With these conclusions in mind, I attempted to develop my own project aimed at improving existing practices. A tangible result of this undertaking was my offer to the students of pedagogy to participate in optional creativity trainings. In my own research I use the term ‘training’, following Edward Nęcka and his associates, in a narrow and specific sense: “creativity training is a system of exercises used on an ad hoc basis to increase the creative potential of an individual or groups of people”⁴⁴. The term ‘creativity training’ may raise some people’s doubts. For example, the question may arise as to whether such training is really creativity training, since there are established norms and rules,

41 Convergent thinking is a thought process that assumes multiple points of view and embraces the many possibilities of a problem, without concern for the ‘correct’ answer or logical arrangement.

42 See K. J. Szmidt, “Szkoła przeciwko myśleniu pytajnemu uczniów. Próba określenia problemu, sugestie, rozwiązania”, *Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja* 2003, no. 2.

43 K. J. Szmidt, *Edukacyjne uwarunkowania rozwoju kreatywności*, op. cit., p. 66.

44 E. Nęcka, J. Orzechowski, A. Słabosz, B. Szymura, *Trening twórczości*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 12.

only that they are different from the traditional ones? Researchers have argued that this kind of training is not about stripping creativity of its specificity, but about de-mythologising it⁴⁵.

This means that we need to move away from conceiving of creativity as something extraordinary, almost supernatural. If someone believes that the term 'creativity training' is a profanation of the word 'creativity' - he may use the phrase 'ingenuity training' instead. The sense of exercise will not change because of this. What is important is their relevance to the average person, especially children, schoolchildren and students who expect more ingenuity, originality of thought and everything that is associated with creativity with a small 't'⁴⁶. When putting together my training programme I assumed that such training modalities could eliminate most of the objections to education described above. The methods of teaching creativity proposed during the trainings refer to principles and norms of pedagogical conduct different from those accepted by traditional education. The aim is not to memorise as many facts as possible, but for help for students of pedagogy - shaped adults, with already defined creative potential, sometimes full of inhibitions and blockades, in becoming more creative.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND PARADIGM

The main research objective was to develop professional skills of pedagogy students through practical implementation of 30-hour classes of creative thinking and acting training and to investigate the relationship between participation in creativity training and acquisition of professional skills. The choice of the research topic was determined by my personal experience as a participant of creativity training, gained during a year-long internship at the School of Trainers and Psychotherapists at the Gestalt Therapy Institute in Krakow, as well as the experience of an academic teacher using the strategy of creativity training methods in teaching students. However, it was cognitive curiosity that was the main reason for embarking on the study. I was

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 12.

interested in whether there was a correlation between participation in activities aimed at developing creative skills and the acquisition of professional skills by future educators. I decided that the model of action research would be the most appropriate for the analysis of the research problem raised. In its assumptions, it is part of the critical paradigm, which emphasizes the social function of science and its social importance, is focused on action and the study of this action⁴⁷.

The research met the demands of the methodological tradition of the critical paradigm. Set in the everyday educational reality of a higher education institution, it aimed to make the participating subjects aware of the contradictions implicit in the existing and upheld social order. Critical reflection and self-reflection as a factor and outcome of the dialectical relationship between the participants in the research situation and the other elements that make up the lifeworld of the subjects involved in the research became crucial. In other words, the aim was to make the subjects aware of the consequences of participating in an educational process that is often not conducive to the formation of their creative skills and, indirectly, to the formation of professional skills. The emancipatory function of the research was manifested, among other things, in the fact that one of the research assumptions was to change the situation of the subjects in three terms: 1) the research subjects ceased to be mere objects studied (and then transformed) and became rather conscious participants in research situations; 2) through participation in the research process, their self-awareness and potential for self-development rose; 3) they acquired the ability to “speak with their own voice”, i.e. had a chance to air their opinions on matters of importance to them⁴⁸. Individual and group interviews and continuous feedback sessions served this purpose. Under these conditions, the role of team learning increased, the boundary between the researcher and the subjects became blurred and the latter became actively involved in the research process.

⁴⁷ S. Nowak, *Metodologia badań społecznych*, Warszawa 2007; S. Kemmis, “Critical Theory and Participatory Action Research”, op. cit.

⁴⁸ M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, “Badanie w działaniu – perspektywa akademicka”, [in:] *Problemy współczesnej metodologii*, ed. J. Krajewski, T. Lewowicki, J. Nikitorowicz, Olecko 2001, p. 188.

RESEARCH TYPES

I decided on qualitative studies⁴⁹. The choice of the qualitative research strategy was due to the fact that creativity tests do not examine creativity itself but rather its components, factors or only potentialities⁵⁰. Therefore, nothing prevents the use of case studies, product analysis or focus groups with some of the former participants of the trainings, if only to make them aware of the relevance and effects of creativity training⁵¹. Essential was also my conviction that a qualitative approach makes it possible to take into account the uniqueness of individual experiences. It provides a flexible and in-depth exploration of these experiences and therefore allows for an insightful response to the research questions posed. Moreover, this approach respects human dignity. It is expressed in the subjective treatment of the subjects. Unlike the quantitative approach, it does not reduce the richness of experience to numbers or the humanity of the subjects and the researcher to the object and tools of research. For these substantive and ethical reasons I decided to choose a qualitative research approach.

As I have already mentioned, a distinctive feature of the qualitative (humanistic) treatment of empirical research is the striving for the empowerment of the research relationship. In this orientation it is therefore possible to conceive of the role of the researcher in such a way that emphasis is placed on his/her similarity to the researched subject. Both subjects have certain features in common and participate within a 'shared' reality.

Putting the word 'shared' in inverted commas indicates that this is never a complete sameness of situation for each party, but it does offer the possibility of trying to bring them together. Their 'shared' world is created as a result of equalizing mechanisms, namely: the researcher loses the positivistic, privileged position of the observer from above

⁴⁹ See M. Magda-Adamowicz, I. Paszenda, *Treningi twórczości a umiejętności zawodowe*, Toruń 2011.

⁵⁰ See K. J. Szmidt, "Czy twórczość można mierzyć? Spory wokół psychometrycznych metod badania twórczości", [in:] *Twórczość – wyzwanie XXI wieku*, ed. E. Dombrowska, A. Niedźwiecka, Kraków 2003, p. 53.

⁵¹ See M. Karwowski, "Trening twórczości: rozpoznanie, planowanie, monitorowanie, przewodzenie", [in:] *Trening twórczości w szkole wyższej*, ed. K. J. Szmidt, Łódź 2005, p. 52.

and in a way descends to the level of reality, when at the same time the position of the partners in the research situation is raised. This happens as a result of taking into account the subjective competences of the research subjects. Thanks to this, the investigator can acquire from them knowledge about the 'shared' reality. This situation allows him to form a partnership relation, in which he no longer plays the role of an authority. This, in turn, helps him to reduce spontaneously emerging status differences⁵². In a partner-like dialogue and through the negotiation of common findings, both the researcher and the subjects are empowered and autonomous⁵³. Together they decide on the accuracy of the research. In this way they gain more awareness, the possibility to reflect on their actions and a chance for self-development and emancipation⁵⁴.

In my research I have tried to pay particular attention to the issues highlighted. Therefore, I set the context of the research in the environment of a higher education institution, where I played the role of an academic. This allowed me to capture the subjects' experiences in a direct way. In order to check whether the image of the research reality I presented represented its true nature and character, I referred, during the interviews, to the knowledge and reflections of the subjects, who considered the adequacy of the interpretation of the research reality presented by me. Such a procedure allowed me to assume the role of a researcher who can learn from their knowledge of the 'shared' reality. With the above assumptions in mind, to investigate the relationship between participation in creativity training and the acquisition of professional skills by pedagogy students, I used a research procedure based on integrating the activities of the researcher and the subjects in a single research cycle.

The designed research model was built on a hermeneutic circle, which resembles a dialogue situation. Questions posed to the 'world' provided answers that triggered further questions. Moving along this track, I confronted my own interpretations with the explanations of the research participants. This gave me the chance to knowingly move outside my

⁵² See A. Wyka, "Model badania poprzez wspólne doświadczanie, czyli o pewnej wersji empirii 'jakościowej'", *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1985, vol. XXIX, no. 2, p. 97–98.

⁵³ See M. Malewski, "Metody ilościowe i jakościowe w badaniach nad edukacją. Spór o metodologiczną komplementarność", *Kultura i Edukacja* 1997, no. 1–2, p. 19.

⁵⁴ See *ibidem*, p. 20.

own horizon and to expand and complement it with elements found in the horizons of others⁵⁵. Together with my subjects I tried to understand the worlds of educational reality which had become the object of our interest and research. Placing subsequent stages of activities in a hermeneutic circle, and thus breaking with the linear structure of the study, enabled repetitiveness and reproducibility of the research cycle. This was facilitated by critical reflection, present at each stage of the research, and the process of generating questions and research problems. Assuming this structure of the research process, each reflection closing the research cycle triggered subsequent questions and problems, which defined a new course of research proceedings. Critical self-/reflection had a direct impact on each phase. The benefits of such a planned model of research not only created a chance for intentional change in selected areas of social reality, made the researched active subjects, but were also useful for me as an investigator. I was therefore able to learn more about my own teaching practice, and consequently to improve it.

At this point it is worth indicating one more feature of action research. Some call it the 'self-reflection spiral', others refer to it as the 'research cycle stages'. Whatever the name, however, in both cases there is a clear idea of a hermeneutical circle, in which one cycle, or an element of the spiral, becomes only a single step in cognition⁵⁶. The individual stages of the research cycle followed a multi-phase model of the action research procedure put forth by Stephen Kemmis⁵⁷.

PRACTICAL COURSE OF THE RESEARCH CYCLE STAGES

STAGE I – IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

The first research stage consisted in formulating research questions and collecting/constructing data to build information about the existing educational reality. I focused my research activities on the exploration of the following research problems:

⁵⁵ See M. Malewski, *Teorie andragogiczne. Metodologia teoretyczności dyscypliny naukowej*, Wrocław 1998.

⁵⁶ See T. Pilch, T. Bauman, *Zasady badań pedagogicznych. Strategie ilościowe i jakościowe*, ed. A. Radzko, Warszawa 2001 (chapter 6).

⁵⁷ See *ibidem*, p. 312–314.

1. What is the place of creative skills classes in the process of educating pedagogy students?
2. How are the classes addressed to the students of pedagogy conducted in the educational practice?
3. What are the students' opinions on their participation in the process of pedagogical education?

The aim of the questions formulated in this way was to gain knowledge about the functioning in the teaching practice of the postulates of inspiring and developing students' creative dispositions. The research was based on the qualitative interview technique.

STAGE II – UNCOVERING THE PROBLEM

The second stage of the study⁵⁸ consisted in deep reflection on the educational reality examined, its deficiencies and relevant reflections of the subjects. At this stage I was interested in the following:

1. What are the reasons for the sometimes unsatisfactory formation of creative skills of pedagogy students?
2. How can this situation be changed for the better?

In this phase of the research I used the focus group interview technique⁵⁹ and projection techniques: the unfinished sentence test and the animation and collage technique⁶⁰. The purpose was to find out independent opinions on the question to be discussed, excluding the possible influence of the group on these opinions, and at the same time to check the consistency (or lack thereof) in the opinions of all the participants. In addition, the techniques were to verify that the conclusions resulting from their analysis were consistent with the other data obtained during the individual interviews.

The conclusions from the discussion set the direction for further research measures.

STAGE III – DRAFTING THE MAIN ACTION PLAN

At this stage of the study my action focused on developing a project geared towards enhancing the existing practice. I drafted a scenario of

⁵⁸ See M. Magda-Adamowicz, I. Paszenda, *Treningi twórczości a umiejętności zawodowe*, op. cit.

⁵⁹ See D. Maison, *Zogniskowane wywiady grupowe. Jakościowa metoda badań marketingowych*, Warszawa 2001.

⁶⁰ See *ibidem*.

a 30-hour training in creative thinking and acting. I designed a training outline, the objectives of each training session, a description of the training process, and a list of exercise resources.

STAGE IV – IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

In this part of the research, the planned project was put into practice. The aim of the research was to attempt to provide consolidated and verified knowledge about the actual course of creativity training and to fill the gap in existing knowledge with a new area of cognition. The research was based on the technique of participant observation. At this stage, I carried out continuous monitoring of the actions taken. This was done by means of continuous feedback sessions, during which the experiences were analysed and conclusions about the training were shared between the researcher and the participants.

STAGE V – EVALUATION/CHECKING UP ON THE RESULTS OF ACTION

The fifth phase of the research consisted of evaluating the effectiveness of the solutions used. The study focused on the following problems:

1. What are the effects of pedagogy students' participation in creativity training?
2. What are the individual ways in which the students experience creativity training?
3. What kind of creative skills did the students acquire participating in creativity training?
4. What kind of professional skills did the students acquire as a result of participation in creativity training?

The aim of the research was to find out whether there was a correlation between students' participation in creativity training and their acquisition of professional skills. It also attempted to address the paucity of relevant empirical research. In this phase I reused the technique of focus group interviews and projective techniques: the test of unfinished sentences and the animation technique.

At this stage I analysed and interpreted the practical course of the creativity training. First, I grouped the entries according to the areas and themes they referred to in their images. Not content with the external message of the image, I moved on to the next stage of analysis,

i.e. deconstruction and interpretation. In this way I reconstructed the course of the training, supplementing it with comments and feedback on the individual experiences of the trainees and my experience as a creativity coach.

STAGE VI – INTEGRATING THE KNOW-HOW ACQUIRED DURING THE STUDY WITH SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, THEORETICAL/ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE MATERIAL COLLECTED

The sixth phase of the research consisted in integrating the knowledge/insights gained during the research with scientific, theoretical knowledge. Based on the available literature I tried to relate the results of my own research to the results obtained by other researchers diagnosing the effectiveness of training interventions. This part of the research was also a phase of developing my own concepts of describing the analysis and interpretation of the collected research materials, based on existing knowledge on the subject. Bearing in mind the objectives, problems and research methods and techniques used, I referred to the qualitative analysis of the collected research material when analysing and interpreting the research results. In this type of research, a special role is played by the widest possible background of the researcher's analysis and interpretation, determined by the socio-cultural framework, the framework of social interaction, and that of the research process.

The context of my own research was determined by the academic environment, which I referred to while analysing and interpreting its results. The first research step was to analyse and interpret the experiences of those involved in the traditional educational process. For this purpose, I transcribed all the conversations recorded on a recorder. Then, I analysed the individual interview texts produced in the course of the transcription. Subsequently, within these individual cases, I made a structural description, analysing particular situations, climaxes, turning points, looking for regularities and contradictions within them. This resulted in student narrative maps that illustrated these experiences, both in individual terms and in terms shared by all participants. The former reflect the individual trajectories of the participants' narratives, while the latter illustrate the common motifs they share. Maps of these

narratives were constructed based on the statements undertaken by the participants in the study. The resulting individual narrative trajectory, despite sharing common areas of experience with other subjects, had its own specific direction and character. It was also characterised by its uniqueness, as in every context (social, physical, research, etc.) it can take a completely different course.

At this point I would like to make it clear that the identification of a common narrative map for the subjects was not intended to illustrate those areas of experience that are equally shared by all subjects. Due to the fact that each narrator referred to these areas in their own individual way, the resulting map was only a certain list of the main themes referred to by each of the subjects. Nevertheless, at this stage of analysis, by combining the experiences of subsequent narrators, I was able to go beyond the individual case, and thus enhance the perspective of learning about the research reality with new cognitive horizons. By juxtaposing, comparing and integrating individual narratives, I obtained a more detailed picture of the phenomena and problems I was interested in.

The next research step was the analysis and interpretation via projection techniques of the results gained. Here it was also important that the results should not be interpreted in isolation from the entire context of the study and other available data. Hence, during the analysis I examined whether the results obtained were consistent with other available data and could be explained by these data.

STAGE VII – REFLECTION ON THE STUDY SUBJECT

In the last phase, the knowledge gained in the course of the research was embedded in the context of existing knowledge and conclusions for educational practice were drawn from it. I also shared my own reflections on the subject of the research from the perspective of the role of a creativity coach.

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

To conclude these considerations, I would like to mention that, in accordance with the open-ended procedure of qualitative research, research objectives and questions were formulated not only in the initial phase

of the research, but also at each stage. As a result, the research was not limited only by the list of selected questions/problems, but also developed during the study. The process of data collection/construction consisted of my numerous activities as a researcher, during which I experienced the research reality and simultaneously collected/formulated data about it. The whole process was based on the research objectives of theoretical, practical and social nature, formulated before and during the activities.

The first aim was realised through theoretical systematisation of knowledge about potentials, scopes and areas of creativity training for students of pedagogy. Thanks to this, I have rationally developed a scientific theory as a basis for practical action. The second goal was achieved through the practical implementation of creativity trainings and generalizations gained from the results of my own research as well as learning about the relationship between participation in creativity trainings and the acquisition of professional skills by students of pedagogy. The third aim resulted from the civilisational and cultural challenges of the present time, which increasingly calls for people with a creative mindset⁶¹.

The activities and actions undertaken in the course of the research made it possible to draw the following conclusions: creativity trainings are important in the acquisition of professional skills by students of pedagogy. The collected research outcomes showed that the objectives of the interventions directed at the development of the creative skills of the trainees concern a wide spectrum of changes in their cognitive, emotional and social functioning. The respondents' statements showed that, on the one hand, the individual acquires habits and skills for creative problem solving, overcoming barriers to creative thinking and acting. On the other hand, they develop their communication, cooperation and autcreation skills, thanks to which they control themselves and their development. Mastering these skills in the course of educating educators can be a basic factor of professional success. Conclusions of practical nature suggest the necessity of designing and implementing educational programmes aimed at 'education towards creativity'.

⁶¹ See M. Magda-Adamowicz, I. Paszenda, *Treningi twórczości a umiejętności zawodowe*, op. cit.

In the context of disturbing reports about the negative influence of school on creative dispositions, it would be advisable to include in the educational programmes at least those elements that support the creative capacities of students of pedagogy. The realization of these postulates could level out the strengthening of adaptive forms of learning behaviour by traditional education. This issue is important because in a situation when continuous learning has become a necessity, and sometimes even a prerequisite for 'professional survival', there is a huge demand for the development of various types of skills, especially creative ones. These, in turn, are particularly desirable in the teaching profession. The interest of a well-understood education assigns them the roles of creative performers of creative activities. A creative approach at work and in pedagogical practice should, therefore, be shared by all those who engage in teaching, upbringing and care. For this reason, the key task of education is the increased care of educators for the promotion of creative thinking and acting of learners at all levels of education. The acquisition of similar skills by their students will depend on their own creative competence, reflexivity and critical skills. Hence the importance of analysis, shaping creative predispositions not only in the environment of students, but also among future teachers of grades 1 to 3. The first years of education (starting as early as kindergarten) determine the child's biography. Teachers educating the young generation play a vital role in the education process.

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