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Creativity Training in Academic Education

Abstract

This text is a short version of a research process that is part of preparation for a doctorate thesis at the Wroclaw University Pedagogic Institute. In her article the author points out the need for a scientific analysis of the ways of development and efficiency of initiation, developing, and support of creativity in academic education. According to her, one of the most innovative strategies of developing creativity strategies is creativity training. Therefore she made Wroclaw University conversational courses on creative action and thinking the object of her investigation. The main aim of the investigation is to show the practical use of this educational form in academic education and to attempt to asses it. Another investigation goal of the author is to test a popular in the world, but rarely used in Polish pedagogy, empirical research model called action research.

In the work presented the author gives her reasons for her choice of the subject, presents the aim and object of the research, the main thesis and she points to predictable, realistic results of the undertaken study.

Key words: *Academic education, Creativity training*

"Great dangers of today's life are slogans, common opinions, ready-made thinking models. As individuals we have to be able to ask questions, to resist, to criticise […]. That's why we need active learners, ready to search on their own."

J. Piaget

In these modern times the property of life is the changeability of its form and content of people's participation in it. It is generally believed that a creative attitude enabling to create changes and to adjust to them creatively is also a need and a value of contemporary man. According to R. Schulz (1996, 9) , a common feature of

current ideologies is a statement that creativity is what contemporary man desires, and at the same time what man is obliged to do. Because of that, the contemporary civilisation requires from man other models of behaviour than in the past- the innovative ones and the creative ones, executed in an individual and flexible way that implies the development of new models of behaviour.

The changing world radically transformed the opinion about education. Nowadays, the basic task of education (tertiary education included) is the creation of active, autonomous and creative man who will be able to acquire knowledge and transform it developing the world and him/herself (Melosik 2000, 62).

The necessity to adjust education to new developing tendencies in civilisation engendered a need for another education model. The preferred elements of education today are: autonomy, creativity, placing the learner in the centre of education, humanity and preparation for life in a democratic society based on the market economy (Niemiec 2000, 42). The challenges of the contemporary world require a change in bringing a young person into society. The present changing realities, the valuable aims of education concern discovery, explanation and interpretation of processes and phenomena. It seems to be exceptionally relevant to the academic education. That is why scientists of educational occurrences suggest that the stimulation of students' versatile activities and creative thinking with the use of diverse techniques of creative solving problems should be exhibited to a higher degree (Bereźnicki 1999, 162). Those suggestions induced me to conduct studies in which I intend to come to a scientific reflection on the ways, efficiency of development, stimulation and assistance in creative dispositions in the academic education.

In my opinion, one of the most innovative strategies to develop creative dispositions is creativity training (Szmidt, ed., 2005, 82), understood as an integral system of group activities used for stimulation, intensification and assistance of potential thinking abilities and creative actions. Thus, I took a decision to choose as the object of my research the educational courses of creative activity and thinking for students of Pedagogical Studies conversation courses at the University of Wrocław.

The precise research area of the work will be the structure of a creative training course, its aims, methods, techniques and psychodidactic means applied in it. The principal goal of the investigation will be showing the practical use of this form in academic education and the attempt at its evaluation.

These problems aroused my interest because of social and practical premises. The social premises emerge firstly, out of cultural and civilisation challenges which create a demand for more and more people with creative attitudes, and secondly, out of the criticism of school and traditional didactics which often create many obstacles hampering the development of learners' creative capacities (Góralska 2003,

36; Stasiak 2004, 56–57; Bereźnicki 1999, 160). The practical premises are based on the conclusion that the results of the research work may contribute to the intensification of the didactic process and widen the scope of educational methods.

Apart from that, regarding the undertaken method of the research, practical premises also imply better familiarity with my own didactic practice, updating the knowledge about it, and consequently, improving it.

Methodological premises are also relevant to the research because the aim of the study is not only an attempt at evaluation of creativity training but also verification from its practical aspect of one of the best known research methods in the world (Kwiecińska-Zdrenka 2000, 63), but rarely used in Polish empirical pedagogy, *the action research*. Apart from that, in the investigations of the problem dealing with efficiency of creative training, I mean to integrate in one research methods belonging to different methodological traditions (critical paradigm and postmodernist elements). The attempt to use methodological triangulation may enable to verify the adequacy and the efficiency of the suggested method in exploration of the investigated reality.

The ethical issue of the research seems to be a crucial point. As an academic teacher and a student of Ph.D. studies I mean to use the students of the Pedagogy Institute as a population of the research and my own didactic experience.

The problematic issue tackled by me seems to be worthy of attention because judging by the number of theoretical and empirical works on the subject, many Polish scholars dealt with the question of developing creative dispositions in the educational process (Puślecki 1999; Czaja 2002, Tomaszewska 2003; Jąder 2005). Few of them, however, concentrated their interest on academic education. Also few of them, made an attempt to verify the adequacy and efficiency of creative training principles during didactic work with students. The insufficiency of empirical research in that area became a starting point of the research, which I hope, will contribute, at least to a slight degree, to reducing the shortage.

The following questions seem to be of great importance for the problems of the work: How are the courses of creativity training carried out? What are the aims of their realisation? What methods, techniques, psychodidactic means are used for the courses? To what degree are the students involved in the creative training? And above all, what changes (if any), advantages or results does creativity training bring to students who take part in it?

Before my research proper I made myself familiar with the literature on the subject in order to find out if, on the one hand, scholars had provided the answer to the questions I raised and, on the other hand, how the issue is treated in other scientific disciplines, especially, that its nature borders on didactics and psychology. After close scrutiny I stated that a few Polish authors (Turska 1998; Nęcka and

others 2005; Kosiorek and Marszałek 2005; Szmidt (ed.), 2005; Dzwonkowska 2005) dealt with the issue of the specific form of instruction which is creativity training. And few of them, as I mentioned above, tried to present the practical use of creativity training and examine the efficiency of its specific form of instruction. At the same time, scholars of creativity (Nęcka 2001, 208–209; Szmidt [ed.] 2005, 7) suggest that the issue needs to be explored so that new outcomes could fill in the gap in today's achievements with a new area of investigation.

In order to answer the questions raised above I will use the method called action research. The adopted research procedure is a form of self-reflective investigations carried out by students taking part in a social situation in order to improve the rationality of their proper actions, to understand the social practice and to understand the situation in which the practice is carried out (Czerepaniak-Walczak 2001, 191). In other words, it offers participants an active part in the discovery and an explanation of the mechanisms directing their practice without engaging them as mere users of the uncovering. Taking into account all these assumptions, I considered the research method as useful in the scientific exploration of the problems under study.

The procedure will be carried out according to a 4-phase model of action research procedure: planning, execution, observation and reflection (Kwiecińska-Zdrenka 2002, 66).

The phase of **planning** will consist of the assigned courses procedure which comes from the accepted theoretical model of creativity training.

The **execution** stage will comprise of the creativity trainer's typical psychodidactic activities.

In spite of the fact that the **observation** stage is presented as a separate phase of the research, it will concern deeply the preceding stage because it comprises typical creativity training trainer's activities expanded by consciously used research activities based on the questions put forward at the beginning.

The **reflection** phase excludes the examiner out of the examined situation. In this phase of research the examiner analyses the gathered experiences without any help from other sources. The analysis is established on the collected material.

I express a hope that the tackled issues and hinted problems in the research may contribute to the intensification of the didactic process and widen the scope of teaching methods. Nevertheless, I wish to emphasise that the aim of courses based on creativity training rules is not a negation of existing teaching methods. On the contrary, the traditional model has proved correct during at least the past 25 hundred years and the civilisation and science would be impossible without it. That is why, the aim of the courses proposed by me is not to replace the traditional model but to complete it by adding an element that is often underestimated in education.

This element is the development an of an individual's creative abilities and his/her abilities to cooperate in a group. It is not difficult to notice that traditional teaching models also develop learners' creative dispositions but they do it in an indirect way, according to a maxim: *Learn to broaden your mind*. The suggested teaching model uses the maxim in an opposite way: *Broaden your mind to learn faster*. Hereby, this work attempts to provide the answer if it is so.

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