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Special educator and creative art at school

The issue of artistic abilities has been lately frequently present in educational literature.¹ It seems that the creative development of a person will continue to be the subject for research and scientific considerations as well as one of the more important aims of education. According to the title of one of papers², artistic creation is more and more often perceived as a challenge of the twenty first century. Why is this issue so popular? Creative art is a necessity which results from the very essence of humanity³, it is one of the most healthy impulses of a man. Moreover, proper functioning in the surrounding environment, active participation in the process of permanent changes taking place in the world, is not possible without an individual and creative engagement of a person. Artistic abilities create a chance for better adaptation to the requirements of the changing environment, for better functioning at school, work, in personal life.

I believe that the above arguments are sufficient reason to see the shaping of artistic predispositions of pupils and students as an important task to be performed by school.

Education for artistic creation should be carried out in all types and at all levels of school education. Speaking about the need of artistic creation at school, we should not forget about special schools and teachers working there. It only seems that creation and disability are mutually exclusive phenomena. However, life faces the disabled, just like their fully able peers, with tasks and situations in which reproductive knowledge turns out to be insufficient. Another important argument for common realization of the task consisting in developing the artistic predispositions is the assumption that creation is a continuous feature and that the creative potential is present in all human beings. A person with lower intellectual level does

¹ Puślecki W., Wspieranie elementarnych zdolności twórczych uczniów, Kraków 1999, Dobrołowicz J., Kreatywność uczniów a ich osiągnięcia szkolne, Kielce 2002, Uszyńska – Jarmoc J., Twórcza aktywność dziecka. Teoria – rzeczywistość – perspektywy rozwoju, Białystok 2003, Szmidt K. J., Pedagogika twórczości. Idee – aplikacje – rady na twórczą drogę, Kraków 2005.

² Twórczość - wyzwanie XXI wieku, p.red. W. Popek, Kraków 2003.

³ Hanisz J., Rozwijanie twórczego myślenia uczniów w procesie rozwiązywania zadań tekstowych, „Życie Szkoły” 1995, nr 7.

not have to be deprived of creative functioning. Robert Gloton and Claude Clero⁴ proved that among people with intelligence quotient lower than the average a considerable amount of creative persons can be found, just like in a population of people with high intelligence quotient people who are not creative at all can be found. Thus, as Maria Lewandowska⁵, puts it: „disability can but it does not have to be an obstacle in creativity, and relatively full ability can, but it does not have to help in creativity.” The level of creative abilities shown does not depend on the potential of a given person only but also on the intentional educational activities applied, which encourage to use the predispositions of the person.

In the literature on this subject⁶ an issue is raised that the creative predispositions of children diminish with age. It is hard to specify in a clear way how much it is the result of a development process and to what degree it is caused by the process of education. There is criticism raised against school that it does not teach reflectivity, but it shapes reproductive, conformist behaviours of pupils. This are, however, generalized accusations, which are unjustified or even detrimental towards many schools and many teachers. Edward Nęcka⁷ notices the fact that in many cases school is anti-creative environment. He stresses the fact that educational facilities have resources allowing to make the creative development of children and young people more dynamic, or at least allowing to prevent the stoppage of creative abilities. Teachers play an important role in such activities.

The following questions arise in connection with the above considerations

- Are all teachers able to develop creative predispositions of pupils?
- Which principles should be applied by a teacher, who wants to stimulate the creative activity of his pupils apply?
- What external factors present in school environment can make the creative work of a teacher easier, what factors can make it difficult?

Creative predispositions of pupils can be developed by a teacher who understands the essence of creativity, notices the symptoms of creative abilities of a child, knows techniques, methods and principles of work enabling creative development, wants and is able to apply them in everyday practice. Thus, the condition for the creative development of a pupils are

⁴ Gloton R., Clero C., *Twórcza aktywność dziecka*, Warszawa 1985

⁵ Lewandowska M., *Twórczość a niepełnosprawność – kilka refleksji „Kultura i edukacja”* 1992, nr 2

⁶ Karp E., Wojciechowska K., Mielczarek M., Cieślak M., *Aktywność twórcza dzieci i młodzieży [in:] W stronę kreatywności*, praca zbiorowa pod red. W. Dobrołowicza i M. Karwowskiego, Warszawa 2002.

⁷ Nęcka E., *Psychologia twórczości*, Gdańsk 2002.

attitudes and behaviours of the teacher.⁸ It is hard for a teacher to demand from his pupils any abilities he does not have himself, or which he depreciates by his behaviour.

Maria Grzegorzewska spoke about the necessity of creative predispositions' presence in persons working with the disabled. In her *Letters to a Young Teacher* she said that a special educator should have a researcher's attitude and not be a passive person, creative search for new ways – and not repeating well-known schemes⁹. A necessary condition for creative activity of a teacher is a reflection on one self, the awareness of one's own creative potential, aiming at self-improvement in this matter.

A creative teacher can fulfill a role of a master taking individual care of a pupil with creative abilities, or be a model – a model personality¹⁰. If a teacher looks for creative solutions in his work, avoids schematic solutions, then, according to the theory of modeling there is probability that the pupil will follow him. A teacher, however, cannot jam pupils' creative potential with his creativity. In situation where a child perceives its teacher as a matchless model, it can take the attitude of the lack of belief in its abilities and skills, fail to undertake challenges as a result of its conviction that the mastery of the teacher cannot be equaled. The saying: *nothing grows in the shadow of a big tree* illustrates this situation well.

According Paula Torrance (after: Nęcka),¹¹ a teacher aiming at creative development of his pupil should apply the following principles in his behaviour:

- Respect for unusual questions asked by children during lessons.
- Respect for unusual ideas of pupils raised during lessons.
- Showing to children that their ideas are valuable.
- Ensuring for pupils the possibility of activities which are not subject to evaluation (the pressure of evaluation limits the risk of undertaking unconventional solutions which have not been checked so far).
- Connecting the evaluation with its reasons and consequences (avoiding generalised evaluations).

For work with the intellectually disabled the above guidelines should be supplemented with additional indications, taking into consideration the specific psychosocial functioning of such persons. A special teacher should undertake activities aiming at overcoming the lack of belief

⁸ Cudowska A, Twórcza postawa jako element kompetencji zawodowych nauczyciela akademickiego [in:] Edukacyjne Dyskursy, <http://ip.univ.szczecin.pl/~edipp>, 2000.

⁹ Grzegorzewska M., *Listy do Młodego Nauczyciela* [Letters to a Young Teacher]. Cykl I-III, Warszawa 1996

¹⁰ Nęcka E., *ibid*

¹¹ Nęcka E. *ibid*.

of intellectually disabled pupils in their own possibilities, give them tasks adequate for their abilities, resign from excessive time pressure, discreetly help them in overcoming schematic thinking, equip them in the ability to start the co-operation with other persons while solving tasks and issues.¹² It is also good to remember that in the process of shaping the creative predispositions of a person, the creative process is more important than the final outcome of the tasks performed.

The positive attitude of the teacher to creativity does not guarantee ultimately that he will in his work freely realize tasks aiming at developing the creative potential of his pupils. Improper social and emotional atmosphere in school, expressing itself in the form of the lack of consent for searching for and application of non-standard solutions, feeling of threat, excessive criticism of superiors, competition within school staff members can be a barrier making the creative activity of a teacher especially difficult. Equally important inhibitors of teacher's creativity can also be: excessive burdening with duties, bad condition of teaching facilities, insufficient equipment in aids and materials necessary for work.

Between the teacher's attitude towards creativity and external factors there is a mutual dependency. If a teacher shows no positive attitude towards creativity, does not understand its role in the life of a human being, has no adequate abilities, the most favorable external conditions will not enable the development of the creative potential of pupils. On the other hand, when the teacher believes creativity to be of a great importance, presents immanent motivation to undertake creative activities, he is able to overcome obstacles making it difficult to shape creative personalities.

In order to specify the attitude to creativity at school presented by special teachers, a research has been conducted in a group of 56 teachers employed in special schools for teachers with slight intellectual disability¹³. Questionnaire of Attitudes and Preferences in the Workplace by Hausdorf and Basadur was used as the research tool. The results obtained show that the situation in the group under research is far from the desired one. Only 18 teachers (35.29%) believe that creative thinking is important and be the source of pleasure. Even smaller number of the research subjects (13 persons – 25.49%) admit that there is time for creative thinking at work. Trying to find out what factors differentiate the attitudes of the research subjects, their attitudes towards creativity have been analyzed, with a few variables taken into concern. This analysis allowed to state that the persons who especially approved of the creativity at school were teachers who worked at school for longer time, who were over 40

¹² Dziedzic S., *Kształcenie myślenia twórczego w świetle pedagogiki*, „Szkola Specjalna”, 1972, nr 1

¹³ The research within the MA thesis was carried out under my supervision by Ewa Cecuła

years of age, with the degree of nominated or diploma teacher and with a high level of self-control feeling. The majority of teachers believing that creativity is not only important but also pleasant are teachers of such subjects as: technical education, Physical education or other subjects within artistic group (music, art).

The opinion that in work there is no place for creative thinking was expressed most often by young employees (up to 30 years of age), with the degree of assistant teacher. Taking into consideration the type of school subjects taught, teachers of arts spoke more often about the lack of time for creativity at school than teachers of science.

The research carried out do not allow to draw unambiguous conclusions but they suggest that teachers with longer professional experience are more prone to creative activities. The reason for this can be the proficiency in their work obtained, which guarantee confidence and courage in acting, allowing focusing on educational mastery. Young teachers certainly have to devote more time to organize their teaching workshop, prepare adequate strategy of work.

Both the considerations resulting from the analysis of the literature on the subject and the results of the research carried out suggest that in the process of educating teachers it is necessary to introduce classes which would provide future teachers in theoretical knowledge and skills allowing to diagnose and develop creative predispositions of their pupils. Creativity training can play an important role in the process of shaping creative attitudes of future teachers. It allows among others to acquire the skill of breaking the habitual methods of perception, quick and adequate adjustment to new situations, enables building creative motivation, learning techniques and strategies of creative activity.¹⁴ I believe that a teacher who has adequate knowledge on creativity and who personally experienced the joy of creation will be more prone to share this joy with his pupils.

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