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## **Educational Creativity of Family Life Education Teachers: Polish Context**

Recent years in the Polish didactics have been marked by interest in educational creativity of teachers<sup>2</sup>. Creativity ceases to be perceived as an exceptional element of didactic and educational work at school<sup>3</sup>. All teachers are required to conduct classes in an innovative and interesting manner, activating pupils in multiple ways<sup>4</sup>. This obligation also applies to family life education teachers and is related to multifaceted stimulation of pupils to active participation in teaching and education in Polish schools.

The following questions arise in relation to the above: what does the educational creativity of a family life education teacher consist in, and how is it manifested? Which educational strategies are conducive to the creative activity of a family life education teacher? Searching for an answer to the questions listed above requires clarification of the term “educational creativity”. The creative involvement of a family life education teacher is going to be characterised in this context. A point of reference for analyses oriented towards this direction is going to be the Polish educational reality related to the conduct of “family life education” classes at schools.

### **Understanding of the Term “Educational Creativity”**

The central category in this study is educational creativity. Polish literature on the subject defines this term in various manners<sup>5</sup>. There are no commonly

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<sup>2</sup> For more on this, see, e.g.: J. Łaszczak, M. Jabłonowska (ed.), *Zdolność i twórczość jako perspektywa współczesnej Edukacji*, Warsaw 2009; M. Kołodziejka (ed.), *Twórczość codzienna w praktyce edukacyjnej*, Płock 2009.

<sup>3</sup> M. Just, *Kreatywny nauczyciel – pozwólmy sobie na twórcze szaleństwo*, „Życie Szkoły” 2010 No. 8, p. 43-48.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

accepted definitions. Sometimes, authors identify this term with the involvement of a teacher in professional work and with looking for and applying new methodological solutions<sup>6</sup>. At other times, they draw attention to activating methods of teaching and an open style of managing the pupils' work during classes<sup>7</sup>. There are also Polish researchers who describe educational creativity via professional skills and competences<sup>8</sup>. Simultaneously, they draw attention to inventiveness, openness to new pedagogical proposals, the ability to constantly extend substantive knowledge and improve professional qualifications and the abandoning of schematic thinking along with active and constant searching for, verifying and working out of new solutions<sup>9</sup>. According to Polish researchers, an indispensable attribute of educational creativity is pedagogical innovation and on-going in-service teacher training. In this context, they point to the capacity of looking at educational problems from various perspectives, involvement in didactic and educational work and striving for discovery of new and valuable experiences in the school reality, which enrich the teacher's and the pupils' personality<sup>10</sup>.

Taking into account the determinations of the Polish pedagogues presented above, "educational creativity" for the purposes of this text is going to be understood as multifaceted activity which goes beyond the existing rules of didactic and educational conduct and aims for formation – on the basis of hitherto knowledge and experiences – of new solutions within the scope of teaching and education. The core of educational creativity consists in reorganisation of the hitherto style of conduct in the teacher's work and discovering and constructing new, innovative and – at the same time – valuable ideas, concepts and material products related to didactic and educational work at school<sup>11</sup>. Educational creativity understood in this manner is directly related to creative thinking, i.e. the ability of looking at problems from different perspectives and searching for and applying numerous, often innovative, solutions<sup>12</sup>.

The basic distinguishing factors of educational creativity are as follows: innovative product, originality, relevance, transformation of reality, durability of

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<sup>6</sup> For more on this, see, e.g.: D. Ciechanowska, *Twórczość w edukacji*, Szczecin 2007; J.K. Szmidt, *Pedagogika twórczości*, Gdańsk 2007.

<sup>7</sup> For more on this subject, see, e.g.: J.K. Szmidt, W. Ligęza (ed.), *Twórczość dzieci i młodzieży. Stymulowanie – Badanie – Wsparcie*, Kraków 2009.

<sup>8</sup> More on this is written by L. Skorecka, *Prakseologiczny wymiar pedagogiki twórczości w pracy nauczyciela*, Warsaw 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> For more on this subject, see: K. Denek, L. Pawelski, A. Żukrowska (ed.), *Regionalizm i twórczość w edukacji*, Szczecin 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Interesting analyses about this subject can be found in: M. Magda-Adamowicz (ed.), *Twórczy pedagogicznie nauczyciele klas młodszych: obszary i panorama problematyki*, Gniezno 2011.

<sup>12</sup> I. Adamek, *Twórcze rozwiązywanie problemów*, „Życie Szkoły”, 63(2008) No. 3, p. 19-24; M.M. Adamowicz, *Twórcze kształcenie: utopia czy rzeczywistość?*, „Dydaktyka Literatury”, 25(2005), p. 203-211.

impact and social value of the outcome<sup>13</sup>. The capacity for creativity determined in this manner requires own activity of an individual, i.e. personal thinking (reflection before, over and during an activity), decision-making and activities characterised by vitality and originality. Without this, the process of creation in the teacher's and the pupil's activity would not exist. There would also be no original and unique works, concepts and ideas<sup>14</sup>. On this basis, it is possible to state that every teacher – to a varied degree – possesses a creative potential. Every teacher may create new immaterial and material products, transform the existing reality and solve problems. This last skill, i.e. the problem solving capacity, allows the teachers to plan and apply innovative solutions, solve difficulties and support pupils in integral development. It also stimulates the creative potential of every pupil and opens the path towards educational creativity.

### Family Life Education in Polish School

In Poland, family life education is implemented – according to State law – in primary schools, middle schools and upper secondary schools<sup>15</sup>. Between September 1993 and June 1997, these classes were taught by class tutors and school counsellors<sup>16</sup>. Subsequently (between September 1997 and December 1998), each school could organise – in the form of optional classes – classes devoted to “knowledge on the sexual life of man”<sup>17</sup>. These classes could be conducted by individuals without pedagogical qualifications, the so-called sexual educators. This encountered protests from multiple environments (e.g. Catholic, educational and local governments)<sup>18</sup>. The subject matter of such classes referred to the sexuality of men and women, whereas sexual education was clearly separated from family life education. Issues related to education about responsible parenthood were omitted. Permissivism in the evaluation of sexual behaviour was promoted. This was convergent with the sexual education programmes in Western

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<sup>13</sup> K.J. Szmidt, *Twórczość*, in: *Encyklopedia XXI wieku*, vol. 6, ed. T. Pilch, Warsaw 2007, p. 841-849.

<sup>14</sup> A. Klim-Klimaszewska, *Twórcza aktywność*, in: *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, vol. 6, p. 833-841.

<sup>15</sup> Conduct of such classes is regulated by the *Act on Family Planning, Prenatal Life Protection and Conditions Under Which Pregnancy Termination is Permitted of 17 January 1993*, “Journal of Laws” of 1993, No. 17, item 78, as amended.

<sup>16</sup> *Regulation No. 26 of the Minister of National Education of 18 August 1993 with respect to school curriculum encompassing knowledge about the sexual life of man*, “Official Journal of the Ministry of National Education” of 1993, No. 7, item 31.

<sup>17</sup> The law was determined in *Regulation No. 17 of the Minister of National Education of 19 September 1997*, “Official Journal of the Ministry of National Education” of 1997, No. 8, item 37.

<sup>18</sup> For more on this, see, e.g.: K. Głombik (ed.), *Wychowane seksualne w rodzinie i w szkole*, Opole 2010.

Europe and in the United States<sup>19</sup>. Due to social protests and slight interest on the part of parents, the above-mentioned classes were not organised often. In 1998, the subject “knowledge about the sexual life of man” was withdrawn from school education<sup>20</sup>.

On 1 September 1999, educational classes called “family life education” were introduced<sup>21</sup>. The regulation of the Minister of National Education specified that the classes had to be organised in primary schools (grades 5 and 6), in middle schools and in upper secondary schools (including special needs schools). The core curriculum of general education and, in particular, the section devoted to family life education emphasised pro-family objectives, tasks and content very clearly. These premises were put to practice for a short time. In 2002, new changes were introduced in the core curriculum of general education<sup>22</sup>. They also encompassed family life education. The curriculum assumptions with respect to this course emphasised biological, medical and pragmatic content regarding sexual life. References to personalistic anthropology were abandoned<sup>23</sup>.

More changes in the family life education programme were introduced on 1 September 2009. Pursuant to the amended resolution, new principles of organisation of these classes in Polish schools were determined<sup>24</sup>. It was specified that family life education classes would be attended by pupils from the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school, middle school pupils and pupils from upper secondary schools, excluding those pupils whose parents present (in writing) their objection to the headmaster. In line with ministerial recommendations, family life education classes were going to be organised in primary schools and in upper secondary schools as a part of classes assigned for the headmaster’s disposal in the school teaching programmes. There were 14 hours scheduled for every grade,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> For more on this, see, e.g.: A. Zellma, *Wychowanie młodzieży szkół ponadgimnazjalnych do życia w rodzinie – perspektywa katechetyczna*, „Studia Warmińskie” 50(2013), p. 155-167.

<sup>21</sup> *Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 12 August 1999 on the manner of school teaching and the scope of content regarding knowledge about the sexual life of man, principles of conscious and responsible parenthood, family value, life in the pre-natal phase and methods and means of conscious procreation contained in the core curriculum of general education*, “Journal of Laws” of 1999, No. 67, item 756.

<sup>22</sup> *Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on the core curriculum of pre-school education and general education in individual school types*. “Journal of Laws” of 2002, No. 51, item 458.

<sup>23</sup> For more on this, see, e.g.: A. Zellma, *Wychowanie młodzieży szkół ponadgimnazjalnych do życia w rodzinie – perspektywa katechetyczna*, op.cit., p. 155-167.

<sup>24</sup> *Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 12 August 1999 on the manner of school teaching and the scope of content regarding knowledge about the sexual life of man, principles of conscious and responsible parenthood, family value, life in the pre-natal phase and methods and means of conscious procreation contained in the core curriculum of general education*, “Journal of Laws” of 2009, No. 131, item 1079.

including 5 hours for separate groups of boys and girls<sup>25</sup>. On the other hand, family life education in middle school was incorporated into civic education. It was treated as one of three separate teaching modules of this subject. It was emphasised that the participation of pupils in the course was not mandatory and was not subject to grading. In the case of minor pupils, participation in classes of this type was going to be determined by parents after they became acquainted with the teaching programme. Adult pupils could decide independently<sup>26</sup>. The objectives, tasks and content of the family life education courses were determined in the core curriculum of general education<sup>27</sup>. They encompassed knowledge about man's sexuality, principles of conscious and responsible parenthood, the value of marriage and family, psycho-sexual development of man, methods and means of conscious procreation (mainly contraception), sexually transmitted diseases, family pathologies and problems in marriage and manners of solving them. Attention was paid to family life education and contemporary addictions. Issues related to education in chastity were treated marginally. A lot of attention was devoted to issues from the field of sexual education<sup>28</sup>.

Subsequent changes in family life education were introduced pursuant to the regulation of 17 February 2012<sup>29</sup>. They mainly refer to the manner of class organisation<sup>30</sup>. The number of hours devoted to "family life education" courses did not change in comparison to the previous legal status, described above. However, the conditions of organising these educational classes were changed. Classes assigned for the family life education courses were included in the school teaching programme<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, they are no longer a part of classes left at the disposal of the headmaster. There is also a possibility of organising such classes for pupils from various grades, yet the number of participants should not exceed 28 pupils<sup>32</sup>. The planned educational classes were clearly separated from general education classes. This is conducive to ideologisation of content and propagation of a liberal approach to the issue of marriage and family. Therefore, attention

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<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> *Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on the core curriculum of pre-school education and general education in individual school types*, "Journal of Laws" of 2009, No. 4, item 17.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> *Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 17 February 2012 amending the regulation on the manner of school teaching and the scope of content regarding knowledge about the sexual life of man, principles of conscious and responsible parenthood, family value, life in the pre-natal phase and methods and means of conscious procreation contained in the core curriculum of general education*, "Journal of Laws" of 2012, No. 0, item 300.

<sup>30</sup> *Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 February 2012 on framework teaching plans in public schools*, "Journal of Laws" of 2012, No. 0, item 204.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

should be drawn to the attitude of teachers conducting such classes. Educational involvement, beliefs and the life wisdom of such teachers determine proper education of the young generation in Polish schools.

### **Creative Involvement of Family Life Education Teachers**

Family life education teachers undertake various educational tasks at school. These tasks are related to the transfer of knowledge about various aspects of marriage and family, human sexuality, interpersonal contacts and personal development. Family life education teachers should also draw attention to contemporary threats with respect to individual and social life. Their professional obligations include support for pupils in the development of social and moral stances. The efficiency of such a teacher's educational activities depends on multiple factors. They are conditioned by educational legal regulations and transformations occurring in society, culture and the family. In this complex educational situation, the creative predispositions of family life education teachers play an important role.

The basic point of reference in creative professional activity is the subjective treatment of pupils, creation of an atmosphere of trust and dialogue, stimulating pupils to independence in problem solving and enabling the acquisition of various experiences<sup>33</sup>. These personality traits determine the preferred style of interaction with pupils. A creative family life education teacher acknowledges the model of reciprocity in education as important. This premise seems justified, as mature and integral development of pupils is a joint venture of all participants of education, and therefore the pupil, his/ her parents, other teachers, priests and media employees. Thence, a creative teacher undertakes cooperation with entities responsible for the integral education of a pupil and consistently initiates various activities related to it<sup>34</sup>. In the didactic work, a creative family life education teacher prefers a negotiating style. This is expressed in the application of solutions that activate pupils in multiple manners. Acquisition of knowledge and development of skills relies on the interaction between a teacher and pupils. A creative family life education teacher treats every pupil as a researcher, using various sources of knowledge (scientific and common), along with personal experience. At the same time, such a teacher prefers educational dialogue, in the course of which all class participants are searching for relevant values, asking questions and presenting problems, listening to one another and negotiating the significance of knowledge<sup>35</sup>. The educational activity of a creative family life

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<sup>33</sup> J. Smogorzewska, *Twórczy nauczyciel=twórczy uczeń?*, „Nowa Szkoła” 64(2008) 2, p. 35-37.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> B. Cygan, *Kreatywność w pracy nauczyciela*, „Życie Szkoły” 2011 No. 11, p. 14-17.

education teacher consists in the creation of a free atmosphere conducive to the acquisition of knowledge. This is related to the necessity of stimulating pupils to independent and critical thinking<sup>36</sup>.

A creative family life education teacher is constantly acquiring new substantive knowledge, e.g. regarding alternative forms of life with respect to marriage and family, bio-ethical problems, gender ideology, human sexuality, ethics and family and marital life psychology. Such a teacher also masters their own teaching skills and tools and improves upon professional qualifications. Simultaneously, such a teacher has the attitude of a researcher and an innovator who is constantly looking for new methodological solutions and verifying them in their professional work<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, a creative family life education teacher is an inventive individual, capable of preparing own methodological aids (e.g. multimedia presentations), own class work scenarios and applying them during classes<sup>38</sup>. This feature of creative involvement becomes particularly important on account of the sparse educational materials for teaching family life education that are available in Poland. It allows for initiating educational activities which are conducive to stimulation of innovative thinking and promoting creative stances among pupils<sup>39</sup>.

The subject matter of family life education requires the teacher's responsibility for the integral development of every pupil, perseverance in aiming for the objectives pursued, acceptance of pupils (in particular their beliefs and opinions) and power of persuasion in showing genuine values which a man should be guided by in marriage and in family life<sup>40</sup>. Educational dialogue during family life education classes at school is conducive to this<sup>41</sup>. In general, this method consists in the exchange of opinions and ideas between the teacher and the pupils on a specific subject. It also allows for joint analysis of problems and for reaching solutions to such problems via negotiation and mediation. There is no place for moralising. On the contrary: by using educational dialogue, the family life education teacher communicates with pupils, and this communication is based on cooperation and partnership. This method constitutes a basis in the process of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> With respect to these activities, the study of J.P. Sawiński, *Sposoby aktywizowania uczniów w szkole XXI wieku: pytania, refleksje, dobre rady: poradnik dla nauczyciela*, Warsaw 2014, may be helpful.

<sup>38</sup> M. Piskulski, *Lekcja ciekawa. Nauczyciel kreatywny – uczeń kreatywny*, in: *Nauczyciel wobec wyzwań współczesności: doświadczenia – badania – koncepcje*, Łódź 2009, p. 9-26.

<sup>39</sup> M. Just, *Kreatywny nauczyciel – pozwólmy sobie na twórcze szaleństwo*, p. 43-48.

<sup>40</sup> For more on this, see, e.g.: A. Zellma, *Wychowanie młodzieży szkół ponadgimnazjalnych do życia w rodzinie – perspektywa katechetyczna*, op. cit., p. 155-167.

<sup>41</sup> Interesting analyses about this subject are presented by: M. Rusiecki, *Dialog w szkole drogą do dojrzałości osobowej*, „Nauczanie Początkowe” 2009/2010 No. 1, p. 7-20; M. Śnieżyński, *Dialog edukacyjny*, Kraków 2001.

developing the creative psychical and intellectual potential of all class participants<sup>42</sup>.

The ability of establishing and maintaining interpersonal contacts in a manner that makes the pupils perceive the teacher as a trustworthy person, who treats everybody (disregarding their preferences and ideas) subjectively and who respects their separateness, is very important in the creative involvement of family life education teachers<sup>43</sup>. It also requires the ability of active listening, speaking and understanding. Situations where pupils can speak freely are very important. They allow the family life education teacher to get to know the personal knowledge of pupils and to refer to it during lectures, talks and discussions<sup>44</sup>.

The above-listed educational activities require supplementation by references to universal values. This is related to the need of showing the pupils proper models of conduct in friendship and in marriage and family.

### Final Remarks

The theoretical analyses concerning the educational creativity of family life education teachers presented here briefly confirm the thesis that this type of activity is directly related to organisation of situations stimulating the own activity of pupils, developing internal possibilities of critical thinking and creative problem solving. Such creativity requires an innovative stance and an unconventional approach to the teaching and educating processes in Polish schools. Selection of specific educational strategies depends on multiple factors, including the school, group of pupils, duration of classes, available didactic aids, interests and preferences of class participants. The educational creativity of a family life teacher is expressed in independent settlement of practical problems and modification of own manners of professional activity. The result of such activities is the creativity of participants of "family life education" classes.

The creative educational activity of a family life education teacher in professional work leads to modernisation of teaching and educational processes. At the same time, it becomes a source of professional satisfaction and self-fulfilment. In the educational creativity of a family life teacher, the teacher's personality becomes visible (including stances, values and beliefs), along with independence in thinking and acting. The teacher's personal involvement in professional improvement, as well as care for the welfare of pupils and their integral development, is also visible.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>43</sup> For more on this, see, e.g.: M. Kocór, *Kompetencje komunikacyjne nauczycieli*, „Kwartalnik Edukacyjny” 2010 No. 4, p. 20-32; J. Szempruch, *Kompetencje komunikacyjne nauczycieli wzorem zachowań interpersonalnych*, „Nauczanie Początkowe” 2007/2008 No. 3, p. 29-36.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.

## **Twórczość edukacyjna nauczyciela wychowania do życia w rodzinie – kontekst polski**

### **Streszczenie**

Twórczość edukacyjna nauczyciela należy do podstawowych kategorii badawczych we współczesnej pedeutologii. Zagadnienie to analizowane jest w powiązaniu z aktywnością dydaktyczną i wychowawczą w szkole. Wśród różnych powinności współczesnego nauczyciela wymienia się twórczość w myśleniu i działaniu. Powinność ta odnosi się również do nauczyciela wychowania do życia w rodzinie. Jej realizacja wymaga innowacyjności oraz umiejętności wielostronnego stymulowania uczniów do aktywnego udziału w procesie nauczania i wychowania w polskiej szkole. Twórczość edukacyjna nauczyciela wychowania do życia w rodzinie wymaga bowiem umiejętności przekraczania zastanych reguł postępowania dydaktycznego i wychowawczego oraz tworzenia – na bazie dotychczasowej wiedzy i doświadczenia – nowych rozwiązań edukacyjnych. Istotna jest też zdolność do osobistego namysłu (refleksyjności przed, nad i w trakcie działania) oraz umiejętność podejmowania decyzji, samodzielnego rozstrzygnięcia problemów praktycznych, modyfikowania własnych sposobów aktywności zawodowej i działania naznaczonego oryginalnością.

Wyżej wymienione właściwości znajdują wyraz w aktywności zawodowej nauczyciela wychowania do życia w rodzinie, ukonkretnionej w przekazie wiedzy na temat wielorakich aspektów małżeństwa i rodziny, ludzkiej seksualności, kontaktów interpersonalnych i rozwoju osobowego oraz współczesnych zagrożeń w zakresie życia indywidualnego i społecznego. Nauczyciel wychowania do życia w rodzinie ma wspomagać uczniów w kształtowaniu postaw społecznych i moralnych. Skuteczność jego działalności edukacyjnej jest warunkowana m.in. osobowością nauczyciela wychowania do życia w rodzinie (w tym postawami, wartościami, światopoglądem), samodzielnością w myśleniu i działaniu oraz troską o integralny rozwój uczniów. Za priorytetowe uznaje się też podmiotowe traktowanie wychowanków, tworzenie atmosfery zaufania i dialogu, stymulowanie uczestników zajęć do samodzielności w rozwiązywaniu problemów oraz rozwijanie umiejętności wartościowania w zakresie życia indywidualnego, rodzinnego i społecznego.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

nauczyciel, twórczość, pedeutologia, twórczość edukacyjna, wychowanie do życia w rodzinie, polska szkoła, polska edukacja

### **Keywords**

teacher, creativity, pedeutology, educational creativity, family life education, Polish school, Polish education

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