Creativity is an important element of adaptation to the constantly changing world. Family environment is a natural place for creative development of young children. There are differences in the creativity of children and adults both in terms of its form and content. They result from mental differences related to the developmental period. The creative potential of the family is influenced by the psychological diversity of family members. The article presents some activities of everyday life with family environment, which can be used to develop creativity in pre-school children. These include: observing adults, joint household chores performed by children with their parents, solving everyday problems together and playing together. The text also discusses some issues related to conditions conducive to successful support of children’s creativity.

**Key words:** creativity, artistic creativity, creativity of everyday life, family, development of creativity, supporting the development of creativity, pre-school children.

INTRODUCTION

The process of creative development is usually analysed in the context of such institutions as schools or kindergartens. It is not surprising, as these institutions were established to support development in children, including their talents,
abilities and skills. This goal may be achieved by means of educational programmes, teaching methods, teaching aids and teachers themselves, i.e. their competences and personality traits. However, creativity is a specific phenomenon that encompasses different areas: not only the psyche, the cognitive sphere or personality, but also interpersonal relations. It requires time and space. It develops within environments which cannot be fully controlled and in situations that cannot be fully planned. In addition to institutions and peer groups, family home is a natural space conducive to the development of creativity in children.

ADULTS AND CHILDREN – CREATIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FAMILY

Why is paying attention to creativity worth the effort? Why do psychologists, educators and sociologists find the phenomenon of creativity interesting? According to Stein, “creativity is a process leading to a new product that is accepted as useful or acceptable to a certain group at a certain point” (Nęcka E., 2002, p.17). Considering the level of creativity in the context of personality traits, it is assumed that there may be elite creativity, which is unique, and egalitarian creativity, which is common (Nęcka E., 2002, p.19). An individual who has a high level of creativity copes better in life situations, finds a greater number of solutions to existing problems, easily breaks the patterns of thought, is open to new ideas. Consequently, the individual can find fulfilment in many areas of life, including cultural, social, professional and personal areas, which generally stimulates personality development. Thanks to creative potential, one can adapt more easily to new conditions in various spheres of life. “The need for developing creative attitudes is a result of the increase in the dynamics of social life and the formation of post-industrial societies,” claims Krzysztof Szmidt (2007, p. 241). Therefore, high levels of individual creativity nowadays, is a necessary element of good social adjustment and personal satisfaction. Children’s creative activity is not immature and unproductive as a form of spending time, which adults can treat with indulgence or acceptance. Nor is it a clumsy introduction to later learning and work. It is an important element of adaptation to adult life.

In psychology, creativity can be understood as an individual trait. It is an ability to generate products that are new and valuable (Nęcka E., 2002). It is
then assumed that all people are creative to a lesser or greater degree. It is possible to make creative potential of individual people greater. In terms of age, it is obvious that creativity occurs in adults. However, there are different views as to whether children are creative. On the basis of literature, Szmidt lists the following approaches to children’s creativity: elite-object, subject-humanistic and realistic. In the elite-object approach, it is assumed that children are not creative, because they are not able to change their fields of creativity and do not make any lasting contribution to the knowledge and skills of societies. The subject-humanistic approach treats creativity as a natural feature of childhood, where all children are creative. The realistic approach is more balanced, i.e. children are creative, but there are significant differences between creativity in children and adults. (see: Szmidt, 2007).

Support for the development of creative abilities in children is usually discussed in relation to school and pre-school environments. It is hardly surprising, as these are places where specialists, such as teachers and educators are involved in supporting children’s cognitive development, skills and abilities, including their creativity. The family environment is most often considered in the context of social impacts that are either favourable or unfavourable to creativity, e.g. educational attitudes, parenting styles, parents’ personality or the use of reinforcements.

There is no doubt that there are big differences between people in the family. These differences relate to their age, gender, life experience, potential special and creative talents and the level of advancement in the development of these talents. They are essential in relation to creative activities. Diversity is associated with a wealth of stimuli, which is a source of inspiration. Children perceive reality differently, they have different cognitive abilities, including less advanced mental processes than adults. Pre-school children have developed specific and pictorial thinking, a symbolic function develops in them, which manifests itself in symbolic play and drawing. They begin to understand lies, metaphors and jokes. They have rich vocabulary and create neologisms. In conversations, children learn to see their interlocutor’s viewpoint and analyse their statements. (Kielar-Turska M., 2002). Children are dominated by intense curiosity about the world, the need to learn about reality. On the other hand, adult thinking is characterised by high precision in comparison with children’s thinking, which is verbal-logical in nature, with abstract concepts, i.e. those that have no direct counterparts in reality. Adults, in contrast with pre-school children, can direct their attention, i.e. they can fully decide on what action,
observation or element of reality they will focus on at a given moment. Pre-school children do not have these abilities, or just begin to shape them. Children are fairly free from patterns, because are in the course of learning them. Due to relatively low level of knowledge about reality, children do not create limitations in solving problems. Sometimes it is natural for them to draw a dog that has six legs, or a man who has hands larger than the head. On the other hand, adults have structured knowledge about reality, fixed patterns, which in many situations is useful as a developmental achievement, but it also may limit creativity. Adults are more aware of unrealistic solutions, which may limit their creativity.

As Szmidt points out, there are many differences in the creativity of children and adults. Children are unaware of the principles of creation and each time learn them from scratch. Moreover, without knowing the language of particular areas of creativity, children have no habits related to the use of the means of creation. They usually treat creative activity as fun. Therefore, they do not feel responsible for the product or the process. Striving for self-realisation in the process of creation, children are often not interested in the assessment of their own product. When creating, they fantasise, blur the boundaries between fiction and reality and fill information gaps. For full implementation of creativity, children require favourable conditions, such as ample educational environment, safety and trust. Adults as creators rely on tradition, skills and the material. They know methods, have their own habits of creation and set the goals of their creative activity. Adults bear social responsibility for their creations and are interested in social reception and evaluation. In addition, they co-create cultural heritage of a given region, country or the world, i.e. participate in culture. Similarly to children, when creating, adults learn about the world and broaden their knowledge, but unlike children, they consciously use both intuitive, wishful and analytical thinking. Both favourable and unfavourable conditions contribute to revealing the creative potential in adults (Szmidt E. 2007). However, adults can also create in a childlike way.

Often, families are not merely made up of just one child and parents, who as separate individuals bring a different picture of the world, but there are also siblings, older and younger children, and grandparents. Being at different ages and developmental stages, these individuals possess different cognitive abilities. It is easy to notice that family as a group has great creative potential due to its diversity. Family groups are natural creative groups, i.e. with creative behaviour surfacing in them spontaneously. No additional educational or
psychoeducational activities are needed to make them occur. They should only be noticed and strengthened. This creative potential can be used in various forms of activities for the mental development of children as well as other family members.

ACTIVITY OF FAMILY LIFE AND CREATIVITY

Norbert Jausovec (Pufal-Struzik 2006, referring to other authors) points out that the best way to develop creativity in children is joint child-parent or teacher activity that aims at achieving goals and is organised in such a way that it is attractive to both the children and the adults.

In pre-school children, creativity is best supported in the following forms of family life: observation of parents, joint performance of household chores, solving everyday problems, playing together. In the further part of the article, I will present the above-mentioned elements, list their characteristics and explain their positive effects on children’s development, and in particular on the development of their creativity. I will also present the role of parents in supporting their children’s development in this area.

Observation of parents is currently underestimated, even neglected. Children accompany their parents in everyday activities. This form of learning about life was probably much more clearly present in earlier generations, when children learned housework as well as activities related to their parents’ jobs by observation. For example, if the father was a craftsman or farmer, the boy first assisted him in his work. In the next stage, if it was possible, the son performed simple activities (often together with the parent) and then more and more complex ones. It was the first stage of learning skills that in the future contributed to the young man’s independence and employment. However, nowadays most parents work away from home. The development of civilisation has resulted in jobs that involve highly specialised activities, and therefore not very plausible and accessible to pre-schoolers’ minds. Children understand that parents perform activities that are very important to them, but they have no access to these activities nor possibility of participating in them. This is why, it is good to allow children to observe and assist in everyday activities related to family life. Obviously, our everyday life has also changed. Much housework is currently performed by others as paid services, and if it is done
by family members, it does not usually require excessively complicated skills. So what benefits do children get from observation? By observing adults and through the mechanism of identification, children learn some aspects of adulthood and watch behaviours that they will follow. They can also observe how adults solve problems that appear during creative activities, how they overcome barriers in creativity, i.e. obstacles that prevent them from achieving a creative goal and how adults cope with frustration. Children may also see the natural joy that adults get from creativity. Although children stay passive while watching, they do not perform any activities, but they acquire some knowledge on creative behaviour and form an attitude towards them. When observing a parent who solves a creative problem, children see that creativity is a normal natural generally accessible phenomenon. If parents are creative in their everyday activities, their children become creative in a natural way.

Performing household chores together can be seen as a continuation of observation. Children undertake activity by imitating their parents and cooperating with them. It can be expected that imitation is dominated by reproductive elements. However, if adults undertake creative activity together with their children and do not inhibit their behaviour, it has a beneficial effect on the development of creativity. In addition, when working together, problems which require creative solutions may become evident.

What is a problem? “A problem is a discrepancy between the output state and the desired or imposed target state which cannot be reduced routinely” (Falkowski A. et al. 2010 p. 471). Learned habitual activities will not solve the problem. Therefore, other strategies should be implemented. Solving problems together by family members differs from observation, because children become an active party and co-participate in solving problems or even initiate the process. Obviously, the complexity of a given problem should be adjusted to the cognitive abilities of a pre-school child, e.g. how to find a lost shoe or how to draw a cat. Adults’ role is to help children to solve the problem, and not, if possible, give ready solutions (which is usually the simplest way and also saves time). A good method is to ask them guiding questions. Being in the state of non-solution is connected with a certain emotional tension. Parental role is to help children bear and alleviate this tension through other methods than providing a ready solution which brings the creative process to a halt. A very important element is to treat solving everyday problems together as a thinking game and not as problem-solving. The real goal is to develop children’s creativity and not to solve a problem.
The solution to the problem, although it has an important practical aspect, is only a way to achieve the goal.

It is natural that the creative process (problem solving can be understood as such) involves different emotions, sometimes unpleasant ones, such as frustration caused by lack of success. Inability to solve a problem can be understood as a state of frustration. “The feeling of frustration is caused by the appearance of obstacles on the way to achieving a goal” (Aronson E. et al 1997, p.505). The role of adults is to help children find mature response in this situation, i.e. find a solution or even several solutions and experience success. It is often done by guiding pre-schoolers or reducing their negative emotions. At this stage of development, children are impulsive and emotionally unstable. Therefore, parents must ensure that tasks are adjusted to children’s intellectual abilities and their mental condition on a given day. Too much frustration is not beneficial, as it is not conducive to development. It is good to support and appreciate children’s spontaneous ways of solving problems even if they are imperfect, partial or inadequate.

There are different types of plays: manipulation, construction, thematic (dramatic) and rule plays (Brzezińska A.I., et al. 2010, p. 201). I would like to draw attention to thematic plays. Similarly to rule plays, they occur in the pre-school period. Children play invented roles, they decide who assumes what role, they create situations, playing, for example, home or school. (Brzezińska A.I., et al. 2010, p.201). Children realise that some things happening in a play are not real. The phenomena of metaphorisation and symbolisation which appear are manifestations of creative thinking. The construction play is connected with the desire to obtain a specific product. Constructions can be made by following instructions or own ideas (Brzezińska A.I., et al. 2010, p. 2010). In the latter case, the play has important creative elements. It is also possible that children first reproduce, and later create structures by following own ideas. Drawing is a special form of play in the context of creativity. Children often draw a lot and eagerly. When drawing, or playing a construction and thematic play, their natural creativity is visible. Drawing is also an activity that can be done together.

When playing together, it is a parents’ is to restrain their own activity and resign from imposing their own norms and rules. It is good when a parent playing with the child finds a child in him/herself, i.e. this form of unrestricted spontaneity that occurs in children. However, the parent must be careful not to let the inner child dominate him/her in the play. In other words,
it is not beneficial if the adult enjoys a play much more than the child. When playing, the adult should assist and interact with the child, focusing mainly on the child, i.e. his/her involvement, emotional states, creative problems and dilemmas, barriers to creativity. An extreme example of losing perspective and parental regression while playing with the child is when the adult competes and is genuinely proud of winning (because he/she can build a higher block tower than the child).

Appropriate behaviour is an important element for supporting the children's creative development in the family. On the one hand, activities should be pleasant and interesting both for parents and children. On the other hand, parents should not completely resign from being adults in these activities. Their role is to reduce children’s negative emotions that naturally appear in the creative process, help them overcome barriers in creativity, create an atmosphere conducive to creativity, use appropriate reinforcements, and provide materials for plays. Adults constitute objects of identification for children. It means that children strengthen creative attitudes in themselves not only through adults’ behaviour towards them, but also through the methods parents support the development of their own creativity and treat being creative as a value.

CONCLUSIONS

Creativity is an important area of children’s activity. It energises children's development and has a positive influence on their adaptation to reality. Parents can influence the development of pre-schoolers’ creativity through appropriate activities that can be naturally included into family life. Joint creative activity is associated with positive emotions. Thus, it does not only involve spending time together, but also building positive bonds within the family.

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