Reflective practice at kindergarten – child, teacher and parents

Understanding the reflectiveness – definitions and conceptions

Reflectiveness is a phenomenon fascinating philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and educationalists. Reflection is a kind of theoretical reasoning that is connected with constant consideration, inquiry, analysis of different sides to a problem, and selection of contexts. In literature, it is usually assumed that reflection is deeper wondering, analyzing something, thinking over an idea. Reflectiveness may also be understood as searching for the sense, i.e. the value and meaning. It includes continual consideration of acting within the light of the new knowledge and the assumptions made, makes it possible to modify the actions, and is coupled with openness, responsibility and individual initiative.

One of the precursors of psychological basis for reflectiveness/non-reflectiveness problems, E. Langer (1993: 139), assuming that reflectiveness may be described as creation (noticing) numerous perspectives or becoming conscious of the context, states that reflectiveness is activated when situation requires high effort, when factors do not allow for non-reflective sequence and consequences of behaviour are contradictory enough to the previous experiences. Langer (1993: 149) couples reflectiveness with having inner locus of control, with tendency to taking risk and adaptation to unforeseen situations as well as with pro-health attitude or even longevity, and states that reflectiveness evokes sensitivity to contexts, while non-reflectiveness results in submission to contexts. The process of reflection is conceptualization and articulation of wondering (Czerepaniak-Walczak 1997: 11), and consciousness of reality ambiguity. That is why the basic
factor of reflective thinking is “remaining in the state of doubt and avoiding premature drawing conclusions while continuing systematic research” (Woronowicz 2003: 14). Reflective thinking is thus continuous thinking with defined sequence, based on rules of outcomes, active and attentive consideration of particular judgement or knowledge within the light of arguments, conclusion basis, often requiring suspending of judgement for the time of investigation.

Reflection that includes constant consideration of one’s own action within the light of new knowledge and assumptions made, with possible modification of operations, is connected with openness, responsibility and activity. Usually, it is identified with the way of thinking, but J. Dewey (1988) mentions reflective activity being the opposition of routine and automotive acting, which have their roots in traditional, fundamental or non-democratic systems. Similarly, self-reflection is also considered in two aspects: a) reflection connected with subjective conditions that makes the knowledge possible, and b) reflection understood as freeing the individuals from the hidden restrictions. Close to reflectiveness is the term of emancipation potential, seen as the subject effectiveness for critical recognition of one’s own restrictions and for their conscious crossing (Witkowski 1990). Hence, self-reflectiveness is systematic, every-day examining of one’s own practice, containing consideration of one’s own development (intellectual and emotional) and strategies used, subjecting to doubts personal assumptions and testing them in practice.

Basing on conducted research, Hatton and Smith (1994) distinguish three levels of reflections present in the subject literature: technical, practical and critical (which is also defined by some researchers as constructive criticism). In the opinion of F. Down (1995), reflection contains four levels: description (analysis of actual behaviour, judgements and opinions), searching for the meaning (finding the value), confrontation (looking for social, political and cultural context) and re-construction (considering the alternative solutions). The analysis of this conception is illustrated in Fig. 1.
The process of reflection is described slightly differently by R.J. Sternberg, L. Jarvin and E.L. Grigorienko (2009), who couple reflectiveness with abilities connected with wisdom (wisdom-based skills). It includes thinking, being the form of thinking of an individual’s own functioning, judging and acting. In the authors’ opinion “wise” decisions require reflective thinking – selection of meta-cognitive strategies, checking how the applied strategy works, and having an idea how to change it when it does not succeed in practice. Questions supporting reflective thinking understood in this way refer to individual experiences, beliefs, opinions, judgments and pre-assumptions. Such form of reflectiveness is also connected with the ability of imagination and creative invention. Another type of abilities coupled with such understanding of wisdom is dialogical thinking, which takes into account different points of reference and numerous perspectives in order to reach the best solution. The third process activated while reflecting is thinking of dialectic type, in which the effort is made to join and integrate contradictory points of view, to reach the consensus, to make synthesis of different references. Quite similarly, M.E. Gorman and J.A. Plucker (2003: 276) name the aspect of reflectiveness as the “process of intra-personal criticism” while the “process of inter-personal criticism” is connected with the reflection over the individual’s abilities and knowledge, and by that is frequently joined with the social context. J.-C. Kaufmann (2004: 179) proposes the model of “dialectic square”, for which the corners are:
individual reflectiveness, individual habits legacy, social reflectiveness and socialization frames.

J. Habermas (in: Nowicka 2009) popularized three types of reflection: empirical, interpretative and critical, relating to three types of rationality – technical, practical and emancipative. Basing on J. Habermas’s views, Max van Manen (in: Dylak 1996) worked out a hierarchic system of reflectiveness levels in teachers’ practice, describing the following reflection types: 1) technical – where mainly efficiency and effectiveness of means applied for reaching the particular goals are analyzed, and which themselves are not subject to critic or change; 2) practical – including examining not only the means, but also aims and their assumptions, as well as the actual results of actions; reflection of such type contains linguistic analysis and negotiation of meanings; 3) critical – where, beside the already mentioned, moral and ethic criteria of activities taken are included. Analysis is here settled in a wide historical, social, political and cultural context. Continuing such a general approach, J.R. Ward and S.S. McCotter (2004) distinguish four types of reflection: normal, technical, dialogical and transformative, while J.K. Jay and K.L. Johnson (2002) propose three different types – descriptive, comparative and critical. Reflectiveness is also supported by actions in social-constructivist practice paradigm. In the programme for mastering students’ reflective competencies, B.D. Gołębiak (1999) described three reflection types: monitoring, estimating and evaluative, while D. Klus-Stańska (2004b: 31–32) distinguishes interpretative, critical, self-creative and projective reflections.

In conclusion, it should be noticed that reflection includes two different meanings: the first one is connected with thinking over the world of things, actions and problems, while the second one, according to K. Illeris (2006), is coupled with “mirroring” – the experiences and understanding are reflected into “the self” (identity) of the person learning (such understanding is often defined as a feature of reflectiveness or self-reflectiveness). W. Woronowicz (2006: 158, 160) states that “ability to reflect guarantees the person most of all the individual freedom to choose both the values and their concerns in life practice. Reflection allows for certainty that neither values nor their inner hierarchy in the consciousness are imposed in any way, and we follow them owing to the ability to differentiate what is important and valuable, and owing to our free will. Reflection allows not only for inner analysis of mind rightness, but also...
for thinking over if and to what extent we are driven by emotions, features of our personality and will”. If we decide to accept this thesis, we may conclude that reflection is the attribute of mature personality. One should then think about factors supporting development of reflectiveness already in the practice of kindergarten/pre-school education. The following sections of this paper are devoted to the presentation of chances and possibilities of this process, as well as barriers and restraints in the context of the bringing-up process with three subjects.

Teacher’s reflective practice – possibilities and restraints

The basis for reflectiveness is searching openness (Bloom 1997), which serves looking for knowledge and certainty, connected with discovering the basis for individual knowledge. A. Giddens (2002: 29) ascribes an important role to “reflexivity” and “the reflexive project of the self” of individuals, and recognizes that “Modernity’s reflexivity refers to the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge”. Philosophy of reflectiveness described in the previous section also reflects the conviction that there exists a wide spectrum of factors and influences which, when treated in a holistic manner, may result in the development of teacher’s reflective practice. As noticed by S. Dylak (1996), reflectiveness, both in a teacher’s activity context and with regard to education, is the compulsory paradigm of the modern pedagogical writings. The conception of reflective practice consists in the application, in a teacher’s work, of the ability of critical reflection and deliberation not only to the teacher’s own behaviour, but also to the multi-dimensional context in which it occurs. In the case of school, reflection may also concern the pupils (looking for the sense of pupil’s own activity and presence in school – understood by S. Dylak (2009) as the basic dimension of engagement into the process of self-education). Children’s self-reflection at school may take on the dimension of consciousness as to the goal of an activity, the realization what they may learn as the result of actions taken, awareness of the criteria of evaluation of particular actions, and of the means taken as their consequences. In reference to pre-school practice, self-reflection is often connected with the teacher’s activity. It
may contain the reflection over the teacher’s own knowledge, abilities or attitudes towards the conception of teaching, planning and evaluation. The concept of the teacher as a reflective researcher of his own experience and educational practice is presented most completely in the works by Carr and Kemis, Pollard, and in the “reflective practitioner” concept by Schon. Carr and Kemis (1986) assume that the subjects of reflection may be frustrations, restraints and pressures; habits, routines, dogmas, ideologies, prejudices, pre-assumptions connected with behaviours; interpretations and judgements constituting cognitive level that may be the subject of reflection.

Reflective teaching and educating of teachers as reflective practitioners are categories mostly connected with D. Schön (1986); the works of this author according to S. Dylak (1996) are the synthesis of “reflection over reflection”. Most frequently, reflection is understood as searching for solutions that can be met while doing practical actions and while solving problems by the teacher, connected with the analysis and estimation of action conditions and their consequences. With regard to teacher’s practice, reflection takes place in connection with a particular activity and is oriented onto solution of actual problems (Dylak 1996). Category of reflective practical experience (Pearson 1994) thus contains the situation when teacher faces the necessity of modification or change of the intended actions due to his own beliefs. S. Dylak (1996) states that many authors who undertake the critical analysis of “reflective practitioner” refer to the term of self-determination created by J. Habermas, defining reflection as the process of realizing the sociological and ideological context of restraints, previously treated as determined, and taking control over this influence. But reflective pedagogy is a conception connected with three types of reflective knowledge: about the language, about the myths, and poetic knowledge (Krüger 2000), and in creating the knowledge on education it uses critical educational research. The attitude of a reflective practitioner is perfectly characterized by M. Czerepaniak-Walczak (1997: 94): “reflective practitioner constantly and systematically decodes and creates the meanings of the facts and events. It requires courage and readiness to take responsibility for the results of such decoded and created meanings. Vast and constantly increasing general knowledge supported by its common accessibility places reflective practitioner against the necessity to make choices of information sources and critical interpretation.
of newly presented facts and phenomena. It also requires the necessity to actualize one’s own knowledge and beliefs”. Reflection in action plays a critical role, leading to formulation of questions as to the structure of assumptions, and being the foundation for particular activity in reference to the thinking method that led to it (Day 2004). Going beyond automatisms or spontaneity is named by D. Schön as “reflection within the action”. The opposite of reflective practice is technical rationality, defining knowledge as specialized, standardized, scientific and within the particular domain.

Reflective practice coupled with “reflection within the action” assumes the social attitude of a teacher who takes information from self-reflection and from pedagogic and psychological knowledge, and who develops by co-operation and dialogue with the colleagues. Critical reflection shows the influence of ideology and power on the learning process. On the part of the teacher, it is making sense of one’s own functioning at school (teacher’s ideologies) and understanding the sense of the knowledge presented – its social, ideological and individual (practical) roots and reference. In the case of teacher’s self-reflection, what becomes important is the dimension of self-evaluation of one’s own professionalism, taking into account the judgements of oneself, but also reflecting the social expectations of the role of a teacher (a guardian of values, tradition transmitter, cognitive and moral authority). V. Švec (2000) presents the components of professional teacher’s self-reflection understood as a type of inner dialogue, including thinking over the social changes and their reflections in education.

Following J. Dewey, A. Pollard (1998) presents the features of reflective teaching. Continuing his ideas, M. Czerepaniak (1997: 20–23) distinguishes the following premises motivating teachers’ reflectiveness: 1) changes in relations between social life and education – “a reflective practitioner faces the necessity of making it possible to get access to information and to use it critically, instead of getting the knowledge of facts and having the ability to use it” (p. 21); 2) popularization of the alternative theories and educational movements and the multiplicity of human being concepts and conditions of development; 3) tendency to limit central administration of education – teachers by themselves make choices being the basis for pupils’ development – “knowledge independently discovered and constantly verified” (p. 22); 4) expectations and vision of the professional role in the contemporary society; 5) responsibility for the results of work with the pupils and parents; 6) view of the pupil and his
place within the education and the bringing-up process. M. Czerępianiak (1995: 141) convinces that we can speak of two types of reflectiveness: manifested and potential. Observation of the school’s every-day practice rather seldom proves the presence of both these reflection types in teachers’ work. Thus it seems to be a matter of great importance to pay attention to the sources of this situation. The causes of barriers may be found in external conditions in which teachers function, as well as in subjective predispositions and limitations resulting from the faulty selection and education process of future teachers. From this perspective, the lack of reflection may be explained as an insufficient number of cognitive schemes, cognitive non-competency barriers (under-evaluation), fear of novelty and unclear situations, the feeling of obviousness of knowledge and application of non-flexible and simplified cognitive heuristics in the reality interpretation. Other barriers that restrain teachers’ possibility of reflective analysis of one’s own practice are (Dylak 2000): ideology of the type “it does not apply to me” – avoiding and denying the difficult situations; ideology of the only proper method and of correctness; lack of time, patience and inquisitiveness with the related non-reflective acceptance of authorities; the so-called Horatio dilemma, when teachers underline and exaggerate objective difficulties piling up on the way to the realization of the goal; ideology of quantitative approach to teacher’s thinking, resulting from the faith in the importance of practice and routine despite the level of critical reflection and intelligence. It should be noticed that teachers more affirmatively treat practical realization and execution tasks than interpretation, as well as most frequently understand their duties as transmitting information and bringing up through persuasive or directive arguments and rules. The aforementioned beliefs and stereotypes of teachers can play a role of regulators of their attitudes towards reflectiveness and criticism. Amongst theoretical propositions forming the contemporary Polish analysis of this problem, we should note the recently formulated postulates of D. Klus-Stańska and J. Kruk (2009) on reflective designing of learning environment instead of traditional – according to the authors – inert methods of creating and interpreting school activities.
Reflective child at pre-school – chance or barrier for education

Numerous researchers point to the fact that children indicate higher cognitive abilities than assumed by classical Piaget researches. Accepting this perspective, it may be assumed that the process of gaining reflectiveness starts early – even 4- or 5-year-old children ask questions aiming at understanding the reality. It becomes an imperative here to reach for the truth, determine cognitive choices and activate children’s curiosity at the period of medium childhood. A child expresses autonomy and independence – in an unstoppable manner voices objection, asks questions, explores, and creatively experiments. But a child lacks in cognitive instruments, especially in logical and analytical abilities to conduct constructive/fair criticism and reflection. In a child’s behaviour and thinking egocentricity dominates, manifested by the inability or reluctance to see the others’ points of view, and by rejecting ideas that are incompatible. In extreme cases, it may be a desire to have 100% right, and a strong conviction that everybody else is completely wrong; it may also be the lack of self-consciousness of thinking processes. For example, E. Martens (1996a, b), in many of his publications, presents the arguments for children being able to carry out philosophical reflection, and states that children ask free, inquisitive and even difficult questions. The author also points to the importance of activities starting from quiz questions, Aristotelic wondering, and asking questions or stating “I do not know” that may enrich the process of natural wondering of children (Martens 1996b). Hence, we should admit the conviction of educators and psychologists who, as J. Bruner, think that children are capable of understanding complicated intellectual activities under the condition of appropriate didactic influence.

In the opinion of W. Woronowicz (2006: 19), the aim of reflective education is bringing up a reflective human being, accustomed to “deep consideration before making decision or activity, especially those having morally ambiguous features, according to high values system accepted in the society”. Within the years 2001–2003, the author carried out two experiments proving that in children of medium childhood it is possible to form reflectiveness. In the conducted undertakings, W. Woronowicz (2006: 20–22) pointed the importance of implementing the following principles of reflective education by teachers of pre-school education:
1. A child is a free individual (hence it is not allowed to impose upon the children a particular way of thinking or ideology – they should have a chance to form their judgements by themselves);

2. A child constitutes the subject of education (children ought to be supported, not controlled);

3. Relationship between the teacher and children ought to be characterized by partnership (the teacher should not use categorical commands or non-disputable directives);

4. Communication between the teacher and children is carried out by educational dialogue (the teacher stimulates questions and does not demand answers);

5. Education is associated with consequent getting used to reflection.

The basis for reflective education is focusing on one’s own emotions, thoughts and states (emotional self-consciousness, control over emotions, productive use of emotions, decoding the emotions). Hence, for children the most important stimulators for thoughts development are: curiosity, the act of examination, searching for facts confirmation or rejection, as well as contradictory or difficult feeling and postponing the judgement. Children’s features of reflective thinking are distinguished by states of embarrassment, concern, uncertainty, or doubt. That is why during activities at pre-school age it is possible and it is really worthwhile to consider particular subjects, look for evidence, confirm it or point out its senselessness.

Similar conclusions are formulated by B. Curtis (1996) while presenting the effects of realization of the one-year course programme “Philosophy for children”. In all groups subjected to the programme, progress was noticed within the following domains: focusing attention (children with engagement took part in discussions lasting 30–40 minutes); showing respect for the inquiry process (children fluently changed the subjects from thoughtless and humorous statements to serious discussions); thoroughly identifying the major ideas of texts; expressing opinions in discussions; understanding philosophical issues (gradually grasping the subtleties of thinking and meaning); giving individual answers (taking responsibility for their own judgements and opinions); formulating original statements (change from imitative answers to original ones); giving justifications; co-operation of thoughts – referring to others’ thoughts (in the process, starting from creation of statements describing children’s own individual experiences, to adding those statements to others’ expressions – formulating
opinions on the general level); sensing what is philosophical (children indicated “philosophical sense” – they were interested when important ideas or meanings were analyzed); holding on to the subject (children tried to maintain the selected direction of discussion); discovering what is important and being satisfied with understanding; taking a stance (children could take a stance and defend it); criticism (usually in the form of counter-example, but also in the polite form, without hostility); defending the opinion (replying to criticism); proving advantages of the view-point (but also noticing its weak points); attitude towards criticism (children could back out from the position they stood at and give the right to others’ opinions); communicating with other children (even if in the beginning they addressed each other through the teacher); and at the end of the experiment, the elements of continuing the autonomic discussion were even observed – which was performed by children independently. During such activities, children were satisfied with self-creation, but only when they noticed the teacher’s real interest and confidence in their competencies and abilities.

A.J. Starko (2005) also proposes numerous strategies aiming to support children’s ability to ask questions, and assumes that the basic factor is to create climate in which children could feel comfortable (especially when through questions they report lack of understanding – they should not be afraid of punishment and negative evaluation, and these questions should not be ignored). The climate of freedom supports asking critical and creative questions. Another method of supporting questions is change in the form of their formulation. A.J. Starko (2005: 344) proposes the change of the phrase “I do not understand” into “I wonder”. This author describes five strategies (Starko 2005: 345–346) that may encourage children to asking productive questions: 1) paying attention to differences between asking open and closed questions – creating such situations in which children notice that even the teacher does not know the answer to the question; 2) attributing surprise, curiosity to the problems under consideration, teaching children engagement and appropriate attitude towards knowledge (using comments like “is it not interesting that...?”); 3) creating visual activities that popularize importance of questions, revealing the reasons explaining why asking questions is important in particular professions; 4) treating children’s questions with attention and respect; 5) independent deep examination of particular domains. Questions stimulating reflective
thinking, formulated during activities, may be aimed at: explanation, specifying the details (“could you be more specific? could you give more details? could you be more accurate?”), determination of connections and coherency (“how is it connected with the problem at issue? how does this describe the problem?”), estimation of accuracy and reliability of knowledge basis (“how do we know that it is true?”) and examination of the problem from different perspectives (overcoming the children’s egocentricity). Similarly, N. Postman (2001: 174) defines five different proposals how to teach children the art of asking questions, logical thinking, rhetoric and grammar in such a manner that it could help forming reflective thinking and coping with propaganda and information noise, shaping such a view of the world that includes not only declarative knowledge (facts). Strategies of development and support of critical thinking may rely on: searching for the questions, clarification, explaining or describing with one’s own words the definitions of ideas and meanings, formulating predictions, comparing, stimulating discussions, collecting arguments. Such activities should use texts specially selected and adapted for children’s knowledge and intellectual level – philosophical tales or social problem texts that may confront children with values. Activities stimulating reflectiveness should also make it possible to experiment freely, take risk or look for different solutions to the problem.

But the effect of intellectually and methodologically poor education as well as the lack of selection for teacher’s profession is the situation when teachers feel endangered meeting children whose intellectual abilities are different (or even higher) then their own. Also quite frequently, teachers’ reflection is limited only to the analysis whether children’s behaviour or question constitutes a breach of discipline or a symptom of different (faulty) view of the reality. Another barrier in supporting children’s reflectiveness is the fact that education often enforces on children the acceptation of defined, traditional behaviour patterns, and they quickly resign from the resistance and with no objection follow the provided examples. Then a child, instead of questioning, is taught how to accept, and instead of thinking – repeats with no reflection. Another barrier that often appears is the lack of respect for individuality – promoting the children that are “polite”, “well-behaved”, but without initiative and predictable. This is confirmed by the research on teachers conducted by M. Węglińska (1989) and R. Wiechnik (1999), from which it may be concluded that teachers are mainly focused on the work
with average children. In the hierarchy of pupils’ perfection, disciplined pupils are located higher than original and creatively thinking individuals. A child displaying non-stereotypical thinking, asking questions, is often treated as trouble, breaks the fixed course of activities or statement, attracts attention, and occupies the time intended for other children. Evaluation of teacher’s work is also formulated on the basis of the average, standard abilities acquired by children and is very seldom connected with the effects in the form of development of creativity, reflectiveness or criticism. Little attention is paid to the achievements of single pupils, especially when they refer to unconventional domains and fields of interests, not covered by the programme basis for the defined level of education.

Reflective parents – out of concern for children subjectivity and autonomy development

Development of children’s reflectiveness depends on their potential and motivation, but also, to a great extent, on environmental resources and the closest surroundings’ activities. Adult persons, introducing a child into the world, mark the first traces for intellectual wandering. This problem is well characterized by B. Muchacka (2007: 10) who states: “An adult should help children to discover the principle of order, to be able to appropriately structuralise the knowledge of the world and of themselves”. An important sphere for stimulating or inhibiting the natural children questioning, creativity and reflectiveness is thus the family. A determinant factor is parents’ attitude towards reflectiveness, whether they support children or stop them, whether they take an active role in the kindergarten, in local surroundings, in culture.

Some researchers, for example E. Landau (2003: 159), underline the meaning of emotional and motivational factors of relations between the child and the family, which release the courage to accept the child’s own abilities and feeling of efficiency (“I can”), as well as the motivation for inner development and surrounding exploration (“I want”). Adults, thanks to providing the intellectual patterns, encourage children to take responsibility for their own thinking, thus supporting children’s independence in constructing the knowledge. Hence, M. Lippman (1996) postulates that in contact with children parents not only pay special attention
to what is known and what others invented, but most of all encourage to independent experimentation and formulating judgements.

Discussing the importance of family relationship supporting creativity, G. Mendecka (2003: 93) notices that the most optimal conditions are formed by coherency and high adaptability of the family, which offers a possibility for individual development by allowing for autonomy and introducing the elements of order connected with co-existence and confrontation of different points of view. Also G. Lewis (1994) stresses the significance of parents’ mobilizing the perseverance, freedom in thinking and activities, as well as developing independency adjusted to the child’s age.

It is recommended that children should adopt habits of appreciation and respect for their own ideas by adults’ reflective activities, and express courage in undertaking and solving difficult tasks. Parents ought to support kindergarten in stimulating intellectual anxiety, encouraging to take cognitive risk, to be attentive and critical towards authorities and experts, in developing children’s constructive/fair criticism as well as in creating chances for being independent. Only the parents who are examples of being tolerant of new ideas can teach tolerance, providing the climate of safety based on trust and minimization of fear in social contacts (Czaja-Chudyba 2008).

In effective help in constituting the reflective attitude of children, dedication of sufficient time plays an important role. Owing to being together, plays and conversations, parents have a possibility to observe their children and to diagnose their abilities (Smółka 2010). Family is a place for natural situations, in which children in an unhindered manner may express the upper limits of their abilities. In such understanding, parents’ reflection should also refer to children’s abilities level, their motivation and attitudes, and personality development. Yet it should be kept in mind that numerous practitioners (Czaja-Chudyba 2009) emphasise that children’s evaluation made by parents may be completed, but sometimes not necessarily objective. And the other way round, also quite often family environment becomes the source of barriers and limitations for children’s reflectiveness. The basic negative factor for building mental obedience is children’s dependence on the adults. From the early years, children’s sources of information are restricted and controlled – children, by having constant contact with the parents, unconsciously adapt the habit of being influenced, and in searching for identification feel the need of following the parents’
way of acting. Children’s wondering in everyday natural situations may activate imagination and fantasy, may be the factor intensifying actions and may create conditions for the complete development of personality, but also may be stopped by quick and unpremeditated answers or signs of disapproval and impatience. Adults frequently interpret children’s questions as requests for immediate answer, while they may be caused by the need of a common riddle solutions. Very often adults treat the questions as a threat to their status and educational habits. Barriers are manifested also through stiff noticing of family situations, through the lack of reactions for novelty, action done according to schemes, fixed rules, low cognitive aspirations, conventional social expectations (“how can reflectiveness be useful in my life?”), insufficient cognitive pre-dispositions and lack of engagement.

Research by B. Bloom (Eby and Smutny 1998) indicates, however, that carers of children who succeeded in their future life devoted them a lot of time, energy and funds to support their abilities, trainings and career. They recognized the children’s achievements as a value, appreciated them and encouraged children to work and exercise, often spending a lot of money on them. Similarly, outstanding scientists in their biographies describing the beginnings of their careers (Brockman 2007) point out the importance of intellectual and emotional encouragement they received at home.

Conclusions

Generally, dominant in the analysis of reflective education is the pressure on cognitive and affective aspects of learning and on meta-cognitive processes. At this point, within the scope of understanding the reflective teaching, consensus ends. It is quite well understood in the context of shifting from the culture of certainty to the culture of uncertainty (Hargreaves 1993: 98), unlimited process of information spread, dimensional and time information compression (Muchacki 2006), multi-cultural migrations as well as acceptation of individual’s autonomy (Hargreaves 1993: 101). A statement representative of this trend of thinking over the present may be the formulation by W. Dróżka (2005: 25): “Reflectiveness of modernity refers to the principle of methodological doubt, around which the new epoch develops. According to this principle, almost every human activity is constantly subjected to revision due to
newly received information or knowledge acquired. [...] The knowledge is impermanent, highly problematic and does not provide the feeling of certainty”. This short analysis of contemporary changes in pre-school education indicates both positive tendencies – numerous educational projects underlying the importance of reflectiveness (for teachers and for children); tendencies in pre-school education pointing to the significance of cognitive independence, reflectiveness and creativity of children as well as the necessity to diagnose the potential strong and weak sides of children that are included in the *Programme Basis*, – and barriers and difficulties inhibiting the process of stimulation of reflective practice. With regard to the process of education, reflectiveness takes into account most of all the uniqueness of experiences of children, parents and teachers, the importance of problem solving and critical experience analysis, as well as active and independent examination of activities within the constant deliberations and in co-operation with others (Bar 2009). It is not the question of the so-called festive learning – festive reflection (Rutkowiak 2003), but of everyday reflectiveness in a wider meaning, when critical attitude towards the reality becomes the natural (however not easy) attitude towards the world.

References


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