

From cognitive dissonance overcoming to developing creativity

Petya Hr. Georgieva¹, Tatiana Tod. Balkandzhieva²
of Academy of Economics "Dimitar A. Tsenov" – Svishtov¹
postgraduate qualification in pedagogy, University. "A. Kanchev"- Ruse¹
– Student - University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev"²

*"I sometimes think that creativity is matter of recognizing,
or stumbling in non-obvious similarities between things-
like coming up with a fresh metaphor, but in quite a complicated dimension."*

David Mitchell

Annotation: *The present work tries to present possible variants for developing the creative beginning through overcoming the cognitive dissonance. It looks for balance between the traditional pedagogic interaction aiming academic achievements in certain strict framings and achieving creative manifestations. There are accents not on following algorithms and rules but rather on human behaviour in school environment, modeled according to the learner's abilities in order the cognitive dissonance to be overcome.*

KEY WORDS: COGNITIVE DISSONANCE, CREATIVITY

We are piled with rules, norms, requirements, prohibitions, standards in the pedagogic process. The so defined reality does not pay attention to the cognitive dissonance, in the learner's subjective world. The result is not good – lack of motivation (according to some of the authors, the cognitive dissonance is „theory about human motivation“) for studying, dropping off school or in the best case – memorizing not rationalized facts, objective laws without personalized rationalizing.

The great sense of the philosophy of education is not in memorizing but in standardizing. It is in the development of potential creativity through understanding yourself, of your strong sides. For that reason, cognitive dissonance should be overcome. Leon Festinger (Festinger, L., 1954) describes it as feeling for „psychological discomfort, provoked by the combined presence of two thoughts that do not derive from each other. According to him, there is directly proportional dependence between discomfort and the desire for dissonance reduction of both cognitive elements.

Accepting the cognitive dissonance theory, according which people's beliefs change if they act in contradiction with them, we think the activity approach is good base for the goals we set – achieving creativity through cognitive dissonance overcoming.

What a dissonance is meant in this case? The dissonance between the necessity to keep exact steps, rules and standards during the pedagogic interaction and/or individual studying and the wondering, asking itself and making out the world child in each one of us, the desire for insight and a unique manifestation of “the self”. One of the most often seen dissonances is whether to learn the algorithm for solving for example equations or to copy the homework. Another one – shall I follow the steps and to achieve result that would bring me approval or to go beyond the obvious because it is interesting, i.e. to allow myself to think critically? People rather choose the successful alternative because of the illusory success. Illusory, because in life, creators ate the really successful, not the ones who just memorize knowledge. But the learners from the very primary education are persuaded they should not make mistakes and thus they get addicted to confirmations¹. Such consequences have negative social reflection – withdrawal into self, lack of interest, going down to the level of mediocrity in order not to be rejected, occurrence of doubt regarding the own strivings.... Something more – all this is in the base of taking decisions and outlining perspectives before the own self. Despite Matz (Matz, 2008) and other psychologists put a dividing line between the cognitive dissonance influence with extroverts and introverts, nobody denies it upon the various typologies, which defines the actuality of the issue's review.

Adding the docimologic procedures that accompany learning, it becomes clear that cognitive dissonance is a significant factor in learners' life at all ages. Then the question of

can we and how to turn cognitive dissonance into a helper in therapeutic practice and how to do it emerge?

The first step is to stop competing with the others, to allow ourselves being ourselves and doing the things our way, to accept we can make a mistake. And to continue competing but with ourselves. The stages are:

- Rationalizing the goals;
- Knowing ourselves – strong and weak sides;
- Accepting plan and defining concrete practices for changing of mindsets and beliefs;
- Building criteria for self-assessment.
- Creating psychological mindset for grounding and protecting of a point of view;
- Deriving the positive sides of the experience;
- Creating balance in the understanding between the internal and external locus of control.

The next step is associated with:

- Getting acquainted with new information, understanding about its essence regarding change of own beliefs as base for future activities;
- Analysis of our beliefs aiming confirming or rejecting part of them being reason for the dissonance;
- Review of people's statute (authorities and power), with which dissonance and their influence is associated with, as reason for the dissonance occurring, connected with the cognitive sphere; Analysis of the personal characteristics possessed by the ones, who have influence upon us – physical and intellectual, and building strategy for preserving stability, having in mind the own understandings, goals and values;
- Analysis of the tasks, where the dissonance comes from.

In a generalize view, the steps aim improving the understanding about: yourself, the others and the tasks aiming overcoming the dissonance. The means and approaches for practical realization regarding the creativity typology vary in a wide range. The art-therapeutic² means' role is significant. The reasons are:

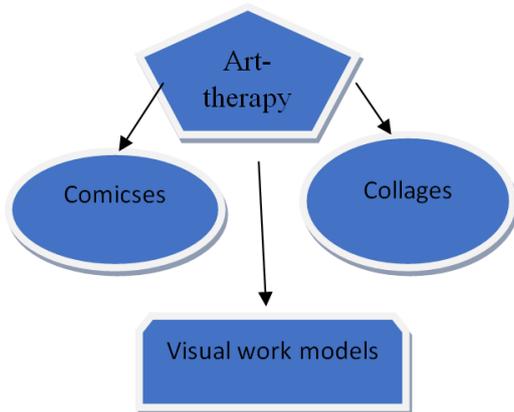
- Proved positive effect on ill people in clinical practice, through improving indicators for the immunity.
- Help reducing anxiety, i.e. deactivate the brain centers that activate also at strong physical pain.

² **Author's note** Art-therapy comes from: „art“ (art) and „therapy“ and as of now, has gained the meaning of „part of medicine that deals with defining the ways for treating the various diseases “. At the same time, it has been introduced as psychological-pedagogical practice.

¹ See the more detailed accepted combination of words „addiction to confirmations“, derived by psychologists

- Visualization through single and massive visual compositions and models.
- The technique suggests individual use of a variety of materials and their combining. This fact, on its own, contains potential for creativity manifestation.
- The specific of the art-therapeutic means broadens communication adding to visual to the speech one.
- The use of art-therapy for improving various components of behaviour (aesthetic, musical, etc.) incites thinking activity to side and alternative thinking.

Interactive model



A productive approach, with possibilities for stressing on creativity through overcoming the cognitive dissonance is the interactive one. In the process of learning through experience, the growing ups deepen their interests because of negative assessing fear dropping off. The work with comicses and collages could be uniting element in the process of the interaction between art-therapy. Considering that according to the French origin of the term „collage“ it is meant: „application, combination of various elements, attaching“ and the essence of the term „comics“ as „type of creativity“ (Wechsler, A., 2011) and the essence of

collage as „Fairy tale of adventure’s story, delivered with series of

pictures and short texts“, it becomes clear that a good directions could take the learners to an emotionally positive way of learning, for achieving creativity, through overcoming the cognitive dissonance. Each of these techniques is to be well chosen and taken into consideration with:

- The age of learners and their experience.
- The possibilities for composite presenting according to the contents.
- The right materials for each single task.

Standing behind the idea for the described possibilities for reaching creativity through overcoming cognitive dissonance, we do not stand that there aren’t any others. Fairy tale therapy could successfully be one of the practices, but it occupies special place in the work with individuals and groups of various age and possibilities, so it deserves special attention. At the same time, it could combine with the pointed means and to be their natural logic extension.

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