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Educational Research in Changing University

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Abstract

The authors of the article analyze the prerequisites, conditions and directions of humanities-based knowledge transformation which provide the implementation of educational innovations in a research university. The first part of the article presents the organizational and implementational principles for innovation-oriented educational research. The principles are based on the comparative analysis of ethnomethodological, conversation and microethnographic approaches. The second part of the article focuses on case study method which can be adapted to the objectives of university's innovative development. Such adaptation allows to specify university's constitutives, forms of its application and parameters for evaluating its effectiveness.

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1. Introduction

Several circumstances have determined becoming of Eastern European universities. Those circumstances have not only changed fundamentally the place and role which educational research occupies in the life of universities but also have raised some questions connected with humanitarian and pedagogic knowledge, the content of the educational process, and the relationship between education and research. The prospects which these universities face – access to global education market, sharp change of information environment, developing competitive practices of corporate education – made the Eastern European universities to search for brand new forms of self-

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determination, unprecedented principles of internal and external relations organization. Such form of self-determination as 'research university' has become an attempt to respond to the mentioned challenges. A research university reconsiders the nature of science in its educational practices, rejects the status of Absolute Observer, supports scientific knowledge transformation into the mechanism of innovative transformation of society and culture, the factor determining the future of communities and the indicator of their modernity. The necessity of new forms of scientific experience poses challenges to the established educational practices. Those practices face the task of self-modification, transforming universities from institutions that conserve and reproduce the experiences approved in non-educational spheres to open systems that function as environments able to generate brand-new knowledge and unprecedented forms of practical participation in ambient life. In other words, education and education sciences face the challenge of innovation from an innovation-oriented society.

The way education will meet this challenge depends directly on the condition of educational knowledge and practices. Being historical and cultural phenomena, educational knowledge and practices themselves are facing the necessity of modernizing their methodologies and pragmatics and revising their innovative potential. In this regard, the main issue raised in this article is to define the key constituves of educational knowledge oriented to innovative development of education. The innovative development of education will be, in our opinion, the heart of the contemporary research university.

To avoid misunderstanding, we want to define the term 'innovation' based on the distinction between 'innovations in education' and 'educational innovations' (Prozumentova, 2007, pp. 6-7). Innovations in education are connected with implementation of various novelties in the educational process (non-educational inventions, e.g. computers and learning software, learning tools, teaching methods). Such novelties optimize the existing pedagogical practice without modifying its essence. Educational innovations signify the re-organization of the education system itself, modifying the orientation and principles of education.

The limited number of pages does not allow us to cover the whole scope of issues and relationships represented by the category 'educational innovations'. In this paper we emphasize the study of learning-oriented verbal interactions in academic student groups in education sciences. Analyzing the contemporary research in this field, we propose the principles and criteria to which the educational theory of interpersonal interaction must correspond if it claims to be innovation-generating. The choice of this type of analysis is based on the assumption that access to micro-level of education processes functioning is the key to managing innovations in education. Such processes must be coherent and synchronized with the changes taking place in a university on the tactical and strategic level.

2. Methodology

The main function of the chosen methods can be described as 'geodesic' – marking. Marking is connected with the idea of spatial perception creating places for future research to put its substantial contribution. The incidental function is regulation. Its aim is to define the rules of conduct on the 'field of play', the procedure of defining is attributed as a rule to logical thinking. Point positioning and norm formation are based on prototypes. First, we draw on microethnographic experience of educational research. Second, we work with case study practices. With its help we specify the considered general outlines for the sought research conduct. Opposing the closely related scholar experiences – ethnomethodology and conversation analysis – we present the outline for humanities-based research program. Such research program, in our opinion, is the most relevant one to the task of providing development of educational innovations.

The constituves of the proposed approach are borrowed from microethnography. The statement of microethnography is that "people …. act in terms of the situation in which they find themselves whilst simultaneously creating that situation" (Bloome, 2004, p. ix). Microethnographic platform is connected with the theory of communication, cultural research, humanistic linguistics, literary science, poetics and particularly with ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. This approach is oriented to the study of linguistic and social interaction. It is based on the assumption all that people perform in interpersonal interaction is complicated, ambiguous, indefinite in many aspects and deals with the issues of social identity, power, broad social and cultural processes. Moreover, social and cultural phenomena 'live' and change in microcommunication and "every [communicative] event provides opportunities for people to create new meanings, new social relationships and new futures" (Bloome, 2004, p. xvi).

The privileged sphere of microethnographic interest is *educational routine*. The researchers working in this sphere express their interest in discourse (the use of language) of professors and students, codes of scholarly texts, communication between parents and teachers. Language is both the object of study and the means of learning and at the same time it is the tool of pedagogical manipulation (reading and writing). It also acts as the means of research. Microethnographers insist on the concept that language is not simply a 'transparent' vehicle of information transfer. Any use of language (spoken, written, electronic) involves a complex of social, cultural, political, cognitive and linguistic processes and contexts. It is believed that in conversation, reading and writing one both reflects and constructs one's own identity. In the complicated educational communication semiosis, the participants of communication are "establishing social groups and ways of interacting with others; gaining and maintaining status and social positions and acquiring culturally appropriate ways of thinking, problem solving, valuing and feeling" (Bloome, 2004, p. xvii).

The peculiarity of microethnographic vision is in its specific setting object-based reality with two most distinct cartographical methods – *scaling* and situativation. The first method – scaling – defines dimension of the analysis. In microethnography it coincides with molarity of an analytical object. Microethnographers are not interested much in macrosocial processes and relations but rather in the way such processes and relations are expressed in the acts of interpersonal communication. Those processes and relations can be discovered only in the acts as microethnographers believe. Molar level of research suggests re-scaling, optical conversion of the habit to consider educational phenomena in strategic, methodical and subject-concentrated terms. As P. Ricoeur (2009, p. 212) wrote about re-scaling, "One does not see the same things as larger or smaller …. One sees different things. … There are different concatenations of configuration and causality". Microethnographic optics as well as 'research ocular' of a conversation analyst or ethnomethodologist are focused on the illocutionary force of utterances, their cohesion created by context dependence interacting. We associate ourselves with H. Sacks (1963) in his critics of sociological setting that the language people use constitutes description of their another form of conduct. We also share ethnomethodological prerequisites connected with indexicality[1] of meanings, their cohesion with a) the relevant context, b) practical action (Garfinkel, 2005). The one who sticks to the microethnographic approach is not oriented much to identification of the peculiarities of a communication moment as the analytical pragmatics but rather to creation of actual and potential events. Event opposes automatic routine, standards and nomatic homogeneity. Concentration on event is the key methodologic imperative of D. Bloome.

In other words, the followers of conversation analysis and ethnomethodological approach with their vision of reality on microlevel perform scaling of reality with 'prosaic' optics. And a microethnographer uses the research apparatus and language mostly 'poetically'. Prosaic setting in the approaches which are cognate with microethnography is not coincident. That prosaic setting stems from the objective to determine "what genuinely exists". Poetic focus is intended with not 'what actually exists' but 'what should exist'. In this way it directly expresses the pedagogical interest.

Functional definition of poetic scholar attitude has its origin in the works of Kenneth Gergen (2000). We share his vision of poetic setting and we express it in the following statements:

1. Poetic attitude breaks the routine order. Sign (word, image, gesture) intrudes the current sequence of routine meanings, uncover the dimensions of understanding, judgment and action which were not noticed before.
2. Poetic attitude gives access to creative imagination, imagination which produces new fields of meanings, wishes and represents the reality in a new different way.
3. Poetic attitude has its aesthetic integrity and provokes the feeling of ascent, harmony, symmetry and inner rhythm.

Thus, three dimensions of poetic attitude by Gergen are catalyst dimension, imaginative and aesthetic ones. They can be the main distinctive feature of poetic discourse.

[1] The term 'indexicality' was used by Garfinkel (2005) to separate a series of utterances dependent from actual pragmatic context from the 'objective' decontextualized utterances. The denotation of 'indexical' expressions depends on the situation they are used in and "is relative to the speaker. Their use depends upon the relation of the user to the object with which the word is concerned. Time for a temporal indexical expression is relevant to what it names".

We take the distinctive grounds for set the boundary (even a transparent one) between ethnomethodology and conversation analysis on the one hand and microethnography (the approach we side with) on the other hand for educational semiosis. We see that distinction as "the distinction between old language and new language rather than in terms of a distinction between words which latch on to the world and those which do not" (Rorty, 1989, p. 28). The 'prosaic' language of ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts tend to the definitions connected with correspondent truth and extralinguistic (though tightly connected with language) reality. The 'poetic' language of microethnographers is connected with individual methodology, 'grasping' certain communication facts from routine and amplifying those facts, turning them into visible life-purpose events.

The second methodological procedure is *situativation*. It is related to apologia of present, limitation for cultural and historical predicates' functioning, increasing the value of the event occurring 'here and now'. In regard to the mentioned limitation one can mention Saussure's (2006, p. 151) anti-historicism: "In a game of chess any given position has the peculiar characteristic of being totally free of antecedents; to put it another way it is not 'more or less' indifferent, but *completely indifferent* to the way that the position was arrived at; hence a person who has watched the game from the very start, has not the slightest advantage over someone who, yielding to curiosity, peruses the game at a critical moment. Further, no one would dream of describing a position with a mixture of what *is* and what *has been* even ten seconds previously".

The procedure of *situativation* puts forward definitions of situations determined and re-determined (verbally and behaviourally) by situation participants themselves. In regard to determining situation, one should specify one thing. The objective of determining is to overcome intellectualism stemming from famous Thomas (1967) theorem. According to the theorem, if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences. Meanwhile, this seeming to be true theorem contains one uncertainty when it comes to the interpretation of 'define'. For Thomas, to define is an entirely cognitive act, verbally laden determined with understanding various elements of a situation. However, we want to emphasize one more means of situational definition – determination through action. Microethnographers regard this means as contextualization cues which reports to others a particular version of a situation. Contextualization cues are determined by situations in which people interact with each other, they must do so in ways that their 'intentions' can be understood by others in the event (Bloome, 2004). For instance, a professor standing at a lectern gives a cue to students that a lecture will begin soon. Students, in turn, adopt the pose correct for the situation, open their copybooks, take their pens. Thus, in the interaction between the people in the event an educational situation is constructed. "Unlike words which can be discussed out of context, the meanings of contextualization cues are implicit" (Bloome, 2004, p. 131).

The procedure of *situativation* means using some particular techniques which keep a researcher within the limits of a situation. Adele Clarke (2005), the researcher working with situational analysis, directly defines those techniques naming among them 'thick analysis' and 'thick description'. Among the theoretic tools used to locate an analytical situation A. Clarke offers to use the category of *situated knowledge*. This kind of knowledge in comparison with ethnomethodological indexical meaning includes not only actions of the actors whom a researcher studies – students and professors – but also the statement that the actual situation is created by interaction participants as well as the researcher. The last circumstance problematize the setting existing in classical humanities that conditions, processes and research data must be reproducible.

Let us draw interim conclusions. The approach we have just started to construct implies realization of three interconnected statements.

The first statement can be labeled 'ontological' in terms of 'reality setting'. We consider education as exclusively discursive construction which includes meaningful actions, movements, non-personal conditions as well as the activity of a researcher participating in educational semiogenesis.

The second statement is connected with theory of knowledge. It orients a researcher towards the poetic realization of the research attitude. Poetic realization, in its turn, means priority of experiment over conceptual decisions.

The third statement concerns the technique of analysis and corresponds not only with manipulation in the field of education discourse but also with the study of communication means (oral speech, texts, electronic images) for research procedures organization.

3. Praxeology

The part that concerns organization of pedagogical process within the presented approach is connected with microethnographic imperative – 'concentration on event'. The imperative is expressed in realization of the following two aspects of an event. The first aspect concerns quantification of the studied material. The researcher focuses on not all the amount of data accessible but only some fragments of data. The selection of data corresponds with the scope of research topic, in our case it is changes in education. For instance, analyzing transcripts of a discussion, a conversation analyst works within the whole field of conversation, summarizing the data as transituational regularities – 'structures of everyday conversations' (Rancew-Sikora, 2007). However, a researcher-microethngrapher observes initially all the materials, then marks exclusively innovative moments or the factors which prevent such moments appearing. A researcher sticking to microethnographic approach will tend to locate and make unique the conclusions. Microethnographer judges from the statement that all the intellectual points of the material are not identical to the physical structure of the material. Such intellectual points are not derived from communication participants' subjective prerequisitions but are connected with historical and cultural topology. Thus, a researchers' objective is to make those objects visible. According to microethnographers, the objective of social research is to individuate the analyzed events (Bloome, 2004). The elements marked in analysis are event opportunities.

The second aspect is connected with the way interactive education community functions. The peculiarity of interaction among students of an academic group is as usual collaborative and at the same time individual nature of such interaction. In E. Durkheim's sociology such community is named 'mechanical' (Durkheim, 2014). Mechanical entities have atomic, relatively stable positions of its members, have no aggregation effect. System characteristic of education communication means that education communication is turning from 'mechanical' to 'organic' (Durkheim, 2014). The key characteristic of 'organic' entity is its system condition, high level of interdependence of positions involved in communication, transformation of a student group into a 'mutually enabling' community (Shotter, 2000). A new education community appearing is a sign of educational event.

Orientation towards implementation of educational event strategy demonstrates heavy deficiency of the established research methods. Such deficiency comes from the situation in which nomothetic methodology connected with positivist values, search for non-situational entities and implementation of stable categorical systems took overall priority in study of relations in education. Such type of scholar research uses methaphors for its self-constructing and its reflexive structures which evaluate research effectiveness appeals to tools of standartization and unification. The mentioned scholar research brings all the empirical material to 'a common denominator'. Meanwhile singular events such as educational innovations appearing are out of research optics, they are regarded as meaningless statistic data. Nomothetic strategies in education research can be attributed the following motto, "Let's reach unity in variety!".

As we mentioned before, study of conditions in which educational innovative experience appears reveals that application of the established educational research practices is rather limited. In this situation the researchers direct their attention to the resources of qualitative idiographic methodologies. Such methodologies are oriented to study of contingent, unique, and subjective phenomena in education relations. Researchers also pay attention to the techniques which are able to initiate innovative processes.

R. Schulz (2003) discussing the situation in modern pedagogical knowledge proposes to consider the alternative 'unity - variety' as the aporia connected with the choice of concrete pedagogical program. In the first case, one can discuss pedagogy in terms of synthesis practice applied to perceive educational being, as logos entering material, individual (collective) and symbolic structures. In the second, 'variety' case, one can discuss practicing logos which is developed, divided and reproduced with symbolic culture codes, logos which enters language structures in education and manifests itself in educational discourse. The second program brings forth 'symbolic logos of education', pedagogy of symbolic forms, discourse, language and writing.

We believe that case study method can be adapted to solve singular type educational research tasks. Let us consider this idea more explicitly.

Case study is often interpreted as the method to acquire the knowledge which is unique and aimed at orientation in a concrete life situation. One believes that the data acquired with case study have all the necessary attributes of applicative knowledge inseparable from the situation of its application. Meanwhile, one can often notice plaints that

case study practice “means different things at different times and in different contexts” (Sikes, 1999) or just means antithesis of quantitative research tradition (Hammersley, 2010; Edwards, 1998).

R. Stake (1997) attempted to come up with classification of case study strategies. He believes that there are three ways of ‘case’ concept use: 1) intrinsic case study – understanding the core of a case; 2) instrumental case study – a case allows to clarify something or a series of cases with its help; 3) collective case study as a means of generalization. Stake also describes teaching case study as a particular type as it is connected with learning objectives.

In terms of the method proposed in this article, the research connected with educational relations study determines the choice of a particular pedagogical regime. For instance, pedagogic psychologist studying structure of students’ learning activities takes a formative position by the fact of studying this particular phenomenon and confirming activity-based vision of educational relations, instrumental relations between participants of educational interaction, value of personal choice as the source of individual action. As well as a researcher who conducts a sociological survey in a student group unwittingly transmits patterns of research interaction to students, teaches them communicative techniques of classroom space and time structuring, attitude to text reading, etc.

Social and psychological mechanisms of such experience transmission forms can be clarified with the statement by A. Schütz (1972) on correlation in everyday interaction between “systems of relevancies and reciprocal perspectives”. Education is gripped with the process of the Everyday to the extent to which education gets connected with typifying participants’ interaction (narration-listening, demonstrating-watching). The term ‘the Quotidian’ was borrowed from the works by B. Waldenfels (1995) who attributes to that term to norms establishing and traditions mastering. Waldenfels believes that the quotidian concerns all the spheres including science, art as they get their shape and ability to maintain traditions only in case of institutionalization. The Quotidian also leads to bridging the gap between educational and non-educational orders when the regulative actions of everyday life start getting true for education. This process stems from stable reproduction of educational interaction practices which cannot happen in case of education oriented to various standards and merit-based conditions. The rule of reciprocal perspectives grounded in education can be viewed as the most important consequence of the Quotidian entering education. This statement mostly corresponds with the rules and general principles of conduct applied in education. The Quotidian provides common meaning in education for its participants. It does not presume that students understand the messages of professor but it makes those messages predictable and controllable from the point of situational conditions. It also is the key condition for reproduction of education and at the same time it is the factor blocking educational innovations.

One of the reasons of educational steadiness is support of educational reproduction with standardized norm-oriented researches and descriptions related to those researches. Due to them, education becomes a super-determined object in a scholarly sense. Super-determination of education has the stabilizing impact on research practices with its cross effect, closing thereby an autopoetic cycle. That means that suspending reproduction of system links in humanities and education. Such suspending becomes problem-generating circumstance in research aimed at stimulation of innovative changes.

Meanwhile, as the research conducted by G. N. Prozumentova (2007, p. 8) shows, "an educational innovation is a "threat" to the system, a place of implicit "disturbance" and emergence of obvious opposition. An educational innovation, by its nature, is destined to be officially marked on the system peripheries and to gain the status of marginal, illegal action in the system. It means that management is cultivation a resource of development and a humanization of the education system from "illegal" initiatives’ potential". In this regard, one should mention that already the first experiences of educational innovations implementation results in numerous difficulties despite initially positive relation to them from professors. Students, in particular, facing open tasks (the instructions that seem to be insufficiently certain for them), showed lack of confidence in their abilities, disappointment with teachers, refused to collaborate with experimenters and did not accept the tasks demanding from them productive activity. In their turn, teachers stated fears concerning loss of control over educational events, and also discrepancies between students’ knowledge and the standard education requirements. They were not inclined to support their autonomy, complained about a disorder in classroom which, in their opinion, disturbed other student groups. Meanwhile, the experimenters after studying the class transcripts confirmed that noise in the classroom was productive by its nature.

The analysis of the situation in contemporary educational research in a becoming research university allows to conclude that educational research organization has to meet several practical requirements:

First, to resist reproduction of the educational relations and the Quotidian processes, to be oriented to raise the issues of education automation, to stimulate liberalization and transformation trends in education.

Second, to approve priority of educational tasks over research, to see innovative and educational goals achievement in dynamics of educational discourse.

Third, to encourage participants of educational interaction in innovative creativity, including creating new forms of education and research.

Meanwhile, as our analysis in the critical part shows, the method of case analysis itself can be applied rather variously and disclosure of its innovative potential needs specific pedagogical design. The essence of that design becomes evident by the comparison of an innovative-oriented case study with closely related "agenda-driven research". The supporters of that second type of research hold that the analysis, neutral and free from values, means acquiescence with the dominating social order as this neutrality doesn't conduct in general to the solution of practical problems and can be compared to the washing hands of which leaves people with their problems and the solution to those problems just represents an issue of widely understood science (Jabłońska, 2006). The 'agenda-driven research' conducted by a scholar manifests itself not so much in character of the data obtained by it, but mostly in aiming at non-scholarly tasks. Such tasks could be study of circumstances of social discrimination, distribution of power, domination or submission, autonomy and political dependence of education. The character of 'agenda-driven research' does not influence objectivity of scholarly developments in any way as well as a scholar's attitude towards the truth. A certain distance can be observed between research and its object in this situation, as well as the gap between production and application of obtained knowledge. The value of the truth does not only make related the 'agenda-driven' and 'pure' science, but also generates rivalry between them for the right to speak from its name.

The second kind of 'agenda-driven research' is not connected with validity set, at least, in its correspondent variant. If the first of the discussed forms is closer to the metaphor "opening", the second is focused on the trope "invention". The categories of "validity" or "falsehood", "logical consistency" or "disciplinary compliance" cannot be applicable to an invention, but pragmatic expectations of "relevance", "efficiency" and "assistance" are justified. The subject to which this form of 'agenda-driven research' appeals, will be conformed first of all with the changes made by research, scholar's participation in creation and realization of sociocultural forms (Domańska, 2007). In our case, the subject being invented is education. Or in a broader sense "the objective of humanities-based research is the development of educational initiatives and a human resource of educational practice. Thereby research is not limited to the function of ascertaining and explanation of the current state of affairs, but it becomes a development tool for practices, humanities-based management of innovations in education" (Prozumentova, 2005, p. 17). The invention is drawn to situational thinking and project-oriented organization of scholarly search which is connected with the consuming future. In the event created with the participation of research, innovative education is born, shaped and approved. In this edition of 'agenda-driven research', case study is attributed to the status of event generating factor. One can notice that the procedure of a case analysis adapted for innovative tasks, is realized in group forms, and the way of generative communication constitution represents a subject for separate study.

The choice of case study is a suitable innovative and educational form according to its sensitivity to atypical and unique. The American methodologist of science J. Rowley (2002) adduces some kind of genetic argument, noting that case study is useful first of all at early stages of research when it is necessary to find new prospects, to answer questions "How?" and "Why?". D.B. Bromley (1986) in general is inclined to call case study the bedrock of the subsequent scientific investigation. The most important feature of this methodology is its orientation which allows to see each separate educational case not as a substructure of the uniform world, a set subset but as independent whole, parity to other educational worlds. From this point of view, case study "helps to see the sea in a water drop … But these drops of water open the sea horizons: allow to present as there is a formation of new quality … as from precedents there appear new strategic priorities" (Prozumentova, 2008).

Thus, use of the case study method for educational innovations implementation is connected with some of method transformations. One of these transformations is caused by need of analytical procedure pedagogization, submission to this procedure's educational tasks. Among them there are modelling in training in the unstable

conditions inducing participants to interact in order to define collaboratively an educational situation; motivating learners' communicative self-experimenting and introspection.

The second transformation is connected with overcoming the methodological individualism set peculiar to many research experiences of case analysis. Thus case study is transformed into a subject of public collaboration. Certainly, the emphasis in collective analytical work has to be placed not on establishment of the coordinated edition of a case, but on the conflict of its interpretations, collision of practical positions and detection of qualitatively various educational prospects. Research communication in this case participates in creation of the divergent environment in which the potential difference of the interacting positions becomes one of conditions of innovations emerging.

4. Conclusion

Educational micro-level research in changing university is only one of the factors of its transformation. The efficiency of the presented type of analysis finally depends not only on quality of the carried-out research work, but also on many concomitant circumstances. Among them there are both stability of the operating educational tradition, and nature of communication with university changes at tactical and strategic levels, and, at last, existence of political will, in carrying out the case study programs without which resistance to changes cannot be overcome. The last factor has special value at an initial stage of experimental works. These works are conformed with a problematization of the operating educational conditions, a rupture of habitual communications, periodically arising uncertainty – the action of variables out of which new self-organization of education participants is simply impossible.

Work on molar education level, despite mobility and variability of discourse forms, is regarded among the long-term enterprises aimed at a cultural renormalization. And if at the strategic level, for example, for innovative success often only the right administrative decision is to be made, micro-level transformations, being "slow changes", have to be provided with a necessary temporal, organizational, pedagogical, and administrative resource.

The peculiarity of the presented version of research analysis is its orientation to the educational relations as the research leading subject. The interest of a researcher working with this type of analysis is focused upon the immanent sphere of educational interaction, and the researcher himself/herself is involved into producing these interactions. It causes the specific self-reference character of the offered case-study method. The method has the tendency to answer rather the "internal", created by conditions of educational communication calls, than "external" ones. But this quality of a self-frontage is a necessary condition of development of new pedagogical purposes, the births of new educational forms, new quality of university education participation in public life.

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