INTERDISCIPLINARY CONTEXTS OF SPECIAL PEDAGOGY

28

Academic editor
MAGDA OLEMPSKA-WYSOCKA

Ministerstwo Nauki
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

Contents

REPORTS

ARTICLES

ŚLIWERSKI BOGUSŁAW

The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw

The idea of the exclusion of necrophilic attitudes in critical psychology of Erich Fromm

ABSTRACT: Bogusław Śliwerski, *The idea of the exclusion of necrophilic attitudes in critical psychology of Erich Fromm*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 7–20. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.01

The subject of the analysis is the category of the inclusion as a process that does not only apply to people with special developmental or life needs, but also to social sciences, which as a result of the positivist research paradigm have divided and separated from each other. Meanwhile, human upbringing requires the inclusion of biophilic orientation towards life in all social sciences, whose achievements should be considered and applied to improve educational processes. The Author borrows inspiration from the typology of human attitudes of Eric Fromm, because it makes readers aware of the negative effects of necrophilia in interpersonal relationships. The Author analyses Fromm's approach against the background of selected ideas of Polish pedagogical views.

KEY WORDS: inclusion, biophilia, necrophilia, special education, pedagogy, disability

Inclusive pedagogy is, regardless of how it is defined by special education teachers,[1] a pedagogy of a common denominator, a hu-

_____

[1] *Základy inkluzivní pedagogiky. Dítěs postižením, narušením a ohrožením ve škole*, V. Lechta (ed.), Portál, s.r.o., Prague, 2010.

manistic pedagogy that forces the education sciences to integrate knowledge about a human being, their nature, fate, experience and opportunities for the development of their potential, with which he has to live in a relatively civilised world. In the period which seems distant to us, because in 1934 the outstanding Polish educator Henryk Rowid wrote: *In the content of a person there is nothing that can be separated, so it does not consist of elements that need to be added. Therefore, every physiological or mental phenomenon should be considered on the basis of the whole, or a human being.*[2] In other words, those educators who, because of their concern for disabled people, focus their attention on something that is separated from their structure despite the fact that all personality components are integrally combined, do not operate and are not experienced separately, make an error. Every human being is a multi-unity, unitas multiplex, and this means that there are no disabled people as opposed to able-bodied people, because this classification was done only for ideological reasons in the countries of nascent and developing fascism and communism, in totalitarian countries, in order to divide people into better and worse according with the doctrine, exclude them from society, isolate people, among others, because of their race or health.

Meanwhile, any activity of a human being is (…) *„psychophysically neutral", that is, the interaction of physical and spiritual elements is revealed in its limited function, without the possibility of separation or isolation from one another.* (Ibid.)

It is this pedagogy that sheds new light on the problems of human existence experiencing dysfunction for various reasons, in very different circumstances, but also placing it constantly on the outskirts of everyday life-oriented world.

As rightly observed by Victor Lechta, inclusive pedagogy is a new education philosophy of "education for all", in which each person is treated as an individual with their specific educational needs. It is

_____

[2] H. Rowid, *Jednostka a społeczeństwo w wychowaniu współczesnem (na tle koncepcji osobowości w Chowannie Trentowskiego),* Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa w Krakowie, Cracow, 1934, p. 7.

the modern world that should adapt to people with disabilities, not the other way around. If we really want, (…) *inclusive education to be available to everyone, everywhere and always, then we must understand that meeting this expectation is a difficult and distant task for all the antic-ipating parties.*[3] All subdisciplines of pedagogical sciences need re-vival thanks to the challenges of inclusion to break the chain of the constantly reproduced circle of indifference, violence, and callous-ness towards the presence among us of those who do not claim any special privileges because of their disability, but human under-standing of extremely different conditions of their life, and support.

Awareness of necrophilic attitudes and activities

It is the world that allows totalitarian, authoritarian and di-rective pedagogies to promote genocide, as Wilhelm Reich wrote, the continuous, and yet symbolically reproduced, murdering of Christ, leading to the broadly understood destruction of humanity, the holocaust, ethnic cleansing, segregation based on race, gender, physical condition, religion, nationality etc. The progress of medi-cine, revalidation and rehabilitation, after all, requires permanent work on human culture, so that we do not make each other more spiritually and mentally disabled, increasing the scope and depth of human suffering. The murderers of Christ are everywhere where people are unable to direct their own lives. The prison can therefore be a structurally and morally disturbed family, school, workplace, etc., and therefore environments in which people are caught as in a trap set for them. *The educator who makes education a lucrative business will not be interested in education but in the interest. Let's beware of such educators.*[4] They will use others in a refined way to their extremes.

---

[3] V. Lechta, "Pedagogika inkluzyjna", translated by Bogusław Śliwerski [in:] *Pedagogika. Subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji*, vol. 4, ed. Bogusław Śliwerski, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk, 2010, p. 332.

[4] W. Reich, *Mordercy Chrystusa*, Wydawnictwo Jacek Santorski, Warsaw, 1995, p. 25.

It is therefore necessary to be able to recognise in our environment those who speak about the truth and who live in hypocrisy, including us to cooperate, express a clear contempt for us, not recognising what we do if it is not in accordance with their dictate, who draw their strength from those they destroy. It is not easy to verify the real reasons for evil or violence, or whether they arise from the weakness of the will of the malefactor, from not being aware of the nature of evil and its consequences for others, or from the desire to easily, and without any problems affect someone's personality. In the era of environmental destruction, the question arises anew about the role of socialisation and education in this process, the sense of institutional education, so that there is no further degradation of the nature and basis of life of human beings. However, totalitarianism is born in a society full of conflicts, continuous antagonisms, hostility, broken social ties, disintegration in the struggle of individuals for their own pre-eminence, and therefore in a necrophilic atmosphere. *One of the biggest errors in assessing dictatorships was the assumption that the dictator imposes his power on people somewhat from outside, against their will. In fact, every dictatorship only radicalises ideas present in a state, it is enough to lead them to the extreme and gain power.*[5]

For educators searching for the nature and conditions of evil in human life and in economically developed countries, when so many cruel wars are taking place in the world and the martyrdom of societies experienced by Nazism, Stalinism or new forms of fundamentalist terrorism is not able to oppose the uninterrupted chain of violence, Erich Fromm's views on this subject take on particular relevance. How dramatic his question, *Can we not see the lack of humanity of people for each other, in merciless warfare, in murder, rape, in the merciless exploitation of the weaker by the stronger and in the fact that a picture of a tortured and suffering creature so often goes to deaf ears and hardened hearts?* Sounds.[6]

_____

[5] W. Reich, *Psychologia mas wobec faszyzmu*, translated by Ewa Drzazgowska, Magdalena Abraham-Diefenbach, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, Warsaw, 2009, p. 257.

[6] E. Fromm, *Zapomniany język. Wstęp do rozumienia snów, baśni i mitów*. Translated by Józef Mędrzecki, PIW, Warsaw, 1971, p. 11.

Fromm attempts to understand the nature of violence, aggression and cruelty so omnipresent among people, explaining them by the inability of a human being to solve the basic problems of their life, by their inability to love others, as well as by the necrophilic orientation of all modern industrial societies, regardless of their political structures. At the same time, he distinguishes two types of violence: reactive violence, which is the reaction of a human being to a threat to their life, dignity, property, etc., and compensatory violence, which for weak, enslaved, powerless people is a kind of universal means to regain a sense of self-power through the use of other violence, domination or strength. According to E. Fromm, compensatory violence of a human being is a derivative of their dominant necrophilic orientation (towards death, destruction, towards Evil) and the progressing bureaucratisation of modern industrial societies.

However, in educational institutions, there is no open hostility, but one of two forms of proximity between subjects of the education process [teachers, teachers and students, teachers and parents of students or between students themselves], which determine the specificity of the development of interpersonal relationships and the condition of "health" or "illness" of the institution, namely:

– submissive proximity, consisting in submission to someone people depend on. It leads to a lack of independence or rebellious tendencies (often unaware) and inhibits the full development of the individual, causing deep conflicts between subordination and rebellion;

– proximity of the total and deepest intimacy between two people, consisting in mature love while maintaining full independence and separateness of individuals. This type of proximity does not inhibit development, does not cause internal conflicts or loss of energy.

Education in relation to violence

Therefore, one can ask Fromm about the nature of a human being in the above relationships, whether they are wolves, and therefore beings that destroys others by nature, use in their everyday life

opportunities for cruelty and sadism in relation to other people, or maybe a human being is a sheep or a submissive being, renouncing their own will, giving up their autonomy, individuality, identity, a person susceptible to external influences? What should the education of the younger generation be aimed at? What role does the structure and organisation of society play in it? Is it possible to defy wolf orientation thanks to education, or maybe through education is it necessary to convince sheep not to suppress their nature of wolves? Finally, how should an educator behave towards destructive elements of social life?

Let's take a look at some destructors to understand what can lead to objectification of people, to dehumanization of interpersonal relationships and to processes of self-reproducing evil, and to become aware how strong these tendencies can be in people. Necrophilic orientation is characterised by a specific human ability to use violence against others, *"to transform everything organic into a corpse"*, to treat life in a mechanical way like objects. It is not an expression of a certain single personality trait, but it represents a holistic way of life, expressing itself in the bodily processes of a person, in their emotional and volitional sphere, thoughts, gestures and behaviour. *Memory, not experience; possessing, not being, is what matters. A necrophilic person can refer to an object, a flower or a person, only if they possess it, therefore the threat of becoming the property of a necrophile is also a threat to the existence. […] They love order and control, and kill life when doing the order. In fact, they are afraid of life, because by its very nature it is disordered and uncontrollable. […] Necrophiles can often be recognised by their appearance and gestures. They are cold, their skin looks dead, and the disgust on their face often gives the impression that they feel offensive smell around them. […] Necrophiles are orderly, obsessive and punctual.*[7]

A necrophile is a person who loves destruction, devastation, believing in the appropriateness of violence, separating and dividing people according to ideological criteria. They are guided more by

_____

[7] Ibid., pp. 17–18.

the past than by the future, which is unknown to them, uncertain and therefore does not give them support in ruling others. If they hold managerial positions, they administer people as things. boasting about their own privilege and being proud of inflicting pain on others. In order to secure a better situation and change their own living conditions, they try to gain power over others. For a necrophile, power becomes an opportunity to camouflage their own complexes, disappointed hopes, feelings of powerlessness or undervaluation. Thanks to formal domination over others, a necrophile turns away from other people as human entities possessing equal rights, enhancing their ability to do evil, to broadly understood cruelty (violence, exploitation, rape), delighting in their own sadism towards subordinates.

Power in the hands of a person with this orientation demoralises, because it gives control over the mind or feelings of others. *The elite, who must control those who do not belong to the selected group, become a prisoner of their own restrictive aspirations. Therefore, the human mind, both of those who are ruled and who rule, deviates from its truly human purpose of humanitarian thinking and feeling, using and developing the powers of mind and love characteristic of humans, incomplete development of which causes spiritual disability. With this deviation and perversion, the human nature is ruined. Aspirations contrary to the interests of truly human nature begin to dominate them. The forces of love within them decrease, the desire for power over others is born. Their inner sense of security is diminishing, and this pushes them to seek compensation in the passionate desire for fame and prestige. They lose their sense of dignity and uprightness and are forced to transform into a kind of merchandise, drawing a sense of their own ambition from their saleability, from their success*.[8]

If the necrophilic orientation, oriented towards the love of death, destruction, the bureaucratic way of administering people is not stopped in the process of socialization and education, although it is

---

[8] E. Fromm, *Zapomniany język. Wstęp do rozumienia snów, baśni i mitów*. Translated by Józef Mędrzecki, PIW, Warsaw 1971, pp. 53–54.

not the primary nature of a human being, it may become for them a relatively permanent life opportunity. Fromm warns against the spread of this orientation among people, which does not have to be expressed in its radical form, but may have a whole range of unnoticeable forms, leading to depriving other people of their own dignity, autonomy, individuality. This is because a necrophile (…) *in an act of destruction proves that they are superior to what they could not create: life. By imposing their unlimited will on another living being, they become gods; they can forget their own sense of powerlessness and delight in their own power. The fascination with death and torture is a reaction of a human being who failed to live; it is an expression of jealousy and feeling the offence towards life; this is the jealousy of a disabled person who would rather see the destruction of life than face their disability.*[9]

Therefore, E. Fromm attaches great importance to assertiveness and defence of own humanum. In the process of upbringing and education, this is expressed by forming defensive ability of a person in reaction to a threat to their life, individuality, causative power or personal dignity, and sublimating necrophilic, destructive tendencies, passion to destroy others or oneself. The art of education is to be not only the art of love, but also to sensitise societies to whether they entrust the future of children to the hands of those who already have "callous hearts". Therefore, education becomes a "war in a human being" and for a human being, a war for releasing in them the strongest potential of biophilic orientation, the nature of which is the love of life.

Biophilic education in the light of the concept of Erich Fromm

The approach of E. Fromm to education would be similar to the idea of functional, anti-authoritarian, personalistic education

---

[9] E. Fromm, *Wojna w człowieku. Psychologiczne studium istoty destrukcyjności*, Jacek Santorski &CO, Agencja Wydawnicza, Warsaw, 1994, p. 27.

resulting from the exposure of biophilic orientation over necrophilic one in our everyday life. This is because a biophile is a person brimming over with warmth, cordiality, empathy, a sense of freedom and awareness of the strong points of their own personality and transferring all this the surrounding. They expresses their life orientation in a non-verbal way rather than declaratively.

Biophilia is an aspiration of a human being to protect life, to be creative, to choose joy, openness and prosocial behaviour over pessimism, uncertainty or egoism in interpersonal relationships. *Biophilic consciousness is motivated by the pursuit of life and joy; their moral effort is to strengthen the life-loving side in them. Therefore, a biophile does get lost in qualms of consciousness and guilt, which are ultimately only manifestations of self-imposed constraint and sadness.*[10]

What is a result such a dichotomous division of people according to the above orientations? According to the Author, this is first of all, an indication that children and young people should associate with people who love life, not its destruction. This can happen thanks to the freedom from political ties and the freedom to create and to perform creative work, thanks to the freedom of thought and the right to take risks. *Such freedom requires the individual to be active and responsible, to be neither a slave nor a well-oiled cog in the machine.*[11] The task of an educator is to expand the margin of freedom and to support conditions favourable for biophilia, and thus orientation towards life. In this process, the educator cannot be guided by the intention of dominating the process of development of their students, exerting on them a certain influence, making a choice for them. However, what they can do is to show them the possibilities to choose in a true and loving way, awakening in them an attitude of energy towards life.

According to Fromm, human nature is neither good nor bad, but it becomes pathological depending on the dominance of necrophilic orientation over biophilic one and on contact with the external

_____

[10] Ibid., p. 21.
[11] Ibid., p. 26.

world. The influence of society on individuals brings negative elements in the sense that people are interdependent and need each other. The fact that someone is a biophile is not yet a sufficient condition for them to brim over with their love, warmth and joy of life, if social conditions favour the existence or dominance of enslaved people. Insufficient production of material goods and limited access to them for all citizens of a given community means that they are only available to the few, stronger, with greater access to power and associated privileges.

Fromm is concerned that industrial civilisation itself is oriented not on life, but on its structures, mechanisms, and material products. All this is supported by the growing role of bureaucracy and fetishishisation of things, numbers, quantitative indicators, the objectification of interpersonal relationships, and the administration of people as if they were objects. *The problem here is not whether they are treated nice and well fed (these things can be treated nice), but whether people are things or living beings.*[12] The role of statesmen, scientists, artists and teachers is not only a critical reflection on whether the principles of a political system and social life are subject to the laws of objectification (reification) or the principles of life, but also the evidence with their own attitude and creativity of love of life, inspiring it and developing it in themselves and others. *Every act of neglecting and rejecting life, indifference to life and wasting it is a step towards loving death. This choice must be made by a human being every minute.*[13]

The main issue is how the idea of biophilia, the idea of true love for another person, or the idea of *homo amans* could come into effect? So, Erich Fromm as a supporter of radical humanism does not opt for an evolutionary, but for a revolutionary course of change. He is against waiting for *bureaucrats or ready concepts* believing that those who advocate universal values of life (love, sensitivity, reason, joy, etc.) should actively negate and fight evil (necrophilia) in every form and shape. All who are faithful to life affiliation should strengthen self-confidence, unite in spontaneous and natural group

---

[12] Ibid., p. 30.
[13] Ibid., p. 33.

life, search for solutions to problems related to their existence and transform these ideas into the complete practice of humanism.

This new attitude towards life can be expressed in more detail in the following principles: The development of a human being requires their ability to free themselves from the narrow prison of their own ego, their own greed, egoism, separation from another human being, and hence their own loneliness. This transcendence is a condition of openness and attachment to the world, sensitivity, sense of identity and community. The ability of a human being to rejoice in everything that lives, to radiate their abilities to the world around them, to "be interested" in the word "to be" more than "to have" and "to use" are the consequences of a step towards overcoming greed and egomania.[14]

Pseudo-education becomes one of the active reasons for destroying hope of a child (a human being) by "making the heart callous" with appearances, lies, destructiveness and violence. If during school education, natural educators understood in this way will be joined by professional educators who are necrophiles and economically frustrated citizens, because for social or financial reasons they do not have access to the well-being of the majority, education will also become an accelerator of violence and destruction. In this understanding there is a certain paradox that, to be *homo amans*, it is necessary to fight constructively and together with others, allies of common values, with those who care and who are not dominated by things or dehumanising practices of social life.

The decisive element in every attempt to introduce a social change in favour of greater subjectivity, autonomous activity, awareness and emancipatory rationality is hope, which fulfils an important role in the fight of educators with such a widespread and multiform evil. *Hope means a state of existence. It is an internal readiness for intensive, yet inexhaustible activity (activeness). […] Hope is paradoxical. It is neither passive waiting nor unrealistic forcing of events that cannot happen. It is like a tiger getting ready to jump, which will only jump up when*

---

[14] E. Fromm, *Dogmat Chrystusa i inne pisma religioznawcze*, Wydawnictwo Test, Lublin, 1992, p. 120.

the right time comes.[15] It is high time for special education, compris-
ing inclusive pedagogy to become an integral part of pedagogy in
general, that they break the circle of ideologically reproduced vio-
lence, social exclusion of some people only because they are to some
extent disabled. They are humans in the same way, human entities
in the unity of their body and soul. In the era of two totalitarianisms
developing on our continent, fascist and communist one, which
despised human existence, Henryk Rowid beautifully reminded of
the specific system of national pedagogy of Trentowski:

> *"The whole" cannot be separated from "the self-contained whole", be-
> cause it is my "I" or the "I" of the other, which strives for something,
> desires, thinks, believes, imagines something, wishes something or is
> touched by something, etc. "The self-contained whole" in a human be-
> ing is omnipotent over "the wholes" which it creates and rules. If the
> self-contained whole remains equal and compatible with itself, then the
> wholes which belong to it can arrange themselves in the most beautiful
> rainbow colours, create the most perfect patterns of a multi-unity and
> still have the same harmony. "The whole is an expression of progress,
> the self-contained whole is a steadfast nature".*[16]

The importance of special education
for shaping biophilic attitudes

Special pedagogy allows the most significant achievements,
schools, approaches, theories, models, orientations and even para-
digms, which are also part of the broadly understood inclusion, to
be preserved in the heritage of scientific thought of the humanities.
It allows us to rediscover in an interdisciplinary manner the many-
sidedness of the worlds of people with disabilities. It is this peda-

_____

[15] Ibid., p. 103, 105.
[16] H. Rowid, *Jednostka a społeczeństwo w wychowaniu współczesnem (na tle koncepcji
osobowości w Chowannie Trentowskiego)*, Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa w Krakowie,
Cracow, 1934, pp. 5–6.

gogy that forces scientists to perceive significant differences in the functioning of a person affected by misfortune, a specific dysfunction, lack or psychoorganic weakness, and reveals both to them and their life environment the unique value of *humanum*. As Jan Jakub Rousseau wrote centuries ago: (…) *to discover the properties, one must first notice the differences*.[17] It is this pedagogy that allows people to isolate for a moment, in the space of thoughts and practices of everyday life, levels of authenticity of human life. Therefore, it can be stated that in order to learn and understand universal pedagogy, it is necessary to perceive it from the point of view of ANOTHER, a disabled person. It is inclusive pedagogy that is a continuation of humanistic pedagogy, teaching humbleness, modesty and wisdom towards what is given and assigned to a human being in their life, also with their own participation.

The greatest ambition of modern special pedagogy should be to infect politicians and governments with biophilic wisdom to break stereotypes, prejudices against those who cannot even oppose, despite the unique value of their existence, inaccessible to the majority. May this pedagogy perform the inclusion of special pedagogy to broadly understood educational sciences, so that none of the doctrines, ideologies, concepts, trends or schools of education and upbringing deprived people only and exclusively because of some of their feature, of a part of their own integrity, freedom, humanity and divinity present in them. *Whoever agreed to be deprived of freedom, ceased to be a human being and a deity; whoever tears away freedom from others, traces the supreme holiness with their feet, and becomes a Satan who is rebellious against God. Slavery has no justification, because a human being is the ultimate set of all purposes of God. (…) A human being easily discovers their own feeling (sense of dignity) and independence when they are recognised as human beings and treated as if they were human beings*.[18]

---

[17] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Antropologia wobec problemów współczesnego świata* translated by Maciej Falski, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Cracow, 2013, p. 18.

[18] H. Rowid, *Jednostka a społeczeństwo w wychowaniu współczesnem (na tle koncepcji osobowości w Chowannie Trentowskiego)*, Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa w Krakowie, Cracow, 1934, pp. 9–10.

References

Fromm E., *Dogmat Chrystusa i inne pisma religioznawcze*, Wydawnictwo Test, Lublin, 1992.

Fromm E.*, Wojna w człowieku. Psychologiczne studium istoty destrukcyjności*, Jacek Santorski &CO, Agencja Wydawnicza, Warsaw, 1994.

Fromm E., *Zapomniany język. Wstęp do rozumienia snów, baśni i mitów*. Translated by Józef Mędrzecki, PIW, Warsaw, 1971.

Lechta V., "Pedagogika inkluzyjna", translated by Bogusław Śliwerski [in:] *Pedagogika. Subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji,* vol. 4, ed. Bogusław Śliwerski, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk, 2010.

Lévi-Strauss C., *Antropologia wobec problemów współczesnego świata*, translated by Maciej Falski, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Cracow, 2013.

Reich W., *Mordercy Chrystusa*, Wydawnictwo Jacek Santorski, Warsaw, 1995.

Reich W., *Psychologia mas wobec faszyzmu*, translated by Ewa Drzazgowska, Magdalena Abraham-Diefenbach, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, Warsaw, 2009.

Rowid H., *Jednostka a społeczeństwo w wychowaniu współczesnem (na tle koncepcji osobowości w Chowannie Trentowskiego)*, Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa w Krakowie, Cracow, 1934.

Základy inkluzivní pedagogiky. Dítěs postižením, narušením a ohrožením ve škole, V. Lechta (ed.), Portál, s.r.o., Prague, 2010.

MAŁGORZATA KOSIOREK

University of Łódź

Civic Councils for Education.
Critical discourse analysis

ABSTRACT: Małgorzata Kosiorek, *Civic Councils for Education. Critical discourse analysis*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 21–36. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.02

The aim of this article is to describe the genesis and activities of the Civic Council for Education project and to present it as an activity leading to the development and possible changes in the socialisation of Polish educational policy. The undertaken analysis concerns the reconstruction of knowledge of the society about the professional situation of teachers and their attitude towards current educational reality. The considerations were presented using critical discourse analysis.

KEY WORDS: Civic Council for Education, education system, democracy, activation of local communities

Introduction

Despite the fact that since 1989 the issues of changes related to decentralisation and socialisation of the education system have been discussed in Poland, from the perspective of past years it should be stated that in practice successive political parties did not care about strengthening grassroots initiatives in this respect. As Bogusław Śliwerski notes, *over the past quarter-century, almost every ruling political party has confirmed its image as authorities turning away from citi-*

zens, anti-solidarity, tolerating pathology in its own structures and generating it in public life.[1] Since the political transformation, one of the inhibitors of Polish democracy is education because the authorities of the Ministry of National Education have done for years everything to undermine efforts made by some teachers, parents, as well as representatives of the scientific community, efforts to change the functioning and management of educational institutions. Instead of social dialogue, authoritarian actions of politicians that discourage educational institutions from participating in decision-making processes and in shaping education policy are performed. When analysing the problem of the lack of real social engagement of teachers, students, parents and other educational organisations in creating and developing the education system, attention should be paid to the need to introduce changes in this respect. According to the assumptions of the concept of Amitai Etzoni, the main source of change and progress are active communities based on the principles of cooperation and collaboration. The main component of community activity is intra-group solidarity, thanks to consistent actions aimed at solving problems, people involved in a given process not only acquire specific professional and social competencies, but also gain faith in their own strength and have a real impact on the course of events.[2] These assumptions can be referred to the labour strike of teachers, which in April 2019 included over 70% of educational institutions in the country, as well as to the grassroots initiative of the Civic Council for Education (NOoE), which led to discussions on the conditions of the education system and the professional status of teachers.

The aim of this article is to describe the genesis and activities of the Civic Council for Education project and to present it as an activity leading to the development and possible changes in the socialisation of Polish educational policy. The undertaken analysis concerns

——————

[1] B. Śliwerski, „Kryzys oświatowej demokracji w świetle makropolitycznych badań pedagogicznych", *Przegląd Pedagogiczny*, 2/2016, p. 314.

[2] A. Etzoni, *Aktywne społeczeństwo XXI wieku*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Warsaw, 2013, pp. 225–234.

the reconstruction of knowledge of the society about the professional situation of teachers and their attitude towards current educational reality. The considerations were presented by means of critical discourse analysis that is applicable in both the humanities and social sciences. According to Teun van Dijk, the possibility of using critical discourse analysis in research results from existing, often "urgent", "hurting" social issues that need to be resolved. Therefore, on the basis of critical discourse analysis, it is possible to resort to various theories, descriptions, methods depending on their "suitability for the sociopolitical purpose".[3] The justification for the selected method is also the approach of Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, who believe that every fragment of social life is "discursive", or involved in the relationship of power, arranged according to some ideology and as such may be the subject of reflection of the researcher associated with critical discourse analysis.[4] In the article, press releases concerning the Polish nationwide strike action conducted by teachers in 2019 and a report summarizing the NOoE activity were analysed.

Civic Council for Education as a form of building agreement in a conflict situation

Education in Poland has been politically involved for years, and with the transfer of power to Law and Justice party in 2015, the policy of centralised rule in education policy has continued. Its victims are various types of institutions and professional groups, including school and teachers. Curricula, objectives and contents of teaching are subordinated to right-wing conservative ideology and the political vision of the state, and teachers feel more and more ignored and

——————

[3] T. van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis", *Discourse & Society*, 4/1993, p. 252.

[4] After: K. Biskupska, "Analiza dyskursu i krytyczna analiza dyskursu", [in:] *Współczesne teorie społeczne: w kręgu ujęć paradygmatycznych*, (eds.) M. Szczepański, A. Śliz, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2014, p. 377.

disgusted with their professional situation. In March 2019, as a result of disagreement on a requested rise in wages, the president of the Polish Teachers' Union, Sławomir Broniarz, said: "Teachers feel cheated. It turned out that they are a group that is not worth any investment. And they are the core of the public education system. The state should take care of its maintenance and development. Meanwhile, the Law and Justice treats education as a ball and chain. Ignoring our postulates, they prove that they are interested neither in the future of education workers, nor of the one of students and their parents".[5] The consequence of the anti-democratic activities of the government, including to a large extent changes introduced from 2015 by the Minister of National Education Anna Zalewska (from July 2, 2019, a member of the 9th European Parliament), was the strike action started on April 8, 2019. Its organisers were the Polish Teachers' Union and the Free Trade Union "Solidarity-Education". The strike was preceded by a referendum organized by the Polish Teachers' Union, in which teachers from approximately 20,000 schools, school complexes and kindergartens took part. 15,549 institutions (approximately 78%) voted for the strike.[6] The strike demands formulated by the Polish Teachers' Union included: a rise in wages of PLN 1000 for pedagogical staff, increased expenditure on education, a change in the assessment of the work and career path of teachers, dismissal of Minister Anna Zalewska. The protest action took place in the period of state examinations that is on 10–12 April (the lower-secondary school leaving exam) and 15–17 April (the primary school leaving exam), and the examinations were conducted largely thanks to the involvement of people other than teachers (parents, priests, members of local governments etc.). Because of the approaching date of the secondary school leav-

––––––––––––

[5] A. Ambroziak, *To nie będzie strajk ostrzegawczy. Nauczyciele czują się oszukani. Jeżeli nie teraz, to nigdy*, https://oko.press/to-nie-bedzie-strajk-ostrzegawczy-nauczyciele-czuja-sie-oszukani-jezeli-nie-teraz-to-nigdy/ (access on: 08.08.2019).

[6] https://polskatimes.pl/strajk-nauczycieli-2019-zawieszony-do-kiedy-czy-3004-sa-lekcje-w-szkolach-mapa-postulaty-czy-matury-sie-odbeda/ga/c1-13749626/zd/32825298, (access on: 12.08.2019).

ing exam on April 23, the National Inter-School Strike Committee participating in the protest appealed to the striking teachers to organise meetings of teaching staff to award marks to students of the secondary school graduation class. On April 25, the president of the Polish Teachers' Union, Sławomir Broniarz announced the suspension of the strike from April 27, 2019. At the same time, he rejected the possibility of signing an agreement with the government, as well as participation in discussions based on the "Educational Round Table" proposed by Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki. The representatives of the strike organisers did not take part in the debate organised on April 26, as well as in the following ones scheduled for April 30, May 10 and June 17, 2019. The described conflict situation was not finally resolved, and the strike action was suspended until September 2019.

In the opinion of Andrzej Olubiński, the type and dynamics of the dispute, as well as the level of pedagogical awareness of individuals or groups ultimately affect the type of attitude which will be shaped in a conflict situation, while conflict situations are defined by the author as those that "can shape different types of behaviour and attitudes: from anti-creative and submissive, through destructive and aggressive, up to creative and emancipatory".[7] Standing in opposition to the changes introduced in the education system, teachers and representatives of educational environment adopted a creative and emancipatory attitude and decided to organise discussions among themselves about the changes which are necessary to be introduced. In this way, a citizens' initiative to establish the Polish nationwide campaign called Civic Council for Education (NOoE) appeared. It was supposed to be held in the form of local, intersisciplinary meetings taking place at a similar time in many places around the country. The councils were to focus on the current situation and condition of education, a common reflection on

_____

[7] A. Olubiński, *Aktywność i działanie jako forma edukacji do samorealizacji czy zniewolenia? W świetle założeń edukacji humanistycznej i krytyczno-emancypacyjnej*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Cracow, 2018, p. 93.

the condition of the modern school and the needed directions of change (during meetings moderators should focus the attention on five key questions). The organisers defined the councils as direct conversations:

– taking place in public space, but possibly close to the participants' place of residence,
– regarding public matters,
– structured,
– conducted despite differences of opinion and in the search for what unites,
– performed with respect for each other,
– allowing for the participation of everyone for whom the topic is important and regardless of their formal position,
– taking place at similar time in numerous places in Poland.[8]

The rules that apply during meetings are simplicity of means, grassroots nature, supra-party nature, voluntary engagement, process transparency, rule clarity, predictability, format uniformity, decentralisation, concern for reliability, conclusiveness and efficiency.

The initiators of the meetings were teachers from all over Poland, members of the JaNauczyciel and Protest! groups operating on one of the social networks. The first meeting of the team and the decision to start the NOoE was made on March 2, 2019. Then, on March 25, the website and Facebook profile of the program were created. The debates started before **the undertaken strike action (the first one took place on April 1, 2019 in** the Lauder-Morasha School in Warsaw**), were conducted during the strike and after its suspension (**the one before last took place on June 18 in the Tadeusz Rejtan General Secondary School No. 6 in Warsaw, and the last summarising one on June 21 during 29th Malta Festival in Poznań).

The goals set for NOoE participants are:
– explaining the intentions behind the decision about the strike and its form in direct contact with students and parents,

---

[8] *Civic Council for Education. A preliminary summary – June 2019,* https://www. naradaobywatelska.pl/, (access on: 12.08.2019).

– honestly building understanding and agreement that goes be-
yond the environment of teachers themselves,
– going beyond the dispute of a purely wage-related nature
(a strike postulate) and raising its broader (systemic) and deeper
(dignity-related) nature,
– reflecting together on the kind of education and school which
is expected by different environments,
– building the broadest possible constructive interest in systemic
postulates concerning education,
– creating space for the civic experience of an authentic, collec-
tive conversation on public matters,
– showing that in important public matters civic and grassroots
action can bring meaningful, constructive and democratically
legitimised conclusions,
– strengthening the school as a place to collectively reflect on
public matters.[9]

Detailed information on how to organise debates (the recom-
mended method is *world cafe* allowing for a meaningful conversa-
tion of many people) and what topics to raise during the discussion,
was posted by the organisers on the NOoE website (https://www.
naradaobywatelska.pl/).

Each meeting should be reported via the website and with the
use of an Internet form, and after its completion, the conclusions
and documentation from the meeting should be submitted. Based
on the submitted materials and data, in June 2019 the first report
was concerning the organisation of debates and postulates submit-
ted during their course, was published. Available data show that
between April and June 141 meetings took place of an average dura-
tion of 2.5 hours. The estimated number of participants was 4400,
including 38% teachers, 28% parents, 24% students. Most meetings
took place in Gdańsk (16), Poznań (13), Warsaw (13) and Łódź (11).
Over half of the meetings were held in schools, other places were

---

[9] *Civic Council for Education. A preliminary summery – June 2019,* https://www.
naradaobywatelska.pl/ (access on: 12/08/2019).

libraries, cultural centres, universities, kindergartens, social organisations seats, and cafes. The prepared report includes also the conclusions of the five discussed issues. In the topic *What does the school teach? What does it prepare for?* the opinions of the participants of the debates show that there is imbalance between three aspects of student development which are: knowledge, skills and attitudes.
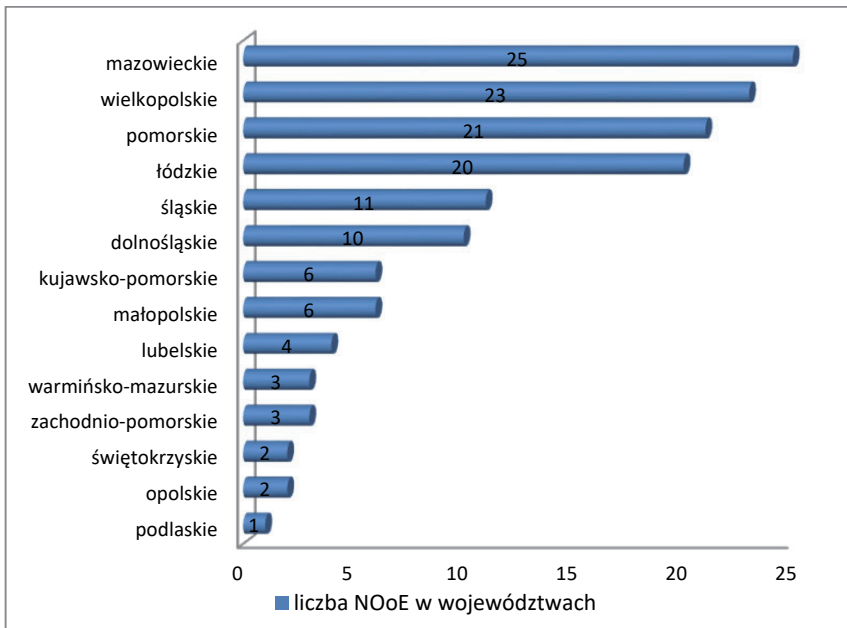
Figure 1. The number of NOoEs in individual voivodeships organised in the period from April to June 2019 (https://www.naradaobywatelska.pl/)

Modern school is focused on knowledge at the expense of developing skills and shaping attitudes. In addition, attention was drawn to the need to modify the general education program and adapt it to the psychophysical capabilities of children and youth, change the method and scope of teaching, and orientate the learning

process towards the development of students' passions and interests, change the system of the assessment and motivation of students/teachers, introduce ecological education and global education as obligatory elements of teaching, as well as a depart from subject-oriented teaching in favour of a multidisciplinary one.

The second discussed issue concerned the following questions: *How do we teach and raise? How do we motivate to learn? What experience do we provide?*

This topic was dominated by two main elements which, in the opinion of the participants, constitute the school life. These are external examinations and the general education program. According to teachers, the reasons of the subject-oriented approach to students and education process are related to excessively extensive school bureaucracy, to the absence of verification of predispositions and competencies for the profession, and to permanent changes in the process of professional promotion. The situation could be changed by such activities as a rise in wages and raising the prestige of the teacher profession by the establishment of the Teachers' Chamber constituting a professional self-government.

In the third question concerning *a role of the school in the local community*, it was noticed that the school does not develop a sense of civic responsibility or patriotic attitude, hence the low involvement of young people in social and local life. The institution itself in the local context is perceived primarily as a place (building), which often results in negative associations of the students. The discussions highlighted the need to increase the impact of the school community on the selection of the headmaster and to develop school autonomy and self-governance, as well as the need to change the rules for financing educational tasks. Postulates of the formation of the National Council for Education, the obligatory appointment of a school board in each institution, as well as the increase in the influence of local governments on the organization of education, appeared.

Good relationships are the basis of effective cooperation and this was the subject of another issue raised during the debates. *The shape*

of internal relationships in a triangle: teachers – students – parents at school was analysed. Attention was paid to the problem of mutual burdening with responsibility, loading with tasks (mainly of teachers by parents and of students by teachers), lack of respect between teacher and student, and teacher and parent, lack of effective interpersonal communication (members of the school community do not talk to each other, they lack ability to honestly express needs and emotions).

The last discussed topic was *the position of teachers and expectations from this professional group*. The conclusions of the discussion are not optimistic. Teachers are not respected, and the negative, disrespectful attitude of parents towards them is often shared with students. Lack of authority translates into lack of trust, and low wage strengthens the sense of disrespect from society, which in turn demotivates and hinders relationships with students and their parents. Teachers indicate the economic compulsion to work in many schools. The hurry associated with teaching the general education program and the amount of non-teaching duties do not leave them time for individual work with the student and their own development, and the bureaucracy overloads them physically and mentally. In addition, teachers indicate the fact that more and more people who start this profession are unprepared, especially in the field of psychological and pedagogical competencies, and they complain about the lack of so-called "screening" of candidates for studies and later for work at school.

The described data were taken from the first, preliminary report prepared on the basis of data obtained from civic councils taking place from April to June 2019.[10] The organisers declare to develop the full version of the report and provide public access to the collected material. They want to promote the most important conclusions in the environments involved in introducing changes to the education system, including the NOoE partners and participants,

---

[10] *Civic Council for Education. A preliminary summary – June 2019*, https://www. naradaobywatelska.pl/, (access on: 12.08.2019).

teachers associated in trade unions and outside them, local governments, expert communities, non-governmental organisations, and government institutions. From September, the action is to be continued and expanded to include further issues under discussion.

The NOoE social activity as a source of planned change and development of education

Interpretation of the NOoE activities as a source of change and development of education will be made on the basis of modern concepts of organisation and principles of functioning of local communities. Based on the quantity, nature and dynamics of contradictions and conflicts occurring in various areas of life, as well as the attitude to such social processes and phenomena, it is possible to judge the quality and level of democracy in a given education system.[11] Events that have been taking place in the Polish education system for a long time have clearly shown that participation is a sham game of the authority with citizens, which involves representatives of social environments in artificial organisational forms, so that they do not have any impact on its decisions. That is why the NOoE project is an important social initiative that has appeared in the arena of educational policy. The action can be considered in the category of civic experience of an authentic, collective conversation, which shows that in important public matters, civic and grassroots initiatives can bring constructive results. A. Etzoni in his theory proves that active communities are the main source of change, development and social progress. Being active means awareness of having control over own behaviour, but also the external environment, and activation and application of the natural potential and commitment of the community to satisfy both their own and general needs and interests allows for the change of the reality. According to the au-

_____

[11] A. Olubiński, *Aktywność i działanie jako forma edukacji do samorealizacji czy zniewolenia? W świetle założeń edukacji humanistycznej i krytyczno-emancypacyjnej*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Cracow, 2018, p. 94.

thor, activity resulting from awareness, knowledge, goals and methods of their implementation means strong motivation and involvement of social groups in the processes of change, as well as in the search and overcoming barriers that inhibit development.[12] Based on the Etzoni's theory, it is possible to analyse actions taken by teachers, students, parents and other representatives of education-related communities, which resulted in previous meetings within the framework of the NOoE. The initiative related to the establishment of the initiative and activities undertaken by the NOoE have shown the importance of mobilising resources and motivating members of a given community, as well as using forces present in the community. According to Marek S. Szczepański and Weronika Ślęzak-Tazbir, local communities are the main subject and animator of the process of change called local or endogenous development because this type of development uses the internal potential of the community.[13] It is assumed that the necessary condition for such development is the participation (engagement) of individuals and communities. According to Andrzej Niesporek and Kazimiera Wódz, the local community is territorially, but also socially, a specific "place" for the development of various forms of individual activity.[14] In many of its definitions, there are three permanent elements: territory, social interactions and mental bond.

As it has already been mentioned, in order to organise the local community and introduce changes, it is necessary to use the local resources and energy of its members, therefore the establishment of the NOoE and forms of its activities can be considered as organising the local community referred to as *comprehensive community initiatives* (CCI). It combines the simultaneous operation of many entities

_____

[12] A. Etzoni, *Aktywne społeczeństwo XXI wieku*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Warsaw, 2013, pp. 20–27.

[13] M.S. Szczepański, W. Ślęzak-Tazbir, „Region i społeczność lokalna w perspektywie socjologicznej", *Górnośląskie Studia Socjologiczne*, Seria Nowa 1, 2010, p. 17.

[14] A. Niesporek, K. Wódz, „Grupy zmarginalizowane, przedsiębiorczość społeczna, praca socjalna – strategie rozwoju społeczności lokalnych", [in:] *W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej*, (eds.) T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymsza, Wyd. Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw, 2003, p. 123.

both within the local community and external ones to comprehensively solve social problems. The desired changes have a wide range, covering all sectors of the community life – a social, educational, economic, and cultural one, and focus on strengthening members of the community as well as organisations and institutions. One of the main goals of the CCI is to shape new forms of social participation and build social capital. These activities are aimed at involving members of the local community to actively participate in introducing changes after prior determination of needs and problems and formulation of ideas and projects to solve them. It is important to build relationships between community members, as well as to introduce new, participation-oriented community governance rules.

Such procedure favours the formation and development of human capital (individual abilities to cope with various life situations), social capital (various forms of local social life and civil society) and local capital (institutional infrastructure).[15]

When analysing the nature and direction of activities undertaken by the NOoE, it is worth mentioning the importance of social capital, defined by Francis Fukuyama as "as a set of informal values and ethical norms common for members of a given group and enabling them to cooperate effectively".[16] According to the author, a high level of social capital is associated with the functioning of a healthy civil state and it facilitates:

– establishing cooperation thanks to the belief that people can count on reciprocity in the future,
– collective solving of local problems,
– use of material (things, money) and intangible resources (information, contacts, participation in power, prestige) available to friends.[17]

---

[15] *W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej*, ed. T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymsza, Wyd. Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw, 2003, pp. 127–129.

[16] F. Fukuyama, „Kapitał społeczny", [in:] *Kultura ma znaczenie*, (eds.) L.E. Harrison, S.P. Huntington, Zysk i S-ka, Cracow, 2003, p. 169.

[17] F. Fukuyama, „Kapitał społeczny", [in:] *Kultura ma znaczenie*, (eds.) L.E. Harrison, S.P. Huntington, Zysk i S-ka, Cracow, 2003, p. 170.

In addition, a high level of social capital translates into a greater number of undertaken activities, and repetitive behaviours begin to function as norms of conduct or patterns set out for this community, which in turn can promote progress and development. A norm may determine that fact that members of a given community start to unite to counteract emerging problems and pathology.

Conclusion

The process of the development and stimulation of local communities usually leads to mutually supportive initiatives and activities, and as a consequence to genuine participation in making decisions important for development. Social participation and citizen involvement is an important indicator of democracy. Community actions such as the NOoE referring to dialogue, aimed at resolving disputes and conflicts, related to the implementation of common goals, needs and values have causative power. Therefore, the initiative of civic councils as a grassroots action may in the future lead to a weakening of centralism and statism in education management, freeing of education from politics and ideologization, or broadening of the autonomy of institutions. Bearing in mind the long-term crisis of Polish education, the emergence of local movements and initiatives such as the NOoE is of particular importance. This is a direct response to the resourcelessness of the central state administration in solving social problems. The transformation of territorial communities into empowered local communities is, according to many experts, one of the ways leading to the reconstruction of civil society. Among the strategies for organising and stimulating social groups, meetings under the NOoE project are an important step towards building new relationships and creating the foundations for a partnership for participatory democracy. This is the beginning of the road, but the effects can lead to new quality. Undoubtedly, the NOoE initiative brings together people who share a common goal, and the actions they undertake trigger the development poten-

tial, mobilise to undertake prosocial behaviour and strengthen the position of school as a place of debate important for the local community. The activity of teachers to achieve the goals and fulfil the needs of their professional environment is associated with the development of self-confidence, and the struggle for change brings benefits to the whole environment. Based on the analysis of the activities of the NOoE today, the benefits include: building an agreement that goes beyond the teacher community, making society aware of the broader (systemic) and deeper (dignity-related) nature of the wage dispute, indicating what education and which schools are expected by different environments (not only by the teacher community), and raising consciousness that the norm is a situation, when "a teacher is an artisan, an artist who performs their role responsibly and is not a cog in the machine of a centrally controlled system".[18] Without the actions such as the NOoE, the crisis of the Polish education system will deepen, because the more standardisation and centralisation in education, the less chance for human development, democracy and civil society.

References

Ambroziak A., *To nie będzie strajk ostrzegawczy. Nauczyciele czują się oszukani. Jeżeli nie teraz, to nigdy,* https://oko.press/to-nie-bedzie-strajk-ostrzegawczy-nauczycie le-czuja-sie-oszukani-jezeli-nie-teraz-to-nigdy/ (access on: 08.08.2019).

Biskupska K., "Analiza dyskursu i krytyczna analiza dyskursu", [in:] *Współczesne teorie społeczne: w kręgu ujęć paradygmatycznych,* (eds.) M. Szczepański, A. Śliz, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2014.

Etzoni A., *Aktywne społeczeństwo XXI wieku*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Warsaw, 2013.

Fukuyama F., "Kapitał społeczny", [in:] *Kultura ma znaczenie*, (eds.) L.E. Harrison, S.P. Huntington, Zysk i S-ka, Cracow, 2003.

https://polskatimes.pl/strajk-nauczycieli-2019-zawieszony-do-kiedy-czy-3004-sa-lekcje-w-szkolach-mapa-postulaty-czy-matury-sie-odbeda/ga/c1-13749626/zd/ 32825298 (access on: 12.08.2019).

_____

[18] B. Śliwerski, "Pedagogika (w) demokracji", *Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, vol. 37, 2014, p. 27.

Civic Council for Education. A preliminary summary – June 2019, https://www.naradaobywatelska.pl/ (dostęp: 12.08.2019).

Niesporek A., Wódz K., „Grupy zmarginalizowane, przedsiębiorczość społeczna, praca socjalna – strategie rozwoju społeczności lokalnych", [in:] *W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej,* (eds.) T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymsza, Wyd. Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw, 2003.

Olubiński A., *Aktywność i działanie jako forma edukacji do samorealizacji czy zniewolenia? W świetle założeń edukacji humanistycznej i krytyczno-emancypacyjnej*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Cracow, 2018.

Szczepański M.S., Ślęzak-Tazbir W., „Region i społeczność lokalna w perspektywie socjologicznej", *Górnośląskie Studia Socjologiczne,* Seria Nowa 1, 2010, pp. 13–33.

Śliwerski B., „Kryzys oświatowej demokracji w świetle makropolitycznych badań pedagogicznych", *Przegląd Pedagogiczny*, 2/2016, pp. 313–322.

Śliwerski B., „Pedagogika (w) demokracji", *Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, vol. 37, 2014, p. 9–37.

van Dijk T., "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis", *Discourse & Society*, 4/1993, pp. 249–283.

Współczesne teorie społeczne: w kręgu ujęć paradygmatycznych, (eds.) M. Szczepański, A. Śliz, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2014.

W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej, (eds.) T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymsza, Wyd. Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw, 2003.

Number of NOoEs in individual voivodeships

Masovian Voivodeship

Greater Poland Voivodeship

Pomeranian Voivodeship

Łódź Voivodeship

Silesian Voivodeship

Lower Silesian Voivodeship

Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship

Lesser Poland Voivodeship

Lublin Voivodeship

Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship

West Pomeranian Voivodeship

Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship

Opole Voivodeship

Podlaskie Voivodeship

KORNELIA CZERWIŃSKA

The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw

Gradual loss of vision and performing the role of father

> […] *I relaxed because I already knew what to say and where we were. Since the appearance of Tess in our lives, these minutes were the nicest and gave me an idea of what really can mean raising a child. I passed on knowledge. I explained something to my daughter. With my every word her world grew bigger, each name led her out of the fog into human specificity.* […] *God, what a fantastic feeling. I heartily recommend.*
>
> "C'mon Papa: Dispatches from a Dad in the Dark" R. Knighton

ABSTRACT: Kornelia Czerwińska, *Gradual loss of vision and performing the role of father*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 37–60. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.03

Performing social roles, including family-related ones, by people with visual impairment is associated with experiencing various types of difficulties It is basically a consequence of the socially established negative image of these people who are perceived as not fully competent and requiring assistance. Previous few studies devoted to the motherhood of blind and partially sighted women indicate relatively frequent reactions of their social environment expressing the belief that a visually impaired woman is not able to perform her role as a wife and mother in a proper way. The psychosocial situation of fathers with visual impairment is rarely analysed in research activities, and knowledge of the relationship between gradual loss of vision and experience of fatherhood is relatively poor. The aim of the article is to present the results of a qualitative study focused on learning the subjective experience of performing the role of a parent by a man with progressive vision loss.

In the biographical study of an individual case, the narrative interview technique was used, and the analysis of the collected material was referred to such

spheres of experiencing fatherhood as: the concept of role, sources of satisfaction and positive experience related to the role, perceived relationships between the way of performing the role and progressive impairment.

KEY WORDS: visual impairment, vision loss, progressive vision loss, fatherhood, individual case study

Introduction

The dynamic changes currently occurring in the social macrosystem, mainly related to the processes of globalisation, industrialisation and constantly increasing autonomy of the individual, are directly reflected in the functioning of a family. The gradual broadening of the social definition of the family, combined with the high heterogeneity of modern forms of family life, implies changes in public space. The cultural transformation of this sphere of existence is particularly evident in significant changes in the area of parental roles, both in terms of social expectations towards their undertaking, as well as types and methods of performing tasks assigned to parents according to their gender. Traditional family models focused on the permanence of the system, characterised by a stable and hierarchical system of intergenerational relationships, recognised parenthood as a natural element of adult life and closely associated it with the marital role.[1] The gradual departure from the pattern of extended and patriarchal families contributed to the consideration of parenthood not as an obligation, but as the right of each individual and a consciously chosen developmental task that is a potential source of self-creation experience. Parental roles are evaluated by adults of both genders as the most satisfying compared to marital and professional roles.[2]

---

[1] L. Bakiera, *Zaangażowane rodzicielstwo a autokreacyjny aspekt rozwoju dorosłych*, Difin, Warszawa 2013, pp. 125–130.

[2] K.M. Perrone, L.K. Webb, R.H. Blalock, "The effects of role congruence and role conflict on work, marital, and life satisfaction", *Journal of Career Development*, no. 31(4), 2005, pp. 225–238.

Cultural, social and demographic changes observed in European countries (e.g. lower stability of marriages, debut as a father at an older age, greater professional activity and financial independence of women, raising children in reconstructed families) affect family positions and roles, leading to a transformation of motherhood and fatherhood. In traditional concepts, father's tasks were reduced to securing the family life in material terms and ensuring its safety and coherence. Performing the function of the main family supporter obligated the man to increased professional activity leading to economic success and high social position. Fatherhood was associated with the authority, knowledge and power entitling to make decisive choices regarding individual family members. The man as a mentor introducing his descendant into the world of social norms at the same time kept a distance from everyday experience of his child. At present, the authoritarian and dominant attitude is opposed by the tendency to involve the father more in the daily care and upbringing of the child, which favours building a close relationship based on mutual understanding and respect. The new dimension of fatherhood implies the need for greater availability and active presence of a man at home, as well as constant care for maintaining positive contacts with the child. The promotion of equality and the increase in the active participation of women in public life, including in particular their activity in the labour market, led to the perception of the father as an equal partner of the mother in the care and support of child development in every area.[3]

The function of a responsible guardian and educator performed by fathers, as well as active participation in fulfilling the obligations related to household management, increasingly often become a topic of public debates aimed at developing such systemic solutions that would effectively support men in shaping new parenting patterns. It should be noted that despite attempts of European countries to introduce various types of tools in the sphere of family poli-

_____

[3] A. Błasiak, „(Nowy) wymiar rodzicielstwa – wybrane aspekty", [in:] *Rodzicielstwo w wybranych zagadnieniach pedagogicznych*, (eds.) D. Opozda, M. Leśniak, Wydawnictwo Episteme, Lublin, 2017, pp. 36–37.

cy strengthening the model of active fatherhood, performing this role raises some tensions and doubts. The lack of adequate socialisation patterns generates the need to develop new strategies of operation, and the broadening of the role to include numerous aspects previously reserved only for motherhood raises anxiety and exposes men to experiencing overload. In addition, present expectations concerning fatherhood are often contradictory, and beliefs about the need for practical and emotional participation in the growth and raising of a child starting from conception to independence are accompanied by the continuing requirement to provide financial security for the family, mainly by a man. The situation is further complicated by the progressing differentiation of parenthood forms related to the breakup of relationships and the establishment of subsequent relationships, in which the provisions that constitute a social role of the father include many different connections and different parenting and educational relationships.[4]

Parental roles are not static and their changes are not conditioned only by the specificity of a given period of history. Adoption of a developmental perspective tends to define the family as circumstances of the life course of individuals in an interdependent relationship, so parental roles, including fatherhood, will change within the life cycle of a given person, as well as in successive phases of the family functioning as a system.[5] Studies confirm the variability in perception of parental role in ontogeny. People in different developmental periods (early and late adolescence, early, middle and late adulthood) differ in the structure, content and evaluation of the father's image.[6]

——————————

[4] M. Racław, *Postawy Polaków wobec ojcostwa – wybrane aspekty w świetle badań społecznych*, Report "Rola ojca i postawy Polaków wobec ojcostwa w świetle badań społecznych" 2013, Chancellery of the Senate, Warsaw, pp. 15–17.

[5] M. Tyszkowa, *Rozwój jednostki w cyklu życia: teoria i metodologia badań*, Poznań Society of Friends of Learning of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, 2010, pp. 86–89.

[6] A. Kurcbart, *Psychologiczny obraz ojca w biegu życia*, Difin, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 57–86.

The complexity and dynamic transformation of parental roles require a multidisciplinary, in-depth analysis enabling the design of effective strategies to support women and men in undertaking and performing these roles. The issues related to fulfilling paternal functions seem to be definitely less recognised, because childcare had been identified for many years only with the person of the mother. Therefore, understanding and description of the specific nature of the father's role, considering its various variants in individual family structures, is becoming an important research task. It is emphasised that survey research normally applied in social studies do not provide data describing the emotional and mental presence of a particular parent in family life, and do not record all significant relationships between the activities of mother and father.[7] National studies concerning fatherhood are still relatively scarce and do not cover all thematically important areas.[8] The issues that concern performing this role in minority groups (including single fathers, men with disabilities, and adoptive fathers) are particularly little recognised and researched.

Visual impairment and parental roles

Statistical data concerning the number of parents with disabilities obtained in demographic analyses conducted in selected countries, including Poland, indicate a steady upward trend in this group.[9] Although families in which at least one of the parents expe-

---

[7] M. Racław, *Postawy Polaków wobec ojcostwa – wybrane aspekty w świetle badań społecznych*, Report "Rola ojca i postawy Polaków wobec ojcostwa w świetle badań społecznych" 2013, Chancellery of the Senate, Warsaw, pp. 15–16. Ch. Lewis, M.E. Lamb, "Fathers' influences on children's development: The evidence from two-parent families", *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, no. 18(2), 2003, pp. 211–228.

[8] A. Marzec-Tarasińska, "Oddziaływania wychowawcze ojców a poglądy młodzieży na temat roli ojca w rodzinie", *Wychowanie w Rodzinie*, no. XIII(1), 2016, p. 259.

[9] P.E. Kaniok, "Rodzice z niepełnosprawnością – przegląd wybranych wyników badań zagranicznych", *Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja*, no. 1, 2014, pp. 66–67.

riences disability constitute a fairly large percentage of the general population, the issue of their situation is still rarely studied in theoretical and scientific analyses, especially in the context of relationships between the role of the father and the occurrence of a certain type of dysfunction.[10] A review of international andragogy research on families of origin performed by Beata Borowska-Beszta, Urszula Bartnikowska and Jerzy Stochmiałek showed that explorations in this area regarding disability in the children subsystem are undertaken more often than in case of parents. There is no reliable, evidence-based scientific knowledge regarding significant phenomena constituting the everyday lives of these families, including analyses focused on factors and circumstances other than the dysfunction that affect the quality of life of families and their individual members. The authors emphasise the dominance of research focused above all on the barriers, difficulties and burdens in families with a disabled parent, which consequently build a negative image of those families, ignoring coping strategies, the use of the accessible resources and the occurrence of positive consequences of living in the family system.[11] Neglected areas are also noticed in the national system of practical help and specialist support in the field of rehabilitation psychology, in which the issues of functioning of marriages of people with disabilities and their families are ignored.[12]

Previous explorations concerning the fatherhood of men with disabilities were mainly conducted in the interpretive paradigm and provided cognitively valuable material illustrating the high diversity of individual experience and the multitude of meanings assigned to them. Studies conducted among men with various types of dysfunctions revealed numerous difficult situations, taking the form of

---

[10] M. Kilkey, H. Clarke, "Disabled men and fathering: opportunities and constraints", *Community, Work & Family*, no. 13(2), 2010, pp. 127–146.

[11] B. Borowska-Beszta, U. Bartnikowska, J. Stochmiałek, "Niepełnosprawność w rodzinie jako «wartość dodana». Międzynarodowe andragogiczne badania nad rodzinami generacyjnymi", *Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja*, no. 1, 2016, pp. 79–81.

[12] S. Kowalik, *Psychologia rehabilitacji*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 225–235.

deprivation, overload, threat and impediments encountered in daily functioning and performing tasks related to fatherhood. Factors that negatively affected performing a parental role included, among others, problems with finding a job, low income, incurring additional expenses related to the disability and negative social attitude, leading in some cases to actions resulting in discrimination and exclusion.

At the same time, having children and fulfilling caring and educational functions was a source of positive experience and constituted an important element of the identity of men with disabilities.[13]

Interesting data was also collected in narrative interviews conducted in a group of over 30 men who related their experience to the general category of experience typical for fathers regardless of their health and physical function. In the statements, there were no signs of emphasising disability, and the difficulties listed by the respondents were not predominantly linked to the negative consequences of their dysfunctions.[14] The most often perceived categories of limitations related to childcare, play, work and direct contact with the child, and the awareness of these problems was a result of a comparison with other fathers and their possibilities, generating a sense of unrealised desires. An important element of the structure of experiencing limitations in performing the role of a father was the compensatory role of the environment, including the takeover of some parental responsibilities by an able-bodied partner. Because of low income or inability to perform gainful employment, the surveyed fathers had considerable difficulties in satisfying the material needs of the family, and therefore they felt emotional discomfort resulting from the failure to meet the social expectations still attrib-

---

[13] M. Kilkey, H. Clarke, "Disabled men and fathering: opportunities and constraints", *Community, Work & Family*, no. 13(2), 2010, pp. 127–146.

[14] U. Bartnikowska, K. Ćwirynkało, "Wyzwania współczesnego ojcostwa w narracjach niepełnosprawnych mężczyzn", [in:] *Teoria i praktyka oddziaływań profilaktyczno-wspierających rozwój osób z niepełnosprawnością*, (eds.) G. Gunia, D. Baraniewicz, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Cracow, 2014, pp. 108–113.

uting to the man the role of the main family supporter. This experience was particularly painful for men who lost their fitness in adulthood and had difficulty adapting to the new situation and adopting the status of a person with a disability. Interestingly, the lower professional activity of the fathers did not correlate with greater involvement in daily household chores.[15]

Disability is a complex and heterogeneous category, which in the context of parenting-related considerations is of great importance and implies the necessity to take into account a number of interrelated internal and external factors affecting the relationship between damage to the body and performing social roles.[16]

In order to identify specific problems and strategies to overcome them, it is necessary to focus, among others, on the period of acquisition of disability in the life cycle, the nature of the dysfunction (stabilised vs. progressive) and the type and degree of disability. Polish and foreign studies concerning the experience of fatherhood by men with a dysfunction were generally conducted in groups with high heterogeneity, so the conclusions were usually quite general, and information on issues specific to individual types of disability was fragmentary. However, the gathered empirical data allows for the identification of certain issues characteristic for the experience of fathers with visual impairment. The narratives of the surveyed men included the following issues:

  – reproduction-related dilemmas related to the risk of inheriting serious eye diseases,[17]
  – problems to ensure the safety of the child when moving in an open and (or) little-known space, and during spontaneous

---

[15] U. Bartnikowska, K. Ćwirynkało, "Niepełnosprawność mężczyzny a możliwości i ograniczenia w realizowaniu roli ojca", *Problemy Edukacji, Rehabilitacji i Socjalizacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych*, no. 20(1), 2015, pp. 66–79.

[16] B. Górnicka, "Wybrane aspekty funkcjonowania osób z niepełnosprawnością w rolach rodzicielskich", *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska Lublin-Polonia*, Vol. XXVIII, no. 1, 2015, p. 100.

[17] A. Nowakowska, "Rodzicielstwo osób z różnymi rodzajami niepełnosprawności", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 31, 2018, pp. 123–124.

play[18] and the resulting need to use the assistance of sighted people, including the mother,[19]

– inability to drive a car independently, which makes moving with the child difficult (the necessity to use public transport, dependence on able-bodied family members in terms of transport).

More detailed analyses can be found in visual impairment pedagogy publications concerning the psychosocial functioning of blind and partially sighted adults.

Among the few studies focused on parenthood in the case of visual impairment, the vast majority are analyses concerning motherhood, including above all the challenges related to the childcare of the infant.[20] The rich material about parental roles of this group of people comes from a study conducted by Marzenna Zaorska in a group of 35 people with visual impairment (16 men and 19 women), among whom as much as 89% acquired dysfunctions in their adulthood. It is worth emphasising that much attention was paid to learning the ways in which respondents perceive family roles attributed to a given gender. In the perception of male roles, apart from the tasks determined by the traditional father/husband model (e.g. taking responsibility for the material and social situation of the family, participating in making decisions regarding individual family members, supporting the development and education of chil-

_____

[18] U. Bartnikowska, K. Ćwirynkało, "Niepełnosprawność mężczyzny a możliwości i ograniczenia w realizowaniu roli ojca", *Problemy Edukacji, Rehabilitacji i Socjalizacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych*, no. 20(1), 2015, pp. 76–77.

[19] U. Bartnikowska U., K. Ćwirynkało, "Wsparcie społeczne z perspektywy ojców z niepełnosprawnością", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 13, 2014, pp. 127–131.

[20] Cf. K. Czerwińska, I. Kucharczyk, *Tyflopsychologia. Realizacja zadań rozwojowych w biegu życia przez osoby z niepełnosprawnością wzroku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2019, pp. 147–171. M. Wałachowska, "Specyfika macierzyństwa kobiet z niepełnosprawnością wzroku", [in:] *Tradycja i współczesność pedagogiki specjalnej w tworzeniu społeczeństwa dla wszystkich,* (eds.) J. Głodkowska, K. Sipowicz, I. Patejuk-Mazurek, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 160–167.

dren), there were functions and activities typical of modern model of engaged fathering (including active participation in family life, childcare and playing with offspring, creating a safe climate and care for the well-being of family members). The respondents, when describing their difficulties in performing family roles, indicated tasks in which eyesight plays an important role, i.e. dealing with administrative matters, playing with children, helping in learning and maintaining contact with school, using means of transport, activities that require access to information. In the opinion of the respondents, the source of these problems are not only the functional consequences of diseases and damage to the visual system that negatively affect the quality of everyday activities, but also social barriers, including the stereotypical perception of blind and partially sighted people as not competent and the distance expressed by able-bodied people resulting from anxiety and lack of knowledge about this type of disability. Among the determinants of difficulties appearing in families, the lack of access to professionals specialising in working with adults with visual impairment was also mentioned.[21]

The impact of negative social attitudes experienced by blind and partially sighted people on their functioning in the family was also noticed in other studies. While able-bodied people participating in the diagnostic survey conducted by Hanna Żuraw associated blind people with mainly positive features, they perceived them as financially dependent on their families or social assistance institutions, being unemployed or achieving unsatisfactory earnings.

Over half of the respondents did not connect the lives of the blind with having a family and competent performing of social roles related to marriage and parenthood. Perception of the blind as lonely, weak, dependent and unhappy was associated with reluctance to have frequent contacts with this category of people.[22] Similar results

---

[21] M. Zaorska, "Role małżeńskie w percepcji osób dorosłych z niepełnosprawnością wzrokową", [in:] *Nauka. Edukacja. Praca,* (eds.) U. Jeruszka, J. Łaszczyk, B. Marcinkowska, F. Szlosek Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 285–294.

[22] H. Żuraw, "Koncepcje osób niewidomych w poglądach osób z wykształceniem średnim", *Szkoła Specjalna*, no. 3, 2008, pp. 165–174.

were obtained in surveys conducted by Marta Kasperska and Iwona Bodyk-Cupak. 64% of respondents believed that visual impairment hinders the involvement in emotional relationships and family life. According to respondents (28%), adults with visual impairments are lonely, passive (34%), experience frustration (38%) and face a lack of acceptance from their environment (44%).[23] Myths about the impossibility of raising children in accordance with the norms adopted in a given cultural circle seem to still be present in the social image of the blind and partially sighted.[24]

Negative beliefs and social reactions towards parenthood of people with visual impairment significantly increase the risk of marginalisation and favour the acquisition of non-constructive coping strategies, such as avoiding contacts or masking disparaging traits. In the group of visually impaired people and those who gradually lose their vision, the strategy of hiding visual problems treated as an embarrassing attribute exposing to discrimination is observed particularly often.[25] The stigma masking strategy, although it helps to avoid negative reactions in some situations, is ineffective in the longer term and involves high psychological costs[26] such as constant fear of being unmasked.[27] Then, performing

----

[23] M. Kasperska, I. Bodys-Cupak, "Funkcjonowanie psychospołeczne niewidomych i słabowidzących w opinii osób z dysfunkcją wzroku oraz osób pełnosprawnych", *Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja*, no. 4, 2012, pp. 8–10.

[24] B. Szabała, "Stereotypowy wizerunek osób niewidomych", [in:] *Dystans społeczny wobec osób z niepełnosprawnością jako problem pedagogiki specjalnej*, (eds.) M. Parchomiuk, B. Szabała, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin, 2012, pp. 89–100.

[25] J. Gładyszewska-Cylulko, "Autostygmatyzacja osób z niepełnosprawnością wzrokową", *Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 22, 2018, pp. 192–193. K. Czerwińska, "Stopniowa utrata wzroku a wypełnianie ról społecznych w dorosłości", [in:] *Tyflopedagogika wobec różnorodności współczesnych wyzwań edukacyjno-rehabilitacyjnych,* (eds.) K. Czerwińska, K. Miler-Zdanowska, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2017, pp. 202–209.

[26] L. Smart, D.M. Wegner, "Ukryte koszty ukrytego piętna", [in:] *Społeczna psychologia piętna*, (eds). T.F. Heatherton, R.E. Kleck, M.R. Hebl, J.G. Hull, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 205–245.

parental tasks is associated with increased emotional tension that reduces psychophysical well-being.

Many of the above-mentioned studies of parenthood, including fatherhood, of people with visual impairment, were implemented in a qualitative strategy based on phenomenological and interpretive understanding of reality. The dominance of qualitative research is associated with the position which is increasingly common position in special education and recommends this method of analysing the family and intimate life of people with disabilities because of the possibility of a more in-depth, multidimensional learning of subjective experience, sensations and impressions related to personal spheres.[28]

Fatherhood in the experience of a person gradually losing their vision

The undertaken own research was conducted in the qualitative paradigm, and it is focused on the subjective experience of performing the role of a father by a person who gradually loses their vision. As a research method, a biographical case study was selected, which in the opinion of Tadeusz Pilch and Teresa Bauman "(…) enables the exploration of the internal structure of the studied phenomenon, e.g. it allows for the penetration into the significance of experience lived by a blind person (…) or also for the perception of external conditions of their existence".[29] Description and analysis of the individual history of a studied person along with various factors

_____

[27] K. Pietrowiak, *Świat po omacku. Etnograficzne studium (nie)widzenia i (nie)sprawności*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń, 2019, p. 261.

[28] This issue is further explained in: R. Kijak, *Dorośli z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną jako partnerzy, małżonkowie i rodzice*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Cracow, 2017, pp. 116–129.

[29] T. Pilch, T. Bauman, *Zasady badań pedagogicznych. Strategie ilościowe i jakościowe*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak", Warsaw, 2001, p. 299.

conditioning its course become possible thanks to the biographical method, which "(…) allows for the exploration of the subjective experience of the studied people and, therefore, perception of the problem which is important for the researcher from their own perspective, or in a way through their eyes (…) makes it possible to learn more about what and how happens around the studied people (or how and what they are witnessing every day or in exceptional circumstances), is reflected in their consciousness, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, aspirations, as well as in the values, norms and principles they recognize".[30]

In the study, the narrative interview technique, which formulates material including the events of the respondent current life into a specific structure, within which statements about self-understanding of their own situation, experienced emotions, motives for actions and undertaken activities are incorporated, was applied.[31] As observed by Magdalena Żurko, based on the data obtained in this way "it is possible to describe the way of experiencing and living a parental role. Interpretation of narrative material allows for the reconstruction the narrator's intentional attitudes to their role, revealed in the described episodes (events)".[32] The author did not make an attempt to obtain the full autobiography and its structure, but she focused on the selected segment of the respondent's life history regarding his parental role. The following specific research problems have been formulated:

• What is the concept of the role of the father adopted by the respondent?

—————

[30] M. Łobocki, *Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Cracow, 2003, p. 309.

[31] E. Kos, "Wywiad narracyjny jako metoda badań empirycznych", [in:] *Badania jakościowe w pedagogice. Wywiad narracyjny i obiektywna hermeneutyka*, (eds.) D. Urbaniak-Zając, E. Kos, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2013, pp. 93–97.

[32] M. Żurko, "Doświadczanie ojcostwa w świetle narracji mężczyzn w okresie średniej dorosłości", [in:] *Psychologia małych i wielkich narracji*, (eds.) M. Straś-Romanowska, B. Bartosz, M. Żurko, Wydawnictwo Psychologii i Kultury, Warsaw, 2010, p. 159.

- What is the source of satisfaction in undertaking and performing the role of the father for the respondent?
- What are the relationships between the consequences of gradual loss of vision and the way of performing the role of the father perceived by the respondent?

At the time of the interview, the respondent had been married for 28 years. For the first time he became a father at the age of 23, and for the second time at the age of 31. Because of binocular congenital cataract, nystagmus and a secondary form of glaucoma, the respondent suffered from numerous diseases affecting his everyday functioning. As a result of the reduced visual acuity, visual field loss and the increased demand for light, he experienced difficulties in the process of learning in the public education system and sharing free time activities with able-bodied peers. Constantly worsening visual problems during the adolescence period aroused in the respondent strong anxiety and numerous fears related to potential difficulties in establishing a lasting relationship leading to parenthood. This fear was further strengthened by the opinions of parents who in the presence of the respondent expressed their doubts about the possibility of raising a family by their son who was gradually losing his vision. In the statements referring to the personal concept of fatherhood, the respondent emphasised several times that the mere fact of having a family can be considered in his case a kind of success in life.

And what else is fatherhood to me? The joy that I could be a father, given my visual impairment, because not all disabled people can have this experience. To this day, I remember the concern of my parents, who were repeating «(…) what will happen to our Andrzej, will he find a wife, will he have children (…)?». Fatherhood is for me happiness that I could raise (as I think well) my children – together with my wife, to become good and valuable people and I hope that my children bring up their children, my grandchildren, in the same way or better [voice crack caused by emotions].

When defining tasks of a man in performing a parental role, the respondent mentioned a number of tasks and responsibilities (in-

cluding care, concern, assistance, development support, material support, education focused on the transmission of values and norms) and forms of interaction with the father (e.g. performing care-providing and upbringing activities, spending time together, talking, playing, learning, modelling the right behaviour, participating in problem solving and accompanying in difficult situations). According to the narrator, all actions taken by the father, with the significant involvement of the mother, should be aimed at equipping the child with competencies that will allow them to independently achieve their life goals and dreams in the future. It is worth emphasising that the respondent, despite a detailed description of numerous practical aspects of fatherhood, perceives this role as a kind of unique relationship with a metaphysical dimension.

> *Fatherhood is for me something special that cannot be defined. It is like my nature, my second "me", but it is also a certain expectation of fulfilling unrealised dreams, which of course will not be realised, because each person is different and unique (…) in my case, fatherhood is a kind of relationship with a daughter or son, I do not know how to call it, such an unconditional relationship, despite different beliefs or different outlook upon life. I used to wonder whether a father or mother can recognise their child they have not seen for many years, or whether there is something incomprehensible that connects a parent with their child. I think the aswer is yes. For me, fatherhood is a pride of being a father and at the same time anxiety about the future of the child. And one more slogan, which to me is true. A child for me will always be a child despite their adulthood.*

The most common topic of the episodes described in the interview were educational interventions, especially during school age and adolescence, dictated by the desire to protect the daughter and son from the consequences of bad choices, as well as resulting from a sense of parental responsibility understood as the need to explain the principles of morally proper behaviour. According to the respondent, such explanation should be combined with teaching and disciplining.

Extensive self-narrative material showed many threads of experiencing fatherhood, including referring to positive emotional experi-

ence, which transformed along with the progressing development of children and gradual accumulation of experience in the efficient fulfilment of parental tasks. Information about the pregnancy of the narrator's wife released his great joy and became for him a source of other strong, hard to identify positive emotions. The infancy and post-infancy period was associated primarily with a sense of responsibility, but also with the feeling of concern and tenderness during direct contact with children. Pre-school and early school age was indicated by the narrator as the period, which was most satisfying for him as a father mainly because of the extraordinary intimacy experienced in the relationship with his offspring.

> *At the beginning, the joy of becoming a father and such an unimaginable, wonderful feeling that I still remember today. I am not able to describe this feeling, but it was amazing and I have never experienced anything like this again (…) The most satisfying period in performing my role of the father role was the period when the children attended kindergarten and the first years of elementary school. Of course, every stage of the development of my children was important to me, but the aforementioned period is the time when children are so"sweet", keep their eyes fixed on the father, with unconditional love. This is the period when children want to be with their parents, sit on their knees, hug and parents are the most important for them. I have the best memories of this period and I cannot wait for my grandchildren to reach this age.*

In turn, the period of adolescence of children, especially of the daughter, is described from the angle of numerous conflicts and educational problems. The narrator indicated complex causes of difficult situations occurring in the family at that time, noticing, apart from the specific characteristics of this stage of development, the incorrectness of his actions, including a tendency to slightly excessive control and rigour in enforcing requirements. The respondent perceived positive impact of his wife on the functioning of the whole family system at the time, as well as on the systematic broadening of his competencies as a father. The wife not only eased the emerging conflicts on an ongoing basis, but also vividly explained to the respondent the needs of an adolescent child, including the need for independence and self-determination, as well as

forms of expressing opinions typical of adolescents. Thanks to the support of his wife, the narrator managed, despite many misunderstandings, to maintain a positive relationship with his children, which was even deepened when the daughter and son became adults.

> *It is important for the father to be supported by the mother of the child, who will help him become aware of the moment when he makes a mistake that could destroy the child-father relationship. My children, going through this period, became wise and valuable people, without distorting their moral fibre and without leaving the determined path. And from a time perspective, I consider this to be my greatest achievement as a father, my parental success. Despite some of my mistakes at this stage in my children's lives, I think **I successfully passed my parenthood exam**. And this emotion, when I hear from my children, I am sure that honestly spoken words: "Dad, I love you. You were and you are a great father»".*

The respondent associated his parental role and fulfilling his tasks of the father for many years with the acquisition, development and (or) improvement of numerous internal resources such as patience, prudence, sensitivity, responsibility, resourcefulness, empathy and creativity.

Interestingly, narratives regarding the family sphere contained relatively frequent references to gradual loss of vision experienced by the respondent, although in his opinion this dysfunction did not significantly interfere with fulfilling parental responsibilities. The problem of visual impairment treated as a stigma that requires to be hidden was revealed already during the period of dating with the future wife of the respondent, when he was making inefficient attempts to mask his perceptual limitations (e.g. he did not wear glasses for a meeting, which prevented him from recognising the face of his partner). From the perspective of numerous years of marriage, the respondent recalled with amusement his actions and surprise at the fact that his wife from the beginning of their relationship was fully aware of his vision problems. The topic of his low vision reappeared in the description of the spouses' conversations

about parental plans and related concerns about passing on health burden to the offspring.

> *The problem of my low vision and its consequences started to be important for me and my wife when we decided to become parents. We went together to my ophthalmologist and simply asked about the probability of our children to inherit my vision-related diseases. The ophthalmologist could not say anything about it, therefore we left the physician with the same knowledge which we had before, which means none. We were afraid of a glaucoma, congenital cataract, nystagmus, poor vision in our possible child and we didn't know anything about what could happen in this respect. In a sense, we took a risk, and in a sense it was by chance and after some time we had a healthy daughter with good vision. We felt a big relief. Then a healthy son with good vision was born.*

The already adult son had some ophthalmology conditions requiring constant medical check-ups, however, however the respondent treated this subject quite marginally in the interview. When analysing the successive stages of the upbringing of the daughter and son, the narrator pointed to numerous difficulties such as constant fatigue, sleep deficit, exhaustion, economic uncertainty, and educational dilemmas. However, he devoted a lot of attention to those situations in which his low vision had a negative impact on the effectiveness of undertaken childcare and upbringing activities. He described negative feelings most commonly experienced in connection with:

- inability to ensure the safety of his children in an open space, especially during walks and when using moving equipment in parks and playgrounds,
- problems in precise and quick childcare activities,
- limitations concerning help provided during doing homework.

The respondent also recognised the lack of full freedom and spontaneity in activities undertaken together with children as a certain inconvenience, which resulted from the need for constant attention and concern for their safety, which under the conditions of impaired vision of the guardian was more difficult to achieve. It should be

noted that only some of the described problematic situations were directly related to the functional consequences of the experienced visual system diseases. Certain events were rather the result of the use of non-constructive coping strategies by the respondent, based on incomplete acceptance of his dysfunction. For example, during individual consultations in the course of a parents-teacher meeting, the narrator did not inform a teacher of his son that he is a visually impaired person and cannot see the marks shown in the table on the computer screen, as a result of which he did not get any information about school achievements of his child and teachers considered him to be a rather uncommunicative parent.

> *Care of a newborn and infant was problematic. As a visually impaired person, I had significant difficulties and fears in situations when my wife was at work, and I had to deal with personal hygiene of an infant, to bath, change a nappy, clean, etc. On the one hand, I was afraid to do these activities because of low vision, and on the other hand I was so unskillful in these tasks. When I was carrying the infant in my arms while lulling them to sleep or in some other situations, low vision did not help either. This was because I had to be careful not to drop the child and not to fall over with them or fall on something standing on the floor […] Once I lost my 5-year-old son on a walk, because he was playing in the sandpit and suddenly he was not there, because he went to a swing, and I could not see him, and I began to look for him intensively until one lady who was nearby brought him to me, seeing what was happening.*

In the development of children, the infancy, pre-school and early school age are those stages, at which the narrator very often experienced difficulties in performing the role of the father resulting from progressive visual impairment. Taking a retrospective perspective, the respondent considered these years as a particularly difficult stage of his parenthood and emphasised the effectiveness of the support he received at that time from his able-bodied wife as a partner and a person co-responsible for the process of raising children. It should be remembered, however, that the early childhood of the daughter and son was identified by the narrator as the period of feeling the greatest satisfaction from his parenthood.

Summary

The image of fatherhood presented in the analysed narrative showed the extraordinary multidimensionality of this life experience. This role was considered by the respondent in terms of a particular challenge implying a number of responsibilities, at the same time perceived as a source of strong, positive experience resulting from the unique nature of the relationship between the father and his children. The wide range of activities and tasks of the narrator is part of the content of the modern model of fatherhood, emphasising the importance of the active participation of men in the process of raising children by adopting the role of a guardian, educator, everyday playmate consciously and systematically building an intimate, affective relationship with the child. Issues related to the perception of the role of a man as the main family supporter, which in the collected material seem to be treated marginally, require further research. This issue seems to be important because of the observed and persistent difficulties of people with disabilities in finding an economically satisfactory job.

The evaluation of the relationship between gradual loss of vision and performing the role of the father in the analysed material is quite ambivalent. The narrator declares that his disability did not significantly impede performing this role, but at the same time he describes in detail numerous events from the early childhood of his daughter and son, in which visual impairment as well as its functional and psychological consequences negatively affected the fulfilment of his parental responsibilities. Therefore, the experience of numerous problematic situations did not lead the man to form a belief that his visual impairment had a limiting impact on the achievement of parental goals, which was probably associated with the supportive activities taken by his wife. The narrator repeatedly mentioned his partner in the context of his parenting, emphasising the diversity of her tasks and functions. His wife took over the duties that absolutely required good vision, while in other tasks she

helped him develop the most effective strategies to compensate for impaired vision. In addition, she facilitated the understanding of the specific nature of children's functioning in successive stages of development, thereby correcting improper educational practices performed by the respondent. The narrator perceived a common dimension of fatherhood and motherhood, and emphasised shared experience related to raising children. The presence of wife, strongly marked in the narratives of the respondent seems to have a direct connection with his dysfunction, because in the study conducted by Magdalena Żurko, most able-bodied men did not mention at all their wives as partners and mothers in their narratives.[33] Interesting data could be provided by scientific analyses aimed at understanding correlations between marital relationships and the concept of the role of the father, including men with visual impairment.

It should be noted that in the narratives there was no information about the negative reactions of the social environment towards the visually impaired man as a father, on the contrary the respondent experienced signs of approval, understanding and help in crisis situations. It can be assumed that to some extent the lack of this type of negative experience was the result of his strategy of hiding his visual problems.

The gender of the respondent could also play an important role, because, as shown by the results of numerous studies,[34] mainly women experience multiple discrimination in the area of performing social roles because of overlapping stereotypes regarding both gender and disability.

———————

[33] M. Żurko, „Doświadczanie ojcostwa w świetle narracji mężczyzn w okresie średniej dorosłości", [in:] *Psychologia małych i wielkich narracji*, ed. M. Straś-Romanowska, B. Bartosz, M. Żurko, Wydawnictwo Psychologii i Kultury, Warsaw, 2010, pp. 165–166.

[34] E. Ciaputa, A. Król, M. Warat, "Genderowy wymiar niepełnosprawności. Sytuacja kobiet z niepełnosprawnościami wzroku, ruchu i słuchu", [in:] *Polscy niepełnosprawni. Od kompleksowej diagnozy do nowego modelu polityki społecznej*, ed. B. Gąciarz, S. Rudnicki, Wydawnictwa AGH, Cracow, 2014, pp. 280–281.

References

Bakiera L., *Zaangażowane rodzicielstwo a autokreacyjny aspekt rozwoju dorosłych*, Difin, Warsaw, 2013.

Bartnikowska U., Ćwirynkało K., "Niepełnosprawność mężczyzny a możliwości i ograniczenia w realizowaniu roli ojca", *Problemy Edukacji, Rehabilitacji i Socjalizacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych,* no. 20(1), 2015, pp. 63–79.

Bartnikowska U., Ćwirynkało K., "Wsparcie społeczne z perspektywy ojców z niepełnosprawnością", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej,* no. 13, 2014, pp. 124–138.

Bartnikowska U., Ćwirynkało K., "Wyzwania współczesnego ojcostwa w narracjach niepełnosprawnych mężczyzn", [in:] *Teoria i praktyka oddziaływań profilaktyczno-wspierających rozwój osób z niepełnosprawnością,* (eds.) G. Gunia, D. Baraniewicz, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Cracow 2014, pp. 105–114.

Błasiak A., "(Nowy) wymiar rodzicielstwa – wybrane aspekty", [in:] *Rodzicielstwo w wybranych zagadnieniach pedagogicznych,* (eds.) D. Opozda, M. Leśniak, Wydawnictwo Episteme, Lublin, 2017, pp. 29–43.

Borowska-Beszta B., Bartnikowska U., Stochmiałek, J., "Niepełnosprawność w rodzinie jako «wartość dodana». Międzynarodowe andragogiczne badania nad rodzinami generacyjnymi", *Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja*, no. 1, 2016, pp. 72–88.

Ciaputa E., Król A., Warat M., "Genderowy wymiar niepełnosprawności. Sytuacja kobiet z niepełnosprawnościami wzroku, ruchu i słuchu", [in:] *Polscy niepełnosprawni. Od kompleksowej diagnozy do nowego modelu polityki społecznej*, (eds.) B. Gąciarz, S. Rudnicki, Wydawnictwa AGH, Cracow, 2014, pp. 275–334.

Czerwińska K., "Stopniowa utrata wzroku a wypełnianie ról społecznych w dorosłości", [in:] *Tyflopedagogika wobec różnorodności współczesnych wyzwań edukacyjno-rehabilitacyjnych*, (eds.) K. Czerwińska, K. Miler-Zdanowska, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2017, pp. 189–211.

Czerwińska K., Kucharczyk I., *Tyflopsychologia. Realizacja zadań rozwojowych w biegu życia przez osoby z niepełnosprawnością wzroku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2019.

Gładyszewska-Cylulko J., "Autostygmatyzacja osób z niepełnosprawnością wzrokową", *Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 22, 2018, pp. 185–200, doi: 10.14746/ikps.2018.22.11.

Górnicka B., "Wybrane aspekty funkcjonowania osób z niepełnosprawnością w rolach rodzicielskich, *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska Lublin-Polonia*, Vol. XXVIII, no. 1, 2015, pp. 99–128, doi: 10.17951/j.2015.28.1.99.

Kaniok, P.E., "Rodzice z niepełnosprawnością – przegląd wybranych wyników badań zagranicznych", *Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja*, no. 1, 2014, pp. 66–73.

Kasperska M., Bodys-Cupak I., "Funkcjonowanie psychospołeczne niewidomych i słabowidzących w opinii osób z dysfunkcją wzroku oraz osób pełnosprawnych", "*Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja*, no. 4, 2012, pp. 4–15.

Kilkey M., Clarke H., "Disabled men and fathering: opportunities and constraints", *Community, Work & Family*, no. 13(2), 2010, pp. 127–146.

Kos E., „Wywiad narracyjny jako metoda badań empirycznych", [in:] *Badania jakościowe w pedagogice. Wywiad narracyjny i obiektywna hermeneutyka*, (eds.) D. Urbaniak-Zając, E. Kos, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2013, pp. 91–116.

Kowalik S., *Psychologia rehabilitacji*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warsaw, 2007.

Kurcbart, A., *Psychologiczny obraz ojca w biegu życia*, Difin, Warsaw, 2011.

Lamb M.E., *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, John Wiley&Sons, New York, 2010.

Lamb M.E., "Fathers' influences on children's development: The evidence from two-parent families", *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, no. 18(2), 2003, pp. 211–228.

Łobocki M., *Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Cracow, 2003.

Marzec-Tarasińska A., "Oddziaływania wychowawcze ojców a poglądy młodzieży na temat roli ojca w rodzinie", *Wychowanie w Rodzinie*, no. XIII(1), 2016, pp. 257–276, doi: 10.23734/wwr20161.257.276.

Nowakowska A., "Rodzicielstwo osób z różnymi rodzajami niepełnosprawności", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 31, 2018, pp. 116–131.

Perrone K.M., Webb L.K., Blalock R.H., "The effects of role congruence and role conflict on work, marital, and life satisfaction", *Journal of Career Development*, no. 31(4), 2005, pp. 225–238.

Pietrowiak K., *Świat po omacku. Etnograficzne studium (nie)widzenia i (nie)sprawności*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń, 2019.

Pilch T., Bauman T., *Zasady badań pedagogicznych. Strategie ilościowe i jakościowe*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie "Żak", Warsaw, 2001.

Racław M., *Postawy Polaków wobec ojcostwa – wybrane aspekty w świetle badań społecznych*, Raport "Rola ojca i postawy Polaków wobec ojcostwa w świetle badań społecznych" 2013, Chancellery of the Senate, Warsaw.

Smart L., Wegner, D.M., "Ukryte koszty ukrytego piętna", [in:] *Społeczna psychologia piętna*, (eds.) T.F. Heatherton, R.E. Kleck, M.R. Hebl, J.G. Hull, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 205–245.

Szabała B., "Stereotypowy wizerunek osób niewidomych", [in:] *Dystans społeczny wobec osób z niepełnosprawnością jako problem pedagogiki specjalnej*, (eds.) M. Parchomiuk, B. Szabała, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin, 2012, pp. 89–100.

Tyszkowa M., *Rozwój jednostki w cyklu życia: teoria i metodologia badań*, Poznań Society of Friends of Learning of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań 2010.

Wałachowska M., „Specyfika macierzyństwa kobiet z niepełnosprawnością wzroku", [in:] *Tradycja i współczesność pedagogiki specjalnej w tworzeniu społeczeństwa dla wszystkich*, (eds.) J. Głodkowska, K. Sipowicz, I. Patejuk-Mazurek, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 155–172.

Zaorska M., "Role małżeńskie w percepcji osób dorosłych z niepełnosprawnością wzrokową", [in:] *Nauka. Edukacja. Praca*, (eds.) U. Jeruszka, J. Łaszczyk, B. Marcinkowska, F. Szlosek Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 285–294.

Żuraw H., "Koncepcje osób niewidomych w poglądach osób z wykształceniem średnim", *Szkoła Specjalna,* no. 3, 2008, pp. 163–174.

Żurko M., "Doświadczanie ojcostwa w świetle narracji mężczyzn w okresie średniej dorosłości", [in:] *Psychologia małych i wielkich narracji*, (eds). M. Straś-Romanowska, B. Bartosz, M. Żurko, Wydawnictwo Psychologii i Kultury, Warsaw, 2010, pp. 157–168.

AGNIESZKA IWANICKA

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Loneliness as a potential consequence of the presence of children in the digital world

ABSTRACT: Agnieszka Iwanicka, *Loneliness as a potential consequence of the presence of children in the digital world*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 61–76. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.04

The feeling of loneliness is a condition that affects not only adults and youth, but also children. It may be a temporary and transient in nature, occurring as a response to external circumstances, although it can also be long-lasting, as long as months and years, and be a result of deep, traumatic childhood experiences. One of its most common sources is isolation of a child in a family, peer groups and at school. In the article, the author considersnwhether the sense of loneliness experienced by children can also be traced back to the media and the functioning of children in the digital environment. Thanks to the conductednqualitative study (focus interviews with children), the paper answers questions regarding how early school-age children perceive loneliness and isolation, and whether they link this phenomenon with digital media.

KEY WORDS: digital world, children and loneliness, new technology

Introduction

Early school-age children feel right at home in the digital world – from an early age, they can see adults who use digital media, and their habits and behaviours contribute to the increasingly common

and earlier use of ICT by children.[1] However, they rarely possess enough media competence to know that the use of new technologies can lead children to a kind of a digital trap – by opening the door to the world of endless possibilities by facilitating communication, education and access to entertainment, they can at the same time negatively impact the social development of a child, disrupt their interpersonal relationships established in that period in their lives, and even cause them to experience a growing sense of loneliness and isolation. Loneliness in children is a significant issue, which gives rise to a number of long-term negative outcomes. Research shows that even small children perfectly understand the meaning of the concept of loneliness.[2] The author was curious whether the sense of loneliness experienced by some children could be linked to the fact that they are exposed to the media throughout their development, and this hypothesis formed the basis of the study. In order to respond to the research question posed, the author carried out a qualitative study in the form of focus interviews with primary education students attending integration classes. The aim of the study was to examine and describe whether the digital environment and the use of new technologies can contribute to a sense of loneliness among early school-age children.

The problem of loneliness and isolation of children is quite often discussed in literature,[3] usually it is brought up in the context of

---

[1] D. Batorski, "Technologie i media w domach i życiu Polaków", [in:] *Diagnoza społeczna 2015: Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*, J. Czapiński, T. Panek (eds.), Rada Monitoringu Społecznego, Warsaw, 2015; J. Pyżalski, A. Zdrodowska, Ł. Tomczyk, *Polskie badania EU Kids Online 2018. Najważniejsze wyniki i wnioski*, Fundacja Orange, Warsaw, 2019

[2] Cf. J. Cassidy, S.R. Asher, *Loneliness and peer relations in youth children. Child Development*, 63(2), 1992, pp. 350–365; G.W. Ladd, B.J. Kochenderfer, C.C. Coleman, *Friendship quality as a predictor of young children's early school adjustment*, 67(3), 1996, pp. 1103–1118.

[3] H. Cudak, *Szkice z badań nad rodziną*, Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna Kielce, Kielce, 1995, p. 8, 45; H. Izdebska, "Współżycie pokoleń w rodzinie", *Problemy opiekuńczo-wychowawcze*, 1980, no. 9; J. Cassidy, S.R. Asher, *Loneliness and peer relations in youth children. Child Development*, 63(2), 1992, pp. 350–365.

dysfunctional families, characterised by the weakening of the emotional bond between its members,[4] the lack of psychological bonds between them,[5] or the lack of broadly understood support that a child should receive from its parents. Some authors point out that that more and more often parents are absent from their children's experiences, which may cause them to feel lonely.[6] This absence can be both physical (caused by long working hours, apparent lack of time for the child, exhaustion) but also emotional (rejection of the child's needs in favour of their own, excessive involvement in other matters – professional and social life, as well as excessive use of media at the expense of time spent with the child). However, to date, there were no studies, which would attempt to capture the relationship between loneliness and the functioning of children in the digital world. The study carried out by the author are an attempt at filling the gap in this research area, as the author believes that the awareness of the link between the feeling of isolation with digital media should become a permanent part of the subject of media pedagogy studies and be a concern for media educators, teachers and parents. This will allow them to take appropriate measures to support children facing this issue, while enabling them to change their situation. Perhaps the topic of loneliness in children and its links with digital media should be even referred to in the core curriculum of primary schools.

Loneliness and isolation in the digital world

In spite of the fact that loneliness can affect a person at any stage of their development, it is least associated with childhood. Mean-

---

[4] H. Cudak, *Szkice z badań nad rodziną*, Kielce, 1995, p. 8, 45.

[5] G. Gajewska, "Opuszczenie i osamotnienie dziecka wśród dorosłych", [in:] *Nowe stulecie dziecku*, G. Gajewska, D. Waloszek, (eds.) Zielona Góra, 2001, p. 267.

[6] E. Kozdrowicz, "Dziecko zagubione w rzeczywistości", [in:] *Nowe stulecie dziecku*, G. Gajewska, D. Waloszek, (eds.) Zielona Góra, 2001, pp. 258–260.

while, in reality children also experience loneliness or a sense of isolation in their closest family and peer circles.

The analysis of available sources makes it possible to distinguish between the concepts of loneliness and isolation. In certain situations not only adults but also children consciously seek isolation, and they do so for various reasons: to rethink their emotions, to gain distance from problems, to plan for the future. Thus, isolation understood in this way is a state resulting from one's own choice: desirable and necessary for one's personal development.[7] According to Szczepański, isolation is a feeling of lack of contact with other people and oneself.[8] It means experiencing loneliness, understood as physical distance from others, subjective mental experiences, feeling of lack of bond with other people, as well as oneself.[9] Thus, understood this way, it constitutes "a limitation of an individual's development, a disturbance of their normal functioning, a burden on life experience […]"[10] The feeling of isolation may be deepened in the cases where interpersonal contacts with other people are disrupted, when people feel that nobody thinks or remembers them, when they are treated by other members of our development environment in a subjective way.[11] This is most often understood as a result not so much of internal limitations as of external situations or conditions people operate in. In the case of children, in particular the youngest ones, loneliness will usually be conflated with isolation. It is seldom their own choice, because it stands in opposition to their developmental needs, rather it is a sum of unfavourable envi-

_____

[7] I. Niewiadomska, "Osamotnienie – sprzyja toksykomanii", *Problemy Alkoholizmu*, Warsaw, 1994, no. 8–9, p. 13.

[8] J. Szczepański, *Sprawy ludzkie,* Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, Warsaw, 1980, p. 23.

[9] B. Matyjas, *Źródła prowadzące do osamotnienia dziecka w rodzinie,* Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego Kielce, Kielce, 2011.

[10] E. Dubas, "Samotność i osamotnienie jako wyznacznik dla dzisiejszej edukacji", [in:] *Pedagogika wobec zagrożeń, kryzysów i nadziei,* ed. T. Borowska, Krakow, 2002, p. 101.

[11] J. Gajda, "Samotność", [in:] Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku, vol. V, ed. T. Pilch, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warsaw, 2003, p. 657.

ronmental factors that the child has no impact on, especially when it comes to adults – the child needs their attention, support, help, interest in school and life outside school, as well as in contacts with peers and their interests.

For the purposes of this study, the author uses the terms *loneliness* and *isolation* interchangeably, understanding them as "a feeling of loneliness, or a mental state characterised by the painful feeling of a lack of bond and regular contact with a person, who is important to the child".[12] The author decided to do this consciously, knowing that for early school-age children the difference between these concepts may be elusive, and these terms are often used synonymously by adults.

The feeling of loneliness experienced by children can be caused by a number of factors, the most important of which seems to be the weakening of emotional bonds between family and members of their immediate peer group. By analysing the source materials, one can see that new technologies are becoming increasingly important in the lives of Polish families. With every new year, families spend more and more of their free time using new technologies.[13] The excessive use of the media by children can have a destructive and disintegrating effect on the family – the increasing amount of time devoted to the media can come at the expense of other activities or the time that the child could spend with the family, which can be detrimental to integration, as well as building bonds and relationships within the family.

The media play an important role in the lives of young parents, who use them for work, communication, information and entertainment. Studies show that parents are keen to shift the tasks that until recently were their parental responsibilities – education, playing and making sure the child is occupied in their free time is in-

---

[12] M. Łopatkowa, *Samotność dziecka,* Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warsaw, 1983, p. 4.

[13] D. Batorski, "Technologie i media w domach i życiu Polaków", [in:] J. Czapiński, T. Panek (eds.), *Diagnoza społeczna 2015: Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*, pp. 355–377, Warsaw: Rada Monitoringu Społecznego, 2015.

creasingly associated with the use of digital tools in younger and younger children. Parents themselves admit that they use new media to capture the child's attention, to calm them down, to claw back some time for themselves, or to take care of other, more urgent matters.[14]

Children are increasingly exposed to contacts with new technologies even in the cases where this happens unintentionally. Additionally, they participate passively in the use of digital tools – smartphones, tablets, computers – by their guardians (parents, older siblings, grandparents).[15] Watching adults in the digital world, even the youngest children can become convinced that the world offered by the media is more interesting than offline life, that media is a great tool that provides fun and entertainment, while warding off boredom. In many cases, children who are left to their own devices reach for digital devices which, unlike their parents, are always present and always ready to fill their time. According to Izdebska: "Having loved ones and feeling lonely is the worst kind of loneliness, because it kills one's hope, weakens motivation, deforms mentally".[16] At the same time, the lack of time for children is turning into a negative symbol of our contemporary life, resulting in a sense of loneliness among family members. While spending their time alone, even in spite of not being physically separated from their parents, children experience a sense of injustice, rejection, alienation.

The media and digital devices seem to have become an alternative, which helps children alleviate and overcome this feeling. This gives rise to a kind of paradox – in order to fill the emotional void, children use digital devices, drifting even further away not only from their parents but also from their peers.

––––––––––––

[14] D. Batorski, "Technologie i media w domach i życiu Polaków", [in:] J. Czapiński, T. Panek (eds.), *Diagnoza społeczna 2015: Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*, pp. 355–377, Warsaw: Rada Monitoringu Społecznego, 2015.

[15] J. Marsh, P. Hannon, M. Lewis, L. Ritchie, "Young children's initiation into family literacy practices in the digital age", *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, p. 1–14, 2015.

[16] H. Izdebska, "Współżycie pokoleń w rodzinie", *Problemy opiekuńczo-wychowawcze*, 1980, no. 9.

Parents are increasingly absent from their children's experiences, which are now largely related to the digital messages they receive. The lack of knowledge about the media among the parents, combined with a lack of appropriate role models to learn how to properly and safely use the new media lead children to watching animated films in the TV and YouTube videos, playing video games and using social networking sites on their own, without any supervision. Many parents do not even try to explore this world, leaving children completely unattended. They do not talk to children about what they do online, they do not explain the digital world, they do not know what makes children happy in this world, what makes them very emotional, what makes them anxious and worried. Such an attitude not only fosters discouragement, indifference and distrust in children, but also leads to the loosening of the psychological bond between parents and their children.

One of the most common accusations levelled against the media is that they significantly damage social contacts and adversely affect the emotional life of their users. Maciej Tanaś lists a number of potential threats and risks, such as social alienation and weakening of family ties or social relations in general, as well as escapism from the real world into the world of media.[17] Undoubtedly, the digital community in which a child lives also affects their relationships with peers, since young people shape their psyche in their relationships with the group, and this process usually occurs in school. The use of media or specific digital content is a topic, which frequently pops up in conversations among early school age children. They devote a lot of time to that topic in their conversations: they analyse videos watched on YouTube, clips recorded on TikTok, as well as photos and accounts published on Instagram. New technologies can also help children to acquire a certain position in their peer group. Owning a smartphone, installed apps, video games, a high-end

_____

[17] M. Tanaś, "Primum non nocere a internetowa przestrzeń wolności i aktywności nastolatków", [in:] *Nastolatki wobec internetu*, NASK, ed. M. Tanaś, Naukowa i Akademicka Sieć Komputerowa, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 48–49.

computer or tablet often helps them to become a part of a group, to feel like they belong. Like books in the days of old, these days popular children's TV shows, applications and video games form links that connect children to each other, allowing them to communicate and get together on the basis of common interests. Watching shows together or playing popular video games can stimulate conversation just as well as discussing a book people read, since this leads to shared experiences that bring children closer together, giving them joy and laughter. However, it can also lead to fighting for hierarchy in the group, trying to establish one's position in the peer group, due to the urge to dominate over others, humiliating someone in a computer game, as well as boasting about one's digital skills. This situation also leads to the risk of social exclusion of those children who do not have access to digital tools – social ostracism caused by the lack of a fashionable phone, popular game or app can even lead to extreme situations such as bullying or theft of desired devices. It can also be a reason for the child to be rejected by a peer group and, as a result, lead to a feeling of loneliness.

Study results

In 2019, the author carried out qualitative studies in two primary schools in Poznań. The aim of the study was to examine and describe whether the digital environment and the use of new technologies can contribute to a sense of loneliness among early school-age children.

Thus formulated study objective required the author to identify research problems:

1. How do early school-age children perceive loneliness and isolation?
2. Do children connect a sense of loneliness with digital media?

In order to answer the study questions, the author used focus group interviews with children (also known as focus group, group discussion, focus or focus study), which can be considered as

a communicative data collection technique.[18] This type of interview enables interaction and discussion within the group,[19] as well as offers direct access to facts, with the additional benefit that the information obtained is accurate and reliable. The focus study was carried out according to the prepared set of instructions with special care and conditions for a good interview with the child. The study involved 30 primary schoolchildren attending the 3rd grade. In the study, the author selected a targeted study group, based on the age of children, the number of children examined in the study, their respective genders and the schools in which the study took place. The author set up 5 focus groups, with six children in each group, which allowed to keep the atmosphere of intimate closeness and openness. The children chosen for the study attended integration classes, and the study group involved 15 boys and 15 girls. For the purpose of this paper, children's statements are quoted without the codes assigned to them during the study.

1. Perception of loneliness and isolation by early school-age children

Early school-age children not only perfectly understand the concept of loneliness, but also declare that they experience loneliness themselves. When asked the question about the meaning of loneliness, they responded with: "*it's about being sad*", "*it's being alone all the time*", "*it's a kind of a pain in your heart, because a person is alone*". They also know where loneliness comes from: "*It's a sad feeling when nobody wants to play with you or talk to you*", "*it's when you're standing alone in the classroom or in the hallway and nobody talks to you*", "*you're constantly alone, you have no friends*", "*it's when your parents don't pay attention to you*", "*it's because parents would rather stare at the TV than*

───────────

[18] S. Banaszak, *Technika i jej zastosowanie w badaniach edukacyjnych,* Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań, 2017.

[19] R.A. Krueger, M.A. Casey, *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research,* Sage Publications Inc, Thousand Oaks: 2000.

play with me", "it's because my mum doesn't even talk to me, she just keeps checking her Facebook"; "when I talk to my mum, and she just nods, I know she doesn't listen to me at all, she's just busy writing something on the Internet or posting pictures on Instagram".

They also know perfectly well what can be done to overcome loneliness: *"find a friend", "somebody who likes you", "a person who likes to spend time with you", "somebody who has time for you".* Some also referred to new technologies: *"To avoid being lonely, you have to find someone, a friend, who would rather talk to you than play with their phone". "I won't be lonely when I get my parents to leave their phones alone and play with me instead". "You have to make friends with somebody and be important to that person. Even more important than recording TikTok clips or posting photos on Instagram". "To not be lonely, you have to like somebody who likes you back, who likes spending time with you and will always choose you, instead of doing stuff on their phone".*

The children were also asked about how important it is for them to spend time with other people. If they had to make a choice: unlimited access to media (smartphone, tablet, TV, computer) and a meeting with a friend, what choice would they make? In response, all children declared that they would choose to meet their friend. Why this is the case? Because they miss such contacts, because they feel the need to deepen them, because meetings with their peers at school are not enough for them, because they prefer direct relations with other people to those mediated by the media. The children pointed out that in spite of the fact that technology and media are a great source of entertainment, they largely contribute to their loneliness.

2. The relationship between loneliness and digital media in children's opinions

To find out the answers to this research problem, the author asked the children a number of questions. One of the first concerned the reasons for using new technologies at home at all. In their answers, the children pointed out that they use them because of the

lack of alternative activities, ideas on how to fill their free time, as well as out of boredom. They claim that when left alone, often without the supportive presence of their parents, they choose digital media as an easily accessible means to fill their free time after school; however, they would be happy to exchange them for an opportunity to spend time playing, as well as meeting with their peers or parents:

> *"If I had to choose whether to play with someone on the console or go out with friends, I would choose my friends, because since I moved here, I rarely get to see someone, I don't know anyone here and I just don't have anybody to go out with, so I'd rather do that than sit home alone and play games".*
> *"I'd always prefer to meet a friend, because often when I watch something, I get bored sitting alone at home. My parents are never there, and I don't know what to do… If I had someone to meet, I would rather choose to play with them, rather than watching animated films and playing games".*

When asked if they had ever felt lonely at home, even though their parents were physically close, they replied:

> *"I often feel lonely, because my mum just sits with her phone and keeps doing something on it, I don't know why. When I ask her, she never shows me and tells me to go and play. I'd rather play with her or play a game together…"*
> *"I get very sad sometimes, because my parents are at home, but they don't care about me at all, they always say 'later, later' and then they do nothing at all. Dad plays games, and mum constantly talks with her friends on Messenger".*

Sometimes they experience similar feelings at school or during meetings with their peers. They notice that for many of their peers, their media are so valuable that using them makes them feel lonely:

> *"Sometimes, when I meet my friends, they pull out their phones and I feel like they don't respect me, they don't see me, they just see their*

screens, that light. It's not a cool feeling… We're supposed to be together, and yet we aren't".

"Sometimes when I go outside, I grab my phone, my friends do the same thing and then we don't get bored, because we keep looking at stuff. Despite that, we get kind of bored, because we just stare at our phones instead of talking.

"You can sit in the same room, close to each other, but if you have your computer and phone on, it's like we're not in that room at all. I would always prefer to spend less time with someone, but to be really with each other and do various things together, rather than be with each other, and spend time playing on the phone or on the console".

Children notice that topics concerning digital content dominate in their conversations, at times resulting even in peer exclusion:

"All the guys in class play games, so that's all we talk about. In the other class, there's this boy who doesn't play games. And the guys from his class always stand in a group of four, talking about games, and he doesn't know what they're talking about and he always stands to the side, and he probably feels very lonely".

"At some point, no one wanted to play with me because I didn't watch the film, and the girls didn't want to tell me how to play, I was very sad because I had to stand alone and do nothing".

Although few of them experienced a sense of loneliness at school because of this, children were aware that new technologies could have a real impact on their relationships with peers:

"Phones can make you just look at them, make you never talk to anybody and be constantly alone. The others will eventually start having fun without you…"

"When I visit my friend, and she doesn't even look at me, she just looks at the phone, I don't want to meet with her any more. It's sad, because even when we're walking home from school together, she keeps staring at it all the time. That makes me feel lonely, as if I was alone. I'm with her, but at the same time I'm alone".

Children's opinions should be an important clue for adults, letting us know that they feel increasingly lonely because of their own contact with the media, as well as that of their adult guardians. Children interact with other people, communicate their social needs and expect them to be satisfied in their closest circles. When the family is unable or unwilling to meet them, they begin to satisfy them somewhere else and in other ways, such as new technologies, which result in a certain paradox – they further exacerbate the phenomenon of loneliness in the digital world.

The last question asked by the author was: "*How would you feel if the media disappeared?*"

Only three children seemed to worry about such a vision of the world. The remaining children replied: I would be somewhat sad and happy and the same time. At first, the children were confused by that strange question, but then they started to plan their lives without new technologies. They came to the conclusion that – although they would be sad and uncomfortable at the beginning – such a situation could result in something good, for example more time spent together with their parents and peers:

> *"I'd be very sad that I wouldn't be able to record any more TikTok clips, but I could play more board games with my parents, maybe they'd have more time for me. Now it's really not the case, I'm alone all the time".*
> *"It would be a little good and a little bad at the same time. I'd feel desperate… but maybe that could be fun, too? It's because my mum constantly watches the TV, and if that was the case, I could play with my mum, go to the park and spend time together".*
> *"I'd feel sad, I'd miss it a little bit, but if everything disappeared, I think it would be better. No one would bully or insult anybody, there would be no YouTube, everyone would have fun and spend more time together. My parents, for example, could spend more time with me".*

In other words, children believe that such an unusual situation could become an opportunity for them to strengthen their relationships and see new opportunities and ways of filling their free time.

These responses also allowed the author to conclude, contrary to the popular opinion, that children deem the company of their peers and family way more important than using new technologies, which leads to the conclusion that it is the adults who are largely to blame for the fact that children experience loneliness, despite being surrounded by their loved ones.

Conclusions

Some of the results of the study presented in this paper lead to the conclusion that the digital environment and the use of new technologies can contribute to the feeling of a sense of loneliness among early school-age children.

Children know this feeling, they can not only define it and determine where it stems from (rejection by peers and parents), but they also know what to do in order to counteract and alleviate it (maintaining relationships, entering into relationships and strengthening them in absence of new technologies). One of the reasons for loneliness indicated by children is that they experience loneliness among their family and loved ones. They note that parents increasingly use digital tools in their free time, at the expense of other activities that could be undertaken without said tools, but together, as a family (for example playing or simply spending time together). Feeling more and more lonely, they start using new technologies themselves, and gradually lose control of their time. In their statements, the children indicated that they did not know what could make for a good alternative to digital media, because they have always been present in their lives, and they always associated them with tools used to ward off loneliness and boredom. Children are starting to use new technologies not only at home but also outside their homes, using them to keep in touch with their peers, which may lead to significant consequences in their lives. Excessive use of the media without counterbalancing them with other activities, as

well as without the supervision of the adults both over the quality and duration of this contact may lead them to experiencing loneliness and estrangement as a result of other members of their peer group, who do not hold the media in such a high regard, leaving them for others. Children notice that excessive immersion in the digital world can lead to loneliness: despite physical closeness – for example, even despite being in the same room, one may feel lonely when other people do not pay attention.

Loneliness can also result from the opposite situation, when a child does not use media and does not have apps, tools or devices popular among their peers. This may lead to social exclusion, resulting in a sense of loneliness.

Both loneliness and isolation usually result from overlapping external factors. This is also the case in this situation – it can be assumed that appropriate digital skills of parents and teachers, their attention and vigilance, could prevent the aforementioned situations leading to loneliness experienced by children in many situations. In social discourse, there is a belief that communication mediated by the media is preferred by children and adolescents, and chosen more willingly than face-to-face communication with other members of society; however, recent studies seem to contradict that hypothesis, showing that children value direct relationships as much as those mediated by the media.[20] The author reached a similar conclusion in the study, as children knew that the remedy for loneliness is simple – being mindful of them and spending time with them: *"I'd like someone to finally pay attention to me. To me, not to the phone"*.

References

Banaszak S., *Technika i jej zastosowanie w badaniach edukacyjnych,* Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań, 2017.

---

[20] D. Boyd, *It's Complicated: the Social Lives of Networked Teens*, Yale University Press, New Haven – London, 2014, pp. 20–28.

Batorski D., "Technologie i media w domach i życiu Polaków", [in:] *Diagnoza spo-łeczna 2015: Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*, J. Czapiński, T. Panek (eds.), Rada Monitoringu Społecznego, Warsaw, 2015.

Boyd D., *It's Complicated: the Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2014.

Cassidy J., Asher S.R, *Loneliness and peer relations in youth children. Child Development*, 63(2),1992.

Cudak H., *Szkice z badań nad rodziną*, Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna Kielce, Kielce, 1995.

Dubas E., "Samotność i osamotnienie jako wyznacznik dla dzisiejszej edukacji", [in:] *Pedagogika wobec zagrożeń, kryzysów i nadziei,* ed. T. Borowska, Krakow, 2002.

Gajda J., "Samotność", [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku,* vol. V, ed. T. Pilch, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warsaw, 2003.

Gajewska G., "Opuszczenie i osamotnienie dziecka wśród dorosłych", [in:] *Nowe stulecie dziecku*, G. Gajewska, D. Waloszek, (eds.) Zielona Góra, 2001.

Izdebska H., "Współżycie pokoleń w rodzinie", *Problemy opiekuńczo-wychowawcze*, 1980, no. 9.

Kozdrowicz E., "Dziecko zagubione w rzeczywistości", [in:] *Nowe stulecie dziecku*, G. Gajewska, D. Waloszek, (eds.) Zielona Góra, 2001.

Krueger R.A., Casey M.A., *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research,* Sage Publications Inc, Thousand Oaks 2000.

Ladd G.W., Kochenderfer B.J., Coleman C.C., *Friendship quality as a predictor of young children's early school adjustment*, 67(3), 1996.

Łopatkowa M., *Samotność dziecka,* Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warsaw, 1983.

Marsh J., Hannon P., Lewis M., Ritchie L., "Young children's initiation into family literacy practices in the digital age", *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2015.

Matyjas B., *Źródła prowadzące do osamotnienia dziecka w rodzinie,* Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego Kielce, Kielce, 2011.

Niewiadomska, "Osamotnienie – sprzyja toksykomanii", *Problemy Alkoholizmu*, Warsaw, 1994, no. 8–9.

Pyżalski, J., Zdrodowska, A., Tomczyk, Ł., *Polskie badania EU Kids Online 2018. Naj-ważniejsze wyniki i wnioski*, Warsaw, Fundacja Orange, 2019.

Szczepański J., *Sprawy ludzkie,* Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, Warsaw, 1980.

Tanaś M., "Primum non nocere a internetowa przestrzeń wolności i aktywności nastolatków", [in:] *Nastolatki wobec internetu*, NASK, ed. M. Tanaś, Naukowa i Akademicka Sieć Komputerowa, Warsaw, 2015.

NATALIA WALTER

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Online social functioning of students of Polish higher education institutions

ABSTRACT: Natalia Walter, *Online social functioning of students of Polish higher education institutions*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 77–92. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.05

The paper was devoted to the issue of social functioning of Polish higher education institution students online. The internet is a social space, which offers opportunities for civic engagement, and online political activism; it can also be a place of interactions, such as social support, which lead to the improvement of individual mental well-being. The paper outlines some of the results of a study carried out as part of a State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems project (40/3.4.3/ 19/DEA) in 2019 on a group of 4503 women and men, studying at Polish higher education institutions. The tool used to study the support was the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale, complemented by statements concerning online support. In order to investigate the phenomenon of social and civic engagement, the study used a scale of 14 statements, developed by Mateusz Marciniak. The results showed that the majority of the respondents (ca. 70%) never engaged in online fundraising campaigns, did not engage in political disputes online (more than 75%) and did not seek social support on the internet.

KEY WORDS: online social support, online social and civic engagement, university students

Introduction

The term 'social space' usually concerns a specific and limited area where interactions and communication processes both take place. In the case of the internet, this is connected with the complete disappearance of traditional space-time boundaries. What is more, in this case we are dealing with virtual reality, which – according to some authors – is immaterial and imaginary. Despite that, the internet is considered a social space and its users become part of a larger community.[1] "The internet is a technology that not only serves the public sphere but also becomes socialised, mirrors this sphere and can be populated or even inhabited",[2] The social space of the internet is referred to as the cyberworld, cyberspace, which is inhabited by virtual society, communities and groups.[3] The contemporary concepts concerning the internet mostly adopt the approach that both online and offline communities interpenetrate, which makes it difficult to speak of dualism in this regard.

The internet is a tool, which may foster the development of social interaction, despite the lack of physical presence and closeness.[4] Referring to Bohdan Jałowiecki's urban space theory, Magdalena Szpunar defined the dimensions of the social space of the internet – the space of production (creative online activities, business activi-

---

[1] Cf. S. Jones, *CyberSociety 2.0: Revisiting Computer-mediated Communication and Community*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998; D. McQuail, *Teoria komunikowania masowego*, PWN, Warsaw, 2007; M. Castells, *Galaktyka Internetu*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2003, N. Walter, *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016 and more.

[2] A. Tarkowski, "Internet jako technologia i wyobrażenie. Co robimy z technologią, co technologia robi z nami?", [in:] *Społeczna przestrzeń Internetu*, D. Batorski., M. Marody, A. Nowak (eds.), Academica, Warsaw, 2006, p. 30.

[3] N. Walter, *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016.

[4] M. Szpunar, "Przestrzeń Internetu – nowy wymiar przestrzeni społecznej", [in:] *Media-Komunikacja-Zdrowie: Wyzwania-Szanse-Zagrożenia*, B. Aouil, W. Maliszewski (eds.), Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń, 2008, pp. 31–51.

ties), the space of power (governments, politics), the symbolic (spiritual) space, the space of consumption (leisure activities) and the space of exchange. The space of exchange, which is the most common online space, is conflated by the author with the exchange of information, which encompasses advice, sharing experiences, as well as libels and offensive messages. The space of the internet is technological, informational and social at the same time. The last type of spaces are communities that use and develop the internet. One may analyse them in terms of objective variables (such as living conditions, income, the manner of using the internet), behavioural variables (online behaviour) and subjective variables (concerning awareness – beliefs, opinions, evaluation of social relations).[5]

The development, implementation and dissemination of the Ajax technology ca. 2001 turned out to be a true breakthrough in the process of socialisation of the internet, leading to the emergence of Web 2.0 applications. Existing services, such as e-mail, WWW, discussion lists and groups, as well as online forums, chats and blogs were enhanced with new features. Additionally, a number of solutions have emerged at that time, believed by many internet users to be indispensable.[6] The development of the internet has led to the emergence of so-called new media (sometimes called the achievement of the Web 3.0 generation) of a more social nature. "Their primary purpose is to connect people and build relationships. Facebook, MySpace and Twitter are the best examples of such services, where the ability to post short, single-line posts encourages users to share their stories, thoughts and emotions with friends".[7]

During the study design phase, the authors decided to take a closer look at the following areas of online social activity of the respondents: 1) political and social activism, 2) engagement in online helping and 3) online social support.

_____

[5] M. Szpunar, "Przestrzeń Internetu – nowy wymiar przestrzeni społecznej", [in:] *Media-Komunikacja-Zdrowie: Wyzwania-Szanse-Zagrożenia*, B. Aouil, W. Maliszewski (eds.), Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń, 2008, pp. 31–51.

[6] N. Walter, *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016.

[7] P. Levinson, *Nowe nowe media*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków, 2010.

Here, it is worth pointing out that ICT are increasingly becoming more and more crucial for political and social activism. In particular, the tools ushered in by the advent of Web 2.0 and social media applications have played a significant role in influencing government decision-making and shaping relationships between governments, citizens, politicians and other social actors. Initially, activists used information technology to promote and disseminate the key ideas and concepts of social movements and to gain global following. Currently, we can see an apparent trend towards integrated use of social media tools and applications, which give rise to a phenomenon, which can be referred to as cyberactivism 2.0.[8]

Online social support, on the other hand, is closely linked to the concept of human mental well-being, which in turn depends on many factors, one of which includes social support, aimed at helping people in a critical situation. Such an event may be of a normative nature and be an integral part of human development (birth of the first child, starting the first job, death of a spouse), as well as traumatic (unexpected illness in family, a cataclysm, an accident). Support may serve the role of a protective buffer, helping the person experiencing a difficult situation to return to better mental state in shorter time. It is worth noting that the received support does not have to be the same as the support perceived by the supported person. Studies show that the internet may become a space of social support, in particular in situations, which require contact with other people, who share similar experiences.[9] The manifestations of online social support can be seen in various online services. In difficult situations, internet users usually turn towards thematic websites

---

[8] R. Sandoval-Almazan, J.R. Gil-Garcia, "Towards cyberactivism 2.0? Understanding the use of social media and other information technologies for political activism and social movements", *Government Information Quarterly*, Volume 31, Issue 3, 2014, pp. 365–378, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2013.10.016.

[9] Cf. A. Bambina, *Online social support. The Interplay of Social Networks and Computer-Mediated Communication*, Cambria Press, New York 2007; N. Walter, *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016.

and online forums, they also read blogs, social networking websites and discussion groups, but less often than the former. Usually they look for information, followed by instrumental support. They rarely seek emotional, spiritual and material support.[10]

Literature review

The studies encompassing young internet users *(Nastolatki 3.0. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów*, Bochenek, Lange (eds.), 2019; *Polskie badania EU Kids Online 2018. Najważniejsze wyniki i wnioski*, Pyżalski et al., 2019) indicate that the number of children and youth who are constantly connected to the internet is on the rise. Just like young people, the adults also never let go of their smartphones, which give them unfettered and unlimited access to the internet, and they use them no matter what kind of activity they participate in. This "background" use blurs the boundaries between "online" and "offline" life. It is therefore necessary to examine how and how often students of higher education institutions use the internet, and whether there are any correlations between their online activities and risky or pro-social behaviours.

The contemporary students are considered to be a generation that has internalised media convergence and that knows how to use various digital devices and media, as well as one that is endowed with social awareness that the previous generations did not have. According to a Havas Media study on young prosumers[11] among this generation, in 2011 47% of the population aged 18–25 considered themselves prosumers. They explained the fact that that the majority of them solely consumed content, rather than actually produced it by claiming that sharing content created by others is a form

---

[10] N. Walter, *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016.

[11] Euro RSCG Worldwide, "Millenials: The Challenger Generation", *Prosumer Report*, vol. 11, p. 4, 2001 http://www.prosumer-report.com/blog/wpcontent/uploads/2011/04/MGv16no%20crops.pdf, retrieved on: 29.11.2019.

of creating new content. For these people, sharing the information they read is part of their social engagement.[12] Studies carried out by EU Kids and NASK[13] have highlighted even lower creative involvement of younger internet users.

It is difficult to unequivocally claim whether online social support is widespread among studying women and men, who are predominantly young adults. According to Natalia Walter's study, less than half of pedagogy students surveyed declared that they would take advantage of online support in a critical situation, or a situation they personally would perceive as exceeding their ability to cope with it on their own.[14]

Methodology

The study was carried out in 2019 on a group of 4503 students of Polish higher education institutions, which was representative in terms of gender, place of residence and institution type.

Table 1. Study group – course type (N = 4503)

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Part-time courses	1588	35.3	35.3	35.3
Full-time courses	2915	64.7	64.7	100.0
Total	4503	100.0	100.0	

———————————

[12] M. Sánchez Martínez, R. I. Alonso,"Convergence and interaction in the new media: typologies of prosumers among university students", *Communication & Society*, 2015, pp. 87–99. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.28.2.87-99.

[13] J. Pyżalski, A. Zdrodowska, Ł. Tomczyk, K. Abramczuk, *Polskie badania EU KIDS ONLINE. Najważniejsze wyniki i wnioski*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2019; M. Bochenek, R. Lange, *NASTOLATKI 3.0. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów*, NASK Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, Warsaw, 2019.

[14] N. Walter, *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016.

The survey was attended by 1588 (35.3%) persons attending part-time courses, as well as 2915 (64.7%) persons attending full-time courses and study programmes.

The group of respondents included 3052 women (67.8%) and 1322 men (29.4%). According to data provided by Statistics Poland, in the academic year 2018/19 women constituted 58.0% of all students. Approximately 809,300 people signed up for full-time study programmes, making up 65.8% of all students, while approximately 421,000 signed up for part-time courses.[15] Therefore, it can be assumed that the distribution of the respondents is consistent with the nationwide distribution observed at higher education institutions.

Table 2. Study group – gender (N=4503)

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Note	woman	3052	67.8	69.8	69.8
	man	1322	29.4	30.2	100.0
	Total	4374	97.1	100.0	
No data	Systemic data gaps	129	2.9		
Total		4503	100.0		

The majority (85.9%) of the surveyed group were people born after 1992, who are members of the group of the so-called young adults.

The fragment of the study presented in this paper concerned the use of the internet by students. 95% of the respondents declared that they connect to the Internet using at least one of the following devices – a smartphone/mobile phone, desktop computer/laptop placed in a specific place at home, laptop they carry with them, a tablet, a sports wristband/smart watch, a console, a TV set. The respondents indicated that they most commonly used their smartphones

———————

[15] Statistics Poland (GUS), *Szkolnictwo wyższe w roku akademickim 2018/2019 (wyniki wstępne)*, 2019.

and mobile phones to connect to the internet (82.1% of all re-
spondents).

In order to examine the perceived social support among stu-
dents, the authors used the Multidimensional Perceived Social Sup-
port Scale.[16] Additionally, the respondents were asked questions
concerning online social support. The Likert scale employed in the
study included values from: 1 – I strongly disagree to 7 – I strongly
agree.

To investigate the phenomenon of social and civic engagement,
the authors used a scale designed and developed by Mateusz
Marciniak, comprising 14 questions; however, this paper focuses
only on selected items concerning online functioning. The responses
were provided in the form of a cafeteria, and the respondents were
to indicate whether they had undertaken particular activities during
the last year or earlier (described as "various activities undertaken
by some people"). Each statement could be answered with "yes"
or "no" (multiple choice, with the following available responses:
"during the last year", "earlier during my studies" and "before
studying").

Results

By far the largest source of support for female and male stu-
dents are people from their immediate social circles (indicated by
70 to 80% of all respondents). Online social support is less appreci-
ated, but remains quite important. The search for online social sup-
port takes place independently of the supportive presence of people
from the immediate social circles, although a certain correlation
cannot be fully excluded. Social support offered by the immediate

----

[16] G. Zimet, N. Dahlem, S. Zimet, G. Farley, "The Multidimensional Scale of
Perceived Social Support", *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52(1), 1998, pp. 30–41;
Polish version: K. Buszman, H. Przybyła-Basista, "Polska adaptacja wielowymiaro-
wej skali spostrzeganego wsparcia społecznego", *Polskie Forum Psychologiczne*,
vol. 22, no. 4, 2017, pp. 581–599.

Table 3. Offline and online social support (N = 4511)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1) There is a special person who is always nearby when I am in need	2.4	3.3	5.2	8	13.5	19.9	47
2) There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows	2	2.8	5.3	7	11	20.1	50.8
3) My family is really trying to help me	1.5	2.8	7.3	8.9	14.1	20.7	43.8
4) I receive the emotional help and support I need from my family	2.2	3.7	6.7	10.5	15.3	21.5	39.2
5) I have a special person who is a real source of comfort / support for me	2.4	2.8	4.8	8.5	10.5	19.4	50.6
6) My friends are really trying to help me	1.7	2.9	6.6	11.8	18.4	25.2	32.5
7) I can count on my friends when something goes wrong	2	3.2	6.3	11.5	17.7	25.7	32.9
8) I can talk to my family about my problems	3.4	5.2	9	11	16.5	21.4	32.5
9) I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows	1.8	3.1	6.5	10.1	15.3	25.6	36.6
10) There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings	3.3	3.5	5.7	9.1	11.6	17.5	48.5
11) My family is happy to help me make decisions	3.1	4.5	7.9	12.8	17.9	21	32
12) I can talk to my friends about my problems	2.2	4.2	6.8	11.3	16	24.7	33.9
13) In a difficult situation I look for support on the internet (e.g. online support groups)	41.4	16.9	11.4	11	7.9	6.2	4
14) I look up information about the issues I have online	21.3	16.2	14.8	14.2	15.4	9.8	7.2
15) I talk online to experts about my issues and problems, for example concerning my health	55.5	13.6	7.7	8.2	5.4	4.8	3.7
16) I can count on a virtual support group (online) when I go through hard times	62.4	11.7	6.4	7.6	4.1	3.5	3

social circles is noticed more often by women compared to men ($\chi2$=195.778, with p<0.0001), whereas such a difference cannot be indicated for online support. Childfree and childless people are more likely to take advantage of online support compared to parents ($\chi2$=62,921, at p<0,0001).

For a more complete visualization of the results, the authors have combined positive answers (5, 6, 7 on the Likert scale, from "I rather agree" to "I fully agree"). This summary is shown in Figure 1.
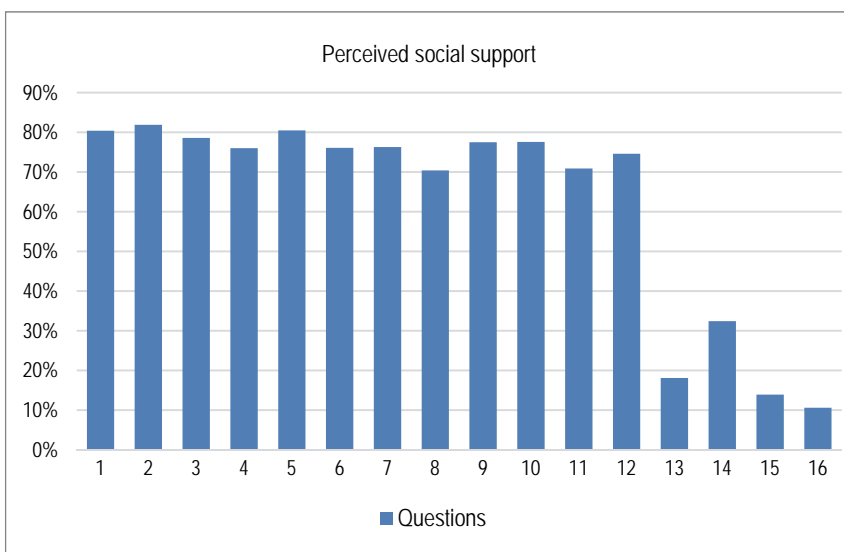
Fig. 1. Perceived social support (N=4470)

It is worth noting that students are rarely eager to take advantage of online social support, when it requires contact with other people who are online (e.g. support groups – 10.6%, as well as specialists – 13.9%). On the other hand, they more often tend to seek anonymous support (32.4%), not linked in any way to a specific person or a group, on their own – by searching for specific information.

As far as participation in charity fundraising campaigns or social activities using online crowdfunding websites such as Siepomaga is concerned, more than 70% of the respondents have never been involved in such activities. The responses to the question concerning participation in offline fundraising campaigns (for example participating in organisation of a charity event, charity race etc.) were similar. 39.3% of all respondents declared that they signed petitions concerning social or political issues, including on the internet. 22.7% of respondents have ever discussed political issues online, while 46.8% of students engaged in such disputes face to face, although it needs to be noted that the authors do not know who initiated these debates – students themselves or, for example, family members or friends.

Table 4. Diversification of the respondents in terms of social and civic engagement (N = 4503)

Forms of social and civic engagement (statements from the social and civic engagement scale)	NO	YES, during the last year	YES (earlier)	No data
	%	%	%	%
I actively participated in raising funds for social/charitable activities through a crowdfunding website or another online outlet (such as siepomaga.pl)	70.9	**18.3**	8.7	2.1
I have signed letters/petitions (including online ones) concerning social or political issues	58.7	**29.7**	9.5	2.1
I have discussed social or political issues during meetings with other people (for example friends and family)	51.3	**41.4**	5.4	1.9
I have discussed social or political issues online with other people	75.5	**16.3**	6.4	1.8

During the analysis of the social engagement of students on the internet, the authors referred to their participation in the daily help activities. It turns out that more often people who participate in offline help activities get involved in online help activities as well ($\chi 2$=866.929; at $p<0.0001$).
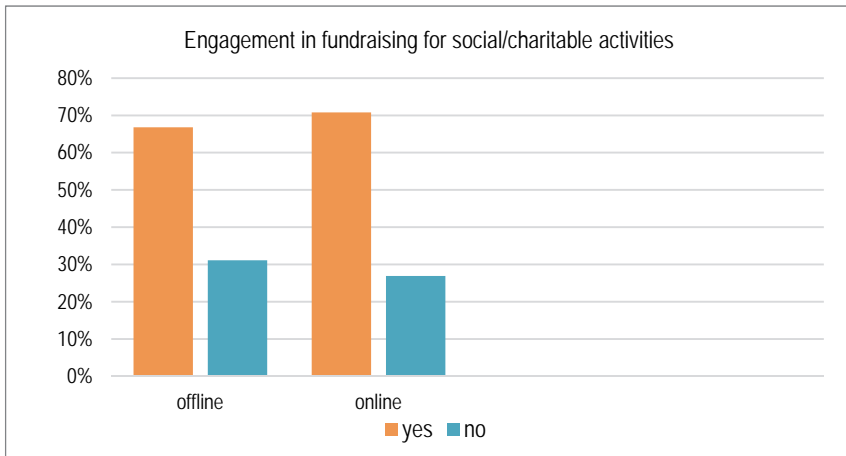
Fig. 2. Students' engagement in fundraising for social/charitable activities (N=4503)

As it was the case with offline engagement, women are slightly more eager to help online (28.8%) compared to men (23.6%) ($\chi 2$=12.991, at p=0.002). Interestingly, online support is more often taken advantage of by people who have never been involved in online charities (fundraising via crowdfunding websites) than those who have done so ($\chi 2$=105,233, at $p<0,0001$).

Discussion and conclusion

Young adulthood, which is the period of development characteristic of the majority of the respondents is one of the first periods of development in which a person encounters critical events that

result in the state of mental imbalance. Such critical events result in different emotional outcomes. Some of them are two-valued in their emotional nature, for example giving birth to a child (ranging from fear during childbirth to great joy) or graduating from school (the difficulties of exams vs. satisfaction with the result), others are associated with positive emotions (for example meeting a partner, success at work, at the university, finding a new apartment), and others are associated with negative emotions (for example failure at the university, at work, loss of a loved one).[17] Thus, the development tasks in young adulthood require, on the one hand, intellectual maturity, together with the ability to cope with problems and solve them, and on the other hand, emotional and social maturity, connected with taking responsibility for oneself and others.[18] The young adulthood age is characterised by optimistic dreams about the future; however, people at that age rarely think about possible difficulties. Parenthood, which is usually the closest normative critical event in the lives of young adults, also appears to be wonderful and full of happiness. It is therefore probably impossible for students to predict whether they would take advantage of online support in a situation of parental stress and whether they would be ready to participate in virtual support groups. The lack of interest in online support may also result from other issues that are described in the subject literature, such as individual ways of coping with stress, personality traits that exclude taking advantage of external resources, as well as supportive immediate circles acting as a kind of cocoon that guarantees safety.[19] In the case of young adults, who

---

[17] H. Sęk, A. Sommerfeld, *Być dorosłym?!* Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli im. W. Spasowskiego, Legnica, 1990.

[18] M. Kielar-Turska, "Rozwój człowieka w pełnym cyklu życia", [in:] *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki. Podstawy psychologii,* ed. J. Strelau, vol. 1, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, GWP, 2006, pp. 281–387.

[19] H. Sęk., R. Cieślak, "Wsparcie społeczne – sposoby definiowania, rodzaje i źródła wsparcia, wybrane koncepcje teoretyczne", [in:] *Wsparcie społeczne, stres i zdrowie*, H. Sęk, R. Cieślak (eds.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 11–28.

usually do not yet have strong support from their spouse and other people, the need of external help, including help sought online, arises somewhat more often. However, due to their age and the fact that they rarely ever experienced a critical event, they are rarely the main recipients of social support and they rarely offer it. As shown in studies carried out by other authors, people who are pro-social, open, active, who exhibit critical thinking are usually involved in providing online social support.[20] The paper shows that students are rarely eager to take advantage of online social support when it requires getting in touch in other people who are online, as they usually look for anonymous support, not linked to a specific person or group of people. Such a distribution shows that in the case of a critical event, the most important things include professional information, only followed by the possibility of talking to other people facing similar difficulties.

According to the concept coined by Havighurst, [21] in young adulthood (23–34 years old) a person should choose a life partner; learn to live with a partner; take on family roles; look after children; run the home; start a career; take on civic responsibility and choose the right social group. Young adulthood is the period when people make the most important decisions in life, "which require making a conscious choice and at the same time great ability to adapt creatively to the new tasks required in the professional and family setting."[22] According to many authors, responsibility – which takes the form of consciously making decisions about one's own life and accepting responsibility for the other, as well as autonomy, which corresponds to territorial and material independence – is the essence of adulthood. The presented study shows that social engagement in online activities, both in terms of political cyberactivism

_____

[20] N. Walter, *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016.

[21] R.J. Havighurst, *Human Development and Education*, Longman, New York, 1981.

[22] H. Sęk, A. Sommerfeld, *Być dorosłym?!* Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli im. W. Spasowskiego, Legnica, 1990, p. 10.

and participation in support campaigns is rather seldom. The willingness of students to use the internet does not translate into empathic or altruistic online and offline activities. This is most likely due to a certain prevailing attitude concerning making conscious decisions about their own life and autonomy, which – with age – may be gradually directed towards accepting full responsibility for the other and for society. The development of digital skills during school education, which so far has rather focused purely on instrumental aspects, as well as the negative image of the internet, also seems to be not without significance.

References

Bambina A., *Online social support. The Interplay of Social Networks and Computer-Mediated Communication*, Cambria Press, New York, 2007.

Bochenek M., Lange R., *NASTOLATKI 3.0. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów*, NASK Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, Warsaw, 2019.

Buszman K., Przybyła-Basista H., "Polska adaptacja wielowymiarowej skali spostrzeganego wsparcia społecznego", *Polskie Forum Psychologiczne*, vol 22, no. 4, 2017, pp. 581–599.

Castells M., *Galaktyka Internetu*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2003.

Euro RSCG Worldwide, "Millenials: The Challenger Generation", *Prosumer Report*, vol. 11, p. 4, 2001 http://www.prosumer-report.com/blog/wpcontent/uploads/2011/04/MGv16no%20crops.pdf, retrieved on: 29.11.2019.

Statistics Poland (GUS), *Szkolnictwo wyższe w roku akademickim 2018/2019 (wyniki wstępne)*, 2019.

Jones S., *CyberSociety 2.0: Revisiting Computer-mediated Communication and Community*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998.

Levinson P., *Nowe nowe media*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Krakow, 2010.

McQuail D., *Teoria komunikowania masowego*, PWN, Warsaw, 2007.

Pyżalski J., Zdrodowska A., Tomczyk Ł., Abramczuk K., *Polskie badania EU KIDS ONLINE. Najważniejsze wyniki i wnioski*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2019.

Szpunar, M. "Przestrzeń Internetu – nowy wymiar przestrzeni społecznej", [in:] *Media-Komunikacja-Zdrowie: Wyzwania-Szanse-Zagrożenia*, B. Aouil, W. Maliszewski (eds.), Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń, 2008, pp. 31–51.

Sánchez Martínez M., Alonso R.I., "Convergence and interaction in the new media: typologies of prosumers among university students", *Communication & Society*, 2015, pp. 87–99. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.28.2.87-99.

Sandoval-Almazan R., Gil-Garcia J.R., *Towards cyberactivism 2.0?* Understanding the use of social media and other information technologies for political activism and social movements", *Government Information Quarterly*, Volume 31, Issue 3, 2014, pp. 365–378, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2013.10.016.

Tarkowski A., "Internet jako technologia i wyobrażenie. Co robimy z technologią, co technologia robi z nami?", [in:] *Społeczna przestrzeń Internetu*, D. Batorski., M. Marody, A. Nowak, Academica, Warsaw, 2006, pp. 23–38.

Walter N., *Internetowe wsparcie społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2016.

Zimet G., Dahlem N., Zimet S., Farley G., "The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support", *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52 (1), 1998, pp. 30–41.

Havighurst R.J., *Human Development and Education*, Longman, New York, 1981.

Sęk H., Sommerfeld A., *Być dorosłym?!* Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli im. W. Spasowskiego, Legnica, 1990.

Sęk H., Cieślak R., "Wsparcie społeczne – sposoby definiowania, rodzaje i źródła wsparcia, wybrane koncepcje teoretyczne", [in:] *Wsparcie społeczne, stres i zdrowie*, H. Sęk, R. Cieślak (eds.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 11–28.

Kielar-Turska M., "Rozwój człowieka w pełnym cyklu życia", [in:] *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki. Podstawy psychologii,* ed. J. Strelau, vol. 1, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk, 2006, pp. 281–387.

Kornelia Czerwińska
The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw

Iwona Konieczna
The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw

Beáta Prónay
ELTE University in Budapest
Faculty of Special Needs Education

Education for students with disabilities – Polish and Hungarian solutions[1]

ABSTRACT: Kornelia Czerwińska, Iwona Konieczna, Beáta Prónay, *Education for students with disabilities – Polish and Hungarian solutions*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 93–127. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.06

The article is a direct outcome of a discourse aimed at exchanging experiences and views in the area of education and rehabilitation for people with disabilities in Poland and Hungary, undertaken as part of scientific cooperation between universities which deal with the issues of special education among others. The authors attempt to perform and present a comparative analysis of current academic solutions for students with disabilities in both countries. Similarities and differences in the solutions discussed, especially problematic areas currently showing in the educational systems, constitute the basis for further discussion and research aimed at developing best practices that would ensure quality education for children and adolescents with disabilities.

KEY WORDS: education, disability, students with disabilities, integration, inclusion

---

Introduction

Effective education is considered a necessary condition for the development of modern, knowledge-based societies as well as a basic tool to improve life quality at the individual and social level. Educational policy in many countries includes activities that promote the openness of the educational system. Nowadays, it is regarded essential to develop effective solutions oriented at providing wider access to education at all levels and meeting educational and developmental needs of all students, including, in particular, children and teenagers at risk of social marginalization.

The structure and functioning of the educational system are country-specific and depend on a number of political, economic, and sociocultural factors.[2] The complex nature of these factors is also manifest in solutions regarding education for students with disabilities adapted in different countries. The variety of educational models for this group of students introduced in various countries results from, among others: different history, including the political system and schooling development, different level of development and availability of modern technology, differences in access to information on rehabilitation opportunities, differences in the aims and strategies of social services providing social support, the relative nature of the concept of disability, and, consequently, different definitions of disability, etc.[3] Contemporary systems of education for students with disabilities use such a wide range of organizational forms that it is difficult to produce a correct and useful typology of these forms.[4]

―――――――――

[2] M. Satoła, „Edukacja specjalna w państwach Unii Europejskiej", [in:] *Postawy wobec niepełnosprawności*, L. Frąckiewicz (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Akademii Ekonomicznej im. K. Adamieckiego w Katowicach, Katowice, 2002, p. 35.

[3] Z. Gajdzica, „Komparatystyka jako dział wiedzy pedagogiki specjalnej", [in:] *Edukacja i wsparcie społeczne osób z niepełnosprawnością w wybranych krajach europejskich*, J. Wyczesany, Z. Gajdzica (Eds.), Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls," Cracow, 2005, pp. 25–26.

[4] A. Firkowska-Mankiewicz, G. Szumski, „Pedagogika specjalna i system kształcenia osób z niepełnosprawnościami w Polsce", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna*, Vol. 2,

The multitude of ways in which special education is organized provokes comparison of theoretical assumptions behind them, their aims, determinants, and effectiveness. The comparison of educational systems for students with disabilities with reference to philosophical and theoretical assumptions underlying these systems falls within the scope of interest of comparative special education.[5] Research undertaken as part of comparative special education has many functions, including among others: an idiographic function (provides an organized, comprehensive description of educational systems in various countries) and an improvement function (improves the native educational system by adopting highly regarded solutions from other countries that are at a similar level of socioeconomic development).[6]

The article aims to perform and present a comparative analysis of fundamental assumptions underlying the systems of education for students with disabilities in Poland and Hungary. The description of educational solutions focuses in particular on problematic and neglected areas identified in theoretical and empirical studies where changes and improvements need to be introduced to raise the quality of educational services. The choice of Poland and Hungary for comparative analysis of special education seems justified due to the countries' similar historic and cultural experiences. Both are post-communist countries that adopted democratic reforms after 1989 and adjusted their educational policies after they rejected the previous political system.[7] These countries are members of the

---

D.D. Smith, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2008, p. 337.

[5] Š. Vašek, A. Stankowski, *Zarys pedagogiki specjalnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, 2006, p. 125.

[6] G. Szumski, *Integracyjne kształcenie niepełnosprawnych. Sens i granice zmiany edukacyjnej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 2006, pp. 32–33.

[7] Cf. K. Wasielewski, "Ewolucja systemów oświatowych i postaw młodzieży wobec edukacji w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej", *Kultura i Edukacja*, no. 3(117), 2017, pp. 145–163. The study by K. Wasilewski provides a critical analysis of educational changes in (post-)communist countries that consisted mainly in imi-

European Union that follow centralized educational policy and use – just like Denmark, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Great Britain, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, and Slovenia – a multipath model as far as educational solutions for students with disabilities are concerned.[8]

Education for students with disabilities in Poland

Under the contemporary approach to special education in Poland, it should constitute a high-quality educational service that ensures meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities in terms of instructional organization and methods. Students with statements of special educational needs, issued by adjudication panels in public psychological and educational counseling centers, can receive compulsory education in special schools for students with a specific disability as well as in integrated and mainstream schools. The type of setting is chosen by parents of students with disabilities. Regardless of the unique nature of each of these settings, school is obliged to follow the psychological and educational counseling center's recommendations and to adapt educational conditions to a given student's individual needs and developmental abilities resulting from, among others, his or her health and skill level.[9] The student's special educational needs are identified and essential rehabilitation interventions are determined by a team composed of teachers and specialists appointed by the school prin-

―――――――――

tative modernization (copying institutional and legal solutions existing in Anglo-Saxon countries); however, it does not directly raise the issues relating to education for students with disabilities.

[8] D. Al-Khamisy, "Kształcenie uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi w powszechnym systemie oświatowym", [in:] *Dydaktyka specjalna w przygotowaniu do kształcenia uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi*, J. Głodkowska (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa, 2012, p. 119.

[9] B. Marcinkowska, *Kształcenie uczniów z niepełnosprawnością w Polsce – przeszłość, teraźniejszość, przyszłość*, *Psychologia Wychowawcza*, no. 7, 2015, pp. 215–216.

cipal. These teams develop Individualized Education and Therapy Programs (IETPs), which define, among others, strategies to adapt the organization of instruction to the type and severity of the student's disability, including the scope and method of using specialist equipment and teaching aids, activities to support the student's development, integrated interventions to be provided by teachers and specialists, forms of cooperation with the student's family, etc.[10] IETPs are designed based on a multispecialist assessment of a student's functioning level and recommendations included in the statement of special educational needs. The multispecialist assessment of a student's functioning level, which is made at least twice a school year, should consider not only barriers and limitations that make it difficult for the child to fulfill the role of a student on the academic and social level, but it should also determine his or her strengths, including gifts, interests, and predisposition. Students' parents and students of age can participate in carrying out multispecialist assessments as well as in developing and making periodic modifications to IETPs. A study conducted by the Educational Research Institute shows, however, that the actual participation of parents in planning their child's education and therapy is not great in school practice. The vast majority of parents in the study (74%) did not take part in developing IETPs and 20% of these parents did not know what an IETP was.[11]

It is important to underline that the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 9, 2017, recommends that rehabilitation activities in IETPs take into particular consideration work on learning and improving communication skills in students with disorders that have a negative impact on this developmental area. In the case of blind students, training in orientation and mobility and

---

[10] Cf. E.M. Kulesza, (Ed.), *Education of students with special needs. World experience. Individualized Education and Therapy Programs (IETPs)*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa, 2013, pp. 86–159.

[11] P. Grzelak, P. Kubicki, M. Orłowska, *Realizacja badania ścieżek edukacyjnych niepełnosprawnych dzieci, uczniów i absolwentów – raport końcowy*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa, 2014, p. 104.

in Braille is regarded essential. Learning to use the sign language or other alternative ways of communication should be provided for students with speech disorders or non-speaking students, and social skills training – for students with autism.[12] The right of students with disabilities to have learning conditions adapted to their individual needs and abilities in an optimal way and to have necessary specialist classes provided should be fully respected by each type of setting regardless of the form of instruction it offers.[13] However, analyses of the educational system that have been performed so far show neglect in this area, identifying the weak points of the current solutions adopted in special, integrated, and mainstream schools.[14]

In historical terms, **special schools,** which started to operate in Poland at the beginning of the 19th century, were the first form of institutional education for students with disabilities. Their segregated nature reflects the medical paradigm, according to which disability was a condition restricting a person's functioning that resulted directly from damage to his or her body and (or) dysfunctions in specific organs. Under this approach, education and rehabilitation aim at remediating developmental deficits and thus are directly determined by the type and severity of disability. Segregated

---

[12] Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 9, 2017 on conditions for organizing education, upbringing, and care for children and adolescents with disabilities, children and adolescents who are socially maladjusted, and children and adolescents who are at risk of social maladjustment. Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland of August 24, 2017. Item 1578.

[13] J. Głodkowska, "Uczniowie ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi – integracja edukacyjna procesem złożonym i trudnym", *Szkoła Specjalna*, no. 1, 2013, p. 11.

[14] Cf. Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, M. Zaorska, "Prowłączające zmiany w systemie polskiej edukacji – nowe możliwości, ograniczenia i wyzwania", *Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 4, 2014, pp. 9–28. Z. Palak, "Tendencje w edukacji dzieci z niepełnosprawnością – szanse i zagrożenia", *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, no. 2, Vol. XXXVI, 2017, pp. 13–31. DOI: 10.17951/lrp. 2017.36.2.13. K. Parys, „Zjawisko pozoru w systemie kształcenia uczniów niepełnosprawnych – próba identyfikacji i propozycje rozwiązań", *Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej,* no. 4, 2014, pp. 34–52.

schooling was the only form of education for students with disabilities in Poland for many years and even now – despite a clear predominance of pro-inclusive trends – special education is considered an important and desirable element of the schooling system.[15] Special schools usually enroll students with one type of dysfunction (e.g.: special schools for students with intellectual disabilities, with visual impairments or with hearing impairments), which allows effective use of numerous achievements in methodology of teaching that takes into consideration functional consequences of a given type of disability. The small number of students in the class (6–12 students), which depends on the type of disability (e.g. maximum 10 students in schools for children with visual impairments) facilitates the use of individualized teaching solutions. Another advantage of this type of education is the expertise of the staff, who need to have formal education that provides competence in instruction and (or) rehabilitation for students with a given type of disability. The requirement of appropriate qualifications for the staff ensures that professional support in special education is provided, both in choosing appropriate teaching strategies and in organizing rehabilitation activities. Also, it is easier to implement appropriate interventions in the area of education and rehabilitation thanks to teaching aids and specialist equipment these settings are equipped with. Moreover, research conducted among students with various disabilities in special schools indicates a relatively high level of satisfaction with such schools, relating to, among others, a feeling of acceptance and belonging.[16]

Despite the above advantages of special schools, it is noted that participation in segregated education may increase the risk of students' social isolation, as these schools' self-containment in terms of

---

[15] I. Chrzanowska, "Uczeń z niepełnosprawnością w różnych formach edukacji", [in:] *W poszukiwaniu indywidualnych dróg wspierających wszechstronny rozwój osób z niepełnosprawnością*, B. Szczupał, A. Giryński, G. Szumski (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa, 2015, p. 206.

[16] Cf. I. Chrzanowska, *Pedagogika specjalna. Od tradycji do współczesności*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Cracow, 2015, pp. 540–541.

space, curriculum, and organization as well as the homogeneity of classes reduce the number of opportunities for engagement in social interactions with nondisabled peers and in activities in mainstream public life. The lack of opportunities for the gradual development of social skills in natural situations may result in difficulty in efficient functioning in an open environment, both during school years and adulthood. Due to the number and location of special schools (in county seats), students who live further away, especially rural students, need to live in dormitories, which entails separation from their families and the loosening of social ties in their local communities. As a result of the segregated solutions' weaknesses and the emergence of other forms of special education, there has been a significant drop in the number of students attending special schools since the mid-1990s. Analyses of statistical data show that about 40% of students with disabilities attend special schools at present, which is largely related to integrated and mainstream schools' problems with adequately meeting the special educational needs of students with multiple disabilities and profound impairments.[17] For example, statistical data indicate that over the last decade, there has been a growth trend in the number of students with visual impairments in non-segregated schools, but it only refers to students with milder impairments, while the majority of blind students still attend special schools.[18] Moreover, the scientific study on the educational pathways of students with disabilities conducted by the Educational Research Institute proves that students who first received education in non-segregated settings are then transferred

---

[17] I. Chrzanowska, "Stan i rozmiary udziału dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością w edukacji włączającej w Polsce", *Forum Pedagogiczne*, no. 1, 2016, p. 41. Cf. M. Zaorska, „Niepełnosprawności sprzężone w obliczu aktualnych przemian w systemowych rozwiązaniach edukacyjnych", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej,* no. 14, 2014, pp. 100–112.

[18] K. Czerwińska, "Edukacja inkluzyjna uczniów z niepełnosprawnością wzroku", [in:] *Edukacja inkluzyjna. Teoria – system – metoda. Część 1*, S. Sobczak, L. Pytka, T. Zacharuk (Eds.), Uniwersytet Przyrodniczo-Humanistyczny, Siedlce, 2015, pp. 98–99.

to special schools. Forty percent of mainstream school principals and 61% of integrated school principals confirmed that students with disabilities were transferred to special schools; difficulties with the child's behavior and lack of appropriate support were pointed to as the main reason for the school transfer.[19] Recently, the percentage of students with disabilities in special schools has remained at the same level, whereas the percentage of students with disabilities in mainstream and integrated classes declines at subsequent educational levels – it is the largest in preschools and the smallest in upper secondary schools.[20]

The departure from the medical model of disability, which focused on individual deficits, in favor of social approaches aiming at removing mental, physical, economic, and systemic barriers contributed to the development of **non-segregated schooling**. After 1989, a goal in the development of the educational system for students with disabilities was established in Polish educational policy to promote **integrated schooling** where students could receive education along with their nondisabled peers, while at the same time being provided with professional support in the area of special education.[21] Integrated classes are supposed to facilitate meeting students' special educational needs and their developing social relationships thanks to a smaller number of students (15–20, including 3–5 students with a statement of special educational needs) and support of an extra teacher with a background in special education. The special educator should introduce various interventions to as-

_____

[19] P. Grzelak, P. Kubicki, M. Orłowska, *Realizacja badania ścieżek edukacyjnych niepełnosprawnych dzieci, uczniów i absolwentów – raport końcowy*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa, 2014, p. 145.

[20] P. Kubicki, "Między włączaniem a segregacją – szkoły w Polsce wobec uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 22, 2016, p. 110.

[21] A. Firkowska-Mankiewicz, G. Szumski, "Pedagogika specjalna i system kształcenia osób z niepełnosprawnościami w Polsce", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna*, Vol. 2, D.D. Smith, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa, 2008, pp. 337–338.

sist the comprehensive development of students with disabilities as well as, together with the general education teacher, plan and give classes and conduct rehabilitation activities.[22]

The number of students with disabilities in integrated classes and schools has been consistently growing since the 1990s, and the popularity of this form of education arises mainly from the declared availability of specialist interventions in the area of instruction, education, and rehabilitation with regular interactions with nondisabled peers. At present, about 24% of students with disabilities attend integrated settings, but these are rarely students with more severe impairments or with intellectual disabilities.[23] Integrated settings' ongoing difficulties with providing students whose educational and developmental needs differ significantly from typical ones with full participation in class and school life become apparent in the study carried out by the Educational Research Institute, which reveals that 40% of integrated school principals recommended school transfer to parents as they were not able to provide appropriate support for the child, and 20% of schools did not enroll a student with disability. Sixty-one percent of integrated school principals admitted that students with disabilities sometimes transferred to special schools.[24] Transfer to special school after a certain time, sometimes after a few years in integrated school (called "expulsion from integration"[25]) entails a number of negative conse-

_____

[22] M. Pachowicz, "Kształcenie integracyjne – moda czy krok milowy edukacji w Polsce", [in:] *Uczeń z niepełnosprawnością w szkole ogólnodostępnej*, Z. Gajdzica (Ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza "Humanitas," Sosnowiec, 2011, p. 126.

[23] I. Chrzanowska, "Stan i rozmiary udziału dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością w edukacji włączającej w Polsce", Forum Pedagogiczne, no. 1, 2016, pp. 41–42.

[24] P. Kubicki, "Między włączaniem a segregacją – szkoły w Polsce wobec uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 22, 2016, p. 113.

[25] D. Krzemińska, "O edukacji (nie)integracyjnej kilka refleksji", [in:] *Szkoła dla osób z niepełnosprawnością. Wzory – Codzienność – Wyzwania*, A. Krause, J. Belzyt, S. Sadowska (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk, 2012, pp. 57–71.

quences for students with disabilities who frequently have then very poor skills important to perform academic tasks, e.g. students with hearing impairments are not proficient at alternative methods of communication[26] or blind students do not know non-visual reading or writing techniques.[27]

Although transition from segregated education to integrated education is considered a positive change expressing the practical implementation of the normalization principle, the demand for equal opportunity, and granting each student the right to quality education,[28] the literature on the subject abounds with critical analyses pointing to certain imperfections of integrated education adopted in Poland. Most frequently, researchers[29] list the following weak points of integrated education:

- difficulty with providing students who have varying disabilities with professional pedagogical assistance due to support teachers' educational background (they generally have specialist qualifications in one or two special education subfields);

_____

[26] P. Kowalski, D. Nowak-Adamczyk, "Kształcenie osób głuchych i słabosłyszących – wyzwania dla systemu edukacji w Polsce", *Biuletyn Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich. Źródła,* no. 7, 2012, p. 69.

[27] K. Miler-Zdanowska, "Edukacja uczniów z niepełnosprawnością wzroku w Polsce – szanse, zagrożenia, wyzwania", [in:] *Możliwości i ograniczenia edukacji inkluzyjnej. Egzemplifikacje*, T. Zacharuk, L. Pytka (Eds.), Uniwersytet Przyrodniczo--Humanistyczny, Siedlce, 2018, p. 48.

[28] M. Kupisiewicz, "Paradygmaty pedagogiki specjalnej – główne kierunki przemian w Polsce w ostatnim trzydziestoleciu", *Człowiek – Niepełnosprawność – Społeczeństwo*, no. 2, 2006, p. 27.

[29] Cf. I. Chrzanowska, "Niepełnosprawny w szkole. Z analiz dotyczących kompetencji szkolnych i realizacji przez szkoły standardu stwarzania warunków zapewniających rozwój osobom niepełnosprawnym", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna. Różne poszukiwania – wspólna misja*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa, 2009, pp. 384–397. Z. Ostrach, "Postrzeganie kształcenia integracyjnego przez rodziców uczniów pełnosprawnych", [in:] *Uczeń z niepełnosprawnością w szkole ogólnodostępnej*, Z. Gajdzica (Ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza "Humanitas," Sosnowiec, 2011, pp. 132–141. M. Buchnat, "Sytuacja dzieci z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w klasach integracyjnych", [in:] *Szkoła dla osób z niepełnosprawnością. Wzory – Codzienność – Wyzwania*, A. Krause, J. Belzyt, S. Sadowska (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk, 2012, pp. 163–182.

– schools lack appropriate equipment, teaching and rehabilitation aids, textbooks in alternative formats, classroom environment is not adequately adapted;
– few rehabilitation activities and (or) rehabilitation activities are conducted by unqualified educators;
– relatively low sociometric status of children with disabilities in their peer group that suggests insufficient interventions to make the class more integrated;
– difficulty with practical implementation of the general education teacher-support teacher cooperation model (in consequence, the class is divided into two groups: nondisabled students and students with disabilities).

Integrated education as organized in Poland is an intermediate link between education in special schools and **inclusive education** in mainstream schools. This form of education sees a steady rise in the number of students with disabilities; however, there is growing criticism of this type of schooling, such as, for example, Paweł Kubicki's opinion: "(…) the fact itself that they [integrated schools and classes] still exist as a transitional form shows unfinished transformation because with appropriate support, integration in mainstream schools as it is now is no longer needed nor does it provide such specialist support for students with profound disabilities as special schools".[30]

The core idea of education for students with disabilities in mainstream schools is the demand for equal rights, according to which individual and social solutions are recommended that ensure all (regardless of their health and skill level) full participation in mainstream communal life, including access to educational institutions. Under Polish law, this group of students is provided with the possibility to receive compulsory education in a local school or a school that is situated near their place of residence, along with their non-

_____

[30] P. Kubicki, "Między włączaniem a segregacją – szkoły w Polsce wobec uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 22, 2016, p. 117.

disabled peers. This educational form is not bound by organizational guidelines for integrated classes (fewer students in a class, constant presence of a special educator), but students with disabilities should be provided with appropriate psychoeducational support. At present, about 35% of students with disabilities receive inclusive education, and these are usually students with motor disabilities, low vision, ASD, chronic conditions, and hard-of-hearing students.[31]

The idea of "school for all", which expresses the recognition of diversity in children's and adolescents' academic abilities and needs as a norm and value, becomes a central category in the discourse on changes in the Polish system of special education. [32] Although inclusive assumptions are considered reasonable, as they correspond fully to the current models of disability, researchers underline that conditions enabling successful inclusion of students with disabilities and a high quality of this process still have not been met in schooling practice. The study report produced by the Educational Research Institute showed significant differences between mainstream schools and special schools in the level of adaptations to school buildings, appropriate resources, and qualified staff. Among the mainstream schools taking part in the study, 69% did not hire a full-time psychologist, 41% – a speech therapist, and 81% – support teachers (in line with the legislation, they have to be present only in integrated schools, while in mainstream schools, they may be hired with the approval of the governing body).[33] The relatively small percentage of special educators hired in mainstream schools makes it difficult to provide appropriate support to the student with disa-

---

[31] I. Chrzanowska, "Stan i rozmiary udziału dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością w edukacji włączającej w Polsce", *Forum Pedagogiczne*, no. 1, 2016, pp. 41–42.

[32] J.J. Błeszyński, "Włączanie (inkluzja) jako normalizacja systemu edukacji i opieki nad osobami niepełnosprawnymi", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna – tak wiele pozostaje dla nas tajemnicą…*, S. Przybyliński (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn, 2010, pp. 73–74.

[33] P. Grzelak, P. Kubicki, M. Orłowska, *Realizacja badania ścieżek edukacyjnych niepełnosprawnych dzieci, uczniów i absolwentów – raport końcowy*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa, 2014, p. 123.

bility,[34] especially as they generally do not have theoretical or practical qualifications to work with children and adolescents with varying disabilities, which is directly connected with the current teacher training system.[35] A questionnaire survey conducted among teachers in mainstream, integrated, and special schools found that mainstream teachers were the ones who gave the lowest ratings to their qualifications for working with students with special educational needs. Almost 33% of the respondents from this group described their qualification level as "low" and "very low", and 47.4% found it to be "quite good" or "good". None of the respondents in integrated and special schools put their skills of special education in the "low" or "very low" category.[36] It is also worth stressing that parents of students with disabilities who participated in the study conducted by the Educational Research Institute chose mainstream schools first of all because of their proximity to their place of residence, and 25% of them would prefer to have their child attend an integrated school, and 5% – a special school.[37] The need to undertake multifaceted actions aiming to improve the quality of education for students with disabilities within mainstream schooling, including expanding the scope of specialist assistance, is considered to be the main challenge for the educational system. Introducing a control system in schools and governing bodies in the area of the

—————————

[34] Cf. A. Zamkowska, "Przygotowanie szkoły ogólnodostępnej do kształcenia uczniów upośledzonych umysłowo w stopniu lekkim", [in:] *Aktualne problemy edukacji i rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych w biegu życia*, Z. Palak, A. Bujnowska, A. Pawlak (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin, 2010, p. 266.

[35] Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, "Aktualne preferencje edukacyjne uczniów o specjalnych potrzebach i ich konsekwencje", [in:] *Szkoła dla osób z niepełnosprawnością. Wzory – Codzienność – Wyzwania*, A. Krause, J. Belzyt, S. Sadowska (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk, 2012, pp. 47–51.

[36] K. Ćwirynkało, A. Żyta, "Przekonania nauczycieli na temat edukacji włączającej uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami. Raport z badań", *Szkoła Specjalna*, no. 4, 2015, p. 256, DOI: 10.5604/0137818x.1177729.

[37] P. Grzelak, P. Kubicki, M. Orłowska, *Realizacja badania ścieżek edukacyjnych niepełnosprawnych dzieci, uczniów i absolwentów – raport końcowy*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa, 2014, p. 103.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the educational system for students with disabilities in Poland. Source: Compiled by the authors

Strengths	Weaknesses
– various forms of special education that make it possible to choose an optimal solution adapted to the individual situation of a student with disability and his or her family; – regulations that protect the right to education for students with disabilities and the choice of the form of education for parents; – relatively large financial resources allocated from the state budget to support students with disabilities; – inclusive education is recognized as the leading, recommended form of special education	– dominant trend for students with disabilities transferring from mainstream or integrated schools to special ones; – architectural and mental barriers and lack of or insufficient support in terms of special education in mainstream and integrated schools; – relatively low involvement of parents of students with disabilities in cooperation with school, among others – in education and therapy planning and implementation; – limited access to integrated and special education for rural students (seemingly a "choice" of inclusive education); – low satisfaction of the rehabilitation needs of students with disabilities, in particular of these with severe disabilities and rural ones; – relatively high number of students with disabilities receiving individual instruction (the highest in mainstream schools)
Chances	**Risks**
– to increase the participation of special schooling in developing an integration support base (e.g.: consulting units, centers of instructional adaptations, courses and training for students, parents, and teachers); – opportunity to implement diverse proven methods used in other countries to provide teachers and students with disabilities with professional support, especially in mainstream settings; – technological advances, greater availability of diverse rehabilitation and IT aids that make education easier for students with various impairments	– local authorities attempting to shift responsibility onto foundations and associations conducting activities for the welfare of children and adolescents with disabilities; – top-down obligation of inclusion without appropriate systemic changes

practical implementation of the legislation ensuring students with disabilities professional support is regarded as one of the key actions.[38]

To sum up, the Polish system of special education includes different organizational forms and the regulations introduced protect the right of students with disabilities to education that takes into consideration their individual needs and abilities. As Anna Firkowska-Mankiewicz and Grzegorz Szumski point out, the existing system "is not a modern system yet. However, unlike systems in many other countries, it has been recently undergoing visible modernization (…). Reforms implemented in special education after 1989 had good aims and as a general rule, appropriate strategies were chosen to fulfill them".[39] Undoubtedly, the gradual shift from the dominance of segregated education toward full inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream schooling should be regarded as a positive fact. However, the serious negligence revealed in research in terms of meeting the special educational needs of students in mainstream schools indicates an urgent need for remedial measures.

Education for students with disabilities in Hungary

Disability rights were composed in Hungary for the first time in an act called "Act No. 26 of 1998 on assuring equal opportunity for people with disabilities". It provides equal opportunities for people with disabilities in health care services, education, employment as well as in cultural and sports activities. It makes provision for the right to rehabilitation and financial aid. It laid down the establishment of the National Council and National Program for Disabled

---

[38] P. Wdówik, „Podręczniki i pomoce dydaktyczne dla uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami", *Biuletyn Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich. Źródła*, no. 7, 2012, pp. 86–87.

[39] A. Firkowska-Mankiewicz, G. Szumski, „Pedagogika specjalna i system kształcenia osób z niepełnosprawnościami w Polsce", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna*, Vol. 2, D.D. Smith, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa, 2008, p. 346.

Affairs. The act has been modified several times since 1998. "This act declares the equality of rights in all areas of social life and education for people included within the scope of the act and bans negative discrimination against them and, where it is absolutely necessary, allows positive discrimination".[40] Hungary signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the CRPD-OP – Optional Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006,[41] which were ratified by Hungary in 2007.

"CRPD, Article 3, General Principles
1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
2. Non-discrimination
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5. Equality of opportunity
6. Accessibility
7. Equality between men and women
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities".[42]

The CRPD and CRPD-OP ratification had a positive impact on the Hungarian legislation, which was later followed by a change of the whole legislation system in Hungary, starting with a new Constitution. The new Hungarian Constitution is called Fundamental Law of Hungary.[43] It guarantees everyone the fundamental rights

―――――――――

[40] K. Kovács, *Empowerment of students with disabilities in university settings*, In *Inclusion, equity and access for individuals with disabilities*, S. Halder, V. Argyropoulos (Eds.), Insights from Educators across World. Palgrave, 2019. p. 594.

[41] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Optional Protocol, UN. 2006.

[42] Guiding Principles of the Convention (CRPD), 2006 UN.

[43] Magyarország Alaptörvénye, Igazságügyi Minisztérium, 2017 [accessed: 01.12.2019].

without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, gender, disability, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status.

The 1993 Act on Public Education introduced the initiative for integrated mainstream education for students with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) in Hungary. Since 1993, fundamental changes have taken place in the Hungarian education system in response. During the nineties, there was a rapid increase in the number of students with special needs studying near their home in local or nearby schools. According to governmental sources, these changes led to a growing inequity indicated by international indicators at all levels of education. "In spite of modernization efforts, basic structural characteristics – mainly the high level of decentralisation – established by the 1993 Act on Public Education proved to be an obstacle to equity. The main problem was that municipalities had to maintain the schools for which the transfer from the central budget was insufficient, and many of the smaller municipalities could not contribute from their own resources. Inequalities grew and teacher salaries became uncompetitive compared to the income of other professionals".[44]

Since 2010, following the new Fundamental Law, all acts have been affected, including the National Public Education Act and Higher Education Act.[45] "Act 190 (CXC) of 2011 on Public Education laid down the framework for a centralized system of public education. The three main elements of the new act concern organization and funding of education, a new remuneration and career scheme for teachers, and the establishment of a quality assurance system in the form of a network of school inspectors recruited from the teaching force active in schools".[46]

_____

[44] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.) *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 2.

[45] 1993. évi LXXX törvény a felsőoktatásról.

[46] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.) *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 2.

Although there are many similarities between the Polish and Hungarian educational systems for children with disabilities/SEN as noted before, it seems to be essential to provide a description of the national content for better orientation. According to Act 190 (CXC) of 2011, clause 4, § 25 on National Public Education, students with special educational needs are those who, based on the expert opinion of the Committee of Experts, require special treatment, have physical, sensory (visual or auditory), intellectual or speech impairments, autism spectrum disorders or other psychiatric disorders or developmental disorders (severe learning difficulties, attention deficits or behavior issues).

It seems to be essential to start with some theoretical and (or) practical issues of the meaning of integration/inclusion as we think about them in Hungary. Papp[47] argues that the two expressions are not synonyms of each other. Authors do not use the words consistently internationally. "The tendency to move from integration to inclusion is obviously less related to a shift in content than to a change in language, simply referring to the concept of inclusion of the Salamanca declaration and explanation".[48] Inclusion is an idea in education. All educational systems are pursuing it. This requires a fundamental change – a new school concept. "Such a school is open to natural diversity among students and mutual adaptation to differences is expected. It is a school where the interpretation of learning is based on the individual's learning strategies, where the special education teacher and the general education teacher jointly control the process".[49] In an inclusive school, the heterogeneous

---

[47] G. Papp, "Az integráció, inklúzió fogalmak tartalmi elemzése gyógypedagógiai megközelítésben nemzetközi és magyar színtéren", *Gyógypedagógiai Szemle*, no. 4, 2012, pp. 295–304.

[48] G. Papp, "Az integráció, inklúzió fogalmak tartalmi elemzése gyógypedagógiai megközelítésben nemzetközi és magyar színtéren", *Gyógypedagógiai Szemle*, no. 4, 2012, p. 296.

[49] G. Papp, "Az integráció, inklúzió fogalmak tartalmi elemzése gyógypedagógiai megközelítésben nemzetközi és magyar színtéren", *Gyógypedagógiai Szemle*, no. 4, 2012, p. 297.

group of students and the individual characteristics of the student community are in the focus regardless of ethnicity, abilities, etc. Integration means to put originally separated parts together.[50] In 2004, Réthyiné proposed a change of paradigm from previous school strategies and practices arguing that the organizational framework for inclusive school services is based on the principle of heterogeneity.[51,52]

The 2003 amendment of the Public Education Act[53] allowed establishing Unified Special Education Methodological Institutions (EGYMI) from the former special education schools. The task was to support education for children with special needs in integrated settings. The services offered by EGYMI included: counselling, early development and care, development support/training, speech therapy, conductive pedagogical care, and physical education. Among professional services, they could provide professional counselling, educational information, support and organization of teachers' self-education and training as well as student information and counselling services. As part of the parallel processes shaping the legislative framework in accordance with the Fundamental Law, Act 190, Article 20 (9)[54] changed the role of EGYMI. This was followed by an amendment[55] in 2013 which separated the institution of Pedagogical Specialist Service from the tasks of EGYMI.

Following Act 190, the tasks of EGYMI radically changed. Two separate institutions were established all over the country, although

_____

[50] A. Varga, *Az inklúzió szemlélete és gyakorlata*. Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Neveléstudományi Intézet Romológia és Nevelésszociológia Tanszék Wlislocki Henrik Szakkollégium Pécs, 2015.

[51] E. Réthy, *Inkluzív pedagógia,* In *Megközelítések*, I. Nahalka, J. Torgyik (Eds.), Eötvös Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2004, p. 231–245.

[52] E. Réthy, *Befogadás, méltányosság, az inkluzív pedagógia rendszere*. Comenius Oktató és Kiadó Kft., 2013 Pécs.

[53] 2003. évi LXI. törvény – a közoktatásról szóló 1993. évi LXXIX. törvény módosításáról.

[54] 2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről.

[55] 15/2013. (II. 26.) EMMI rendelet a pedagógiai szakszolgálati intézmények működéséről.

the two work under one roof or under EGYMI in some organizations but as separate functional organizations. The committee is in charge of specialist assessments and, together with parents, can decide on the educational placement of the child with SEN. At the same time, some other service provisions were also moved to this institution unexpectedly:

– special education counselling, early development, and care,
– development support,
– activities of the Committee of Experts,
– educational advice,
– speech therapy,
– continuing education, career guidance,
– conductive pedagogical care,
– physical education,
– school psychology, kindergarten psychology,
– care for gifted and talented students.[56]

The characteristics of teacher training in Hungary are as follows: "Teacher training in elementary education includes eight semesters of higher education courses leading to a bachelor's degree. Teachers for elementary grades are trained to teach all subjects at the Grade 1 to 4 level and they may specialize in some subjects which they can teach up to Grade 6".[57] Special education teachers qualify for teaching children with special educational needs and they get a dual specialization in full time studies (study to teach two populations with SEN). The training for them is also eight semesters at the BA level, which can be then followed with three semesters of MA studies with another specialization, e.g. remedial teaching. There is one Faculty of Special Needs Education (BGGYK) at Eötvös University which offers training in all populations and since 2010, other universities in different parts of the country have been also offering tertiary education for teacher training in one or two populations

_____

[56] 15/2013. (II. 26.) EMMI rendelet a pedagógiai szakszolgálati intézmények működéséről.

[57] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.), *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 30.

with SEN, typically for intellectual disabilities, speech-language disorders, and emotional and behavior problems. Since 2017, seven other universities have been involved in special education teacher training. The BGGYK has opened an extension in eastern Hungary at the University of Nyiregyhaza, offering part-time programs in two SEN populations: intellectual disabilities and speech-language disorders. All these developments, however, still cannot cover the need for special education teachers in the country.

After 1993, the rapid increase of integrated education in mainstream institutions was unexpected to most of special schools and even more for the professionals working there. This was presumably a stronger reaction than in Poland because the number of special schools was higher in Hungary. As far as the number of special schools is concerned, statistical data based on the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2014[58] show that Hungary was the 5th in the list of European countries while Poland was the 13th. In contrast, the number of children involved in mainstream education was almost on the same level, i.e. around 98%.

Special education institutions faced two important consequences: the number of students in special schools started to decrease while rising in integrated settings. A new professional field opened for special schools to utilize their knowledge and expertise of special education in pedagogical support for students in mainstream education. Special schools started to act as resource centers and carried out pedagogical service activities. This had a two-sided effect: made it possible to survive among integrated settings and offered opportunities for renewal, extending professional competences, and becoming engines of widespread collaboration. As mentioned before, the 2003 amendment of the Public Education Act[59] finally created the legal background to expand the role of special

---

[58] European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017. European Agency statistics on inclusive education: 2014 dataset cross-country report. (J. Ramberg, A. Lénárt, A. Watkins, Eds.). Odense, Denmark.

[59] 2003. évi LXI. törvény – a közoktatásról szóló 1993. évi LXXIX. Törvény módosításáról.

education institutions. The law allowed establishing the Unified Special Education Methodological Institutions (EGYMI) from the former special schools. The task was to support education for children with special needs in integrated settings. The services offered by EGYMI included: counselling, early development and care, development support/training, speech therapy, conductive pedagogical care, and physical education. Among professional services, they could provide professional counselling, educational information, support and organization of teachers' self-education and training as well as student information and counselling services. Although the network of Pedagogical Specialist Service and the Committee of Experts existed since the eighties, EGYMI incorporated these tasks.

In 2004, Hungary joined the European Union. The European Union tenders have encouraged large-scale cooperation between mainstream and special schools. Applicant consortia were in most cases led by special schools. The focus of the activities was on expanding the range of pedagogical professional services. In 2005, 15% of former special schools transformed into EGYMI and 39% were under transformation. This could be considered a major achievement and resulted in more and more teachers and parents receiving professional support for the successful education of children with disabilities and typically developing children together. At that time, EGYMI served as a means of preparing for knowledge transfer and other tasks for inclusive education.

Although the network was making progress then, the services offered by EGYMI were of variable quality and composition. The type of services they were allowed to provide was essentially dependent on the authority they were run by. At that time, EGYMI belonged to the local governments of their municipalities. After 2009, as the economic crisis deepened, inequalities in services became even more significant. Some of EGYMI could provide good working conditions while there were areas where even the tasks required by law were not fulfilled. As mentioned before, as part of the parallel processes shaping the legislative framework, the responsibilities of this type of institution were changed in the 2011

Act 190[60]: "EGYMI can be set up to help educate children and students with special educational needs together with other children and students. In accordance with their objectives, EGYMI may carry out pedagogical service tasks in addition to the tasks of the Committee of Experts. They can also provide family support services, school health services, and work within an institution such as a kindergarten, elementary or secondary school. The functions of EGYMI shall be the subject of separate institutional and professional units".[61] Although EGYMI could continue the pedagogical service task, it was separated from their basic role and not all of EGYMI could provide the necessary conditions for the Expert Committee any more in line with the amendment made in 2013. In the 2013 amendment,[62] the activities of the Pedagogical Specialist Service (PSS) were regulated. The task of the PSS was briefly described above. The structure of PSS centers is explained here. The PSS network is built up on the administrative system of Hungary. The PSS network consists of at least one member institution per district in each county and in the capital. The center in the capital has sub centers for two reasons. One is that approximately 1/5 of the country's population lives in the capital. The other is that some of these institutions need such a level of expertise that there is only one serving the whole country and this one specialist center is located in the capital, e.g. Specialized Pedagogical Service Center for Physical Disabilities as part of the Metropolitan Pedagogical Service Center. The Metropolitan Pedagogical Service Centre has 33 member institutions and there are similar specialist sub centers for speech-language, hearing, and visual impairments. The same organizational and operational rules apply to all member institutions in the whole country.

The activity of the Unified Special Educational Methodological Institutions (EGYMI) has changed significantly as partly described

---

[60] 2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről.
[61] 2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről.
[62] 15/2013. (II. 26.) EMMI rendelet a pedagógiai szakszolgálati intézmények működéséről.

before. "the specialized services within EGYMI, they were trans-formed into county service centers. It was not stress-free because EGYMI lost the functions which have been carried out over the last ten years. Early childhood education, special education, and speech therapy are the three areas that have been affected most here. Most importantly, the itinerant special education network is now run by EGYMI (…). Their operation is professionally justified there".[63] There are still difficulties in these areas of the country which have no EGYMI and because of this, educational support for mainstream schools is not necessarily provided all over the country. The educa-tional authority's resolution is that all educational institutions can employ special education teachers to support students with SEN directly. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the activity of EGYMI is not limited to administrative areas but overlaps county borders. In the daily practice, it is also common that special education teachers are part-time employees of local schools or are hired by EGYMI to serve schools within their locality if that school is integrating a stu-dent with SEN within the specialization of a given special education teacher, e.g. visual impairment. Since 2011, according to the law, institutions involved in special education, whether integrated or segregated, must have special education teachers with appropriate specializations.

An additional difficulty is the wide professional area these insti-tutions are supposed to cover. Their services include diagnostic and rehabilitation services to establish special education needs and to provide therapy for all levels of public education. The most im-portant of these are SEN diagnostic and rehabilitation services, institutions for children with severe disabilities, including early intervention and care, speech therapy and conductive pedagogy services, physiotherapy, and light physical exercises. SEN Diagnos-tic and Rehabilitation Committees are multi-professional bodies of

_____

[63] "A jogszabályon kívül idővel kicserélődnek a jó gyakorlatok" 2014 https://www.oktatas.hu/kozneveles/projektek/tamop3110_oktatasiranyitas/projek thirek/kiss_laszlo_sni_nevelesrol?printMode=true.

special educators, teachers, psychologists, and physicians. Diagnosing special educational needs requires close cooperation between parents, educators, SEN professionals, physicians, and social workers. The Committee is responsible for establishing whether a child or student should be transferred to a special kindergarten or school, or whether he or she needs early intervention and care or individual tutoring. This body is also consulted in cases when a child is advised by the kindergarten teacher – or if it is requested by the parent – to delay school entry for more than one year. Early intervention and care refers to an early diagnosis of delayed development in children below 3 years of age and children with multiple impairments. The services include support to families in childcare as well as providing access to special education institutions. More than two thirds of children diagnosed in early intervention and care programs need individual tutoring. One in four children is provided with services by private entities. Children with severe and multiple disabilities are provided for by special institutions. "About 25% of these institutions are run by private entities and they provide tutoring to 40% of the children in need (…). The development of skills in the case of challenges such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc., is organized in group form locally and through itinerant speech therapists to reach all students. Light physical exercises and physiotherapy are organized in bigger schools in such a way that students from other schools can attend the classes as well".[64]

"Children with special educational needs are provided for within early intervention care or special kindergarten units depending on their special needs. Also, they have access to specific services of early development. These services are organized at the county level".[65] Additional financial support is given to these institutions for children with SEN. There are governmental and various private

---

[64] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.), *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 32.

[65] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.), *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 20.

solutions offered for providing early intervention for children with SEN. The following table shows the number of children provided with services by different service providers jointly in 2009–2013 based on the data from Facts and Figures.[66]

Table 1.

Daycare facilities and family daycare units (private) for children with special educational needs				
Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number	24767	31070	33805	34821	35664

The last published Facts and Figures analysis shows the number of SEN students taking part in mainstream or special education. According to this document: "Students with special educational needs are mostly integrated in mainstream schools where they have access to specialist services (…); a network of special schools functions in parallel to mainstream schooling for children with specific disabilities, including severe and multiple disabilities".[67] "About 7% of all students have special educational needs. Two thirds of these students were integrated in mainstream classes (4.8%) and 2.3% were taught in special classes in 2014".[68]

According to the most recent data for 2019, the number of children in elementary schools is 726000. There are 55300 students with SEN. As many as 71.1% of them attend mainstream settings; the remaining 28.9% – special schools.[69] The number of students edu-

_____

[66] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.), *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 25.

[67] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.), *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 26.

[68] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.), *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 28.

[69] Eduline https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20190109_tanulok_es_pedagogusok_ szama

cated in self-contained classrooms in local schools has decreased. The number of students with SEN is the lowest in the eastern county of Hajdú-Bihar (4.7%), while the highest is in Bács-Kiskun county in the south-central part of the country (13.3%). There are significant differences between counties in the level of mainstreaming. While it is 82.9% in the north-western part in Győr-Moson-Sopron county, it is only 56.8% in the capital.[70] In kindergartens, children with SEN constitute 3.0% of the whole population and 82.2% are in mainstream settings.

Table 2.

Number of students in elementary education (2009–2014)[71]					
Total number of full-time students in elementary education	773706	756569	747601	742931	747746
Percentage of students with SEN integrated in mainstream classes	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.9
Percentage of students with SEN in special schools/classes	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.4

At a statistical level, there is a great improvement in mainstream education in Hungary. This is consistent with practical experiences, e.g. in the school for blind children in Budapest, the number of children is lower than 1/3 of the number of children before 1993. The tendency is that children with visual impairments without additional disabilities or with mild and moderate visual disabilities are easily integrated into local schools. Special schools are facing a great challenge of serving children with severe multiple disabilities. Formerly, these children were educated in their homes within programs called "developmental education." This is a type of education

---

[70] Oktatási adatok 2018/2019. Statisztikai tükör. KSH. http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/oktat/oktatas1819.pdf

[71] J. Kádár-Fülöp, J. Lannert (Eds.), *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures* 2014/2015 p. 29.

guaranteed by law for children with severe multiple impairments for whom there are not any or not enough schools or institutions in the country. The percentage of those who get individual support is 38.8%. The number of schools and support services is not given globally in any of the resources. Luckily, the number of special education teachers has increased from 5700 in 2010 to 9582, but still not filling all needs. This number is not enough to serve all children with SEN in mainstream settings at all educational levels or those in developmental education. The number of special educators and teachers at all levels of education has been decreasing in previous years, which is a heavy burden for education in Hungary in general. This tendency has many reasons rooted in societal characteristics.

Schooling starts in preschool for children at the age of 3. There was a soft rule till 2019 to start preschool schooling later if the family had reasons for that – or due to the child's other conditions. Since 2019, the regulation has changed and all children who are born each year before August 31 have to start preschool schooling at the age of 3. It is very strictly regulated who can be an exception. Special education professionals together with parents of children with SEN are fighting to change this regulation, which lowers the quality and length of early intervention support.

The law assures that institutions involved in special education, whether integrated or segregated, must have special education teachers with appropriate special education background. This goal has not been reached yet. Without it, the quality of mainstream education can be questioned. There is a strong need to increase the number of itinerant teachers in the whole country for special populations, e.g. sensory impairments, and special educators employed by local schools in general.

We translate inclusion as "affiliation" and integration as "placement" in Hungarian. The direction of the two is oppositional. While inclusion is under development, integration is a practice which still needs improvement as it was described. Integration has been typical in the Hungarian education system since 1993, although there were examples of integration even before 1993 and there have

been a few inclusive schools, e.g. Gyermekek Háza[72] as a good practice since the nineties. Csányi argues: "Institutions hosting students are mostly non-inclusive, and in some cases, simple name changes have taken place (…) without changing the content."[73] There is still a lot to do to complete integrated education and a longer way towards inclusive education. The situation is illustrated by SWOT below:

Table 3. SWOT analysis of the educational system for students with disabilities in Hungary

Strengths	Weaknesses
Legislative background	Lack of professionals
Well-trained professionals in special education	Some schools have no access to support – no EGYMI nearby
Special schools transforming into support centers – EGYMI	Special equipment is often missing, e.g. in the case of visual impairment
Opportunities	Threats
Increased number of special education students	Low finances for equipment and service delivery
Openness and need for support in local schools	Number of teachers decreasing, including special teachers

Conclusions

In Poland and Hungary, a steady growth trend in the number of students with disabilities attending mainstream settings is seen as well as marked changes within the population of students in special schools, i.e. decrease in the total number of students in special schools and increase in the number of students with multiple disa-

_____

[72] Gyermekek Háza https://gyermekekhaza.hu/about-us/ _15/2013. (II. 26.) EMMI rendelet a pedagógiai szakszolgálati intézmények működéséről.

[73] Y. Csányi, "Integráció/inklúzió és a szakvéleményezés összefüggései", *Gyógypedagógiai Szemle* 2013(3), pp. 165–173.

bilities. In both educational systems – in line with the principles of the social model of disability – main interventions focus on getting rid of any barriers that increase the risk of excluding a student due to his or her health and skill level. With this end in view, various solutions are being introduced as part of which students with disabilities receive educational offers that provide for their special, individual developmental needs relating to the type and severity of disability among others. The two countries have adopted regulations that properly secure the right to education in non-segregated settings for students with disabilities; however, they are still struggling with providing this group of students with appropriate rehabilitation services and quality education. Both systems lack sufficient methodological support for teachers working with students with disabilities on a daily basis in mainstream settings as well as direct rehabilitation support from special educators and other specialists, although the complex factors determining these problems seem to be different. While the reasons for these difficulties in Hungary are sought first of all in the unavailability of specialist support in some regions of the country due to the location of assistance institutions and the decrease in the number of teachers, including special educators, in Poland, the root cause seems to lie in the current training system for teachers and special educators that is not adapted to the requirements of inclusive education and insufficient use of special schools' resources to support general education settings in work with students with disabilities. At present, both countries are confronted with the need to develop systemic changes that will allow introduction of strategies to meet students' special educational needs in each type of educational setting and at each level of education in a more efficient way.

References

Al-Khamisy D., "Kształcenie uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi w powszechnym systemie oświatowym", [in:] *Dydaktyka specjalna w przygotowaniu do kształcenia uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi*, J. Głodkow-

ska (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2012, pp. 113–139.

Błeszyński J.J., "Włączanie (inkluzja) jako normalizacja systemu edukacji i opieki nad osobami niepełnosprawnymi", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna – tak wiele pozostaje dla nas tajemnicą…*, S. Przybyliński (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn, 2010, pp. 65–75.

Buchnat M., "Sytuacja dzieci z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w klasach integracyjnych", [in:] *Szkoła dla osób z niepełnosprawnością. Wzory – Codzienność – Wyzwania*, A. Krause, J. Belzyt, S. Sadowska (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk, 2012, pp. 163–182.

Ćwirynkało K., Żyta A., "Przekonania nauczycieli na temat edukacji włączającej uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami. Raport z badań", *Szkoła Specjalna*, no. 4, 2015, pp. 245–259, DOI: 10.5604/0137818x.1177729.

Chrzanowska I., "Niepełnosprawny w szkole. Z analiz dotyczących kompetencji szkolnych i realizacji przez szkoły standardu stwarzania warunków zapewniających rozwój osobom niepełnosprawnym", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna. Różne poszukiwania – wspólna misja*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2009, pp. 384–397.

Chrzanowska I., *Pedagogika specjalna. Od tradycji do współczesności*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Cracow, 2015.

Chrzanowska I., "Stan i rozmiary udziału dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością w edukacji włączającej w Polsce", *Forum Pedagogiczne*, no. 1, 2016, pp. 37–56.

Chrzanowska I., "Uczeń z niepełnosprawnością w różnych formach edukacji", [in:] *W poszukiwaniu indywidualnych dróg wspierających wszechstronny rozwój osób z niepełnosprawnością*, B. Szczupał, A. Giryński, G. Szumski (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 205–214.

Csányi Y., "Integráció/inklúzió és a szakvéleményezés összefüggései", *Gyógypedagógiai Szemle*, (3), 2013 pp. 165–173.

Czerwińska K., "Edukacja inkluzyjna uczniów z niepełnosprawnością wzroku" [in:] *Edukacja inkluzyjna. Teoria – system – metoda. Część 1*, S. Sobczak, L. Pytka, T. Zacharuk (Eds.), Uniwersytet Przyrodniczo-Humanistyczny, Siedlce, 2015, pp. 83–104.

Ćwirynkało K., Wójcik M., "Integracja osób pełno- i niepełnosprawnych jedną z dróg rozwoju kształcenia specjalnego", [in:] *Uczeń z niepełnosprawnością w szkole ogólnodostępnej*, Z. Gajdzica (Ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza "Humanitas", Sosnowiec, 2011, pp. 113–123.

Firkowska-Mankiewicz A., Szumski G., "Pedagogika specjalna i system kształcenia osób z niepełnosprawnościami w Polsce", [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna*, Vol. 2, D.D. Smith, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 319–346.

Gajdzica Z., "Komparatystyka jako dział wiedzy pedagogiki specjalnej", [in:] *Edukacja i wsparcie społeczne osób z niepełnosprawnością w wybranych krajach europejskich*,

J. Wyczesany, Z. Gajdzica (Eds.), Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls," Cracow, 2005, pp. 25–43.

Głodkowska J., "Uczniowie ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi – integracja edukacyjna procesem złożonym i trudnym", *Szkoła Specjalna*, no. 1, 2013, pp. 5–16.

Grzelak P., Kubicki P., Orłowska M., *Realizacja badania ścieżek edukacyjnych niepełnosprawnych dzieci, uczniów i absolwentów – raport końcowy*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warsaw, 2014.

Gyermekek Háza https://gyermekekhaza.hu/about-us/ 15/2013. (II. 26.) EMMI rendelet a pedagógiai szakszolgálati intézmények működéséről [01.12.2019]

Janiszewska-Nieścioruk Z., "Aktualne preferencje edukacyjne uczniów o specjalnych potrzebach i ich konsekwencje", [in:] *Szkoła dla osób z niepełnosprawnością. Wzory – Codzienność – Wyzwania*, A. Krause, J. Belzyt, S. Sadowska (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk, 2012, pp. 45–56.

Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, Z., Zaorska M., "Prowłączające zmiany w systemie polskiej edukacji – nowe możliwości, ograniczenia i wyzwania", *Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 4, 2014, pp. 9–28.

Kádár-Fülöp J., Lannert J. (Eds.) *Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures*. This publication is based on the publication Facts and Figures of the Hungarian Education System developed in 2014 as part of the EU development program (TÁMOP-3.1.8-09/1-2010-0004 – "Programme for General Quality Development in Public Education" © T-tudok Zrt. 2016 https://www.t-tudok.hu/files/2/facts_and_figures_210x210mm_angol_14-15-3.pdf

Kiss L., "Fogyatékkal élő és krónikus beteg hallgatók a felsőoktatásban", "Felsőoktatási Műhely" 2014 no. 8 (1), pp. 117–128.

Kowalski P., Nowak-Adamczyk, D., "Kształcenie osób głuchych i słabosłyszących – wyzwania dla systemu edukacji w Polsce", *Biuletyn Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich. Źródła*, no. 7, 2012, pp. 61–72.

Kovács K., "Empowerment of students with disabilities in university settings", [in:] *Inclusion, equity and access for individuals with disabilities*, S. Halder, V. Argyropoulos (Eds.), Insights from Educators across World. Palgrave, 2019. p. 594.

Krzemińska D., "O edukacji (nie)integracyjnej kilka refleksji", [in:] *Szkoła dla osób z niepełnosprawnością. Wzory – Codzienność – Wyzwania*, A. Krause, J. Belzyt, S. Sadowska (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk, 2012, pp. 57–71.

Kubicki P., "Między włączaniem a segregacją – szkoły w Polsce wobec uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 22, 2016, pp. 107–118.

Kulesza E. M., (Ed.), *Education of students with special needs. World experience. Individualized Education and Therapy Programs (IETPs)*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw, 2013.

Kupisiewicz M., "Paradygmaty pedagogiki specjalnej – główne kierunki przemian w Polsce w ostatnim trzydziestoleciu", *Człowiek – Niepełnosprawność – Społeczeństwo*, no. 2, 2006, pp. 23–32.

Marcinkowska B., "Kształcenie uczniów z niepełnosprawnością w Polsce – przeszłość, teraźniejszość, przyszłość", *Psychologia Wychowawcza*, no. 7, 2015, pp. 205–219.

Miler-Zdanowska K., "Edukacja uczniów z niepełnosprawnością wzroku w Polsce – szanse, zagrożenia, wyzwania", [in:] *Możliwości i ograniczenia edukacji inkluzyjnej. Egzemplifikacje*, T. Zacharuk, L. Pytka (Eds.), Uniwersytet Przyrodniczo-Humanistyczny, Siedlce, 2018, pp. 39–53.

Oktatási adatok 2018/2019. Statisztikai tükör. KSH. http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/oktat/oktatas1819.pdf [01.12.2019].

Ostrach Z., "Postrzeganie kształcenia integracyjnego przez rodziców uczniów pełnosprawnych", [in:] *Uczeń z niepełnosprawnością w szkole ogólnodostępnej*, Z. Gajdzica (Ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza "Humanitas", Sosnowiec, 2011, pp. 132–141.

Pachowicz M., "Kształcenie integracyjne – moda czy krok milowy edukacji w Polsce", [in:] *Uczeń z niepełnosprawnością w szkole ogólnodostępnej*, Z. Gajdzica (Ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza "Humanitas", Sosnowiec, 2011, pp. 124–131.

Palak Z., "Tendencje w edukacji dzieci z niepełnosprawnością – szanse i zagrożenia", *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, no. 2, Vol. XXXVI, 2017, pp. 13–31. DOI: 10.17951/lrp. 2017.36.2.13.

Papp G., "Az integráció, inklúzió fogalmak tartalmi elemzése gyógypedagógiai megközelítésben nemzetközi és magyar színtéren", *Gyógypedagógiai Szemle*, no. 4, 2012, pp. 295–304.

Parys K., "Zjawisko pozoru w systemie kształcenia uczniów niepełnosprawnych – próba identyfikacji i propozycje rozwiązań", *Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 4, 2014, pp. 29–55.

Ramberg J., Lénárt A., Watkins A. (Eds.), *European Agency statistics on inclusive education: 2014 dataset cross-country report*, Odense, Denmark, 2014.

Réthy E., *Befogadás, méltányosság, az inkluzív pedagógia rendszere*. Comenius Oktató és Kiadó Kft., Pécs, 2013.

Réthy E., "Inkluzív pedagógia", [in:] *Megközelítések*, I. Nahalka, J. Torgyik (Eds.), Eötvös Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2004, pp. 231–245.

Satoła M., "Edukacja specjalna w państwach Unii Europejskiej", [in:] *Postawy wobec niepełnosprawności*, L. Frąckiewicz (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Akademii Ekonomicznej im. K. Adamieckiego w Katowicach, Katowice, 2002, pp. 31–52.

Szumski G., *Integracyjne kształcenie niepełnosprawnych. Sens i granice zmiany edukacyjnej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2006.

Wasielewski K., "Ewolucja systemów oświatowych i postaw młodzieży wobec edukacji w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej", *Kultura i Edukacja*, no. 3(117), 2017, pp. 145–163.

Wdówik P., "Podręczniki i pomoce dydaktyczne dla uczniów z niepełnosprawno-ściami", *Biuletyn Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich. Źródła*, no. 7, 2012, pp. 81–87.

Varga, A., *Az inklúzió szemlélete és gyakorlata*. Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Neveléstudományi Intézet Romológia és Nevelésszociológia Tanszék Wlislocki Henrik Szakkollégium Pécs, 2015.

Vašek Š., Stankowski A., *Zarys pedagogiki specjalnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, 2006.

Zamkowska A., „Przygotowanie szkoły ogólnodostępnej do kształcenia uczniów upośledzonych umysłowo w stopniu lekkim", [in:] *Aktualne problemy edukacji i rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych w biegu życia*, Z. Palak, A. Bujnowska, A. Pawlak (Eds.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin, 2010, pp. 258–267.

Zaorska M., "Niepełnosprawności sprzężone w obliczu aktualnych przemian w systemowych rozwiązaniach edukacyjnych", *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej*, no. 14, 2014, pp. 100–112.

PIOTR SOBAŃSKI
Zielona Góra University

BŁAŻEJ KMIECIAK
Medical University of Łódź

"When Law Forgets About Dignity": Selected Historical and Modern Contexts of Sterilisation of People with Disabilities

ABSTRACT: Piotr Sobański, Błażej Kmieciak, *"When Law Forgets About Dignity": Selected Historical and Modern Contexts of Sterilisation of People with Disabilities*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 129–148. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.07

What is human dignity? How to define the dignity of a person? Is it possible to identify key features that show the principles of respecting the dignity of another person? Attempts to define the concept indicated here may inevitably fail. On the one hand, human dignity is a universal concept. It refers to all people. Nevertheless, on the other hand, each of us has our own sense of dignity. Paradoxically, e.g., humiliation of a particular person's dignity shows us the importance of the area that has been violated. Similar violations often affect sick and disabled persons. Examples of similar activities throughout human history abound. In this context, special attention should be paid to the interventions undertaken by the Nazis before the outbreak of WWII. Here, we are talking especially about mass and legalised activities that resulted in the sterilisation of many thousands of people with intellectual disabilities, people with physical disabilities and people experiencing mental disorders. The Nazi practices indicated here are presented as examples of human right violations. At the same time, they are examples of the unlawful rule of the state over an individual. Is there still a danger of reverting to similar practices today? Can standards of respect for human rights created years ago successfully protect disabled people against violation of their dignity? Can the knowledge of Nazi activities

still be important to us? The presented article is intended as an attempt at answering these questions.

KEY WORDS: human dignity, sterilisation of disabled people, human rights, eugenics, suffering

Preliminary Remarks

In mid June 2019, the British media informed the public about a court-ordered abortion for a disabled woman. The woman was 22 weeks pregnant. As noted in press telegrams, the woman was diagnosed with mental disability in a degree that made her independent[1] existence impossible. It was written: *The woman did not have the mental capacity for making an independent decision about the pregnancy, even though she claimed that she wanted to have the baby.* The judge adjudicating in the case stated that: *I think that (the woman – authors' note) would like to have a baby as if it was a nice doll (…). I am deeply aware of the fact that ordering abortion by the state at the moment when it seems that the woman does not want it is a deep intervention. However, I have to act in her best interest and not under the impact of the society.*[2] The aforementioned decision of the British court met with strong criticism. In the first place, it must be noted that the compulsory abortive measures were taken against the will of the pregnant woman, her mother (a midwife) who was caring for her, and social service employees. In the second place, attention should be drawn to the character of the procedure. Here, we are talking about a forceful abortion which - independently from the degree of legalisation - has to be called a special type procedure. It is a medical intervention

---

[1] In the presented paper, the term "mental disability" will be used. It is a part of the Polish legislation, including the Act on Protection of Mental Health, to which the authors will refer in a further part of this paper.

[2] Quoted after telegram: *Brytyjski sąd nakazał aborcję niepełnosprawnej kobiecie*, "TVP. Info", source: https://www.tvp.info/43208459/brytyjski-sad-nakazal-aborcje-niepelnosprawnej-kobiecie [accessed: 14 January 2020].

that terminates a unique biological period in a woman's life.[3] In the case discussed here, an appeal was lodged. Its effect was rejection of the judgement of the first instance. Hence, the disabled patient was allowed to continue her pregnancy.[4]

As mentioned before, the presented case met with strong criticism from representatives of religious milieus. Several Catholic bishops, including John Keenan and John Sherrington, drew attention to the fact that the court's consent for compulsory abortion with respect to a handicapped woman was an example of the state overstepping its authority in relation to an individual. It was noted that this was a radical move, violating an individual's fundamental rights. This opinion was soon shared by almost 120,000 people who signed a petition with respect to the disabled patient.[5] However, as it turns out, planned and compulsory termination of pregnancy of the aforementioned woman also sparked strong protests among people not related to, e.g. the Catholic Church that straightforwardly criticises abortion. Mainstream media related the case in detail, referring to the blatant injustice of the court's decision and its cruel nature.[6] However, several questions appear here. Why did such criticism emerge? Why did the abortion-related plans of the court encounter social resentment in a country where abortion is accepted as a reproductive measure and its use is commonly available until the 24th week of pregnancy? Furthermore, is it justified to compare

---

[3] Cf. in this context: Y. Joseph *U.K. Court Says Mentally Disabled Woman Must Have Abortion,* "New York Times", https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/23/world/europe/abortion-mentally-disabled-uk.html [accessed: 14 January 2020].

[4] H. Sherwood, *Appeal Court Overturns Forced Abortion Ruling,* "The Guardian", https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/24/catholic-church-hits-out-at-court-over-abortion-ruling [accessed: 14 January 2020].

[5] F. Mikelionic, *British Court Overturns Ruling Forcing Disabled Pregnant Woman to Have Abortion,* "Fox News", https://www.foxnews.com/world/british-overturn-ruling-forcing-disabled-pregnant-woman-public-uproar [accessed: 14 January 2020].

[6] Telegram: *U.K. Court of Appeal Overturns Ruling Ordering Mentally Disabled Woman to Have Abortion,* "The Wall Street Journal", https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-k-court-rules-mentally-disabled-woman-must-have-abortion-11561390581 [accessed: 14 January 2020].

such ruling of the British court to the despicable actions of physicians during the times of the Third Reich who, based on specific provisions, undertook sterilisation measures with respect to disabled persons?

The doubts presented here are born naturally. In the recent years, it has been difficult to encounter a case where a court would accept abortion for a mentally disabled patient without her consent. It must also be added that in the aforementioned case, the court ruling was supported by an opinion of three physicians: an obstetrician and two psychiatrists who arbitrarily decided that termination of pregnancy would bear semblance of therapy for the patient. It was ascertained that its continuation could lead to a threat for the mental health of the aforementioned woman.[7]

Comparing the currently undertaken activities with the procedures that were carried out by the Third Reich physicians may evoke surprise. The case presented here clearly directs us to the times when thousands of Germans were deprived of the capacity to procreate solely and exclusively due to the fact that they were diagnosed with an intellectual disability, mental disease, addiction or disruptions in social functioning. It may come as a surprise to many that the Nazi procedures were very well described, as well as "efficiently" constructed. They did not refer to an arbitrary decision of, e.g., an NSDAP official; cases were directly sent to courts, which was composed not only of lawyers, but also of physicians.

The authors of the paper will try to discuss the aforementioned Nazi practices, in particular court procedures pertaining to the sterilisation of disabled persons. It is not only meant to recall the important facts that straightforwardly show the situation of violation of human rights, but also to indicate the modern contexts of similar interventions. The analyses and reflections below - also relying on the British example presented above - will form a basis for answer-

---

[7] A. Yuhas, *U.K. Appeals Court Overturns Order for Mentally Disabled Woman to Have Abortion,* "New York Times", https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/24/world/europe/uk-abortion-mentally-disabled-woman.html [accessed: 14 January 2020].

ing the following question: are legal procedures a sufficient tool that allows for securing a person's dignity, including people who suffer from disabilities? The authors of the paper primarily use the historical and legal method, along with an analysis of reference materials, supported by the study of the content of mass media communications. Thus, the text features numerous references to Internet sources. As it turns out, the presented subject is broadly discussed by researchers - primarily German - who present their findings on an ongoing basis on the Internet.[8]

Legal Bases of Sterilisation in the Third Reich

On 14 July 1933, the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases was signed in Berlin by Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of the Reich, Wilhelm Frick, Minister of Internal Affairs and Franz Gärtner, Minister of Justice.[9] The Law entered into force on 1 January 1934.[10] Standards contained in the Law were addressed to persons who were deemed handicapped. The content of the official grounds for adoption of the Law stipulated that sterilisation was meant to exclude offspring of biologically lesser value from the society. Its intention was to prevent birth of children whose parents were treated as handicapped, hereditarily burdened and furthermore, there was a potential risk of reproduction in an uncontrolled mode.[11]

––––––––––––

[8] About the selected methods cf.: M. Krajewski, *O metodologii nauk i zasadach pisania naukowego*, Płock, 2010, p. 23, M. Furmankiewicz, P. Ziuziański "Internet jako źródło danych epidemiologicznych", [in:] *Rola informatyki w naukach ekonomicznych i społecznych Innowacje i implikacje interdyscyplinarne*, Z. E. Zieliński (ed.), Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Handlowej Kielce, 2013, p. 379, K. Puchalski, "Internet a możliwości poprawy efektów edukacji zdrowotnej", *Studia Edukacyjne*, No. 23, 2012, p. 121.

[9] Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14. Juli 1933 (RGBl I, p. 529).

[10] § 18 of the Law.

[11] G. Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Geschlechterpolitik*, p. 4 (https://refubium.fu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/fub188/23 087/Zwangssterilisation_im_Nationalsozialismus.pdf) [accessed: 14 October 2019].

Pursuant to § 1(1) of the Law, sterilisation via a surgical procedure applied to persons who were deemed to have a hereditary disease if, based on medical knowledge, it was to be expected with significant probability that the descendants of such person would suffer from grave physical or psychical defects of hereditary nature. § 1(2) of the Law included a catalogue of hereditary diseases within the meaning of the provisions of the Law. They included: congenital mental deficiency, schizophrenia, manic-depressive insanity, hereditary epilepsy, hereditary chorea, hereditary blindness, hereditary deafness, as well as any severe hereditary deformity. Additionally, persons suffering from severe alcoholism could also be sterilised (§ 1(3) of the Law). Provisions of the Law also referred to five psychiatric and neurological diagnoses, three types of physical disability and alcoholism.[12] In the case of alcoholism as one of the causes of sterilisation, it was not about the determination how often and in what quantities a given person drank alcohol. The decisive criterion was the person's social behaviour.[13] Thus, there was also a risk of sterilisation in case of refusal to comply with the schooling obligation, prior criminal record and homelessness.[14]

Mental deficiency referred to in § 1(1) of the Law was actually treated as a social category and not a medical and psychiatric one.[15] The general concept of mental deficiency contained in the Law

---

[12] H.M. Schneider, Das nationalsozialistische *"Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses" am Beispiel der 1939 an der Psychiatrie Tübingen durchgeführten Sterilisationsgutachten*, p. 9 (https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/hand le/10900/46141/pdf/finale_druckversion_nach_druckfreigabge_und_korrektur_dis _h_schneider_pdf_a_.pdf?sequence=1) [accessed: 16 October 2019].

[13] C.A. Spring, *Zwischen Krieg und Euthanasie: Zwangssterilisationen in Wien 1940–1945*, p. 67 (http://www.boehlau-verlag.com/download/161614/978-3-205-78321-3_OpenAccess.pdf) [accessed: 15 October 2019].

[14] W. Ayass, "*Asozialer Nachwuchs ist für die Volksgemeinschaft vollkommen unerwünscht". Die Zwangssterilisationen von sozialen Außenseitern* (https://kobra.uni-kas sel.de/bitstream/handle/123456789/2007013016913/Zwangssterilisation.pdf;jsessionid =50FFAF621A85CF83434FC236F3ADD2DD?sequence=3) [accessed: 15 October 2019].

[15] K. Berndt, *Zwangssterilisationen in Mannheim. Die Rolle der Richter und Ärzte*, p. 3 (http://akjustiz-mannheim.de/Informationen%20zur%20Zwangssterilisation%20im %20NS%20in%20Mannheim.pdf) [accessed: 14 October 2019].

opened the possibility of constructing divergences from social or character-related standards based on non-scientific and subjective evaluations, whereas such structure could be legitimised with the use of a medical diagnosis of oligophrenia.[16] Applications for sterilisation could be filed by persons who wished to undergo the procedure or their statutory representatives (§ 2(1) of the Law). Medical practitioners, as well as directors of psychiatric clinics, care homes and penitentiary facilities were also vested with the right to file an application for sterilisation of a given person (§ 3(1) and (2) of the Law). Even though directors were authorised to file applications, yet they often chose a different path, i.e. they filed a report to the Health Authority (Gesundheitsamt), which allowed them to remain anonymous.[17]

It must be emphasised that even a brief stay in a psychiatric facility was a basis for instituting proceedings on compulsory sterilisation. Even if the patient left the facility due to mitigation of disease symptoms, there was a risk of initiation of proceedings.[18] § 3 of the Law allowed for submission of applications for initiation of the procedure in case of persons who were in a penitentiary facility. Sterilisation of criminals was a justified necessity with respect to the broadly understood protection of the society, in particular children and women, from rape and unwanted pregnancy.[19]

Procedure Before the Sterilisation Court of First Instance

Pursuant to § 4 of the Law, an application for sterilisation was to be submitted in written form or accompany the minutes in a Hered-

---

[16] E. Heesch, *Nationalsozialistische Zwangssterilisierungen psychiatrischer Patienten in Schleswig-Holstein* (http://akens.org/index.php/materialien-zur-zeitgeschichte/aufsaet ze/18-aufsaetze/euthanasie-zwangssterilisierungen.html) [accessed: 14 October 2019].

[17] J. Piechatzek, *Die Auswirkungen des Gesetzes zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses an der Universitäts-Frauenklinik Kiel in der Zeit von 1932 bis 1940*, p. 15 (https://d-nb.info/1019866705/34) [accessed: 15 October 2019].

[18] E. Heesch, op. cit.; W. Ayass, op. cit.

[19] H.M. Schneider, op. cit., p. 22.

itary Health Court. The application also had to include a medical opinion or the necessity of sterilisation had to be substantiated in another mode. It is worth adding that an application filed by a person wishing to undergo the sterilisation or his/ her legal representative could have been withdrawn (§ 2(3) of the Law). It should also be taken into account that in reality, submission of applications for sterilisation of own person was a rarity[20]. Jurisdiction of the Hereditary Health Court was specified in § 5 of the Law. This was the court having competence as to any cases instituted against a given person, in this case a person who was going to be sterilised, unless the provisions stipulated special competence. In 1936, 205 of courts of this type operated in the Reich.[21]

The Hereditary Health Court was a division of a District Court (Amtsgericht). The adjudicating panel comprised a professional judge as the presiding officer, a medical officer and a physician who received the approval of the German Reich, i.e. was vested with the full right to practise the profession and also had in-depth knowledge about the hereditary health science. An alternate was appointed for every member of the panel. The presiding officer was excluded if he/ she previously rendered a decision in a Guardianship Court in proceedings on granting permit for sterilisation referred to in § 2(1) of the Law. On the other hand, the medical officer was excluded if he filed an application to the Hereditary Health Court for sterilisation (§ 6(1) of the Law).

The proceedings of the Court were not public (§ 7(1) of the Law). It must be emphasised that persons to whom the procedure on sterilisation referred did not have insight to the case files.[22] The content of § 7(2) of the Law stipulated significant freedom of the Hereditary Health Court with respect to evidentiary proceedings. The Court could allow evidence from testimonies of witnesses and experts and order examination of the person to whom the application for sterilisation referred. Such person could have been compul-

_____

[20] C.A. Spring, op. cit., p. 185.

[21] G. Bock, op. cit., p. 213.

[22] E. Heesch, *Nationalsozialistische*…

sorily brought to a psychiatric clinic. If patients tried to escape during the proceedings, they were looked for by the police.[23]

Physicians who appeared before the Court as witnesses or experts were, pursuant to § 7(2) of the Law, released from the obligation of observing professional secrecy. This statutory provision resulted, in the majority of cases, in a drastic drop or even lack of trust of patients to physicians.[24] The Hereditary Health Court could have applied to court and administrative authorities and hospitals for information useful for the needs of the proceedings, the disclosure of which was mandatory at the Court's request.

Pursuant to § 8 of the Law, the Court issued judgements at its absolute discretion based on results of proceedings and evidence taken. A judgement in the case was made after an oral discussion, with the majority of votes. The Court had a significant margin of freedom when issuing judgements.[25] It should be borne in mind that during the court proceedings, Nazi judges and physicians cooperated closely.[26] Physicians not only issued judgements in cases, but also acted as prosecutors, filing applications for sterilisation. Apart from it, psychiatrists issued opinions in proceedings which were usually in favour of sterilisation. This testifies to a significant role of physicians in execution of the provisions of the Law.[27] At the same time, it must be added that as long as the issue of a judgement took place in compliance with the stance of the majority of the adjudicating panel, it was not the judge's task to settle differences in the opinions of physicians in the area of medicine.[28]

─────────────

[23] Ibidem.

[24] C.A. Spring, op. cit., p. 115.

[25] Cf. Ibidem, p. 272.

[26] T. Foth, *Regieren durch Akten. Die Funktion von PatientInnenakten für die Krankenmorde des Nationalsozialismus,* [in:] *Strukturentstehung durch Verflechtung. Akteuren-Netwerk-Theorie(n) und Automatismen*, (eds.) T. Conradi, H. Derwanz, F. Muhle, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 2011, pp. 219–235.

[27] E. Heesch, *Zwangssterilisierungen Kranker und Behinderter in Schleswig-Holstein* (http://akens.org/index.php/materialien-zur-zeitgeschichte/aufsaetze/18-aufsaetze/euthanasie-zwangssterilisierungen.html) [accessed: 14 October 2019].

[28] Cf. J. Piechatzek, op. cit., p. 16.

It must be noted that § 8 of the Law imposed on the Court an obligation of preparing a judgement in written form along with grounds, including causes, on the basis of which sterilisation was ordered or the application was dismissed. Copies of the judgement had to be served to the applicant, the medical officer and the person with respect to whom an application for sterilisation was made, alternatively his/ her statutory representative, if such person was not authorised to file an application pursuant to § 2 of the Law. Proceedings usually took place in the absence of persons whom the application for sterilisation referred to.[29]

Pursuant to § 13(1) of the Law, a person subject to sterilisation did not bear the costs of court proceedings. On the other hand, § 15(2) of the Law imposed the obligation of secrecy on persons participating in court proceedings, violation of which was punishable by imprisonment up to 1 year or a money fine. At the same time, it is to be acknowledged that the obligation of secrecy also included persons who were going to be sterilised under pain of penalty.[30] Filing a motion for prosecution instituted proceedings *ex officio*. In such case, personnel, employers, physicians, including persons who were suspected of committing a forbidden deed under § 15(2) of the Law were heard.[31]

Appeal Procedure and Resumption of Procedure

Pursuant to § 9 of the Law, it was possible to appeal against a judgement of the Hereditary Health Court. The appeal had to be lodged in written form or orally to the minutes in the secretariat of the Court of first instance within a month from serving of the decision. However, there was a possibility of reverting the date for filing the appeal. Effective submission of appeal resulted in suspension of

_____

[29] C.A. Spring, op. cit., p. 32; J. Piechatzek, op. cit., p. 15.

[30] E. Heesch, *Nationalsozialistische…*

[31] H.M. Schneider, op. cit., p. 29.

execution of the judgement (§ 9 of the Law). Pursuant to amendment of the Law of 14 July 1933, made via Act of 26 June 1935[32], the allotted term for submission of appeal was shortened from one month to 14 days, which was justified by the welfare of the proceedings.[33]

The Higher Hereditary Health Court, established as the Court of second instance, was a division of the Court of Appeals (Oberlandesgericht). In 1936, there were 18 courts of second instance.[34] The composition of a Higher Hereditary Health Court included: a judge of the Court of Appeals, a medical specialist, as well as a national licentiate physician of proved competence in hereditary health learning. For every member of the adjudicating panel, an alternate was appointed, analogously to the proceedings before the Court of first instance, which followed from the content of § 6(1) of the Law of 14 July 1933.

Pursuant to § 10(2) of the Law, the proceedings before the Higher Hereditary Health Court were governed by provisions of § 7 and 8 of the Law. Just as the Hereditary Health Court, the Court of second instance also adjudicated during a non-public session. With respect to evidentiary proceedings, there was a possibility of hearing witnesses, experts and the person who was going to be sterilised. In case the necessity of medical examination of such person was acknowledged, in case of the person's un-excused absence, the competence of the Court of second instance also included a warrant for compulsory appearance at the next examination date. Physicians were exempt from medical confidentiality, whereas authorities and hospitals were required to provide the Court with any requested information.

A Higher Hereditary Health Court issued judgements at its absolute discretion, taking into account the overall evidentiary proceedings that were carried out. Issue of a judgement took place after

_____

32 RGBl I, p. 773.

33 G. Bock, op. cit., p. 215.

34 Ibidem, p. 213.

an oral discussion, by majority of votes of the adjudicating panel. The judgement had to be prepared in written form, along with grounds indicating the causes for acknowledging the application for sterilisation or its dismissal.

In spite of the possibility of submission of appeals by persons who were going to be subjected to sterilisation guaranteed in the Law, in practice the courts of second instance never acknowledged them.[35] The decision of the Higher Hereditary Health Court had to be served to the entities listed in the content of § 8 of the Law. Even though judgements of the Court of second instance were final (§ 10(3) of the Law), yet there was a possibility of submission, pursuant to § 12(2) of the Law, of an application for resumption of proceedings both at the benefit and to the detriment of the person who was going to be sterilised. If circumstances requiring renewed review of the actual status came into being, the Hereditary Health Court was required to resume the proceedings and temporarily suspend the sterilisation. In case of dismissal of the application, the proceedings were permitted only in case of emergence of new facts justifying performance of sterilisation.

Enforcement of Final and Valid Decisions of Sterilisation Courts

The surgical procedure of sterilisation could be performed at a hospital by a physician fulfilling the requirements set out in § 11 of the Law. With respect to performance of the procedure, a physician who filed an application for sterilisation or who participated in the court proceedings as a member of the adjudicating panel was excluded. Persons who did not file the application for sterilisation on their own and who evaded the obligation of its performance

_____

[35] S.L. Herrmann, K. Braun, *Das Gesetz, das nicht aufhebbar ist. Vom Umgang mit den Opfern der NS-Zwangssterilisation in der Bundesrepublik* (https://www.kj.nomos.de/fileadmin/kj/doc/2010/KJ_10_03_07.pdf) [accessed: 15 October 2019].

could have been forcefully brought by the police. Means of physical coercion could have been used with respect to them in a situation when all other means turned out to be insufficient (§ 12(1) of the Law). Use of coercion was not only permitted, but often used in practice.[36] Victims of sterilisation policy did not have the possibility of defending against enforcement of final and valid judgements of the Hereditary Health Court.[37] It is worth adding that between 1934 and 1936, approx. 7–9% of patients were forcefully brought by the police for the purpose of performance of the surgical procedure[38]. Pursuant to § 12(1) of the Law, the procedure could have been performed if the judgement of the Court ordering sterilisation became final and valid. A physician performing the procedure was required to provide the medical specialist with a written report on the course of the sterilisation along with information about the applied method. The report had to be presented within two weeks from the procedure.[39]

As a result of second amendment of the Law of 14 July 1933, made by Law of 4 February 1936, sterilisation of women above 38 years of age was also allowed with the use of X-rays.[40] For women over 38 years of age, surgery operation was considered too risky.[41] Sterilisation was also performed with the use of radioactive radiation, in particular radium, mesothorium and radon.[42]

It must be added that in line with § 14 of the Law of 14 July 1933, there was a possibility of sterilisation omitting the provisions of the Law in case of threat to life or health. In such case, sterilisation could be performed by removal of gonads. The procedure had

---

[36] Ibidem.

[37] A. Scheulen, *Zur Rechtslage und Rechtsentwicklung des Erbgesundheitsgesetzes 1934* (https://www.bruecke-sh.de/beitrag/anhang/Rechtslage.pdf) [date of access: 15 October 2019].

[38] E. Heesch, *Nationalsozialistische…*

[39] J. Piechatzek, op. cit., p. 17.

[40] RGBl I, p. 119.

[41] H.M. Schneider, op. cit., p. 33.

[42] J. Piechatzek, op. cit., s. 16; H.M. Schneider, op. cit., p. 34.

to be carried out in line with the rules of medicine and at the consent of the person who was going to be sterilised.

The Law of 4 February 1936 introduced § 10a to the Law of 14 July 1933, which referred to the issue of sterilisation of pregnant women. A situation where the *nasciturus* was deemed capable of living and the situation where the *nasciturus* was not capable of living were regulated separately. In this respect, § 10a(2) of the Law introduced a definition of incapacity for life. It ended at the lapse of the 6th month of pregnancy. § 11 and 14 of the Law also included provisions which referred to termination of pregnancy.[43] It must be emphasised that it did not matter whether a woman was pregnant at the time of issue of the court judgement. It was sufficient for the pregnancy to exist at the moment of performance of the sterilisation procedure. The concept of combined abortion and sterilisation was dictated both by the risk that a pregnant woman would have to endure during performance of two separate procedures, as well as the necessity of minimising the costs of enforcement proceedings.[44] Analogously to court proceedings, Art. 15(2) of the Law imposed the obligation of secrecy on persons participating in the court proceedings, violation of which was punishable by imprisonment up to 1 year or a money fine.

Discussion and Final Remarks

The sterilisation policy was a form of racism. Racism not only entails discrimination of other nations, but also discrimination of members of own nation who are considered handicapped. The concept of race promulgated by the Nazi did not entail - in spite of glorification of the German nation - that race was already given, but that it had to be created.[45] From the Nazi point of view, the sterilisa-

_____

[43] More about it: E. Heesch, op. cit.
[44] J. Piechatzek, op. cit., p. 17.
[45] G. Bock, op. cit., p. 12; A. Scheulen, op. cit.

tion procedure was not about putting the state interest above the interest of individuals. Such interests were treated as identical and it was assumed that no conflict existed between them in theory. An individual had no reason to give birth to sick children and the society had no reason to sterilise healthy individuals.[46] It must also be mentioned that reduction of procreation of mentally and physically sick people was meant to reduce the burden on the state budget.[47] Furthermore, regulations contained in the Law, apart from fulfilment of the racist policy, were intended at prosecuting and sanctioning any socially undesirable behaviour. Therefore, persons manifesting stances not accepted by the Nazi were often diagnosed as sick, suffering from congenital mental deficiency. This referred to political opposition in a significant degree. Apart from mental retardation, also a diagnosis of severe alcoholism was meant to acknowledge any behaviour not fitting the concept of a Nazi state as a criterion enabling sterilisation.[48] G. Bock refers to data indicating that until the outbreak of WWII, 375,000 people were sterilised.[49] The outbreak of the war brought a short-term suspension, and subsequently resumption, in a limited scope, of sterilisation procedures.[50] In total, as a result of application of the Law between 1934 and 1945, approx. 400,000 people were sterilised.[51] Independently from the above, an unknown, yet significant number of people was sterilised in omission of the provisions of the Law, often against their will, and even without their knowledge.[52] When trying to de-

_____

[46] G. Bock, op. cit., p. 215.

[47] G. Bock, op. cit., p. 83.

[48] E. Heesch, *Zwangssterilisierungen…*

[49] G. Bock, op. cit., p. 248.

[50] C.A. Spring, op. cit., p. 72.

[51] Cf. R. Loddenkemper, N. Konietzko, V. Seehausen, *Die Lungenheilkunde und ihre Institutionen im Nationalsozialismus*, Pneumologie 72 (02), 2018, p. 112; J. Nedoschill, R. Castell, *"Kindereuthanasie" während der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur: Die "Kinderfachabteilung" Ansbach in Mittelfranken, Praxis der Kinderpsychologie und Kinderpsychiatrie* 50(3), 2001, p. 194–195; G. Bock, op. cit., p. 4; T. Foth, op. cit., p. 219 et seq.

[52] G. Bock, op. cit., p. 4.

termine the exact number of victims of forcible sterilisation, it is necessary to bear in mind that publication of data about the number of victims was forbidden by the Ministry of Propaganda of the Third Reich. The authorities were aware of the risk that too high number of sterilisation proceedings could make the German society anxious.[53]

The practice described above evokes justified social resentment. This is an example of humiliating treatment of a selected group of people on account of specific features which were arbitrarily deemed bad or detrimental. Analysis of the provisions of Nazi laws leads to a surprising conclusion. The Nazis were very precise in their legislative activities. Sterilisation from the perspective of literal wording of legal acts was meant to be an exceptional procedure, performance of which had to be preceded by an adequate court analysis. Such procedure may at times evoke surprise also among modern experts on human rights, including rights of people with disabilities. As shown above, a decision on depriving a given person of fertility was made by a court supported, in fact, by opinions of several physicians. A participant of the procedure who did not agree with the judgement could appeal to a court of higher instance. Compulsory sterilisation (without the court's control) was considered an exceptional phenomenon in the Nazi legislation. It could be justified by, e.g., such important situation as the necessity of depriving a person of fertility on account of a threat to his/ her life. Thus, as can be seen, it is surprising that the legislation of the Third Reich took into account the right of the procedure's participant to trial, information, effective appeal measures and medical actions taken by qualified medical personnel. Therefore, how is it possible that the procedures and actions discussed here became one of the key cases of violation of dignity of sick and disabled people?

The answer to the question posed here lies primarily in the term "dignity." The Nazi provisions relied on an assumption in line with which not every person was vested with full human dignity. Eugen-

---

[53] E. Heesch, op. cit.

ic assumptions of the Third Reich consisted, on the one hand, of the worship of "Übermensch" and on the other on the contempt for everything that was weak, sick and disabled. In this respect, assumptions presented by Friedrich Nietzsche were of essence. In "On the Genealogy of Morality", Nietzsche claims: "Away with this disgraceful mollycoddling of feeling! That the sick should not make the healthy sick – and this would be that kind of mollycoddling – ought to be the chief concern on earth: – but for that, it is essential that the healthy should remain separated from the sick, should even be spared the sight of the sick so that they do not confuse themselves with the sick. Or would it be their task, perhaps, to be nurses and doctors? … But they could not be more mistaken and deceived about their task, – the higher ought not to abase itself as the tool of the lower …".[54] From the perspective of legislative technique, the pre-war actions of German legislation probably did not evoke any fear. Numerous mechanisms and procedures were introduced that were meant to offer an actual possibility of, e.g., effective appeal from the decision of a sterilisation court. Axiological premises of the law discussed here referred to several fundamental ones, in compliance with which:

- a disabled person is worse;
- a disabled person should be deprived of the possibility of reproduction (protection of the society from transferring defects and disabilities to next generations);
- the state has a right to make arbitrary decisions to protect the society from damages that may be caused by disabled individuals and groups.

A similar approach was justified by a belief that dignity of a disabled person is not subject to any special protection. Thus, deprivation of fertility of a given person was justified by the welfare of the society. However, an assumption that a specific group of people is of lesser quality simultaneously leads to a conclusion that no legal

---

[54] F. Nietzsche, *Z genealogii moralności*, Polish translation by J. Borowski, Gdańsk, 2000, p. 56 [English translation: Carol Diethe, Cambridge University Press, 2006].

procedures can offer effective defence from violation of human rights. If:

– actions of the legislator;

– judicial practice of courts;

– standards of practising medical profession

rely on a similar, demeaning approach, then no act is capable of guaranteeing protection of human rights, in this case rights of a disabled person.

Unfortunately, when analysing the actions of one of the British courts with respect to a mentally disabled patient, it is difficult to avoid eugenic associations. The judge, approving a forceful abortion with respect to the aforementioned woman, simultaneously decided that it was necessary to intervene in a unique sphere of the patient's life (the sphere of fertility and maternity). The judge, assessing the patient's behaviour, decided that the woman - on account of her disability - would not be able to perform her motherly obligations and simultaneously, by giving birth to the child, she would expose herself to losses in the area of own mental health. It seems that in this case it was not important whether the judge issuing the ruling in the case made a fair assessment of the patient's situation. On the other hand, it is essential that the judge decided on arbitrary intervention in the special area of her life, i.e. the time of her pregnancy. In this case, it did not matter whether the patient had competence to become a mother. However, it was important that the court made a shocking - for many - decision on compulsory abortion due to determining that the woman would not be a competent mother on account of the experienced disability. Unfortunately, similarly to the legislation of the Third Reich, it was decided that certain features disqualify specific people from the role of parents. At the same time, it was decided that such assessment authorised the state to take radical steps. It must be noted that the German law described above allowed not only for sterilisation, but also abortion with respect to disabled people.

In cases reviewed on the basis of the Nazi legislation of the Third Reich, appeals were rarely acknowledged. The above-descri-

bed British situation found its positive solution. The court of appeals decided that the original judgement was erroneous and allowed for continuation of pregnancy. Let us be hopeful that the basis of such decision was primarily a conviction about the unique character of human dignity, irrespective of the physical or psychical condition of a person. Without a similar approach, no state law can fully guarantee human rights.

Literature

Ayass W., *"Asozialer Nachwuchs ist für die Volksgemeinschaft vollkommen unerwünscht".
Die Zwangssterilisationen von sozialen Außenseitern* (https://kobra.uni-kassel.de/
bitstream/handle/123456789/2007013016913/Zwangssterilisation.pdf;jsessionid
=50FFAF621A85CF83434FC236F3ADD2DD?sequence=3) [accessed: 15 October
2019].
Berndt K., *Zwangssterilisationen in Mannheim. Die Rolle der Richter und Ärzte* (http://
akjustiz-mannheim.de/Informationen%20zur%20Zwangssterilisation%20im%20
NS%20in%20Mannheim.pdf) [accessed: 14 October 2019].
Bock G., *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Ge-
schlechterpolitik* (https://refubium.fu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/fub188/23087
/Zwangssterilisation_im_Nationalsozialismus.pdf) [accessed: 09 December 2019].
Telegram: *Brytyjski sąd nakazał aborcję niepełnosprawnej kobiecie*, "TVP. Info", source:
https://www.tvp.info/43208459/brytyjski-sad-nakazal-aborcje-niepelnospraw
nej-kobiecie [accessed: 14 January 2020].
Telegram: *U.K. Court of Appeal Overturns Ruling Ordering Mentally Disabled Woman to
Have Abortion*, "The Wall Street Journal", https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-k-
court-rules-mentally-disabled-woman-must-have-abortion-11561390581 [accessed:
14 January 2020].
Furmankiewicz M, Ziuziański P., "Internet jako źródło danych epidemiologicz-
nych", [in:] *Rola informatyki w naukach ekonomicznych i społecznych Innowacje i im-
plikacje interdyscyplinarne*, Z.E. Zieliński (ed.), Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły
Handlowej Kielce, 2013, pp. 371–381.
Foth T., *Regieren durch Akten. Die Funktion von PatientInnenakten für die Krankenmor-
de des Nationalsozialismus*, [in:] *Strukturentstehung durch Verflechtung. Akteuren-
Netwerk-Theorie(n) und Automatismen*, ed. T. Conradi, H. Derwanz, F. Muhle,
Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 2011, pp. 219–235.
Heesch E., *Nationalsozialistische Zwangssterilisierungen psychiatrischer Patienten in Schles-
wig-Holstein* (http://akens.org/index.php/materialien-zur-zeitgeschichte/auf

saetze/18-aufsaetze/euthanasie-zwangssterilisierungen.html) [accessed: 14 October 2019].

Heesch E., *Zwangssterilisierungen Kranker und Behinderter in Schleswig-Holstein* (http://akens.org/index.php/materialien-zur-zeitgeschichte/aufsaetze/18-auf saetze/euthanasie-zwangssterilisierungen.html) [accessed: 10 December 2019].

Herrmann S.L., Braun K., *Das Gesetz, das nicht aufhebbar ist. Vom Umgang mit den Opfern der NS-Zwangssterilisation in der Bundesrepublik* (https://www.kj.nomos. de/fileadmin/kj/doc/2010/KJ_10_03_07.pdf) [accessed: 09 December 2019].

Joseph Y., *U.K. Court Says Mentally Disabled Woman Must Have Abortion,* "New York Times", https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/23/world/europe/abortion-men tally-disabled-uk.html [accessed: 14 January 2020].

Krajewski M., *O metodologii nauk i zasadach pisania naukowego*, Płock, 2010.

Loddenkemper R., Konietzko N., Seehausen V., "Die Lungenheilkunde und ihre Institutionen im Nationalsozialismus", *Pneumologie* 72(02), 2018, p. 106–118.

Mikelionic F., *British court overturns ruling forcing disabled pregnant woman to have abortion,* "Fox News", https://www.foxnews.com/world/british-overturn-ruling-forcing-disabled-pregnant-woman-public-uproar [accessed: 14 January 2020].

Nedoschill J., Castell R., "Kindereuthanasie" während der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur: Die "Kinderfachabteilung" Ansbach in Mittelfranken", *Praxis der Kinderpsychologie und Kinderpsychiatrie,* 50(3), 2001, pp. 192–210.

Puchalski K., "Internet a możliwości poprawy efektów edukacji zdrowotnej", *Studia Edukacyjne*, No. 23, 2012, pp. 119–139.

Piechatzek J., *Die Auswirkungen des Gesetzes zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses an der Universitäts-Frauenklinik Kiel in der Zeit von 1932 bis 1940* (https://d-nb. info/1019866705/34) [accessed: 11 December 2019].

Scheulen A., *Zur Rechtslage und Rechtsentwicklung des Erbgesundheitsgesetzes 1934* (https://www.bruecke-sh.de/beitrag/anhang/Rechtslage.pdf) [accessed: 15 October 2019].

Sherwood H., *Appeal court overturns forced abortion ruling,* "The Guardian", https:// www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/24/catholic-church-hits-out-at-court-over-abortion-ruling [accessed: 14 January 2020].

Schneider H.M., *Das nationalsozialistische "Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses" am Beispiel der 1939 an der Psychiatrie Tübingen durchgeführten Sterilisationsgutachten* (https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10 900/46141/pdf/finale_druckversion_nach_druckfreigabge_und_korrektur_dis _h_schneider_pdf_a_.pdf?sequence=1) [accessed: 10 December 2019].

Spring C.A., *Zwischen Krieg und Euthanasie: Zwangssterilisationen in Wien 1940–1945* (http://www.boehlau-verlag.com/download/161614/978-3-205-78321-3_Open Access.pdf) [accessed: 02 December 2019].

Yuhas A., *U.K. Appeals Court Overturns Order for Mentally Disabled Woman to Have Abortion,* "New York Times", https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/24/world/ europe/uk-abortion-mentally-disabled-woman.html [accessed: 14 January 2020].

RENATA MARCINIAK-FIRADZA

University of Łódź

Types of grammatical and lexical errors made by students with a mild intellectual disability at the second stage of their education a qualitative analysis

ABSTRACT: Renata Marciniak-Firadza, *Types of grammatical and lexical errors made by students with a mild intellectual disability at the second stage of their education a qualitative analysis*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 149–170. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.08

The aim of the article is to provide a qualitative description of the errors committed by pupils with mild intellectual disabilities. The discussed issue has not yet been the subject of a scientific description from a linguistic point of view. The analysis of errors was based on Andrzej Markowski's classification with small additions from Zygmunt Saloni's classification. Due to the volumetric framework, the article is limited to discussing grammatical and lexical errors.

The research showed that pupils with mild intellectual disabilities make similar errors as those with typical development. No qualitative differences were noted between the study group and the control group, only quantitative ones.

KEY WORDS: grammatical errors, lexical errors, intellectual disabilities

Introduction

Language proficiency in humans is defined by linguists (especially those from the generative linguistics school created by Noam Chomsky) using the term of the language competence.[1] On the one hand, Noam Chomsky defines language competence as the ideal knowledge and ability of a given language user to understand sentences in terms of their grammar and semantics, and on the other hand, the ability to create new sentences.[2] In the literature the terms of *language skills*, *language awareness* are also found.[3]

Language competence is essential for a human being in the process of communication, and the nature of every human being includes a need to create and transfer meanings. The discussed competence is also necessary for a person with intellectual disability and usually such a person finds in the individual repertoire of knowledge and skills, linguistic measures to express their intentions.[4] Although we generally understand and know what a person with intellectual disability wants to communicate to us (especially in the case of a mild intellectual disability), we are aware that in the statements of such a person linguistic errors appear, especially since in this case language knowledge remains in relation to the vague knowledge of the world. It is not difficult to make mistakes – as A. Wątorek writes – *if language competence consists of both information gathered as a result*

———————————

[1] I. Kurcz, "Kompetencja językowa i kompetencja komunikacyjna: ich uwarunkowania biologiczne i społeczne. Model wiedzy językowej człowieka", [in:] *Język jako przedmiot badań psychologicznych. Psycholingwistyka ogólna i neurolingwistyka*, Kurcz I., Okuniewska H. (eds.), Wydawnictwo SWPS, Warsaw, 2011, p. 35.

[2] After: M. Mnich, *Sprawność językowa dzieci w wielu wczesnoszkolnym*, Impuls, Cracow, 2002.

[3] In the studies of child's speech *language skills* are most often related to the ability to use the language properly at a particular stage of speech development, as well as the knowledge of specific elements of the linguistic system and linguistic norm by a child of a certain age (after: M. Mnich, *Sprawność językowa dzieci w wielu wczesnoszkolnym*, Impuls, Cracow, 2002).

[4] Cf. A. Wątorek, *Kompetencja językowa uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Cracow, 2014, p. 87.

of inaccurate processing of sound and image material, as well as not fully controlled activities of planning own statements.[5]

To achieve a certain level of language competence, it is necessary pass through a period of its gaining in two, according to Canadian psychologist Stephen Krashen, main processes of acquisition and learning. Both these processes interpenetrate.[6] English sociologist Basil Bernstein,[7] searching for the relationship between different language use norms and the effects of school education, noted that the language competence of the student depends on the speech system acquired in the family, as early as before starting school education. On the other hand, in the didactic process, the language of a student is subjected to particular educational activities by the improvement of specific language and stylistic skills,[8] and the education process is to lead to a conscious mastery of spoken and written language rules.[9] It should be emphasised that, apart from social and didactic conditions, success in language learning by a child depends largely on a number of innate predispositions: hearing, memory, imitation abilities, analysis and synthesis skills, etc.

Although in the case of the topic of language competence of students characterised by a so-called typical development, fairly extensive source literature is available,[10] in the case of students with

———————

[5] A. Wątorek, *Kompetencja językowa uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Cracow, 2014, p. 86.

[6] I. Kurcz, "Kompetencja językowa i kompetencja komunikacyjna: ich uwarunkowania biologiczne i społeczne. Model wiedzy językowej człowieka", [in:] *Język jako przedmiot badań psychologicznych. Psycholingwistyka ogólna i neurolingwistyka*, Kurcz I., Okuniewska H. (eds.), Wydawnictwo SWPS, Warsaw, 2011, p. 39.

[7] B. Bernstein, "Social structure, language and learning", *Educational Research*, vol. 3, 1961, pp. 163–176.

[8] A. Rakowska, *Język, komunikacja, niepełnosprawność. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP, Cracow, 2003, p. 71.

[9] I. Kurcz, "Kompetencja językowa i kompetencja komunikacyjna: ich uwarunkowania biologiczne i społeczne. Model wiedzy językowej człowieka", [in:] *Język jako przedmiot badań psychologicznych. Psycholingwistyka ogólna i neurolingwistyka*, Kurcz I., Okuniewska H. (ed.), Wydawnictwo SWPS, Warsaw, 2011, p. 39.

[10] Cf. e.g. M. Adamczyk-Borucka, "Sprawność językowa dzieci ośmioletnich. Porównanie zdolności językowych dziewcząt i chłopców w normie intelektualnej",

intellectual disability the literature is rather poor.[11] Based on these
scarce literature resources, the image of language competence of

———————

Szkoła Specjalna, no. 4, 2013, pp. 270–279; K. Borawska-Kalbarczyk, *Umiejętności
językowe dziecka kończącego edukację wczesnoszkolną*, Trans Humana, Białystok, 2004;
A. Dziurda-Multan, *Dziecięce sposoby tworzenia nazw*, Wydawnictwo Katolickiego
Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin. 2008; E. Filipiak, *Aktywność językowa dzieci w wieku
wczesnoszkolnym*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane WSP, Bydgoszcz, 1996; A. Giermakowska,
"Ocena kompetencji słowotwórczej uczniów z trudnościami w czytaniu i pisaniu na
poziomie edukacji wczesnoszkolnej", *Szkoła Specjalna*, no. 5, 2012, pp. 356–366;
S. Grabias, *Z badań nad sprawnością językową dzieci*, Provincial and Municipal Public
Library, Zamość, 1981; A. Jakubowicz-Bryx, *Kompetencje leksykalne uczniów w edukacji
wczesnoszkolnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz, 2006;
J. Malendowicz, *O poprawność pisemnych wypowiedzi uczniów klas I–IV*, WSiP, War-
saw, 1974; H. Małkowska-Zegadło, *Rozwój języka mówionego i pisanego uczniów w wieku
8–11 lat*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warsaw, 1983; M. Mnich, *Sprawność
językowa dzieci w wielu wczesnoszkolnym*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Cracow, 2002;
F. Nowak, "Błędy fleksyjne i słowotwórcze w pracach pisemnych uczniów szkół
podstawowych", *Język Polski w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII*, vol. 4, 1990/1991,
pp. 97–106; F. Nowak, "Błędy językowe w zakresie kompozycji zdania złożonego",
Język Polski w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII, vol. 2/3, 1990/1991, pp. 74–77; E. Polański,
"Błędy leksykalne uczniów klas IV–VIII. Part 1", *Język Polsk i w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII*,
vol. 2, 1981/1982, pp. 75–80; E. Polański, "Błędy leksykalne uczniów klas IV–VIII.
Part 2", *Język Polsk i w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII*, vol. 4, 1981/1982, pp. 65–82; E. Polań-
ski, O. Przybyła, "Odstępstwa od normy językowej u uczniów w zintegrowanym
kształceniu wczesnoszkolnym", *Nauczyciel i Szkoła*, no. 3/4, 2002, pp. 185–195;
Z. Saloni, *Błędy językowe w pracach pisemnych uczniów liceum ogólnokształcącego. Próba
analizy językoznawczej*, Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, Warsaw, 1971;
R. Stawinoga, *Twórczość językowa dziecka w teorii i praktyce edukacyjnej*, Wydawnictwo
Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin, 2007; U. Wińska, *Błędy językowo-
stylistyczne uczniów szkół podstawowych województwa gdańskiego*, part I–II, WSP,
Gdańsk, 1966; M. Żytko, *Pozwólmy dzieciom mówić i pisać – w kontekście badań umiejęt-
ności językowych trzecioklasistów*, Central Examination Commission, Warsaw, 2010.
    [11] J. Bałachowicz, J. Paluszewski (ed.), *Sprawności językowe dzieci upośledzonych
umysłowo w stopniu lekkim*, Wydawnictwo WSPS, Warsaw, 1995; J. Błeszyński,
*Nie(pełno)sprawność intelektualna. Mowa, język, komunikacja. Czy iloraz inteligencji wyja-
śnia wszystko?*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk, 2013; K. Kaczorowska-Bray, *Wyra-
żenia przyimkowe w mowie dzieci z upośledzeniem umysłowym w stopniu umiarkowanym
i lekkim*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk, 2013; K. Kaczorowska-Bray, *Kompetencja
i sprawność językowa dzieci z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu znacznym, umiar-
kowanym i lekkim*, Wydawnictwo UG, Gdańsk, 2017; M. Michalik, *Diagnozowanie kompe-*

people with intellectual disability is as follows: the increase in words does not translate into a spontaneous increase in the number of their combinations in the syntax of sentences, difficulties in learning and applying the rules governing the language, a low degree of grammatical correctness of speech, less frequent use of adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, numerals, conjunctions, prepositions, a slower pace of learning and assimilating various verbal behaviours, monotonous production of structures of a particular type, long persistence of morphological and syntactic errors, selective assimilation of sentence patterns, inconsistent application of syntactic rules.[12] In the context of the article, it is worth paying attention to three conclusions resulting from research conducted by Jacek Błeszyński regarding the development of grammar and spelling skills, which are used by people with a mild intellectual disability and attempts to compare acquired language skills to the developmental norm.[13] The author based on the analysis of written works of the third grade students of junior high

——————

tencji lingwistycznej ucznia szkoły specjalnej, Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP, Cracow, 2006; M. Michalik, *Kompetencja składniowa w normie i w zaburzeniach*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UP, Cracow, 2011; J. Piekarska, *Błędy językowe uczniów z inteligencją niższą niż przeciętna*, Difin, Warsaw, 2015; Z. Tarkowski, "Agramatyzm u uczniów lekko upośledzonych umysłowo", [in:] *Rewalidacja dzieci ze złożonymi upośledzeniami*, Sękowska Z. (ed.), Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin. 1988, pp. 81–108; A. Wątorek, *Kompetencja językowa uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Cracow, 2014.

[12] J. Błeszyński, *Nie(pełno)sprawność intelektualna. Mowa, język, komunikacja. Czy iloraz inteligencji wyjaśnia wszystko?*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk, 2013, p. 100, 103, 109, 111; I. Chrzanowska, *Funkcjonowanie dzieci upośledzonych umysłowo w stopniu lekkim w szkole podstawowej*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 2003, p. 55; A. Rakowska, *Język, komunikacja, niepełnosprawność. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP, Cracow, 2003, p. 127, 129; Z. Tarkowski, "Zaburzenia mowy dzieci upośledzonych umysłowo", [in:] *Logopedia – pytania i odpowiedzi. Podręcznik akademicki*, vol. 2. *Zaburzenia komunikacji językowej u dzieci i osób dorosłych*, Gałkowski T., Jastrzębowska G. (ed.), second edition extended and amended, Wydawnictwo UO, Opole, 2003, s. 205–206; Zbigniew Tarkowski, *Mowa osób upośledzonych umysłowo i jej zaburzenia*, [in:] *Podstawy neurologopedii*, Gałkowski T., Szeląg E., Jastrzębwska G. (eds.), Wydawnictwo UO, Opole, 2005, p. 561; A. Wątorek, *Kompetencja językowa uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Cracow, 2014, p. 69.

[13] J. Błeszyński, *Nie(pełno)sprawność intelektualna. Mowa, język, komunikacja. Czy iloraz inteligencji wyjaśnia wszystko?*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk, 2013, p. 79, 80.

school in terms of grammatical (inflectional and syntactic), lexical (meaning, phraseological and word-formation), stylistic, as well as spelling and punctuation errors stated that a) students with intellectual disabilities made mostly spelling and punctuation errors, and then in descending order: stylistic, lexical and grammatical errors. There were no phraseological errors in the works. Statistically significant differences in the number of errors made in various forms of written assignments are visible in the case of inflectional, lexical, word-formation and spelling errors; b) errors in the work of students with intellectual disabilities and normal ones are similar in terms of quantity, though disproportionately; c) students with a mild intellectual disability make similar errors to normal students.[14]

To summarise up, the problem discussed in the article concerning a qualitative description of errors made by students with a mild intellectual disability has not been the subject of a scientific description from a linguistic point of view. It should be added that in the article, because of its limited volume, the Author only wants to signal the problem.

Research methodology

The study of linguistic errors made by students of special schools with a diagnosed mild intellectual disability conducted by the Author remains within one of the two research trends concerning the linguistic functioning of people with intellectual disability. This is so far the most established and dominant trend, encouraging to treat these people as individuals with a set of multiple deficits, which, according to J. Bałachowicz and J. Paluszewski, sets the direction of scientific activities in the sphere of language and speech of people with intellectual disabilities, bringing them to […] *documentation of deficits and conditions, presentation of weak points and diffi-*

_____

[14] J. Błeszyński, *Nie*(*pełno*)*sprawność intelektualna. Mowa, język, komunikacja. Czy iloraz inteligencji wyjaśnia wszystko?*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk, 2013, p. 100, 103, 109.

culties […] *in using the language compared to people with normal development.*[15]

The aim of the article is to analyse linguistic errors excerpted from written works of students with a mild intellectual disability educated at the second stage of education (in grades IV–VIII) and to answer the following questions: 1) What kind of language mistakes are made by students with mild intellectual disability?; 2) Are there any qualitative differences in their mistakes, compared to those of students characterised by a typical development? The answer to the second question is important, as it should be emphasised that students of special schools with a mild intellectual disability follow the same general education program as students of public schools.[16] These students are required to take tests of the same level of difficulty as the students within the intellectual norm.

60 works of students with intellectual disabilities and 60 works of students with typical development were analysed. These were classwork, independent work performed during lessons, and correction of classwork. The study was conducted in the school year 2018/2019 in one of the special school and education centres in the Łódź Voivodeship. Two groups of students (the study and control group) were selected, taking into account not the chronological or mental age, but the criterion of the educational level. The study group (30 students, including 15 girls and 15 boys) consisted of students with an opinion from a psychological and pedagogical counselling centre confirming their mild intellectual disability. The control group (30 students, including 15 girls and 15 boys) were students with typical development, attending one of the primary schools in the Łódź Voivodeship. All subjects came from complete families, and their parents had vocational education, in 5 cases elementary education.

---

[15] J. Bałachowicz, J. Paluszewski (ed.), *Sprawności językowe dzieci upośledzonych umysłowo w stopniu lekkim*, Wydawnictwo WSPS, Warsaw, 1995, p. 5.

[16] The Act of 14 December 2016. The Educational Law (Journal of Laws of 2018 r. item 996 as amended) – The Act of 14 December 2016 The Educational Law (Journal of Laws of 2018 item 996 as amended) – art. 127 paragraph 3.art. 127 paragraph 3.

The term *linguistic error* used in the paper needs to be clarified. The concept of linguistic error in linguistics is one of the basic concepts of proper language use and, according to Józef Porayski-Pomsta, has been sufficiently described in the source literature.[17] Several exemplary definitions of a linguistic error are as follows: cf. a linguistic error is an unconscious departure from the linguistic norm currently in force, or such an innovation that has no justification: it does not improve communication, does not express new content, does not present again, in another way the emotions of the narrator etc.[18] An error can also be defined as a way of using some element of a language that shocks its conscious users, because it is in conflict with their previous habits, and is not functionally explained.[19] According to the definition presented in *Encyklopedia językoznawstwa ogólnego [Encyclopaedia of general linguistics]* (EJO) by Zdzisław Saloni, a linguistic error will include all language uses that do not comply with the accepted linguistic norm and indicate a violation of the basic principles imposed by the system.[20]

A tendency to avoid this term in relation to childhood speech has been visible since the late 1980s. Some researchers suggest alternative forms such as *unconventional forms*, *innovations*, *deviations from the norm*, *specific forms*, *childhood new-coined words* etc.[21] However, as

---

[17] J. Porayski-Pomsta, "Kultura języka", [in:] *Nauka o języku dla polonistów*, Dubisz S. (ed.), Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw, 1996, p. 89.

[18] A. Markowski, *Nowy słownik poprawnej polszczyzny*, PWN, Warsaw, 1999, p. 1621; A. Markowski, *Kultura języka polskiego. Teoria. Zagadnienie leksykalne*, PWN, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 55–60.

[19] A. Markowski, *Nowy słownik poprawnej polszczyzny*, PWN, Warsaw, 1999, p. 1621; A. Markowski, *Kultura języka polskiego. Teoria. Zagadnienie leksykalne*, PWN, Warsaw, 2005, p. 55.

[20] sv. *linguistic error in* EJO – *Encyklopedia językoznawstwa ogólnego*, Polański K. (ed.), second edition, Ossolineum, Warsaw, 1999, p. 77.

[21] M. Smoczyńska, "Metodologiczne problemy analizy błędów językowych dzieci", [in:] *Wiedza a język*, vol. 2. *Język dziecka*, Kurcz I., Shugar G.W., Bokus B. (eds.), PAN, Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow–Gdańsk–Łódź, 1987, pp. 95–116; E. Kozłowska, "Fleksja podstawowych kategorii wyrazów w mowie dzieci pięcioletnich (deklinacja)", *Poradnik Językowy,* vol. 9/10, 1991, pp. 399–406; J. Porayski-Pomsta,

emphasised (and at the same time further justified) by Agnieszka Wątorek, *although the use of a problematic term in the context of immature verbal productions can be misleading, its rigid substitution with another term rather multiplies than cuts doubt.*[22] Therefore, in the paper the Author uses a term of *a linguistic error,*[23] understanding it in this case as a deviation from the norm, which is a result of immature thinking, limited efficiency in the use of speech and being based on false assumptions.[24]

In this paper, the basis for the analysis of linguistic errors will be the classification of Andrzej Markowski[25] with small supplements from the classification of Zygmunt Saloni.[26] Because of the limited volume of the paper, it will be limited to the discussion of grammatical and lexical errors.

A researcher can distinguish between interlingual and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors are writing errors: spelling and punctuation errors. They are related to the structure of the language, but do not violate system rules or language development principles. Intralinguistic errors that directly violate system rules can be further divided into system (language) and usage (or stylistic) errors. Language errors include grammatical, lexical and phonetic errors.[27]

"O tzw. błędach językowych dzieci", *Wychowanie w Przedszkolu*, vol. 8, 2002, p. 1; E. Łuczyński, *Kategoria przypadka w ontogenezie języka polskiego, czyli o wchodzeniu dziecka w rzeczywistość gramatyczną*, Wydawnictwo UG, Gdańsk, 2004.

[22] A. Wątorek, *Kompetencja językowa uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Cracow, 2014, p. 85.

[23] This term is used by, among others, J. Błeszyński, J. Piekarska, A. Wątorek (cf. the items cited above).

[24] A. Wątorek, *Kompetencja językowa uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Cracow, 2014, p. 86.

[25] A. Markowski, *Kultura języka polskiego. Teoria. Zagadnienie leksykalne*, PWN, Warsaw 2005, pp. 55–60.

[26] Z. Saloni, *Błędy językowe w pracach pisemnych uczniów liceum ogólnokształcącego. Próba analizy językoznawczej*, Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, Warsaw, 1971, pp. 36–111.

[27] A. Markowski, *Kultura języka polskiego. Teoria. Zagadnienie leksykalne*, PWN, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 55–56.

Types of errors made by students with mild intellectual disability (LNI) and students with normal development (TR)

1. Grammatical errors

1.1. Inflectional errors, or errors that violate the norm in terms of inflection of words, excerpted from written works of students, result from:

a) the choice of a wrong form of a word:

LNI: Muj kolega ma duże **ucha** (instead of uszy). [My friend has big ears.[28]] Patszył szeroko otfartymi **okami** (instead of oczami) [He stared wide-eyed.] Mamy z bratem polskie **imienia** (instead of imiona). [Me and my brother have Polish names.] Byłem zmenczony i szybko **zasnełem** (instead of zasnąłem). [I was tired and fell asleep soon.] On sie ze mnie **wyśmiewywuje** (instead of wyśmiewa). [He makes fun of me.];

TR: Nauczyciel wytargał ucznia za **ucha** (instead of uszy). [The teacher pulled the ear of the student.] Kiedy **niewykonywuję** poleceń rodziców, dostaję karę (instead of wykonuję). [When I do not obey my parents, I get punished.] Mój brat jak dostaje nowom zabawke to **podskakiwuje** z radości (instead of podskakuje). [When my brother gets a new toy, he jumps with joy.]

b) the choice of a wrong declension pattern:

LNI: Czekolada jest słotka, a cukier jeszcze **bardziej słotki** (instead of słodszy). [Chocolate is sweet and sugar is even sweeter.] Pani jest **najbardziej piękniejsza** od innych (instead of najpiękniejsza). [The lady is more beautiful than others.] Mieliśmy **najkolorofsze** ubrania (instead of najbardziej kolorowe). [We had the most colourful clothes.] Pies jest zły, wilk **zlejszy**, a tygrys **najzlejszy** (instead of

---

[28] The examples are cited using their original spelling. Because the article is focused on qualitative rather than quantitative analysis, specific types and subtypes of errors are presented using 2–5 examples. As for the criterion for the selection of examples, the cited examples include those understandable for people without linguistic background.

bardziej zły, najbardziej zły) [The dog is bad, the wolf is worse and the tiger is worst];

TR: Moja **najulubieńsza** koleżanka dała mi prezent (instead of najbardziej ulubiona). [My favourite friend gave me a present.] On jest dla mnie **najbardziej ważniejszy** (instead of najważniejszy). [He is the most important for me.] Kupiłem **najżułciejsze** cytryny (instead of najbardziej żółte) [I bought the most yellow lemons];

c) the choice of a wrong form of the inflexion stem:

LNI: Spotkałem się **z** mojimi **dziadekami** (instead of dziadkami). [I met my grandparents.] Wybuch **kotł** (instead of kocioł). [A boiler exploded.] **Wyszłem** wcześniej z szkoły (instead of wyszedłem) [I left school earlier];

TR: **Poszłem** z kolegami do kina (instead of poszedłem). [I went to the cinema with my friends.] Ona go **kopła** tak mocno, że płakał (instead of kopnęła). [She kicked him so strongly that he cried.] Chłopcy **ciągli** dziewczyny za włosy (instead of ciągnęli) [Boys pulled girl's hair.];

d) the choice of a wrong desinence:

LNI: Fszystkich wsadzono **do wagona** (instead of wagonu). [Everyone was placed in a railway carriage.] Bohater potszet **do stoła** (instead of stołu). [The protagonish approached the table.] Kolega ulek fczoraj **wypadku** (instead of wypadkowi). [My friend had an accident yesterday.] Kobieta podała **chłopcowi** wode (instead of chłopcu). [The woman gave water to the boy.] Dziewczyny z naszej klasy **umią** grać w piłke nożnom (instead of umieją). [Girls from our form can play football.]

TR: Padał deszcz i na dworzu nie było **ludziów** (instead of ludzi). [It was raining and there was no people outside.] Musieliśmy nauczyć się tych **wierszów** (instead of wierszy) na pamięć. [We had to learn these poems by heart.] Na starcie staneło **dziesięć chłopców** (instead of dziesięciu). [Ten boys stood at the start line.] **Ciąg** mocniej za sznurek, krzyknoł do kolegi (instead of ciągnij) [He shouted to his friend to pull stronger the line.];

e) no declension of a word, which has its own declension pattern:

LNI: Dzień dobry, **pani Ania** (instead of: pani Aniu). [Good morning, Mrs. Ania.] Jade na wakacje **do Sopot** (instead of Sopotu). [I go on holiday to Sopot.]

TR: Adam Mickiewicz napisał „**Pan Tadeusz**" (instead of "Pana Tadeusza") [Adam Mickiewicz wrote "Pan Tadeusz".] Obejżeliśmy w klasie "**Zemsta**" Fredry (instead of „Zemstę"). [We watched "Zemsta" by Fredro in the classroom.] W „**Mały Książę**" jest wiele myśli do zapamiętania (instead of "Małym Księciu") [There are many thoughts to remember in "The little prince".];

f) declension of a word, which cannot be attributed with a declension pattern:

LNI: Nie lubie **kakała** (instead of kakao). [I do not like cocoa.] Muj brat chodzi do **technika** (instead of technikum). [My brother attends a tehnical school.]

TR: Wypiła kubek **kakała** (instead of kakao) i zjadła bułke. [She drank a cup of cocoa and ate a bread roll.] Moja siostra chodzi **do solaria** (instead of solarium) i jest opalona. [My sister goes to a solarium and is tanned.]

1.2. Syntactic errors. They consist in choosing a wrong syntactic pattern, or a wrong combination of word forms into units of a text. Errors excerpted from written works concern:

a) errors in the area of agreement:

LNI: Podwórka dziatka **pilnowali dwa psy** (instead of pilnowały dwa psy). [The yard of the grandfather was guarded by two dogs.] **Dziewczyny umieli** już szyć (instead of dziewczyny umiały). [The girls could already sew.] Nauczyciele chcom by **dzieci umieli** ich przedmiot najlepiej (instead of dzieci umiały). [Teachers want children to know their subject best.]

TR: **Wszyscy dzieci kibcowali** podczas zawodów swoim reprezentantom (instead of wszystkie dzieci kibicowały). [All children supported their representatives during the competition.] Wiele utworów **jest poświęcone** wojnie (instead of jest poświęconych). [Many compositions are devoted to war.] **Dzieci mieli** się wkrótce

dowiedzieć o wycieczce (instead of dzieci miały). [The children were soon to learn about the trip.]

b) errors in the area of case government:

LNI: On **stał sie człowiek spokojny** (instead of stał się spokojnym człowiekiem). [He became a calm person.] Chłopak postanowił **otszukać swojej rodziny** (instead of odszukać swoją rodzinę). [The boy decided to find his family]. Pszyjaciel zawsze **dotrzymuje słowo** (instead of dotrzymuje słowa). [The friend always keeps his word.]

TR: U nas w szkole **zakazali nosić kolorowych ubrań** (instead of zakazali nosić kolorowe ubrania). [At our school it was forbidden to wear colourful clothes.] **Byliśmy grzecznymi** i dostaliśmy nagrodę (instead of byliśmy grzeczni). [We were good and we were rewarded.] On pilnował **swoją pracę**, bał się zwolnienia (instead of swojej pracy). [He minded his job, was afraid of being fired.] Rodzice zawsze mówili, że **papierosy** palić nie wolno (instead of papierosów). [Parents always repeated that smoking was not allowed.];

c) errors in using prepositions:

LNI: Latem jeździmy **do działki** nad może (instead of na działkę). [In summer, we go to our allotment garden by the sea.] **Powodem dla płaczu** była jedynka z matematyki (instead of powodem płaczu). [The reason for crying was an F in mathematics.]

TR: Moja mama pracuje **na kasie** w markecie (instead of w kasie). [My mother works at the cash register in a supermarket.] Lubię truskawkową pastę **dla zębów** (instead of do zębów). [I like strawberry toothpaste.] Oni pojechali **na podróż** poślubną (instead of w podróż); [They went on honeymoon.]

d) errors in using conjunctions and relative pronouns:

LNI: Dostałem jedynke, **ale** mama będzie zła (instead of więc). [I got an F, so my mom will be angry.] Byłem na wycieczce, **gdzie** byliśmy w Makdonaldzie (instead of na której) [I was on a trip during which we visited a McDonald's.];

TR: Wybiorę technikum, **gdzie** po jego skończeniu szybko dostanę pracę (instead of gdyż, ponieważ). [I will choose a technical school,

as after finishing it, I will quickly get a job.] Była sierotą, **ale** musiała pracować na życie (instead of więc). [She was an orphan, so she had to work for a living.]

   e) incorrect syntax shortening:

LNI: Warto **interesować sie i oglądać programy** pszyrodnicze (instead of warto interesować się programami przyrodniczymi i je oglądać). [It is worth to be interested in and watch nature documentaries.] Źle zachowywała się młodzież **przed i po koncercie** (instead of przed koncertem i po nim) [Young people behaved badly before and after the concert.];

TR: Czytając książkę **używamy i rozwijamy naszą wyobraźnię** (instead of używamy naszej wyobraźni i ją rozwijamy). [When reading a book, we use our imagination and develop it.] Miał ojca, nałogowego pijaka, który **znęcał się i kłócił z synem** (instead of znęcał się nad synem i kłócił z nim). [He had a father, a heavy drunkard, who ill-treated his son and argued with him.] **Troszczył się i opiekował swoim przyjacielem** (instead of troszczył się o swojego przyjaciela i opiekował się nim) [He took care of his friend and looked after him.];

   f) incorrect constructions with participle elliptical sentences:

LNI: **Będąc w ósmej klasie** polubiłem polski (instead of kiedy byłem w ósmej klasie). [When I was in the eighth grade, I became fond of Polish.] Został pszyłapany **kradnąc wiśnie** (instead of kiedy kradł wiśnie) [He was caught when he was stealing cherries.];

TR: **Myjąc się wypadł** mi z ręki prysznic i opryskał całą łazienkę (instead of kiedy się myłem). [When I was taking a shower, the shower fell out of my hand and sprayed whole bathroom.] **Jadąc przez miasto przebiegło** nam drogę dziecko (instead of kiedy jechaliśmy przez miasto) [When we were driving through the city a child ran our way.];

   g) constructions incorrect in terms of word order:

LNI: **Dużo bym chciał dostać** prezentów pod choinkę (instead of chciałbym dostać dużo). [I would like to get a lot of presents for

Christmas.] **Dzieci zmenczone** ogarnoł sen (instead of zmęczone dzieci) [Tired children fell asleep.];

TR: **Samodzielności ona się nauczyć musiała** (instead of ona musiała nauczyć się samodzielności). [She had to learn independence.] **Ogród ciekawił bardzo dziewczynkę, który nie miał furtki i był obrośnięty bluszczem** (instead of ogród, który nie miał furtki i był obrośnięty bluszczem, bardzo ciekawił dziewczynkę). [The garden, which had no wicket and was covered with ivy, was very interesting for the girl.]

2. Lexical errors

2.1. Meaning (word) errors. In the case of investigated students, they concern:

a) using words in the wrong sense (unnecessary neosemantisms):

LNI: Ona **ożeniła się** z synem sąsiada (instead of wyszła za mąż). [She became a husband of a son of her neighbour (instead of she became a wife).] Oddali babci dziecko **do chowu** (instead of do wychowania). [They gave the child to the grandmother to breed it (instead of to raise it).]

TR: Burza **narastała** z minuty na minutę (instead of nasilała się). [The storm was growing every minute (instead of the storm was rising).] Kiedyś chciałem **pozostać marynarzem** (instead of zostać marynarzem) [Once I wanted to remain a sailor (instead of to become a sailor).];

b) confusing meanings of words that are similar in terms of sound or morphology:

LNI: Dawniej na wsi panowało **zaciemnienie** (instead of ciemnota). [People in the country used to be ignored (instead of ignorant).] Gagarin był **kosmitą** (instead of kosmonautą). [Gagarin was a cosmos (instead of a cosmonaut.] Rok **przestępczy** ma 366 dni (instead of przestępny). [A lip year has 366 days (instead of a leap year).] Jak żyli ludzie **pierworodni**? (instead of pierwotni). How did primary humans live? (instead of primitive). Jego ojciec był bardzo **chorobliwy** (instead of chorowity) [His father is very sick (instead of sickly).];

TR: w filmie wykorzystano wiele **tryków** (instead of trików). [In the movie, many trikes were used (instead of tricks).] Seriale są odcinkowe i mają wiele wątków **ubocznych** (instead of pobocznych). [Serial films have parts and many side scenes (instead of side scenarios).] Jego pasja **koligowała** z nauką (instead of kolidowała) [His passion interrelated with learning (insead of interfered).];

c) using pleonasms:

LNI: W Polsce jest dużo **zagranicznych cudzoziemców** (instead of cudzoziemców). [There a lot of foreign foreigners in Poland (instead of foreigners).] Zrobiliśmy z chłopakami **głupie głupstwo** (instead of głupstwo). [Me and my buddies did a stupid stupidity (instead of stupidity).] **Poprawiłem się na lepsze** (instead of poprawiłem się). [I have improved for the better (instead of I have improved).] **Podskakiwałem do góry** z radości (instead of podskakiwałem) [I jumped up upwards with joy (instead of I jumped up with joy).];

TR: **Moim własnym zdaniem** każde dziecko powinno mieć wakacje (instead of moim zdaniem). [In my own opinion each child should have a holiday (instead of in my opinion).] Staś i Nel **kontynuowali dalej podróż** (instead of kontynuowali podróż) [Staś and Nel further continued their journey (instead of continued their journey).];

d) violation of collocation:

LNI: Czcili bogów tak, że **dawali im ukłony** (instead of oddawali ukłony). [They worshipped their gods so that they gave bows to them (instead of bowed to them).] Ksiąszka **daje ciekawość** (instead of wzbudza ciekawość) [The book gives curiosity (instead of arouses curiosity).];

TR: Nie bał się **postawić czoła** wrogowi (instead of stawić czoła). [He was not afraid to give face to the enemy (instead of face).] Wojska wroga **odniosły porażkę** (instead of poniosły porażkę). [Enemy troops achieved a defeat (instead of sustained a defeat).]

e) errors in the use of pronouns and other words of a relational-grammatical meaning:

LNI: Utwory Kochanowskiego **wyrażają one stosunek** poety do świata (instead of wyrażają stosunek). [Compositions of Kochanowski

they express the attitude of the poet to the world (instead of compositions of Kochanowski express).] Kochanowski **po śmierci jego ukochanej córki** napisał cykl trenów (instead of po śmierci ukochanej córki) [Kochanowski after the death of his own beloved daughter wrote a series of threnodies (instead of his beloved daughter).];

TR: Był miszczem **w jego** dyscyplinie (instead of w swojej). [He was an expert in their discipline (instead of his).] Ale **ta dziewczynka**, kiedy wyszła **z tej szkoły**, nie poszła do domu (instead of ale dziewczynka, ze szkoły). [But that girl who left that school, did not go home (instead of the girl, school).]

2.2. Phraseological errors. The use of phrasemes non-compliant with the norm in the analysed works applies to the following issues:

  a) a change in phraseme form as a result of exchange, reduction or supplementation of the composition of the phraseme:

LNI: On **wywierał znaczenie** (instead of wywierał wpływ). [He exerted meaning (instead of exerted influence).] Król decyduje o wszystkim i **ma ostatnie zdanie** (instead of ma ostatnie słowo). [The king decides about everything and has the last sentence (instead of the last word).] **Na tronie panował** Bolesław Krzywousty (instead of na tronie zasiadał) [Bolesław III Wrymouth ruled on the throne (instead of was on the throne).];

TR: Napis **nie zrobił dużej reakcji** na nauczycielu (instead of nie zrobił dużego wrażenia). [The inscription did not make a big reaction on the teacher (instead of did not make a big impression).] **Przeszła** w życiu **wiele krzywd** (instead of doznała wielu krzywd). [She has suffered much harm in her life (instead of she has suffered).]

  b) a change in phraseme form as a result of the change in the grammatical form of one of the components:

LNI: Na lekcjach siedzę **jak strusia** (instead of jak trusia). [During the class I sit as an ostrich (instead of I sit timidly).] Byli tacy ludzie, którzy **stawiali opory** (instead of stawiali opór) [There were people who made resistances (instead of who resisted).];

TR: **Wymieniliśmy** pare słów ze sobą (instead of zamienilismy) [We changed a few words with each other (instead of we exchanged).] W wakacje spotkała mnie przygoda **zamrażająca krew w żyłach** (instead of mrożąca krew w żyłach). [In the summer, I experienced an adventure which refrigerated my blood (instead of made my blood run cold).]

2.3. Word-formation errors in the analysed student works concern:

a) using a wrong formant:

LNI: Pracował jako **cieślarz** (instead of cieśla). [He worked as a carpenter.] Nad morzem było dużo **plażowników** (instead of plażowiczów). [There were a lot of sunbathers by the sea.] Rycerze brali udział w wielu **walczeniach** (instead of walkach). [Knights took part in many fightings (instead of many fights).] **Przecierając** kszemień o kszemień rozpalali ogień (instead of pocierając) [Passing a flint against a flint against, they started a fire (instead of rubbing).];

TR: On nie był **uszczycony** tym zaproszeniem (instead of zaszczycony). [He was not honoured by this invitation.] To był **przydomny** ogródek (instead of przydomowy). [It was a backyard garden.] Woda była **źródłowa** (instead of źródlana) [This was source water (instead of spring water).];

b) choosing a wrong word formation stem:

LNI: Po **wymarnięciu** dynastii Piastów byli Jagielonowie (instead of wymarciu). [After the dying of the Piast dynasty, there were The Jagiellonians ruled.] Miałem **zadzierki** ze swoim kolegom (instead of zatargi). [I had splinters with my friend (instead of a conflict).] W piramidach były **zmylne** korytarze (instead of ślepe) [There were dead-end corridors in the pyramids.]²⁹;

TR: Podczas **bycia** w więzieniu myślał o ucieczce (instead of pobytu). [During his being in prison he was thinking about the escape

---

²⁹ The last two examples are typical neologisms that could be classified as morphological errors (according to the classification of Z. Saloni).

(instead of his stay).] W telewizji **wiadomościarze** (instead of dziennikarze) mówili o wypadku. [On TV, newspeople (instead of journalists) talked about the accident.]

Summary

1. Linguistic errors were present in the works of all students with a mild intellectual disability.

2. When assessing the language competence of students with a mild intellectual disability, it should be emphasised that the spectrum of incorrect linguistic behaviour of students covers all types of errors.

3. Inflectional errors are related to, among others, unusual and irregular inflexion, the wrong selection of declension and conjugation endings because of failure to consider such factors as: phonetic (words whose stems end with soft and hard consonants differ in inflexion), semantic (personal nouns and animate impersonal nouns have differ endings), customary ones or those associated with the wrong inflexion pattern. Students with mild intellectual disability have a problem with the comparison of adjectives or use of collective numerals.

4. Syntactic errors of students with mild intellectual disability consist in incorrectly combining word forms into units of text. Students do not take into account the fact that these forms combine into syntactic relations, or e.g., in the relations of agreement (the primary element imposes its grammatical properties, e.g. type on the secondary element), case government (the primary element imposes a specific inflexion form on the secondary element, e.g. *odszukać kogo?* [*to find whom?*] *rodzinę* [*family*]). They also have problems with the correct use of prepositions, conjunctions and relative pronouns. They create incorrect constructions in terms of word order, or use incorrect syntax shortening.

5. Meaning errors in students with a mild intellectual disability mainly result from confusing meanings that are similar in sound or

morphology (or in structure), and from using words in the wrong sense. The analysed students sometimes violate collocation, as well as use pleonasms (or expressions known in Polish as "buttered butter").

6. Phraseological errors, difficult for children with mild intellectual disability, also for the fact that they are wide-spread in the language word connections used in their entirety and their meaning is not the sum of the meanings of the words that make up a phraseme, they mainly concern the change in the form of phrasemes because of an exchange, reduction or supplementation of phraseme composition or change in the grammatical form of one of its components.

7. In turn, word-formation errors, involve either using a wrong formant or a wrong word formation stem.

8. Students with mild intellectual disability make similar errors as students with typical development. There were no qualitative differences between the study group and the control group.

9. Specific conclusions can be made after conducting in-depth and larger-scale research.

References

Adamczyk-Borucka M., "Sprawność językowa dzieci ośmioletnich. Porównanie zdolności językowych dziewcząt i chłopców w normie intelektualnej", *Szkoła Specjalna,* no. 4, 2013, pp. 270–279.

Bałachowicz J., Paluszewski J. (ed.), *Sprawności językowe dzieci upośledzonych umysłowo w stopniu lekkim*, Wydawnictwo WSPS, Warsaw, 1995.

Bernstein B., "Social structure, language and learning", *Educational Research*, vol. 3, 1961, pp. 163–176.

Błeszyński J., *Nie(pełno)sprawność intelektualna. Mowa, język, komunikacja. Czy iloraz inteligencji wyjaśnia wszystko*?, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk, 2013.

Borawska-Kalbarczyk K., *Umiejętności językowe dziecka kończącego edukację wczesnoszkolną*, Trans Humana, Białystok, 2004.

Chrzanowska I., *Funkcjonowanie dzieci upośledzonych umysłowo w stopniu lekkim w szkole podstawowej*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 2003.

Dziurda-Multan A., *Dziecięce sposoby tworzenia nazw*, Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin, 2008.

EJO – *Encyklopedia językoznawstwa ogólnego*, Polański K. (ed.), second edition, Ossolineum, Warsaw, 1999.

Filipiak E., *Aktywność językowa dzieci w wieku wczesnoszkolnym*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane WSP, Bydgoszcz, 1996.

Giermakowska A., "Ocena kompetencji słowotwórczej uczniów z trudnościami w czytaniu i pisaniu na poziomie edukacji wczesnoszkolnej", *Szkoła Specjalna*, no. 5, 2012, pp. 356–366.

Grabias S., *Z badań nad sprawnością językową dzieci*, Provincial and Municipal Public Library, Zamość, 1981.

Jakubowicz-Bryx A., *Kompetencje leksykalne uczniów w edukacji wczesnoszkolnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz, 2006.

Kaczorowska-Bray K., *Wyrażenia przyimkowe w mowie dzieci z upośledzeniem umysłowym w stopniu umiarkowanym i lekkim*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk, 2013.

Kaczorowska-Bray K., *Kompetencja i sprawność językowa dzieci z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu znacznym, umiarkowanym i lekkim*, Wydawnictwo UG, Gdańsk, 2017.

Kozłowska E., "*Fleksja podstawowych kategorii wyrazów w mowie dzieci pięcioletnich (deklinacja)*", *Poradnik Językowy*, vol. 9/10, 1991, pp. 399–406.

Kurcz I., "Kompetencja językowa i kompetencja komunikacyjna: ich uwarunkowania biologiczne i społeczne. Model wiedzy językowej człowieka", [in:] *Język jako przedmiot badań psychologicznych. Psycholingwistyka ogólna i neurolingwistyka*, Kurcz I., Okuniewska H. (ed.), Wydawnictwo SWPS, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 35–44.

Łuczyński E., *Kategoria przypadka w ontogenezie języka polskiego, czyli o wchodzeniu dziecka w rzeczywistość gramatyczną*, Wydawnictwo UG, Gdańsk, 2004.

Malendowicz J., *O poprawność pisemnych wypowiedzi uczniów klas I–IV*, WSiP, Warsaw, 1974.

Małkowska-Zegadło H., *Rozwój języka mówionego i pisanego uczniów w wieku 8–11 lat*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warsaw, 1983.

Markowski A., *Nowy słownik poprawnej polszczyzny*, PWN, Warsaw, 1999.

Markowski A., *Kultura języka polskiego. Teoria. Zagadnienie leksykalne*, PWN, Warsaw 2005.

Michalik M., *Diagnozowanie kompetencji lingwistycznej ucznia szkoły specjalnej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP, Cracow, 2006.

Michalik M., *Kompetencja składniowa w normie i w zaburzeniach*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UP, Cracow, 2011.

Mnich M., *Sprawność językowa dzieci w wielu wczesnoszkolnym*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Cracow, 2002.

Nowak F., "Błędy fleksyjne i słowotwórcze w pracach pisemnych uczniów szkół podstawowych", *Język Polski w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII*, vol. 4, 1990/1991, pp. 97–106.

Nowak F., "Błędy językowe w zakresie kompozycji zdania złożonego", *Język Polski w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII*, vol. 2/3, 1990/1991, pp. 74–77.

Piekarska J., *Błędy językowe uczniów z inteligencją niższą niż przeciętna*, Difin, Warsaw, 2015.

Polański E., "Błędy leksykalne uczniów klas IV–VIII. Part 1", *Język Polsk i w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII,* vol. 2, 1981/1982, pp. 75–80.

Polański E., "Błędy leksykalne uczniów klas IV–VIII. Part 2", *Język Polsk i w Szkole: dla klas IV–VIII,* vol. 4, 1981/1982, pp. 65–82.

Polański E., Przybyła Olga, "Odstępstwa od normy językowej u uczniów w zintegrowanym kształceniu wczesnoszkolnym", *Nauczyciel i Szkoła,* no. ¾, 2002, pp. 185–195.

Porayski-Pomsta J., "Kultura języka", [in:] *Nauka o języku dla polonistów*, S. Dubisz (ed.), Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw, 1996, pp. 57–100.

Porayski-Pomsta J., "O tzw. błędach językowych dzieci", *Wychowanie w Przedszkolu*, vol. 8, 2002, p. 1.

Rakowska A., *Język, komunikacja, niepełnosprawność. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP, Cracow, 2003.

Saloni Z., *Błędy językowe w pracach pisemnych uczniów liceum ogólnokształcącego. Próba analizy językoznawczej*, Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, Warsaw, 1971.

Smoczyńska M., "Metodologiczne problemy analizy błędów językowych dzieci", [in:] *Wiedza a język*, vol. 2. *Język dziecka*, Kurcz I., Shugar G.W., Bokus B. (ed.), PAN, Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow–Gdańsk–Łódź, 1987, pp. 95–116.

Stawinoga R., *Twórczość językowa dziecka w teorii i praktyce edukacyjnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin, 2007.

Tarkowski Z., "Agramatyzm u uczniów lekko upośledzonych umysłowo", [in:] *Rewalidacja dzieci ze złożonymi upośledzeniami*, Sękowska Z. (ed.), Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin, 1988, pp. 81–108.

Tarkowski Z., "Zaburzenia mowy dzieci upośledzonych umysłowo", [in:] *Logopedia – pytania i odpowiedzi. Podręcznik akademicki*, vol. 2. *Zaburzenia komunikacji językowej u dzieci i osób dorosłych*, Gałkowski T., Jastrzębowska G. (eds.), second edition extended and amended, Wydawnictwo UO, Opole, 2003, pp. 203–209.

Tarkowski Z., "Mowa osób upośledzonych umysłowo i jej zaburzenia", [in:] *Podstawy neurologopedii*, T. Gałkowski, E. Szeląg, G. Jastrzębowska (eds.), Wydawnictwo UO, Opole, 2005, pp. 553–606.

Wątorek A., *Kompetencja językowa uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Cracow, 2014.

Wińska U., *Błędy językowo-stylistyczne uczniów szkół podstawowych województwa gdańskiego*, part I–II, WSP, Gdańsk, 1966.

Żytko M., *Pozwólmy dzieciom mówić i pisać – w kontekście badań umiejętności językowych trzecioklasistów*, Central Examination Commission, Warsaw, 2010.

REPORTS

PAULINA KORACH

Catholic University of Lublin

The 9th International Conference as part of a series of Na Tak conventions held in Poznan entitled: "Care, Therapy, Education – Subjectivity of People with Multiple Disabilities" Poznan, 29th November 2019

The 9th International Conference as part of a series of Na Tak conventions held in Poznan and entitled "Care, Therapy, Education – Subjectivity of People with Multiple Disabilities" under the honorary patronage of the Mayor of the City of Poznan and the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled on 29th November at the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University. The University of Poznan was a co-organizer of the event. The Na Tak Association from Poznan, which since 1989 has been supporting people with disabilities and their families in the city of Poznan, was the main initiator and organizer of the conference.

The grand opening of the conference was attended by the University staff – Full Professor Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska, PhD – Dean of the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University and Professor of the Adam Mickiewicz University Danuta Kopec, PhD – Head of the Special Education Department of the Adam Mickiewicz University, as well as by other guests: President of the Board of the Na Tak Association – Ewa Kowanska and President of the Board of the Harpo company – Jaroslaw Urbanski, Master of Engineering who welcomed the guests, wishing them inspirational conference, focused both on professional experience and scientific knowledge.

The conference was also visited by exhibitors who in the main hall presented technological solutions to facilitate the functioning of people with disabilities. Harpo (Poland) and Pretorian Technologies (United Kingdom) support blind and visually impaired people with difficulties in communi-

cation, people with intellectual disabilities who require support in reading and those with other disabilities by providing them with equipment that makes them more independent.

Akson (Poland) has submitted an offer of medical equipment directed to the youngest patients. AssisTech (Poland) supports people suffering from brain damage. The company's products allow people with brain damage to communicate with others. Founders of the company worked on a scientific prototype of the C-Eye system (cybereye). The C-Eye system, which allows to track movements of the eyeballs in people with brain damage, enables the disabled to communicate with others and makes rehabilitation more effective. BNC DISTRIBUTION (the Netherlands) presented the Clevy brand. It is a group of products including keyboards designed to develop typing skills for people with motor deficits, those with visual impairment and dyslexia. HUMANWARE presented devices intended for the visually impaired. The last company – Inclusive Technology (United Kingdom) demonstrated devices for people with special educational needs, as well as for those with various types of disabilities, showing, for example, alternative devices to use a computer.

The entire conference was translated into the Polish sign language, the speeches delivered in German and English were translated into Polish by the translators present in the assembly hall.

The conference was also attended by people with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, who thanked speakers and helped moderate discussions. There were also volunteers who supported the disabled when necessary.

An introductory lecture was given by Professor of the Adam Mickiewicz University Danuta Kopec, PhD, special educator. The lecture was divided into five parts. In the first part, the speaker introduced concepts and definitions used in social sciences to refer to persons with severe intellectual and multiple disabilities. The second part concerned the specifics of working with a person with severe intellectual and multiple disabilities in the context of care, therapy and education. In the next part, the Professor discussed research problems she encounters in her work with people suffering from severe intellectual and multiple disabilities. The fourth part of the lecture presented the analysis of special education of people with severe intellectual and multiple disabilities in the context of critical studies on disability. In the last part, the Professor expressed her final reflections on the issues raised previously.

Then, the lecture was given by Prof. Wolfgang Lamers, PhD (Germany), special educator. The Professor presented the latest research project that is being carried out at the Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences of the Humboldt University of Berlin. The project participants are also employees of the *Heidelberg University* of Education and people working for the institutions helping persons with intellectual disabilities in which the project is being implemented. The goal of the project is to provide people working on a daily basis with adults with severe intellectual disability methodological and didactic support, methods of supporting and seeking work for people with disabilities. The Professor emphasized that the lack of appropriate qualifications of the staff who work with people with severe intellectual disability is the main factor responsible for non-adjustment of the forms of support for people with severe intellectual disability, hence the idea of this project.

Next, there was a discussion summarizing all the lectures, followed by a break. After the break, Monika Karwacka and Agnieszka Gorka presented the Forum for People with Multiple Disabilities and a guide to good practices: "Adults with severe multiple disabilities – needs, rights and opportunities". The speakers demonstrated the project aimed at revising the disability certification system, at clarifying the status of a person with coupled disability and at determining the access to appropriate forms of support. The textbook entitled "Adults with severe multiple disabilities – needs, rights and opportunities" presents professional experience of specialists of various fields. The textbook has been written to fill gaps in the professional literature on support in the functioning of adults with more severe and severe intellectual disability coupled with other disorders and disabilities. The textbook is addressed to educators, psychologists, occupational therapists, medical carers, physiotherapists, students and parents.

Professor Matthias Zündel, PhD (Germany) – Professor of the Health Management and Care, a member of the advisory board of the International Association of Basal Stimulation, devoted his lecture to the concept of basal stimulation in care. The speaker introduced basic assumptions of the concept and its importance in nursing, with reference to fundamental human rights and the examples of concept application in various areas. Next, the Professor presented the ways in which caregivers use basal stimulation in their daily work and discussed the progress of works and challenges of implementing the method in practice.

Then, there was a discussion followed by presentation of solutions for people with multiple disabilities. The presentation was made by Anna

Cygan from Harpo, pointing out the latest technical aids for people with multiple disabilities, and Dave Gilbert from Pretorian Technologies, presenting comprehensive, language-independent AAC devices in action.

After a longer break, Michal Kosiedowski – Head of the Future Internet Services Department from the Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Centre, introduced the Insension project: Intelligent System supporting personalized interaction of people with severe complex intellectual disability with digital services. The goal of the project is to develop a system identifying non-symbolic behaviours in people with severe multiple intellectual disabilities. These behaviours, recognized as decisions or intentions, are transferred to supporting applications (messengers, music players). The "smart room" option will also be available in the solution where the IT system will recognize the needs of the user currently staying in the room.

Maciej Baraniewicz, special educator, psychologist, currently working with students suffering from severe multiple disabilities in the Special Education School Complex No. 11 in Krakow. The speaker addressed standards of care in education and therapy of people with severe multiple disabilities. At the end of the lecture, he emphasized that care should enable cognitive, emotional and social development, as well as prevent deterioration of the quality of life, illustrating his statements with educational activities carried out in his workplace.

Grzegorz Bilinski, PhD, academic lecturer, physiotherapist, president and co-founder of the Opole Association for Rehabilitation and a member of the international MWBA Basale Stimulation group. The speaker stressed the importance of the ICE classification in the context of thinking about disability from a therapeutic point of view. This international classification, as Dr. Bilinski mentioned at the beginning, describes limitations, but also possibilities for people with disabilities without ready-made procedures, which is an opportunity to exchange experience between specialists in many fields in order to improve the patient's efficiency.

The last lecture was given by Katarzyna Klimek-Markowicz, special educator and clinical psychologist, founder of the Zakatek Social Elementary School for children and youth with severe multiple disabilities, a member of the Polish Association of Solution-Focused Therapy. The speaker presented her original model to build collaboration with parents using the Solution-Focused Approach. The speaker stressed that in this model, from the beginning of the interaction, a specialist is to consciously influence people he/she works with. The educator pointed to the key aspect in education and therapy i.e. self-development. The speaker particu-

larly referred to the relationship with people involved in the educational and therapeutic process. She believes that the cooperation with patient's family allows to prevent conflicts. The speaker also emphasized the need to motivate parents of children with multiple disabilities to cooperate with specialists in the educational and therapeutic process.

Then, there was a summary and discussion followed by closing of the conference made by Justyna Tyrakowska from the Na Tak Association. She thanked all the people gathered for participation in the conference and invited them to the scientific conference next year. The speaker also emphasised the fact that there are still many areas in the field of education, therapy and care of people with multiple intellectual disabilities that require changes in order to allow the disabled fully participate in social life.

Published on the basis of an authorised copy

Cover design: Izabella Grzesiak

Technical editor: Dorota Borowiak

Computer DTP: Eugeniusz Strykowski