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### **Perspectives and threats of social integration of mentally retarded people**

Social integration of mentally retarded people is the idea, stream of social changes, which in special pedagogy of many European and world countries has been provoking since 60' previous century lively discussion, polemics, disputes and even controversy.

Popularization of this new idea was in favor for deep positive changes within theory and practice of education and rehabilitation of mentally retarded people, but also very frequently exaggerated ideology caused articulating awkward opinions and judgments, which discredited today's specialist achievements within this frame.

To excessive ideology, without any doubts, efficient pro integrative changes in every environment and in every aspect of mentally retarded people's life, impel also extreme actions, which aimed in elimination of educational special system with simultaneous demanding of total integration. There were also many doubts concerning maintaining institutions which were supporting the rehabilitation of those people, and even educating pedagogues, who were specially profiled for their therapy or rehabilitation<sup>1</sup>. The example of the latter, as Speck stresses, may be Italian educational integration system in which special pedagogues were judged to be needless in teaching mentally retarded children. According to W. Dykcik<sup>2</sup>, the main principle concerning the modern social education reformation, which tradition and achievements is highly unlikely to question, should be "... their creative use in modern organized educational system and breeding with special consideration on still underestimated experiences and competences of special pedagogues as reflexive practitioners". Yet special pedagogues, who are specializing as well in the frame of norms as in their deviations are competent and needed for therapeutic work in different organizational forms - integrative, cooperative, and also as teachers following mentally retarded children everywhere, where they can effectively help them and support them in specialist and

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<sup>1</sup> O. Speck, *Niepełnosprawni w społeczeństwie*, Gdańsk 2005.

<sup>2</sup> W. Dykcik, *Szanse i zagrożenia efektywności funkcjonowania pedagogów specjalnych zatrudnionych w szkolnictwie dla uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną* [w:] *Człowiek z niepełnosprawnością*

methodological manner<sup>3</sup>. It shows the need for giving highly individual help always adequate to different needs of mentally retarded. Just these needs verifies exaggerated expectations concerning integration.

Mentioned issues, but unfortunately not all of them, show unambiguously that in order to make social integration not only permanently declarative idea aiming for fully participation mentally retarded people in the social life, but also in the bigger satisfaction fact level, there should be done a reflexive and coherent her realization. This realization of social integration of children, teenagers and adults with constructive discourse about her is now particularly expected and desired. Stable discourse - rational critics, estimation of achievements, discussion in time when problems appear, should take into consideration modern culture-civilization changes and often related to them many threats, which may have big influence on the process of mentally retarded people integration.

These threats may hamper or even obstruct course and efficacy of process which is satisfying for every subject participating in We perceive them existing as next to very fast and not yet recorded progress, and in our family conditions these threats are very common social attitudes, which are still revealing in functioning of many stereotypes.

They may cause the displacement of appearing social claims to direction of holding weaker or retarded people responsible for development and progress. Meanwhile, these people function in today's free market economy, which generates the dominant trends such as: strict competition, confrontation and relentless rivalry, on the outsider's position and what is more, they don't gain any profits or benefits from being in this position (see Radziewicz-Winnicki, 2001, 2005).

Problem intensifies common social risk which is generated by such pathological phenomena as; homelessness, poor and unemployment. This problem have reached over 40% polish families. Growing children:" ...very often educationally neglected, who heritage their particular culture of poor and other models of deviation behaviors" (Karpińska, 2005, s. 17).

According to "Social Development Report Poland 2004 – In Job Care"<sup>4</sup>, 52% of polish people have got a poor family and every 5<sup>th</sup> 14-years old boy or girl lives in such family. As data show and the number of unemployed people is equal to 3 millions. The unemployment rate in

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*intelektualną. Wybrane problemy osobowości, rodzin i edukacji osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną, t. 2,* red. Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, Kraków 2003, s. 13.

<sup>3</sup> W. Dykcik, op. cit., s. 27.

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.undp.org.pl/center.php?nr=281>

Poland is equal to 19% and is two times bigger than in any European Country. Unfortunately, in some Polish region this degree is much bigger and it reaches 40%. Those who are the most endangered are people between 15–24 years old, because over 40% of them maintain beyond employment. The big unemployment rate causes, how it was shown in report, that every 10<sup>th</sup> Polish citizen is poor, so below the existential line, yet this may cause social excluding<sup>5</sup>. In particular way that is related to mentally ill people, because for many years their estimator of vocational elicitation has been falling down (to 15,7%), the employment rate (12,8%), and in 2004, the unemployment rate started to rapidly rising – to 19,6%.

The most threatening is the high unemployment estimator of mentally retarded people in their productive ages, which in 2004 reached 22,6%<sup>6</sup>.

The same as previously mentioned situations may unfavorably create the reality of integration mentally retarded people – in the way which can't clearly and predictably point the direction of changes of integration, which in every environment of those people's life should happen together.

Is it possible to have doubts in this matter, if it is still highlighted that common entrance into “integration way” depends mostly on our “faith” in integration. Certainty often discredits those, who think differently, have doubts concerning compound social reality or its wider socio-cultural context, as well as not satisfying specialist and financial supporting.

There is not always good understanding concerning suggesting the need of further searching of organizational differential solutions, working methods and above all their reflective and always adequate for mentally retarded needs application. On the other hand, the social integration as dynamic process should be embraced and realized in systemic way in good financial, organizational and expert conditions.

This systemic embrace and realization is made by net of mutual dynamic interrelationship and influences between environments, in which more or less active function people with disabilities<sup>7</sup>.

Social integration of mentally retarded people finds special realization in education system, because that system has a net of long-lasting influences that embraces mentally retarded people in their most dynamic developmental period. On the other hand, the new Bologna

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<sup>5</sup> A. Karpińska, *W poszukiwaniu źródeł edukacyjnego sukcesu. Aktywizacja „dziedzin zaniedbanych”*, [w:] A. Karpińska (red.), *Edukacyjne obszary „głębokiej zmiany” w dialogu i perspektywie*, Białystok 2005, s. 17.

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.mps.gov.pl/index.php?gid=438>

<sup>7</sup> See: W. Pilecka, *Przewlekła choroba somatyczna w życiu i rozwoju dziecka*, Kraków 2002.

reforms and promoted by them constant (lifelong) education will allow mentally retarded people as well as able people to participate in many various organizational lifelong forms of education. It is worth to show those threats, which now can impede and sometimes prevent the pro-integrative changes within this system of education with taking into consideration its social contexts. As I mentioned before, it is necessary to protect appropriate, yet satisfying for integration subjects, and particularly mentally retarded people, financial background for their realistic and not dummy including into various educational forms.

One of the solutions concerning that matter may be providing or activating educational benefits. It should be, as it is stressed by P. Bielecki<sup>8</sup>, followed by new rules of creating central and self-governmental educational budget and also new objective criteria of dividing budget resources between every school.

In our educational realities those issues are seriously neglected, as well in theory as in practice of public and self-governmental finances. It is necessary to provide solution strategies concerning financing the education with lifelong dimension, which are more often said to be educational personal account (EPA). Redistributing function EPA would consist of: public cash flow-vouchers for schools, colleges and education companies. Moreover, author stresses the fact that the conception of trade voucher should take into account three cost components, which estimate its worth and value.

Those components are: "national" element – the same for every student, reflecting standard of education cost, "school" element – it takes into account costs of local education and financial situation of every school, and "student's" element – it is a carrier of additional education costs and it may vary depending on student's needs, mostly those with special educational needs.

It should be considered ,however, in the estimation of provided financial system with using vouchers: free choose in education (students and their parents), economical effectiveness (productivity of education; costs and outcomes of education), equality in education access (including special educational student's needs), social coherence (citizen's socialization) and integration (on school level).

The latter factor is sometimes unnecessarily omitted although the equality of education chances does not cooperate with integration. The example may be strong school selectivity, what causes developing new school ghettos – for poor or for rich. This is the explanation why the criterion of students or listeners "integration", also those with disabilities, in the global

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<sup>8</sup> P. Bielecki P., *Bony edukacyjne. Granice urynkowania edukacji*, Warszawa 2005, p. 229.

estimation of financial education system can't be omitted. According to mentally retarded people this should be very precisely verified<sup>9</sup>.

The advantage of financing the educational system with using educational vouchers is their stimulating function, which appears in such interaction with suppliers of educational services in order to increase their competitiveness among them. Created educational offer, which is rich and interesting, also for disabled people, would provide higher quality of education with not so high costs.

Costs resulting from provided vouchers do not exclude applying other methods of financing education system as, for example, increasing budgeted subsidy with increase in number of students in given school<sup>10</sup>.

Education voucher, as the instrument of financial-educational politics is connected with two matters, both very important for quality and effectiveness of education; appearance of education in market and the possibility of choosing organizational form either within her profile or the direction of education.

Activating the market mechanisms force schools to react on consumers demand (students, listeners and parents), but also for differencing and enriching own educating offer. This offer enables school choice adequate to needs and aspiration of interested people. Unfortunately, in actual educational realities of our country this choice not always is possible, because the offer of accessible and diverse scholarships, support and integration programs for interested students is not satisfying. So the real choice of given form or direction of education for many people, and particularly for mentally retarded may be a serious problem<sup>11</sup>.

This problem may cause decrease of quality and frequency their mutual contacts with "normal" people, may impede social integration with them. Rich offer of educational vouchers would be accepted to be an instrument normalizing existential and particularly educational situation of disabled people.

The financial background of social and educational integration of mentally retarded children, teenagers and adults should be compatible with organizational and expert supporting. It should be appeared in generating many, in organizational way and in its rehabilitative offer, diverse integration forms; pro European improvement of educational system and trainings offered for pedagogues and specialists within rehabilitation and therapy of mentally retarded,

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<sup>9</sup> There, p. 301.

<sup>10</sup> There, p. 12.

creating satisfying cooperation those specialists with family and interested people, and particularly in working on system mutual actions, including help, support, activation and leveling problems of social integration.

I've analyzed and presented those issues in many publications<sup>12</sup>, yet it is worth to concentrated on main points concerned those publications, which still need more reflexions and thoughts. Further enriching offer of educational forms would provide to stronger leveling the differences between integrative and segregate education.

The latter for many years hasn't had any signs of "pure" segregation. So considerations about the efficiency of integration of those forms should equally take into account all of them, not only classless or group's integration including and inclusive realizing her in full way.

Even now, besides integrative and organized forms of education, integration is still realized, however her level may vary. It seems that different levels of this integration may make some forms more interesting and effective, as well educational as social for mentally retarded people. However, the efficiency of integrative or post integrative solutions is, without any doubts, also conditioned by other factors, which not necessarily are related only to functioning within education system. Equally, it is needed to comply with those, which are stuck in others, yet it may be the life after school of those people. Inter alia, they are the factors connected with functioning mentally retarded people in different, conditioned by age peer groups, family provenance, but also in own groups, forms of spending free time, the work environment and also local environment.

So the plait of many factors stuck in systematic environment of mentally retarded life may cause lesser or greater level their social integration in this environment. Their not mentioning or underestimating the meaning in creating pro integrative education for disabled children, teenagers and adults, does not show the real multirange dimension this dynamic process, which is, without any doubts, social integration.

Mutual relations and cooperation between pedagogic personnel and parents are included in this multirange dimension of integration process. Her quality impinge on integrative efficiency various forms of education system. Unfortunately, in actual school realities this

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<sup>11</sup> There.

<sup>12</sup> Janiszewska-Nieścioruk Z., *Integracja społeczna dzieci niepełnosprawnych*, [w:] T. Pilch (red.), *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku, t. 2*, Warszawa 2003; Janiszewska-Nieścioruk Z., *Aktualna oferta edukacyjna dla dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną* [w:] Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk (red.), *Sfery życia osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Kraków 2005; Janiszewska-Nieścioruk Z., Maciarz A., *Współczesne problemy pedagogiki osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Kraków 2006

cooperation is not satisfactorily created. Especially when it includes parents of children from inclusive and integrative classes/groups. In teachers of this forms opinions, parents show mostly negative behaviors, which allow to classify them as; inefficient (in most cases over caring and inconsistent) combating (aggressive, claiming and having a lot of pretensions) and scared (timid, fearful and passive)<sup>13</sup>. For comparison, it is worth to mention outcomes of researches concerning teachers of special schools. In their opinions, parents are often overprotective (49%) not accepting children's disability (27,5%) excessively demanding, as well for teachers as for children, at the same time they do not care about them much (24%).

There have also been shown many parenting problems ;financial problems, lack accessibility to specialists or lack of knowledge. One of the main problems were overwork and tiredness of parents, what was mentioned by 24% of asked teachers.

Very interested were teachers' opinions concerning parents of children under their charge, those opinions were gathered through conducting researches by special pedagogic students. Teachers thought that parents were not interested with their children (46,5%), did not cooperate with them (35%) and are to demanding or them (14%).

According to students opinion, one of the serious problems is lack of understanding and acceptance of parents from environment (65%)<sup>14</sup>.

So this is the reason why parents, as it is concluded from D. Wiercińska<sup>15</sup> studies, are expecting complex support, so not only from school and teachers, directed for children and for their families. Her complexity is appeared in not considering them and children in one educational situation. So it is expected to have full information about children health and about accessible forms of supporting, facilitations in the admission to specialist institutions, using early and complex medical-psychological-pedagogic help, using better rehabilitation equipment and specialist help, greater financial support, and what is more understanding their problems by local community and authority.

Supporting activities offering by school and its pedagogic personnel are elements of complex help which is expected by parents to be given from other specialists and institutions and also

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<sup>13</sup> Florek 2004, after: M. Gołubiew-Konieczna *Rodzina i szkoła w edukacji ucznia niepełnosprawnego w systemie integracyjnym*, [w:] Cz. Kosakowski, A. Krause, S. Przybyliński (red.), *Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej. Pomiędzy teorią a praktyką*, Olsztyn 2006

<sup>14</sup> Bartnikowska, Nosarzewska, Żyta, *Triada: dziecko, rodzic, wychowawca – wielopłaszczyznowość procesu wychowania w edukacji specjalnej* [w:] Cz. Kosakowski, A. Krause (red.), *Rehabilitacja, opieka i edukacja specjalna w perspektywie zmiany*, Olsztyn 2004

<sup>15</sup> D. Wiercińska, *Oczekiwania rodziców dzieci niepełnosprawnych i możliwości ich zaspokajania*, [w:] Cz. Kosakowski, A. Krause (red.), op. cit.

from authorities, who create it on given area. Today, this help is not sufficient, improper is also the distribution among interested.

The proper dialog and cooperation between teachers and parents, as important subjects of social integration of disabled children, should be also very important subject of reflexions during the process of educating pedagogues.

This matter needs not only deep thinking, but also good meritorical preparation. This is why M. Gołubiew<sup>16</sup> postulates to introduce a subject, which would consider not only forms and methods of working with mentally retarded students but also matters related to cooperation with family, to colleges and other forms of educating special pedagogues (maybe rather pedagogues of every specialities – see Z.J-N.). This suggestion would give a chance for creating proper and satisfying every pro integrative activity.

Pedagogue is expected to have a wide range of competences – instrumental and improving, autonomic and auto creative, in addition communicative<sup>17</sup>. However, great importance in pro integrative activities reach those skills of establishing connections, solving problems, negotiations, behavior plasticity. These competences should have modern pedagogue.

Education system of pedagogues and special pedagogues of all specialities, which has been many times modified, both his model and studies programs, stresses in proposed standards of this faculty a pressure on future pedagogues competences. As A. Maciarz<sup>18</sup> stresses, it is very important to develop sensitivity, kindness, sympathy among pedagogic students. It is also important to learn them to understand someone's emotions, attitudes and to free them from intolerance, enmity, doctrinairism and discrimination of poor, disabled or weaker people.

Pedagogue with such equipment is an expert, who would choose with professionalism actual pro integrative plans and activities. While working with family and other specialists in the frame of education and rehabilitation of mentally retarded people, he would be a significant element in the whole of realized systems of actions for process of their social integration.

If this process, in the context of presented considerations, could be full and authentic it needs constant and reflexive monitoring. While taking into account process dynamism, monitoring would make it possible to see positive both symptoms and different deficiencies in every

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<sup>16</sup> M. Gołubiew, *Integracja w prawie oświatowym a realia polskiej szkoły – szanse i zagrożenia edukacji dzieci niepełnosprawnych w systemie integracyjnym* [w:] Cz. Kosakowski, A. Krause (red.), op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Oleńska-Pawlak, 1997 after: Flanczewska, *Wychowanie do integracji jako zadanie w procesie kształcenia nauczycieli i uczniów*, [w:] E. M. Minczakiewicz (red.), *Dziecko niepełnosprawne w rodzinie i szkole*, Kraków 2003.

<sup>18</sup> G. Miłkowska-Olejniczak, B. Olszak-Krzyżanowska, *Rozmowa z Profesorem Aleksandrą Maciarz*, „Uniwersytet Zielonogórski” 2003, nr 12.

environment of mentally retarded life. Multirange dimension of this process should have high quality and this is a matter, when pointing threats, that should be the most minded.

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### **Youth with disability towards their educational and social vocational future — abstract**

The youth with disability have to face new challenges of rapidly changing social reality. The rapidity of changes in education and on labour market is amazing. The tendency of changes is determined by highly developed industrial societies, passing gradually to postindustrial era, which involves transformations in labour structures and professions. The subject-related context of subsequent decisions on education and future profession often does not facilitate making plans for the future.

In their adolescence period of life, the youth undertake series of decisions and actions relating to realization of their life plans. One of the most important is selecting the direction of further education and profession, often accompanying it. It is connected with making determined decisions, which usually is not easy – especially in difficult situation, which is due to biological disability. In my article I shall demonstrate how the disabled youth cope with projecting their educational and professional future, in the face of labour market risks and in the situation of permanent changes taking place in modern Polish reality.