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Preparation of special pedagogues for performing professional roles

The current model of education for special pedagogues

The question how a special pedagogue should be prepared for performing a professional role should be preceded with determination in what educational outlets a graduate of special pedagogics may be employed and what function he/she may have there.

Until recently¹, majority of special pedagogues found employment, right after completion of studies, in departmental educational facilities. Graduates of special pedagogics most often assumed regular employment as a teacher or tutor in special schools and special school and pedagogical centres. One could say that employment needs, method of education for special pedagogues and legislation arrangements in the scope of qualifications of teachers and tutors employed in facilities of special education were to some extent consistent.

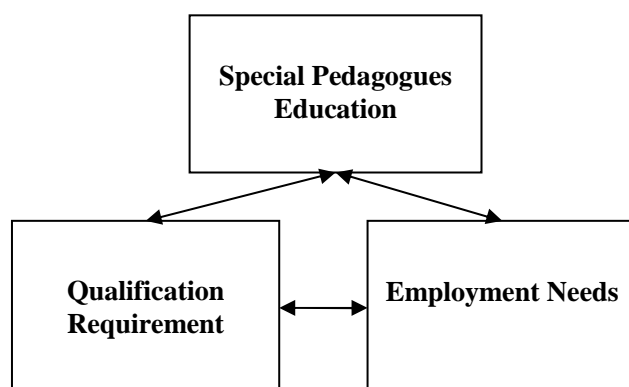


Fig. 1. Connections between areas, which are conditioning adequate special pedagogues functioning on the labour market

One of two major functions, to which students of special pedagogics were prepared, was education and tuition of children and youth, managed under conditions of school reality. As

¹ The situation was changed after implementation of Regulation of the minister of National Education and Sport on qualifications of teachers (Dz. U. 2002 nr 155, poz. 1288)

Halina Borzyszkowska² noticed, the issues of special education of children in school age were always dominant in scientific and practical problems of special pedagogics. The curriculum of studies executed in the faculty of special pedagogics took into account the classes aimed at preparation of teachers-to-be for work with pupils in junior and senior forms.³ Special attention was paid, however, to issues related to specific nature of work with disabled children at junior school age. I guess that many factors determined the said situation, including:

1. Acquiring by a graduate of special pedagogics actual qualifications for tuition in junior forms. The problem of qualifications of teachers authorised for work in senior forms, repeatedly broached in pedagogical literature⁴, was not finally led to any solution in practical proceedings. The literature⁵ quoted a view that senior forms of primary special schools and vocational schools should have graduates of directional studies as teachers, those with preparation for work with disabled pupils. In reality, persons were also employed on these posts, who only had preparation for special pedagogics. Thus, a conclusion comes to mind that a certain discrepancy between the said areas (education of special pedagogues vs. qualification requirements vs. employment needs) was found in higher stages of special education.
2. The problems of educating disabled pupils at junior school age was and still is more popular and much better developed in literature in comparison with the issues related to problems of education for disabled pupils at further educational stages.

It has to be noted that school has never been the sole institution, in which graduates of special pedagogics could apply for employment. However, the method of education for special pedagogues did not satisfy (and still does not satisfy) differentiated employment needs, did not take into consideration all the possible places of work and functions attributed

² Borzyszkowska H., Rozważania nad przygotowaniem kadry pedagogicznej do kształcenia specjalnego [in:] Z problematyki kształcenia pedagogów specjalnych, K. Kuligowska (ed.), WSPS, Warszawa 1991

³ see above

⁴ Kirejczyk K., Upośledzenie umysłowe – Pedagogika, Warszawa 1981; Sękowska Z., Przygotowanie nauczycieli do pracy z młodzieżą specjalną szkoły ogólnokształcącej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem klas starszych. [in:] Studia Pedagogiczne XLV, Funkcje pedagogiki specjalnej w systemie oświatowo-wychowawczym, Hulek A. (ed.), Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk – Łódź 1983; Hulek A., Pańczyk J., Akademickie kształcenie pedagogów specjalnych. [in:] Współczesne problemy pedagogiki specjalnej. Materiały z sesji organizowanych w latach 1985-1988, Pańczyk J. (ed.), Warszawa 1990; Kuligowska Z., Funkcje przedmiotów ogólnopedagogicznych w kształceniu nauczycieli dzieci niepełnosprawnych [in:] Współczesne problemy pedagogiki specjalnej. Materiały z sesji organizowanych w latach 1985-1988, Pańczyk J. (ed.), Warszawa 1990; Parys K., Refleksje nad przygotowaniem pedagogów specjalnych do pracy zawodowej [in:] Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej 4. Normalizacja środowisk życia osób niepełnosprawnych, Cz. Kosakowski, A. Krause (eds.), UWM, Olsztyn 2005

⁵ see above

to special pedagogues. As I stated it earlier, facilities educating special pedagogues used to pay most attention to preparation of graduates for performing the function of teachers in junior forms of primary special schools. Halina Borzyszkowska⁶ stated that preparation of teachers of special kindergartens, schools of life, vocational schools, boarding schools, employees for off-curriculum classes and pedagogues for work in vocational and educational information centres (now: psychological and pedagogical centres) was only an undercurrent. Jan Pilecki⁷ was also quoting imperfections in the scope of education of tutors for boarding schools.

Discrepancy between theory and practice in education of special pedagogues

The fact that the process of education of special pedagogues took into account mostly needs of schools does not mean that the situation was consistent with theory of special pedagogics. Over twenty years ago, Janina Doroszevska noted that “the field of activity of a special pedagogue goes significantly beyond functions traditionally related to the school and one has to be aware that progress in knowledge will be accompanied by these functions, to which a special pedagogue will be called.”⁸ Later, a similar opinion was expressed by Czesław Kosakowski: “The need is strong to educate personnel for the needs of early intervention and early stimulation of growth in children, support staff for teachers in a special school (a therapist, a rehabilitation tutor, a special pedagogue, etc.) [...] The place for a special pedagogue [...] is also in off-school education, social institutions and organisations, health care; these are all many newly growing forms of assistance for adult disabled people.”⁹

Attempts at modification in the scope of education for special pedagogues

Specific activities corresponding with increasing employment capacity for special pedagogues were undertaken years in the Academy of Special Pedagogics (then: the Higher School of Special Pedagogics). The Department of Special Pedagogics of the said educational facility proposed, outside the scope of the four traditional specialisations (oligofrenopedagogics, surdopedagogics, tyflop pedagogics, therapeutic pedagogics), ten new ones (advising and early improvement of children with hearing defects; surdologopedics;

⁶ Borzyszkowska H., Rozważania nad przygotowaniem kadry pedagogicznej do kształcenia specjalnego [in:] Z problematyki kształcenia pedagogów specjalnych, K. Kuligowska (ed.), WSPS, Warszawa 1991

⁷ Pilecki J., Internat jako środowisko wychowawcze [in:] J. Pilecki, W. Pilecka, J. Baran, Wychowanie dzieci o obniżonej sprawności umysłowej w internacie, WSP, Kraków 1992, s. 134

⁸ Doroszevska J., Pedagogika specjalna. Tom 1. Wrocław - Warszawa - Kraków - Gdańsk 1981, s.693

⁹ Kosakowski Cz., Kształcenie pedagogów specjalnych na tle przemian. [in:] Człowiek niepełnosprawny. Charakteria dla Profesor Zofii Sękowskiej, M. Chodkowska (ed.), Lublin 1994, s. 30

education and rehabilitation of persons with moderate, significant and deep mental handicap; individual education and therapy of ill and disabled persons; rehabilitation of persons with vision defects; education and vocational advising for persons with cerebral palsy; rehabilitation and therapeutic certification and advising; off-school rehabilitation and therapy for disabled pupils with associated disorders; diagnosis and therapy of pupils with special difficulties in learning; pedagogics supporting children with special educational needs), which were to meet the needs of labour market for education and rehabilitation.¹⁰

It is not known whether and to what degree students would be interested in new specialisations and to what degree they would allow finding employment and properly meet vocational obligations. The fact is that now they are not listed in the educational offer of the Academy of Special Pedagogics. This facility still offers the largest number of specialisations as compared with other facilities educating special pedagogues. Students of special pedagogics in the ASP may select from among the following specialisations: pedagogics for intellectually disabled, surdopedagogics, therapeutic and early school pedagogics, education and rehabilitation for the blind and those with poor sight, tyflop pedagogics, logopedia, resocialisation pedagogics and family support, pedagogics of skills and IT, early intervention, integration kindergarten education, pedagogical therapy, special andragogics, occupational therapy, arttherapy in the scope of fine arts, therapeutic pedagogics, re-socialisation pedagogics.¹¹

The Pedagogical Academy of Krakow has also slightly increased the number of specialisations, within which it prepares special pedagogues. Starting with the 2005/2006 academic year, the Department of Special Pedagogics of the AP in Krakow initiated education of assistants for the disabled.¹²

Education of special pedagogues in the coming perspective

It is to be believed that the current standards of education should be the determinant regulating to some degree the process of education for special pedagogues. Following the standards of education in special pedagogics¹³, students are being prepared (in accordance with the chosen specialisation) for working in: educational and tutoring facilities, specialised

¹⁰ Pańczyk J., Specjalności na kierunku pedagogika specjalna jako szansa zafunkcjonowania absolwentów na edukacyjnym i rehabilitacyjnym rynku pracy. [in:] Pedagogika specjalna w reformowanym ustroju edukacyjnym, Z. Palak (ed.), Lublin 2001

¹¹ www.aps.edu.pl, (IX 2006)

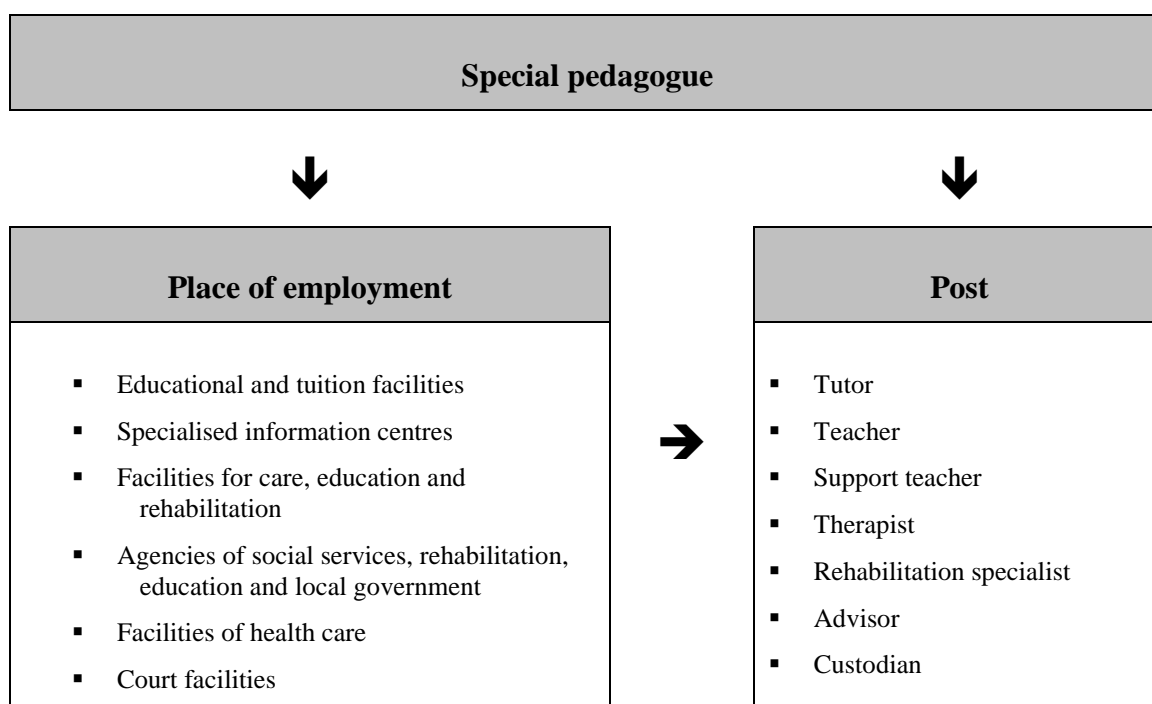
¹² www.ap.krakow.pl/ped_sp/studia.html, (IX 2006)

¹³ www.rgs.edu.pl/Pedagogika_specjalna20060330.doc, (IX 2006)

information centres, care, education and rehabilitation facilities, branches of social, rehabilitational, educational and local government services, health care facilities, the judiciary. Graduates of special pedagogics may apply for employment in the said facilities after completion of studies in both the first and second degree. Studies of the second degree (completing with granting the title of professional master of medicine) allow also for employment of graduates in didactic and research institutions and dealing with popularisation of knowledge in the scope of special pedagogics.

It has to be noticed that graduates of special pedagogics may be employed in schools only when they complete teaching specialisation pursuant to the ordinance of the minister of national education and sport on standards in education of teachers.¹⁴

The said institutions, which are the prospective places of work for graduates of special pedagogics, suggest that, depending on the completed specialisation, they may perform a number of functions. Standards of education tell that graduates of special pedagogics are being prepared for work in the post of: tutor, teacher, support teacher, special pedagogue therapist, specialist in special pedagogics, special pedagogue and rehabilitation operator, advisor, custodian.



¹⁴ Regulation of the minister of National Education and Sport on standards in education of teachers, September, 7th, 2004 (Dz. U. z dnia 22 września 2004 r.)

Fig. 2. Possible places of employment and work posts for graduates of special pedagogics, on the basis of standards of education in special pedagogics

Final reflections

Despite various changes (a smaller number of special schools, the ministerial ordinance limiting significantly the possibility of performing the teacher function by graduates of special pedagogics) in the system of education for special pedagogues, considering a special pedagogue mostly a teacher for disabled pupils is still highly prevalent. Yet, not every special pedagogue must be a teacher, or have vocational qualifications allowing him being a tutor. Other functions, to which a special pedagogue may and should be prepared, are advising, diagnosing, rehabilitation, therapy, custody. To some degree, the said skills should be also acquired by a special pedagogue prepared for the role of a teacher, just like a special pedagogue rehabilitation specialist should have elementary information and skills in the scope of advising, diagnosing, therapy, tuition and even custody, despite that fact that he/she would not be a qualified advisor diagnostician, therapist, teacher and custodian. However, due to different posts, tasks and vocational functions, there should be other competencies and professionalism for the said persons (cf. D. Kopeć)¹⁵. To conclude the above considerations, I can say that the notion of a “special pedagogue” is a very capacious and multi-valued. I completely agree with Czesław Kosakowski¹⁶, who stated that the name of a “special pedagogue” includes a “broad range of sections of his activities.” However, it is necessary for this fact to be taken into consideration in the current model of education for special pedagogues.

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¹⁵ Kopeć D., Kondycja polskiego szkolnictwa specjalnego – analiza wybranych problemów [in:] Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej 3. Rehabilitacja, opieka i edukacja specjalna w perspektywie zmiany, Cz. Kosakowski, A. Krause (eds.), UWM, Olsztyn 2004

¹⁶ Kosakowski Cz., Kształcenie pedagogów specjalnych na tle przemian. [in:] Człowiek niepełnosprawny. Charakteria dla Profesor Zofii Sękowskiej, M. Chodkowska (ed.), Lublin 1994, s. 35

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Abstract

Is special pedagogics a teaching course? This question may only seemingly seem absurd. At the present educational situation, a student after completion of education solely in the special pedagogics course very rarely becomes a teacher. Pursuant to the ordinance of the minister of national education and sport, regulating the issue of pedagogical qualifications, two functions are distinguished, which may be performed by a pedagogue: tuition and running courses. Graduates of special pedagogics are only authorised for running care, tuition and re-validation classes. They may perform the teaching function in a very limited scope only.

The changes in the educational and rehabilitation labour market should make the educational facilities dealing with preparation of special pedagogues prepare for modifying the model of education. Unfortunately, this process is too slow and the current concept of education for students of special pedagogics does not meet the needs in the scope of preparation of differentiated personnel, and takes into account the needs of future places of work to a small degree only.