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Youth with disability towards their educational and social vocational future

The present social situation, subject to constant transformations, the necessity of finding own place in variable social reality – being the result of system and political changes – put an individual under constant pressure. They bring difficulties in the existence of the individual, problems with recursion, in adaptation to the rules of surrounding reality, to the conditions prevailing in the post-industrial era¹. Many different factors (relating to biology, physics and chemistry, law and economics and culture) cause both the growth of number of persons, whose fitness is impaired and determine in special way their place in the widely understood society, including the issues of education or employment².

One of the most important, if not the most important aspects of rehabilitation of the disabled is the problem of getting a job and keeping the employment. However, the conditions prevailing at present in the labour market, the rate and scope of changes taking place in it, the requirements of the ability to be able do adapt flexibly the qualifications and skills to the expectations of the employer, the necessity of measuring up to the education of healthy individuals, as well as the threat of unemployment and social marginalization – all these factors put the disabled youth in especially difficult situation, and the specifics of adolescence period makes an additional obstacle in making decisions relating to education and future profession³.

The adolescence period is a period of biological maturation and social adaptation, the time of great chances for development and rapid changes, the time of making decisions relating to future plans for the life, including most of all selecting further educational way and selection of profession, decision of key consequences for future of the individual and the quality of

¹ Piorunek M., *Młodzież wobec edukacyjno-zawodowej przyszłości – kontekst transformacji kulturowych*, Wrocław 2005, s. 184.

² Wojciechowski Fr., *Szanse i zagrożenia okresu dorastania osób niepełnosprawnych*, Warszawa 2004, s. 25-26.

³ Król M., Przybyłka A., *Rynek pracy osób niepełnosprawnych*, Katowice 1999, s. 143-151.

his/her life. During the adolescence period, the youth with disability, realizing their need of independence and autonomy, search intensely for new areas of experiences and for new values, the methods aimed at obtaining the state of equilibrium. They enter the adults world in specific way, they discover the mechanisms and conditions ruling this world, they try to live up to growing number of their life assignments through intensified interactions with their parents, teachers and peers, get new experiences and develop on permanent basis. At that time in addition to orientation to future and pursuit for self-identification, building subjective identity, we may also observe the state of certain disorientation, getting lost in the social reality, caused by lack of life experience, non-objective estimation of themselves, and surrounding, immature hierarchy of values and experiencing a youth crisis⁴.

In adolescence period, the disabled youth experience series of problems of individual character, depending mostly on type, character and degree of their individual disability. These factors affect the intensity of experiencing the setbacks and the vulnerability to occurrence of problems of psychological character, which is more common than in their healthy peers⁵. The fact that in the growing up period the individual – who still does not have any specific life objectives – creates a vision of ideal profession, rebuilds – in view of the lack of possibility of real estimation of the situation – his/her often not very realistic life plans, not taking into consideration his/her own potentials, predispositions, and also the external conditions, is not of less importance. It makes a specific threat for personal development, since the generation of overstated, compared to individual conditions, level of life aspirations may lead to disturbances in behaviour and affects own activity of such individual⁶.

The present reality is characterized mainly by volatility category. Apart from the diversity of available models of life and the selections made in it, its unpredictability, uncertainty and risk, being one of the results of system transformation, have become omnipresent. Traditional importance of vocational education, nurturing to perform a given occupation, slowly lose their importance, being substituted by the necessity of multi-profile education, permanent education (lasting all the life) and wide specialization. This contributes not only to frustration and uncertainty related to future professional and life role, but above all – by virtue of still underdeveloped maturity of a young individual, not fully formed system of values – makes a problem in the field of the necessity of making relevant and proper selection of educational

⁴ Tyszkowa M., *Zadania rozwojowe*, Warszawa 1993, s. 951-954; Wojciechowski Fr., *Szanse i zagrożenia...* op. cit., s. 26-29.

⁵ Wojciechowski F., *Szanse i zagrożenia...* op. cit., s. 26-29.

⁶ Mądrzycki T., *Osobowość jako system tworzący i realizujący plany*, Gdańsk 1996, s. 91-113.

and vocational way and taking up a responsibility for made selection⁷. In new educational system, the youth are subject to numerous tests and exams, they have to make a lot of selections, sometimes distributed in time, though now they have greater than ever possibility of their modification and larger selection of educational and vocational options⁸.

The education for the disabled youth fulfils not only the role of providing knowledge, but it also makes a basic instrument used for equalization of life chances. It is the first, basic and the most important link in social and professional rehabilitation. The youth, in selection of their educational way, are guided by both the issues of their professional development, type of disability, and the influence of social and culture environment of an individual together with macro-social factors⁹.

The awareness of high requirements put before an individual, existing in the present social and economic reality and their acceptance are reflected in the high rank granted by the disabled youth to the value of education. The youth – both fit and disabled – most often refer to the education as to the value on its own, but associated with the possibility of development, with expanding own horizons, cognitive and analytical abilities, as well as with searching for the sense of life. As a result of their education, the feeling of independence, wilful deciding about their lot, the significance of the possibility of making changes in their own life, the awareness of having learned the ideal profession, a feeling of psychical comfort and own value, of being needed and respected, as well as the sense of achieving something more than their parents have achieved, are also important for them¹⁰.

In recent years, we may observe a general trend in the objectives hierarchy of the entire youth population, indicating to strengthened role of education and professional job. The situation in the labour market considerably impacts the change of the approach towards education, especially higher education, bringing increased educational aspirations in learning youth, oriented to determined level and type of education, treated as purposeful investment, aimed at securing against unemployment, facilitating finding a good well payable job, enabling having more interesting and richer life¹¹.

⁷ Król M., Przybyłka A., *Rynek pracy...* op. cit., s. 146-151; Piorunek M., *Młodzież wobec...* op. cit., s. 185-186.

⁸ Wojtasik B., *Edukacyjno-zawodowe wybory nastolatków w „społeczeństwie ryzyka”*, Wrocław 2005, s. 178-179.

⁹ Szczupał B., *Wykształcenie w systemie wartości młodzieży niepełnosprawnej*, Kraków 2003, s. 415-420.

¹⁰ Borowska T., *Pedagogia ograniczeń ludzkiej egzystencji*, Warszawa 1998, s. 58-60; Szczupał B., *Wykształcenie...* op. cit., s. 415-420; Zandecki A., *Wykształcenie a jakość życia*, Toruń-Poznań 1999, s. 80-147.

¹¹ Król M., Przybyłka A., *Rynek pracy...* op. cit., s. 175-178; Piorunek M., *Młodzież wobec...* op. cit., s. 185-187; Wojtasik B., *Edukacyjno-zawodowe...* op. cit., s. 179-180.

A disabled person wishing to compete effectively in the labour market must be able to offer his/her knowledge, abilities on the level at least comparable to those represented by healthy persons. The only way to reach this is wider practical access to education and life-long learning. Though the disabled youth recognize the important role of education in their future professional life, they also notice numerous threats and potential obstacles on their way to realization of their professional plans, such as relatively low own educational results and the possibility of problems related with this on higher levels of education, their health condition and their family and socio-economic situation. Apart from this, part of the disabled youth plans map out further education, though only small fraction is decided to undertake studies. This condition does not result from lack of intellectual potentials; its main reason is the weakness of existing educational system for the disabled and actual lack of access to education. This situation obviously restricts the chances of the disabled in the labour market¹².

Appropriate professional qualifications are a basic criterion for getting employment, a precondition for coming into being in the labour market, on which the competition is constantly growing. However, the problem in this point is lack of guarantee of employment, often even in spite of properly selected profession. A characteristic feature of the young disabled individuals – graduates from the schools – is the lack of chance for finding any employment not only immediately after completion of their educational process, but also in long-term prospects. The disabled graduates are special group of the disabled, endangered with unemployment¹³.

A problem, which requires urgent solution is adopting the education of disabled youth to existing needs of the labour market, with consideration given for their predispositions, physical and intellectual capabilities, as well as relevant preparation of teachers in order to have better orientation of the labour market for disabled youth and to assist them in making proper educational and professional decisions. The optimum selection of profession is a greater problem for the disabled persons than for the person without disability. Making bad or incidental decision on selection of profession, the necessity of its possible change and retraining has much more serious consequences for a disabled person than for a person without any disability. Difficulties in getting employment in selected and learned profession give rise to disappointment, dejection, development of stress situations, the feeling of washed-

¹² Sowa J., Wojciechowski F., *Proces rehabilitacji w kontekście edukacyjnym*, Rzeszów 2001, s. 113-130; Szczupał B., *Wysztalcenie...* op. cit., s. 415-420.

¹³ Golinowska S., Leś E., Nałęcz S., *Praca dla grup specjalnego ryzyka na rynku pracy*, r. IX. UNDP 2004, s. 237-239; Szczupał B. *Specific occupational problems of the disabled*, Lublin 2004, s. 411-416.

up effort, which may result in passivity and resignation from further profession-related rehabilitation¹⁴.

A certain chance for changing this bad situation is searching for new solutions, enabling educational and professional activity of the disabled. One of such solutions is e-learning (the delivery of learning, training or education programs developed and made available through Internet) and tele-work, which in the near future may become a common form of providing a headwork, creating new possibilities of employment for disabled persons. However, we know from practice such situations that even well-educated disabled persons have difficulties in finding an employer, which would be ready to employ them in tele-work system, giving them by the same a chance to return to active professional life¹⁵.

Unemployment entails many threats for the youth, both disabled and fit. In terms of an individual, it may inhibit greatly the development of personality, leading to degradation, nervous breakdowns, and depressions. In terms of social life, according to some researchers, youth unemployment may become a base for development of various pathogenic effects. The situation of long-lasting lack of any employment after completion the education is particularly dangerous, as it often leads to deterioration of psycho-social situation of the young individual - to decline in their intellectual efficiency and lower threshold of life ambitions, disappearance of qualifications and capabilities acquired in the process of education (so called "becoming out of profession"), restraint of activity and pursuit for independence, shifting the responsibility for own life to aid-providing institutions and family, decrease of readiness to undertake the work, apathy¹⁶.

Unemployed disabled youth constitute a social group endangered with repudiation. Disability is bound with getting an expert medical opinion of injury of body functions and inability to work. This is usually the first step to exclusion from the labour market, which means an introduction to endangering with social disintegration. The expert medical opinion on disability enables making efforts in order to obtain pension and social benefits for the disabled, which results in discouragement to undertaking employment. The pension ensures

¹⁴ Majewski T., *Rehabilitacja zawodowa i zatrudnienie osób niepełnosprawnych dla pracowników terenowych*, Warszawa 1999, s. 33-34; Sowa J., Wojciechowski F., *Proces rehabilitacji...* op. cit., s. 311-316.

¹⁵ Szczupał B., *Telepraca jako forma zatrudnienia młodzieży niepełnosprawnej*, Kraków 2005, s. 227-240; Szczupał B., *E-learning jako forma kształcenia studentów niepełnosprawnych*, Warszawa-Radom 2005, s. 229-233.

¹⁶ Giermanowska E., *Praca, bezrobocie, kształcenie – szanse i możliwości wyboru*. Warszawa 1997, s. 99-103; Golinowska S., Leś E., Nałęcz S., *Praca...* op. cit., s. 245.

the income, constrain the activity of disabled person, putting such person in the role of beneficiaries¹⁷.

In today's world, which is highly diversified and domineered by science and technology, there are plenty of possibilities for the individuals to choose their own ways of life and self-realization forms, and create themselves.. The youth most frequently put the image of this world in the present time dimension, perceiving it through the prism of family home, school and off-school environment, groups of friends. In this situation the time prospect related to life plans closes in the area of the nearest, predictable future (completion of school), focused exclusively on certain aspects and motivations (location of school in the proximity, the easiness of being admitted to it, selections made by colleagues). In addition to attitudes accepting the present reality, there are also critical attitudes, unwillingness to contest in professional and social life, which is treated as necessity, giving priority to other values than welfare¹⁸.

Great own activity of the disabled youth, leading – through work – to social integration, and in consequence, to economic and personal independence, social and professional promotion is necessary in the actions aimed at vocational activation. This activity is often missing¹⁹. The disabled youth aspire to the society of healthy persons, feel the need of independence and autonomy, but often depend on the aid of other persons. An important task in this point is the necessity of establishing an equilibrium between the need of autonomy and necessary dependence on others, self-acceptance and determination of own system of values and life plans, which enables mobilizing the strengths of our body to fight with faced restrictions and obstacles, bear the pain, and favours the self-revalidation process, whose objective is self-realization of a disabled person and fulfilling by such person certain social roles. An important role in realization of this task belongs to pedagogues and educators, as well as to consistent, well thought out and properly deployed educational system.

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¹⁷ Golinowska S., Leś E., Nałęcz S., *Praca...* op. cit., s. 257-258.

¹⁸ Piorunek M., *Młodzież wobec...* op. cit., s. 186-190; Szczupał B., *Wykształcenie...* op. cit., s. 415-420; Świda-Ziemia H., *Obraz świata i bycia w świecie (z badań młodzieży licealnej)*, Warszawa 2000, s. 554-558; Wojtasik B. *Edukacyjno-zawodowe...* op. cit., s. 180-181; Zandecki A., *Wykształcenie...* op. cit., s. 175-180.

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Youth with disability towards their educational and social vocational future — Summary

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.