

The quality of the educational integrity

Educational integrity – realization of the idea of social integration of disabled people – although the years long tradition in the Polish education it is still widely discussed in various circles. Both theoreticians as well as practitioners that (teachers, parents) use the ideas of integration in their daily work with disabled children have their opinions. Worth noticing is, that all of them are connected by the believe in the validity of the assumptions about the social integration idea of the disabled people and the need of implementing it in various aspects of the social life. The doubts appear when one searches and uses particular problem solutions and evaluates the quality of those solutions.

It is difficult for unanimous evaluation of the state and effects (quality) of the educational integrity due to the following facts:

- a) the very nature of the social integration is differently perceived (mostly superficially), that in turn results in lack of conformity among the involved parties about the formulation of the educational integration assumptions and the expectations towards it; The importance of this fact is stressed by K. Baranowicz claiming that “until there are no practical studies of the, so called, educational integration functions, till then it will be difficult to get to know and simultaneously evaluate the good and the weak sides of the educational integration” (K. Baranowicz 1998, p. 13).
- b) educational integration (as well as the social integration of the disabled people) is a multidimensional phenomenon therefore one needs to look at its effects in the same way, assuming correctly after G. Szumski that “(...) gained results differ accordingly to what and how the operationally-goal-structured variable is empirically tested” (G. Szumski 2006. P. 137)
- c) study on educational integration focuses usually only on the chosen aspects of it, what emphasizes A. Maciarz claiming that “(...) variable feature of these studies are their *one side focus* on diagnosis of the relationship and behavior of the able-bodied people (children, teachers, parents) towards disabled people. *There are few* studies whose research subject would be the mutual relations between the participants of the social integration process. *Totally neglected* is the problem of children’s readiness with various kinds and level of disabilities for educational integration, (...) their abilities to cope with difficult for them problems in school such as for instance, pupil competition at school for achievement” (A Maciarz 2003 no. 4, p. 196);¹
- d) analysis of various studies on the state and effects of the social integration of disabled children showed that the research was mostly done in integration classes therefore it seems to be a mistake to infer conclusions about the quality of all educational integration forms;

A supplement to the above facts is the statement, that the very notion of “quality” makes the problem of “quality of educational integration” even more complex.

¹ Other authors also point to the “neglected areas” in the diagnosis of educational integration. G. Szumski’s text deserves attention in which the author, among other things, presents the gathered research results of particular aspects of the educational integration effectiveness. Also the K. Parys’s text deserves attention as she conducts review of after-conference materials illustrating the school integration problems in the empirical research (K. Parys 2007, p. 233-278)

Following E. Deming – the creator of the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM), that quality is that what satisfies (and even delights) the customer, one needs to look at education from the market perspective, where education of a person is a specific service. In such understanding of education there is no place for the “educational mission”, “teacher’s vocation”. The teacher is the provider of services, who is to “sell the product” – education, thus satisfy the customer’s requirements: customer being the pupil, his/her parents, or finally the whole society (K. Stróżyński 2008).

In the educational integration each of these “market elements” takes a “special” meaning. Organized education process of disabled children has to be “adjusted to the needs of the pupil and the disabled pupil, for whom – due to significant disorders or dysfunctions in different areas of development that in significant way disturb his/her mental, physical, social functioning and also the learning capabilities – the specialistic didactic, educational and revalidation reaction is needed and also focused on his/her general development” (Serafin 2001, p.88). Popularization of the educational integration will be strengthened among others by: taking into account the pupils’ individual capabilities, flexibility of the content and methods of teaching, treating the disabled child as a pupil, supplementing the teacher’s action with the team of specialists, popularization of the modern technology in education (Dryżałowska 1997, p.75), and also participation of the disabled children parents whose role (a complete priority in children’s education, the most important link in directing the children’s development) is being appreciated, simultaneously noticing that parents are becoming “the customers” of the educational integration twice: firstly as those for whom the good of the child is often the goal and the sense of life and secondly in situations where there is a need of giving the proper support to them through school in order to prepare them for responsible tasks towards the child, so as they could find themselves in the role of a mother and father of a child with special needs (A. Korzon 200).

In the opinion of K. Stróżyński about the quality of education decides the exploitation level in organizational, didactic and educational action of the pupils also teachers’ capabilities as well as exploitation of the material and organizational conditions for the versatile support of the pupil’s development and his/her functioning in the society (K. Stróżyński).

Let’s look then at the chosen aspects of special education of disabled children in the conditions of social integration in the context of their quality.

Area of organizational actions

The children’s educational integration is present in the Polish educational system because of the legal regulations that regulate the options and rules of formation and realization of special educational integration forms. These forms originate usually due to the needs of the local environment and with the acceptance of educational and self-governance authorities. These needs of the local environment are mostly the constituents of requests and appeals of the parents of the disabled children but also “the school’s own educational offer” (in the times of the free market – the school that forms integration classes- broadens its “range of offers” becoming a competitive one at “the school market”). The question arises: When the school extends its educational offer does it consider its decision with all the involved aspects and is the school ready to meet the requirements of the high quality offer? An answer to this question may be the quotation of the following few facts:

- a) there are some “gaps” in the law (inconsistencies of the acts with the superior legislative acts) and divergences between regulations and their practical, often inconsistent with the legislator intentions, realization – that causes from the very beginning of the “doing “ of the educational integration that its quality is in jeopardy;
- b) often the unrealistic needs and capabilities of the child and parents’ expectations and the “educational policy” regulating the number of places in the integration classes, decides about the disabled children’s educational way. Perhaps this is one of the

reasons of the low rate (5%) of disabled pupils functioning in the educational system and the low schooling level of the disabled people (57,3% of disabled people completes education at the primary level) and also noticeable educational structure of disabled pupils education in the integration system (and in mass one as well) that has a shape of a pyramid. At the level of kindergarten the number of disabled children is significant but in secondary schools the number is small and in universities the number is minimal (G. Dryżałowska 2003, no. 8 p. 54-55);

- c) integration classes (supplement of school society with disabled pupils) are the most (especially at the primary level) common variant of educational integration of disabled children what also means the most desired one – in the opinion of A. Breühlmeier the integration form – including one pupil to the class team at the every level of education with the assurance of full realization of the individualization (enabling the conditions favouring development) – is treated as “neglected treatment” (A. Breühlmeier).

The evaluation of the educational integrity quality in the formal-educational aspect:

Social integration of disabled people is a beautiful idea, that when realized in the form of educational integration of disabled children encounters many obstacles, as a result it arouses many doubts and justified worry about its effectiveness.

Area of didactic actions

In order to be able to realize the integration of the disabled pupils not only in the form of formal-educational but foremost in the didactic and revalidation form (as well as in educational form), one needs transformations in the school functioning. One names, among the biggest obstacles in education of the disabled children that affect its quality, the following:

- a) the continuation of the competitive individualism in the pupils society, that is an obstacle in the development of positive group relations, favours the antagonizing of pupils, makes it impossible to experience the group solidarity, starts destructive mechanisms of social behaviour especially against the individuals that are weaker and less agile, becomes a barrier in mutual social integration of able-bodied and disabled children;
- b) teachers' concentration on the formal form of the program requirements; imposing on pupils the same requirements not taking into account the versatile needs, capabilities and interests of pupils; therefore not creating suitable conditions for the development and self-realization of the pupils;
- c) tendency to require from pupils the achievements (analyzed according to some standards) without taking into account the analysis of pupil's individual capabilities (A. Maciarz 2003, no.4)
- d) lack of sufficient teacher's competencies as to the method of special teaching, indispensable when working with disabled children;
- e) lack or insufficient number of technical devices needed by the child and the teacher in the didactic and revalidation process;
- f) total lack or countless insufficiencies of the teacher support system, for teachers who have undertaken the difficult task of educating and upbringing a disabled child in the mass school;
- g) lack of proper substantial and methodological preparation of the pedagogue that supports the teacher in the integration class;
- h) insufficient continuation of rehabilitation care over the children;
- i) lack of help given to the pupils by the specialists from outside the school in situation when the school is not capable to provide proper help;
- j) lack of providing the child with the possibility to realize so called individual-integration teaching that would combine into one wholeness the individual classes

conducted by the specialist from subjects causing the most problems with the classes where the child can participate on its own without bigger problems (arts & crafts, music);

- k) lack of cooperation between specialists taking part in the widely understood rehabilitation of a disabled child (G. Dryżłowska 1997).

Evaluation of the educational integration quality in the aspect of didactic and revalidative actions: If one cannot provide proper conditions for the disabled children in the “normal school” then one should not put them there. “Including them into normal school in such a situation would be simply pernicious” (A. Hulek 1977, p. 501). Integration then when it is possible, special teaching then when it is necessary” (Gunia 2001, p. 121)

Area of education actions

About the high quality of the educational integration will undoubtedly decide the fact of the real existence of integration of able-bodied and disabled pupils which is understood as the higher form of spontaneous participation in every social group on the principle of a fully rightful member of these groups that requires preparation on both sides (W. Dykcik 1997, p.137) and numerous educational actions conducted in continuous form by teachers and tutors in children groups of various developmental capabilities.

The process of social integration of disabled children in integration classes may be successful only due to the enriching the educational action being realized with children in the extra curriculum classes, because in the process of traditional lesson there are not many situations that enable the children to make casual contacts, to cooperate and to share experiencing, that is the core of the social integration.

Evaluation of educational integration quality in the aspect of educational actions: One needs to pay attention to: the level of knowledge of all the participants of the educational process in integration on the subject of disability and the people affected by it, the formation of abilities for integration actions, the selection in the profession of pedagogue realizing himself/herself in the conditions of educational integration (needed personality predispositions).

The above deliberation points to the final conclusion, that is: in educational integration as in any other action exists the need to conduct evaluation understood as a process of quality research, consisting of systematic, clear and precise information gathering on the subject of the research, analysis and interpretation of the gathered data as well as to transfer the conclusion from the evaluation to the receivers. The evaluation results are to be an important premise for the government educational policy leading to improving the education quality.