

ANDRAGOGY OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN POLAND, THE PRACTICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *Andragogy, as a pedagogy division, deals with upbringing and education of adults (see Encyklopedia PWN 2016). It therefore focuses on forms of education of adolescent youth and adults, and its research problems regard complex issues of education, self-education, upbringing and self-upbringing.*

In case of special andragogy the difference is only in the subject of its interest i.e. "... it deals with [afoer mentioned problems] of the working youth and adults with disabilities or socially maladjusted, with regard to their revalidation and resocialisation" (Stochmiątek, in Dykcik 2001). In case of special andragogy a separate question is functioning in the area of personal and social development of the disabled and socially maladjusted adults, with regard to their revalidation and resocialisation, as well as supporting them in personal crises, and legal regulations on giving support to adults, who temporarily or permanently require assistance to properly function in adult life. Other problems are connected with the differences resulting directly from peculiarity of their functioning due to their disability, as the aurally impaired people experience different difficulties from the socially maladjusted, or people with intellectual disabilities, epecially moderate or severe disabilities. From the point of view of special androgogy's tasks, the area that seems the most challenging to describe is certainly the question of educating and upbringing the adults with severe intellectual disability.

Another important matter in the subject discussed here is the question of describing and defining adulthood, taking into account its various aspects like emotional, physical, intellectual, interpersonal or other maturity, especially in the context of disabled people.

In this work an attempt is made to describe problems concerning education and organising support of development of adults with moderate and severe intellectual disability in formal and nonformal education in Poland. This subject has been chosen due to the fact that this particular group of disabled adults are subject to various resolutions in scope of the programme and organisation of education, as well as their particular educational needs.

Keywords: *andragogy, special education, adulthood, intellectual disability, education, development, support, social functioning, revalidation, rehabilitation.*

Terminology and subject range

Andragogy as a section of pedagogy focuses on issues of upbringing and educating adults (compare: Encyklopedia PWN 2016). Thus, the subject of andragogy interest are educational forms available for adolescents and adults, and its research scope concerns complex issues of education and self-education, rising and self-upbringing.

In case of special andragogy, the difference will concern only the subject of its interest, that is, it “focuses on (the above mentioned problems) of working youth and adults who are disabled or socially maladjusted, while taking into consideration their revalidation and resocialization” (Stochmiałek, [in] Dykcik 2001). The question of functioning in the sphere of individual and social development of the adult disabled and maladjusted individuals is also discussed while taking into account their revalidation and resocialization and providing support in life crises, especially in such cases where these individuals need temporary or constant help to function properly in their adulthood. Such problems are connected with differences inbred in dissimilarity of their functioning, relating to disability. Moreover, other problems will affect hard of hearing or deaf individuals, other those ones who are socially maladjusted and still other will refer to those ones who are intellectually disabled, especially those with moderate and significant intellectual disability, or those with profound disability. What is more, in case of individuals with various kinds of disabilities, we deal with a situation, when each of those individuals develops in his/her own way and it is possible to indicate numerous factors influencing their level of functioning, educational and social abilities and social adjustment, which greatly inhibits formulating any general methods of helping them. Taking into account conditions

inscribed into dissimilarity of functioning by individuals with various disabilities, analysis of formal and legal adjustments and practical solutions based on such adjustments, realized in various environments and by various public, social and private subjects becomes essential. The example may be the issue of reaching adulthood by such individuals and also gaining a range of rights and duties on one hand, and on the other, the issue of incapacitation procedure, rife in Poland, mainly towards people with more profound intellectual disability or autism. Relating to the above mentioned, nowadays the idea is born, a movement, mainly in numerous nongovernmental organizations, to support disabled individuals in execution of their rights, e.g. self advocacy in the Polish Association of Individuals with Intellectual Disability (Polskie Stowarzyszenie Osób z Niepełnosprawnością Intelektualną). The connected issues are problems of constant education understood as “... constant restoration and advancement of general and professional qualifications; it is the modern model of education resulting from necessity of constant cultural, social and professional adaptation of individuals to fast changes of living conditions and relations in contemporary world; the concept of constant education impairs traditional view about the division of human life into preparation period and the period of mature socioprofessional activity, when the results of previous education are being utilized; according to this concept, school is only the first step in education process, preparing an individual to further, constant educational activity...” (Encyklopedia PWN 2015).

In case of people with disabilities, mostly ones with more profound intellectual disability, it seems that in public institutions, it is only possible for them to

take advantage of communal forms, that is the forms in which their special educational needs will not always be taken into account. What is most often left for them is an offer of various kinds of nongovernmental organizations, provided in form of non-formal education. In recent years it has been also a wide offer of activities serving social, and professional activation which have been realized within the EU schemes.

The area which seems to be most difficult to describe from the objectives of special andragogy point of view, is certainly the issue education and upbringing of adult people with profound intellectual disability. This results, among others, from the fact, that this group has been subject to compulsory school education, and as such, it has become the subject of public education activities since the Act of 7th of September 1991 about the educational system. The way of providing classes for this group was regulated some years after, in the ordinance from 30th January 1997, regarding principles of organizing revalidation-upbringing classes for children and youth profoundly disabled intellectually (Journal of Laws of 1997. No 14, pos. 76). These issues definitely require separate elaboration.

A further important goal in the subject discussed is the issue of denominating and defining adulthood, taking into account its various aspects, as for instance – emotional, physical, intellectual, interpersonal, etc. maturity, especially in the context of individuals with intellectual disability.

The present work attempts at describing problems connected with education and organization of support for development of individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability in formal and nonformal education in Poland. This choice results both from the fact that it is

this very group of disabled adults which is subject to variant adjustments referring to education programs and organization and from its specific educational needs.

Formal and nonformal education and constant education for individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability in Poland.

The notion of revalidation andragogy appears in the field of educating people with intellectual disability. It seems that the notion is identical with the term - special andragogy. It is far more important to explain the notion of revalidation (Latin: *re* – **again**, *validus* – strong, healthy), thus, the literary meaning is to restore health. In the Polish tradition of special pedagogy, this notion is derived from such outstanding pedagogues as Grzegorzewska, Doroszevska or Lipkowski, and has been grounded strongly. In the world's literature of the field, however, it is barely known and the word – rehabilitation (Latin: *re* – again, against, **habilis** – able, efficient, sufficient) is used to convey the meaning of the word used in our country. Additionally, the issue is complicated by the fact, that the notion rehabilitation has been used in Polish pedagogy literature and practice together with adjectives *motor*, *social rehabilitation*, *health rehabilitation*, etc. and also, interchangeably with the notion of revalidation, frequently understood as physiotherapy. Moreover, use of the term individual revalidation as a certain, specific form of classes provided at special schools and available for schoolchildren with certificate of special educational needs constitutes additional impediment. The whole of the discussed issues certainly requires a separate elaboration. For the needs of the present article, it is assumed that the notion of rehabilitation understood as a set of all the activities towards people with intell-

ectual disability will be sufficient and the notion of revalidation will remain reserved for a type of classes, so called individual revalidation provided in educational institutions.

The term – a disabled adult will be used for adult people whose physical, mental (intellectual) condition causes periodical or permanent limitation preventing from fulfillment of social roles, connected with functioning in family, or local community in the areas of education, work or free time. (compare: Stochmiałek, [in] Dykcik 2001).

Formal education understood as teaching and learning processes taking place within the frames of public institutions is based on art. 69 and 70 of the Polish Republic Constitution, art.1 of the act of educational system of 7th September 1991, with later changes, as well as on implementing acts of the Ministry of Education and other departments in the form of ordinances. According to legal status, an intellectually disabled pupil may conform to compulsory schooling:

- In a public school (in so called: inclusive education)
- In an integrative school, or an integrative class
- In a special school, or a special class
- In a special educational centre

In practice, people with moderate and significant intellectual disability take advantage of various school institutions of special character. With reference to the fact, that there is legal possibility of prolonging each stage of education for such a group of pupils until 18 years of age for primary education, until 21 years of age for junior high school, until 24 years of age for upper secondary school, and until 25 years of age for individuals with profound intellectual disability (revalidation –

upbringing classes), we might speak about adult individuals on the junior high school level (until it exists) and in upper secondary schools.

It is also crucial, that education of pupils with moderate and significant mental impairment (Polish regulations so far use the notion “mental impairment”) is performed on the basis of different core curriculum. Taking into account limitations of various types, it is understandable that this group of individuals require defining a distinct, special goals, educational content, teaching methods and all the apparatus aiding their developmental abilities. Students with all the other disabilities and other students learning at public schools are educated taking advantage of a unified core curriculum.

Hence, it may be noticed that despite the formal education regulations, saying that *the choice of appropriate form of education and upbringing is always up to parents or legal guardians*, most often individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability take advantage of special education. It also results from the fact, that despite various adaptations in legal regulations, dissemination of inclusive and integrative education including support for practical forms of their organization in general education, a special school has still to offer most pragmatic solutions. Thus, it seems that today's discussion concerning education effectiveness and supporting individuals with disability described here should focus on modern special school. The statements of such kind may seem to be a disbelief in modern times. However, while examining educational goals included in core curriculum for this group of pupils, as : **(in primary and junior high school)** the most important achievements are:

- Self-reliance in satisfying basic life needs;

- Resourcefulness in everyday life, adequate to individual level of dexterity and skills and the feeling of taking independent decisions;
- Taking part in various forms of social life equally with other members of a given community, knowing and conforming to generally accepted norms of coexistence, while preserving rights to being different. **(in upper secondary school)**
- Formation of interests and disclosure of talents, especially musical, artistic and sport gifts;
- Developing knowledge about the culture of one's region and its relation with the culture of Poland;

(see: Minister of National Education ordinance of 27th August 2012 . (Journal of Laws 2012. pos. 977), it may be inferred that a special school is, so far most predisposed to satisfying needs of this group of individuals.

Training, nonformal education

Currently, the nonformal education is most often understood as “institutionally organized learning (for example: in nongovernmental organizations), however, outside the educational programs accepted and realized in formal education” (compare: Sławiński, 2013). Another term is “nonformal education” understood as learning in an unorganized manner, randomly, during a lifetime.

After finishing education in a junior high school, adult individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability may continue their education in a school “adopting to work”, as it is generally the only form of education suitable for them at this stage. The opportunity for further, active partaking in social life for this group are therapy workshops (WTZ) financed by the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of

the Disabled (PFRON) based on specific legal regulations and run most often by autonomies, nongovernmental and church organizations, adaptation centers, self-help houses, etc. within the frames of social assistance programs, professional activation organizations (ZAZ) and others. All these forms of activity for people with moderate and significant intellectual disability are realized after the formal education is finished and they realize various goals. For instance: WTZ, and even more ZAZ are focused on social and professional activation. Many adaptation centers fulfill rather tutelary tasks, ensure adequate free time use, support in satisfying social needs. An important form, an area of nonformal education directed not only to the disabled in Poland have become activities run within the frames of European Social Fund schemes and other, similar ones. These schemes have enabled, on one hand, acquiring new competences by their organizers (schemes writing, realization and settlement), and on the other, taking part and acquiring quite new competences for their beneficiaries.

Constant education

A lot of definitions connected with the notion “constant education” exist nowadays, and there also exist a lot of forms of its realization. The most common understanding of this notion is connected with the idea of lifelong learning, the famous LLL and its consequences in form of various educational offers for adult and elderly individuals. In Poland, constant learning has had also its tradition realized mainly in the context of vocational training in professional training institutions, Labor Corps, etc.

It seems that disabled individuals, especially these with moderate and significant intellectual disability are most often

excluded from constant learning. It results from barriers, which they encounter, here we may enumerate the following ones: *architectonical* – in case of additional impediment of movement apparatus, *transport* – which are essential in case of weakly communicated places, for instant in the country, but also in case of often weak skills of this group in taking advantage of public transport, *cognitive* – which appear when the perception of knowledge encounters limitations resulting from intellectual restrictions, problems with concentration or speech impairment, *social* – referring to, among others, so called “learned helplessness”, or so called “generational disability”, there are many families, who use special education and social care in the second or third, etc. generation, and also these, resulting from weaknesses in social acceptance and support for the autonomy of this group of the disabled, *legal* – very low awareness and so called, legal culture of both the disabled and their families and often also their environment which causes maintaining numerous stereotypes, mainly in the personal sphere (marriage, sexuality, procreation), in the sphere of social functioning (civil rights, work), a separate issue of formal and legal character is the question of, for instance, disability certificates which may contain prohibition of any work, *educational* – despite numerous outstanding changes in the Polish education, both special and public after 1991, that is since the act of education system supporting education of individuals with disabilities came into force, we are still short of solutions, which will allow the described group for greater independence, as for instance, the system of training apartments, which would support independent living or the education for life in a relationship, *other barriers* – a lot of other barriers limiting healthy functioning of in-

dividuals with disabilities can be enumerated here.

It seems that constant education in Poland in the form observed and described, nowadays is directed exclusively to able-bodied individuals.

Determinants and contexts of the “adulthood” notion

Determination and definition of adulthood provides many problems, while one takes into consideration its various aspects, as for example: emotional, physical, intellectual, interpersonal, etc., maturity, especially in the context of individuals with intellectual disability.

According to assumptions of developmental psychology, it would be difficult to determine a moment in human life, when we can say that he/she has become an adult. We may accept some moments in life, such as: gaining economic independence, or marriage as the determinants of adulthood (compare: Napierała-Harwas, Trempała, ed., 2008). However, such criteria cannot be accepted as sufficient, if we are to relate to the disabled individuals.

Another division of human developmental stages, including adulthood is the division included in the Encyclopedia of 21st Century Pedagogy (Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI w), where human development is seen as four stages: “prenatal, childhood and youth, adulthood and senility”. The adulthood defines the period of human life from the end of adolescence and growth, between 20 and 25 years of age, till the beginning of menopause or andropause (Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku. Różycka, Pilch. – 2003).

According to the Civil Code, an individual of age is this one, who is over eighteen years of age. (see: Gniewek ed.) Kodeks cywilny. Komentarz, 2011)

Such divisions, as well as other ones describing possible level of intellectual development of these people in conjunction with IQ, as with (moderate disability 7-9 years, see: Bogdanowicz 1991 or ICD 10 6-9 years), are of little use from the point of view of functioning problems of individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability, if not only for great developmental diversity among these people and theories accepted nowadays, for instance: emancipatory or normalization ones.

A more interesting division, considering discussion being held here, referring to adulthood of individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability, is suggested by Ericson, separating stages into "early period, between 21 and 34 years of age, characterized with developmental dilemma – intimacy, and isolation, adulthood of the middle age, between 35 and 65 years of age, with developmental dilemma about creativity and stagnation, and maturity of old age, after 65 years of age characterized with considerations about one's own identity and despair in context of reconciliation with death" (see: Witkowski, 2009). This division may constitute a challenge, or an inspiration for a modern scientist. For, so far, we have known a little about adulthood and old age and problems connected with these stages encountered by individuals with intellectual disability.

Recapitulation and conclusion

In the light of the above considerations in the area of special andragogy, it seems that the most fundamental issue is the question connected with gaining and keeping independence, self-determination of intellectually disabled individuals, especially these with moderate and significant disability as well as basic dignity of people with profound disability. Problems

of people with profound disability require, as it was stated earlier, a separate elaboration.

Among the issues connected with gaining autonomy, besides problems with education and formal and non-formal support, we cannot forget about the issue of upbringing a human, which remains one of the key areas of interest, also in adulthood, due to consequences for the posterior age. For we may indicate frequent parental mistakes in family. These are primarily: limiting self-reliance, limiting access to other people and social situations, forcing certain behaviors, interfering and replacing in activities, forcing certain activities, denying help (see: Twardowski A., 2004 in: Kościelska M, Aouil B. ed.).

Another matter requiring discussion is the situation of the family living with a disabled person. Relatively a lot was written about the developmental stages of family with a disabled member, about the situation of fathers, mothers and sibling, a lot of guides were created suggesting various diagnostic and therapeutic methods, etc. However, it seems that there are few practical solutions allowing the disabled person's family satisfy such basic needs as free time organization and the possibility of, for instance, not only doing shopping, going to a doctor, to a hairdresser or to a beauty salon, but also to the cinema or a theatre, and maybe, even taking some days free to go for holidays, and not for a rehabilitation camp. We may suppose that such solutions could have a significant influence not only on life quality of the disabled person's family, but also on this person him/herself because happier parents might have more patience and afterthought to the needs of their disabled child.

Yet another issue is the social perception of the disabled and the role of, among others, massmedia and the con-

nected problems of employing disabled people as a condition of their self-reliance and independence.

„Pictures speak louder than words! Do not show (...) pictures (photographs, films) of the intellectually disabled people, which show them as sad or regrettable, it only conforms to the view that it is not pleasant to be in their company, and it makes no sense to help them; badly dressed and neglected, it only conforms to the view that it is justified not to value and respect them, and that they are not the people with whom one would like to identify; lonely or isolated, it only conforms to the view that they are not the part of our world, they do not belong to our community; lying or sitting idly, it only conforms to the view that they cannot do anything” (PSOUU access: 4th December 2016, <http://www.niepelnosprawni.pl/ledge/x/2031>).

In the light of research results concerning attitudes towards the disabled “according to which every fifth Pole (21%) does not know any disabled person, whereas 66% of the adult population hardly knows anybody or knows somebody only by sight”, (see, for example: CBOS BS/85/2000 access: 3rd December 2016, available on: <http://www.cbos.pl>), the matter seems to be very serious, the more serious because, for instance in “2009, the professional activity factor of the disabled equaled merely 24,6% of the employment rate ... *De facto* in Poland 3/4 of the disabled population in working age do not work which is directly reflected in living standards, the level of this group’s participation in social life and its perception” (See: GUS BAEL reports 1993–2012 access: 4th December 2016, document available on the website of Government Representative for the Disabled <http://www.niepelnosprawni.gov.pl>).

The period of last twenty years was certainly the period of changes for the better in the whole spectrum of issues connected with the disabled functioning in public space. It seems that the group of individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability discussed in the present article remains, however in somewhat more difficult situation as to the possibility of autonomy, advocated here.

In conclusion, there might be stated, that in spite of the issues discussed above, we should include the following in the most urgent problems to be solved: preparing to independent or supported living in formal and non-formal education and what follows, in the system of cooperation between education and social care in the local authority, providing opportunities for taking jobs, most conveniently on the open job market, providing education and support for the possibility of starting a family and upbringing offspring, supporting initiatives allowing individuals with moderate and significant intellectual disability to take part in local life, namely in local governments, in politics and in culture and last, but not least, the issues of late adulthood, ageing and dying. A lot of theories of activation mechanisms during old age have already been created. It seems that the 21st century obliges us all to highest standards in providing all the social groups with conditions to dignified, independent life.

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