

## ФІЛОСОФСЬКІ РЕФЛЕКСІЇ СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНИХ ПРАКТИК

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### PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGES IN THE POLISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FOUND IN THE SPHERE OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF THE YOUTH WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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*Philosophy of action taken towards disabled people should not come down to bringing direct help, but rather be based on organising conditions which would allow the disabled for easier start in education or on a job market, unhindered participation in social life. In that context, the school becomes a unique place and it has special tasks in the area of building social climate for integration.*

*Social integration is regarded as the highest form of a spontaneous participation in every social group on the basis of an able-bodied membership. It is aimed to counteract segregation, isolation, intolerant tendencies and discrimination of the disabled. A number of people and institutions get engaged in the process of social integration of the disabled students at each level of their education that co-operate with each other based on a network.*

*Social integration of students with special educational needs in the context of philosophy changes in the Polish system of education becomes a topic for further deliberations taken up for the use of the following article. All the arguments and reflections were based on thematic reference materials and results gathered during the survey conducted among the group of teachers employed at middle and secondary schools working with integrated classes in Mazowieckie and Lubelskie provinces.*

*Main objective for the research was an attempt to prove: if based on the teachers' long term experience while working with integrated classes, it was possible to lead to social integration of the disabled young people with other members of school community, including peer groups – in the context of philosophy of changes taking place in the Polish educational system.*

*Key words: philosophy of changes, social integration, youth with special educational needs, Polish system of education.*

**Аліція Антас-Ящук. Філософія змін у польській освітній системі у сфері соціальної інтеграції молоді з особливими освітніми потребами.**

*Філософія дій, спрямованих на людей з обмеженими можливостями, не повинна призвести до надання безпосередньої допомоги, а повинна базуватися на організації умов, які дадуть змогу інвалідам легше розпочати навчання або влаштуватися на ринку праці, брати безперешкодну участь у соціальному житті. У цьому контексті школа стає унікальним місцем і перед нею постають особливі завдання у сфері побудови соціального клімату для інтеграції.*

*Соціальна інтеграція розглядається як найвища форма стихійної участі в кожній соціальній групі на основі працездатного членства. Воно спрямоване на протидію сегрегації, ізоляції, нетерпимості та дискримінації інвалідів. Ряд людей та установ залучаються до процесу соціальної інтеграції студентів-інвалідів на кожному рівні їхньої освіти та співпрацюють один з одним на основі мережі.*

*Соціальна інтеграція студентів з особливими освітніми потребами в контексті змін філософії у польській системі освіти стає темою для подальшого обговорення, що стосується використання пропонованої статті. Всі аргументи та роздуми ґрунтувалися на тематичних довідкових матеріалах та результатах, отриманих під час опитування серед груп учителів, які працюють у середніх школах з інтегрованими класами в Мазовецькому та Люблінському воєводствах.*

*Основною метою дослідження було довести наступне: якщо взяти за основу довгостроковий досвід викладачів під час роботи з інтегрованими класами, це сприяло б соціальній інтеграції молоді з особливими освітніми потребами та інших членів шкільного співтовариства, включаючи однокласників – у контексті філософії змін, що відбуваються в польській системі освіти.*

*Ключові слова: філософія змін, соціальна інтеграція, молодь з особливими освітніми потребами, польська система освіти.*

**Алиция Антас-Ящук. Философия изменений в польской образовательной системе в сфере общественной интеграции молодежи с особыми образовательными потребностями.**

*Философия действий, направленных на людей с ограниченными возможностями, не должна привести к оказанию непосредственной помощи, а должна основываться на организации условий, которые позволят инвалидам легче начать обучение или устроиться на рынке труда, предоставят возможность принимать беспрепятственное участие в социальной жизни. В этом контексте школа становится уникальным местом, и она имеет особые задачи в сфере построения социального климата для интеграции.*

Социальная интеграция рассматривается как высшая форма стихийного участия в каждой социальной группе на основе трудоспособного членства. Оно направлено на противодействие сегрегации, изоляции, нетерпимости и дискриминации инвалидов. Ряд людей и учреждений привлекаются к процессу социальной интеграции студентов-инвалидов на каждом уровне их образования и сотрудничают друг с другом на основе сети.

Социальная интеграция студентов с особыми образовательными потребностями в контексте изменений философии в польской системе образования становится темой для дальнейшего обсуждения, касающегося использования следующей статьи. Все аргументы и размышления основывались на тематических справочных материалах и результатах, полученных в ходе опроса среди групп учителей, работающих в средних школах с интегрированными классами в Мазовецком и Люблинском воеводствах.

Основной целью исследования было доказать следующее: если взять за основу долгосрочный опыт преподавателей при работе с интегрированными классами, это способствовать социальной интеграции молодежи с особыми образовательными потребностями и других членов школьного сообщества, включая сверстников – в контексте философии изменений, происходящих в польской системе образования.

**Ключевые слова:** философия изменений, социальная интеграция, молодежь с особыми образовательными потребностями, польская система образования.

*‘To bring a helping hand to a man means to comprehend his individuality and uniqueness’*

During recent few years positive changes have been observed around social consciousness referred to place and role of disabled people in contemporary society. Real and desired integration becomes fruitful to everyone in different degree and it should not be led at the expense of any of the party. In order to initiate, integration needs to break many stereotypes, change others attitudes, teach understanding and tolerance towards the other person. One of the most significant conditions for integration to initiate and bring success is to break barriers related to fear for interactions with the disabled and natural behaviour in contacts with others. Philosophy of acting towards disabled people should not only focus on offering a helping hand but also base on organising favourable conditions for the disabled to start education, work and unhindered participation in social life. In such context, a school reveals as a special place with its clear tasks in the area of building social atmosphere towards integration. It requires not only preventing disabled students from segregation but also the way of thinking of their needs, so that their educational chances might be equal indeed and provided access to education at similar level compared to their able-bodied peers, providing essential support which again results from the needs determined by disability. An important aspect of such thinking is building the feeling of affiliation to school society among the disabled students, providing conditions for their achievements, the feeling of acceptance and self-accomplishment. Educational policy also comprises new regulations towards psychological and educational support as well as those directed at organising learning environment for the disabled at public schools.

Modern education assumes that one of the significant attributes of a man's maturity is his ability to decide of himself and taking up actions resulting in the future, which means here making own choices, including those referred to values and lifestyle or

activity forms. Preparing a young man to fulfil his social roles, including those of a citizen, an employee and a parent becomes a challenge both for the teachers and educators addressed towards students at every stage of their education.. Polish educational system defines educational and upbringing objectives as: the most general visions of desired physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual features of an individual which are supposed to be achieved by crating proper conditions of individual growth and stimulating it, especially in the system of education and upbringing accomplished both during a school lesson as well as other forms of education and actions, aimed at providing not only knowledge with its accompanying skills but also views, beliefs, orientation and motivation addressed to each student and a foster child [3, p. 53–54]. The issue especially refers to actions taken up by the teachers and led among middle school and secondary school students. According to national school syllabus the most significant aim of general education in those schools is to assimilate by the students a certain amount of knowledge about facts, principles, theory and practice; gaining skills by the students, needed further to use the knowledge possessed during task accomplishment and problem solving; creating attitudes among the students which would allow for efficient and functional existence in contemporary world [5].

Due to the above, a high rank is paid to intellectual resources of a young person and developing his emotional intelligence. Intellectual development, which is reflected by positive marks at school, practically does not prepare towards facing difficulties or making use of the chances, which young people encounter in their changing life environment.

Even though high IQ score does not guarantee wealth, prestige nor life happiness, schools are still focused on intellectual achievement and in lesser extent they pay attention to their students' growth of

emotional intelligence as a set of personality features commonly known as a character, which again plays a significant role in the process of developing and shaping personality and individual fate of the foster children [6, p. 59].

Both middle and secondary school according to its syllabus principles should create attitudes among students which allow for their further individual and social growth comprising: fairness, reliability, responsibility, perseverance, feeling of self-esteem, respect towards others, anxiety to know more, creativity, management, good manners, readiness to participate in culture and traditions taking up initiatives and team work. It is extremely important when referred to social growth, to shape attitudes of citizenship, respect towards own culture and traditions [5]. Based on such assumptions, it needs to be pointed out that in order to lead towards proper development of a young man it requires correct socialization meant here as a process of acquiring by an individual knowledge, system of values, language fluency, finally abilities of social interaction which allow such person to integrate with society [2, p. 37]. It needs to be stressed that with the moment of acquiring new experience, a child tends to follow his life virtues, in accordance with commonly accepted patterns. During following life stages the process undergoes further changes depending on the way of social activity of an individual including: interpersonal contacts connected with membership and own participation in varied groups activity. Extremely important become relations with family members. First links a child develops are mainly initiated within his family. This small in size, intimate group becomes a major structure and the background to introduce the child into social life. Family also acts as the place to learn about the rules of interpersonal behaviour and it becomes a safe oasis, a child can return to when he is getting tired of external world. On the other hand, when the child starts his school education, he enters relations with a growing number of his peers, whereas his interest of family life slowly decreases and disappears. In a natural way the child learns how to cooperate with his peers. The group, in significant way influences his further experience. It results from the fact that a young man stays with a group, which means that he expects its members acceptance [1, p. 109–111]. Everyone's desire is to belong to a particular social group, keep a direct contact with people of similar age, which again allows for his proper social development. Only 'a healthy group' is focused on achieving personal aims, gained by own work and appreciate the work of others. Such norms comply with favourable external relations and tasks, which accomplishment requires cooperation within the group. Relations kept in the 'healthy group' are usually based on democracy, initiative of individual

members is well used, young people's aspirations and competences develop during the tasks done one by one, which allows the group for long term effectiveness. A key task for the teachers is to pay every good care to build up proper relations among their foster children. It is the teacher who judges intellectual resources of his students, their social growth but also co-creates work atmosphere etc. Building agreement in contacts between the teacher and the student or the student and the teacher starts with the moment of mutual getting to know each other.

Similar process undergoes at schools, which educate disabled students. For many years those young people with dysfunctions had limited contact with their peers, became isolated and excluded from social life. The reason towards initiating integrated classes was thus the need of social interaction, proceeding in a natural and authentic way, not artificial, fuelled by teachers, educators or the parents. Finally, such model of social integration would not succeed to comply with its expected effects or it might even cause greater barriers in initiating contacts, lead to isolation and division. Disability does not mean that someone who is labelled with it becomes generally less reputable as a man or may deserves to possess lower rights towards equal education. First integrated classes were initiated in Poland already in 1990 (comparatively, Europe has much longer experience in this field) and they are continuously becoming larger in numbers. There are integrated groups for young children at kindergartens, primary schools, middle schools and during the last few years the trend is enlarged by integrated groups organised among upper secondary schools. An integrated class usually contains of 15–20 students with 3–5 of them who are adjudicated with difficulties confirmed by Psychological and Educational Counselling Service with the need of further special education. Such disabilities may include: sight, hearing or just emotional disorders, ADHD, misbehaviour, kinesthetic organ disorders, lowered intellectual abilities and others. Integrated classes are supposed to serve all those who demand real need. A school cannot act as a 'storeroom' but a place where an individual may acquire skills, knowledge and receive necessary support. Before the decision is made to include a child within an integrated class, it is important to answer the following questions: if an individual with a particular problem will receive help and support he needs? if the school resources (teachers' and specialists' competence, material base, didactic resources) may enable the process of proper functioning at school?, whether the disorders and problems a disabled person is appointed with does not disturb other students' work?. In Poland there is a vast range of specialistic service centres where students with varied growth

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disorders may receive appropriate educational help. It may also happen that a disabled individual stays for some time at such centre and then he is sent to an integrated class. It demands much flexibility from the teachers working with integrated classes but also it is very important for them to look for new, better solutions, lead a systematic experience and thought exchange organized among the schools. It is the quality of their cooperation which decides about the atmosphere in a single class and achieved results, both referred to able-bodied students and those with disabilities who demand special educational needs. Every centre of integration should employ a psychologist, speech therapist, re-educator, rehabilitation specialist and others depending on the students' needs. Their assistance becomes very useful both for the students and their parents who often take advantage of such specialistic help and support. All students in an integrated class follow the same syllabus (similar to the one as in classes which are not comprised within the programme of integration) considering the fact that detailed syllabus assumptions are clearly suited for the needs and abilities of an individual disabled person and implemented in accordance with the requirements and demands of Psychological and Educational Diagnosing and Counselling Centre. All students who demand special educational needs should follow their own individual school syllabus and their marking should be accomplished on the basis of consultation between the subject teacher and his supporting co-partner. The idea of integration does not only refer to the sphere of particular subject education. In integration development a significant importance is paid to social development. It needs to be stressed that integration is implemented not only during lessons but also at every possible moment such as school trips, outings and occasional meetings, class events etc. Social development becomes thus extremely important in the process of integrated education. The main objective for the teachers who are involved in integrated group work is to shape and develop pro-social behaviours among the disabled compared with able-bodied peers, supporting each student in his personal potential but also coordinating and integrating educational class activity with an emphasis on special educational needs. Young people at their teenage years demand constant guidance while preparing towards their mature life, by the provided patterns of positive building of their self-image and trust in own abilities, self-discipline but also skills in social and emotional intelligence, including responsibility which becomes essential in achieving future goals. Learning important skills of co-existence in a peer group demands training and conscious self-esteem.

Considering the above, at the turn of January and February 2017 a survey was conducted among

48 teachers who worked at middle secondary schools with integrated classes in Mazowieckie and Lubelskie provinces. The main objective for the survey was to receive an answer for the following question: based on long term teachers' experience working with integrated classes is social integration of disabled youth possible to be achieved with other members of school community, including a peer group? The respondents admitted that integrated education allows students with disabilities for education in a group of able-bodied peers and it is led in accordance with the rule of respecting laws of the disabled when referred to participation in social life. The examined teachers stressed that although they might have felt anxiety and fears at the beginning of their work but nowadays based on their years experience, they fully approved cooperation with a supporting teacher and work in integrated groups. They also appreciated atmosphere of common contacts of the youth learning in an integrated class both at school and after the lessons. It may prove frequent friendship which survived among the graduates. Moreover, they claimed that learning in an integrated class has a significant importance on shaping empathy and tolerance among the able-bodied towards their disabled peers. It is unusual that these young people who spend their time together are not surprised by untypical behaviours of their dysfunctional colleagues and they accept them, reluctantly offering advice and support. The teachers also added that their decision to work with integrated classes triggered positive changes in management and planning of their didactic classes. Due to new challenges many teachers have decided to upgrade their qualifications, studying thematic publications, participated in training courses and stayed in touch with other teachers who work in integrated schools of different stages of education. Moreover, adequately to the necessity of individualization of teaching, all the teachers are adapting curriculum requirements to psycho-physical abilities of a disabled student considering the statement referred to special need training [4]. Based on a student's records, talks with his parents and observing the student in different situations, with the help of a supporting co-partner, teachers work out individual student's characteristics. They also stress that a guarantee of success in school carrier of a disabled student is based on a properly led cooperation with the parents, based on building correct relationship and common trust. The respondents declared that in their didactic and educational work they individualise their students' assessment referred to their adjudicated dysfunctions, considering students' personal involvement into the classes. Similar amount of time they spend on individual advice and extra classes to give equal educational opportunities. The respondents remarked that the consultation planned for a student with

special educational needs is the time limited to maximum not only to discuss curriculum issues but these are often longer or shorter talks on topics such as music young people listen to and many others.

Among the responded teachers most of them take up actions which are aimed at involving disabled students in class or school life through varied forms such as celebrations, school assembly, interest clubs, taking active part in the work of class or school students' board, participation in school and external contests. The responded teachers often pointed to disabled students' activity in numerous artistic forms such as singing, dancing, painting etc. These forms in their opinion provide a chance to step out of shade of own disability which is overwhelming. In due course, disabled students who are engaged in artistic activity perceive that the audience appreciated much more their artistic skills than their behaviour or appearance. Another significant remark made during the survey proved a necessity of organising consultation meetings at schools with a carrier adviser in order to increase future prospects of the student with dysfunction, and consequently help with finding a job. At the same time they confirm that well approved formula is the idea of organising school education workshop combined with possibility of participation in activities on job carrier prospects. Teachers and educators undertake numerous actions aimed at building correct social relations in integrated classes. Most commonly these include: wide range of thematic tutorial classes; common problem solving; organising integration class trips; common outings to the cinema, theatre; building atmosphere of empathy and understanding. All students participate in school celebrations and events but also in school trips, after school thematic visits, which are a part of particular subject syllabus, they also take part in workshops on varied topics. Moreover, the students are provided help of the school educator and psychologist they participate in rehabilitation and revalidation classes.

Based on analysis of the empirical material gathered during the research, it may confirm social interaction among the youth. An integrated class is

similar to others, but on the other hand, it differs in much extent. A significant importance becomes students' enrolment to a particular class, individual personality features of the youth and quality of interpersonal relations. Proper students enrolment directly transfers onto appropriate teaching process and achieving optimal success in didactic work with all students. On the basis of documentation analysis and firm observation of the student, based on the decision of the teachers' board there are varied activities organised, shaped to individual student's needs i.e. didactic revision classes, revalidation, rehabilitation and psychological therapy. Work with a student in an integration class at school does not thus mean providing information and assessing. On the contrary, it provokes towards changing the teaching style where the teacher acts as a friend, adviser, diagnostician and sometimes a therapist. It is his attitude which becomes crucial for the situation of a disabled individual in a class environment. The teacher in order to be able to present desired attitudes from the point of view of integration must be sure himself its correctness.

From the perspective of several year work experience, many teachers stress that practice and experience in integrated education resulted in students' success with special educational needs. Their school graduates take faced state final exams, started work or university studies. All the experience gained gives young people the feeling of safety, a chance to take up work according to their in-born or professional qualifications and own predisposition. Generally, the idea of implementing integrated classes in mass schools plays an important role in social development among the able-bodied and disabled students. The latter, by the fact of co-existence in school and peer environment acquire desired skills. Furthermore, being supported by their able-bodied peers they succeed and take advantage in social and emotional sphere of life. Such understood integrated classes provide a chance mostly for students with special educational needs who find possibility towards global development both in education and social area in a school environment.

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