

Foreword

The Readers are provided with the first issue of the journal “Problems of Education, Rehabilitation and Socialization of the Disabled” (1/2014, Volume XVIII), which has been transformed from the publishing series under the same title. The current subject matter “Disability in family as an educational challenge” conforms to the discussed issues of the educational and social situation of the disabled and their families.

Parenthood is a very responsible role and task. It is taught neither by course books nor schools. Most frequently, people deciding to become a parent would like the child to be born healthy. They make plans for the future and want all the best for their child. Dreams not always come true in life. A longed-for baby is sometimes born with disability, or – for various reasons – the child becomes disabled while growing up. This becomes a difficult situation for each family and is often associated with fear, confusion, feeling of injustice, or isolation. What constitutes a key challenge for parents of disabled children is providing them with education due to their needs. However, it should be taken into consideration that in any democratic system the family should not be left alone with these problems.

Undoubtedly, the transformations taking place worldwide in the approach to disability result in changes in treating the disabled. The aim is to ensure even rights to them, also through their inclusion into mainstream education. It should be emphasized as well that education is a right of every individual, which is written down as a basic human right. Thus, the education system aims at full development of disabled children’s personality and its implementation should be the responsibility of all engaged in work with children, including parents. Still, in order to fulfill its duty towards a disabled child, the family should be supported by institutions of care and education. The Polish system of education and the regulations of educational law treat the system

of special education as an intrinsic part of the whole educational system. The organizational structure of special education is the same as in institutions of mainstream education. The essence of special education is aiming at wide availability of education in schools for all learners as well as ensuring appropriate conditions so that learners with disabilities could fulfill school duty in a way adjusted to the pace of their development. What should indicate the way of solving educational tasks are the learner's needs. This is often neither easy to implement nor beneficial to disabled learners.

It also ought to be taken into account that scientific advancement in pedagogy, psychology, medicine, and rehabilitation has enhanced both some changes in standpoints and gradual inclusion of the disabled to social life. What constitutes a tendency of contemporary systems of education is the belief that mainstream schools should accept children and youth regardless their physical or intellectual potentialities. Such an approach has two aspects: it respects disabled people's rights from the standpoint of human rights and creates the possibility of contact with fully able children, which is supposed to increase mutual benefits of both groups. With growing frequency, the transformations in social awareness make the society view the disabled in the category of partnership. Yet, it should be highlighted that this is a long process which requires a change in social mentality, creating an appropriate environment for fulfilling the needs of the disabled, and providing financial resources. The system of education in Poland faces some important challenges in the field of fulfilling the needs of disabled children. The most significant are the following: creating conditions in access to education (also at the stage of kindergarten), levelling life chances from the moment of discovering the disability to the end of education, better quality of teaching. Implementing these educational tasks will allow the disabled to make use of their potentialities and decide about their future life, which will result in benefits for the whole society.

The presented issue comprises articles written by both practitioners and researchers who share their experiences, research results and reflections in the area of disability, especially in the field of educational challenges and social support.

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