

ARTYKUŁY I ROZPRAWY

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STUDIES ON DISABILITY – POLISH EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING IN THE EDUCATION OF LEADERS, SPECIALISTS, AND RESEARCHERS

Introduction

Basic information about the country. Poland is a country with over a thousand years of history. Poland (Republic of Poland – RP) is located in Central Europe. Polish administrative area is over 312 thousand km² (70th place in the world and 9th in Europe). Density of population in Poland is 123 people per 1 km² (as of 1 January 2015). The estimated population in 2015 was over 38.5 million. The population of Poland is 34th in the world and 6th in the European Union (as of 1 January 2015). It was in Poland that one of the oldest universities in Europe, the *Academy of Cracow*, was founded (1364). In 1773, the *Commission of National Education* was appointed as a central educational authority, the first ministry of education in the world, which carried out a profound reform of education. In the 2014/2015 academic year, there were 434 universities of different types in Poland. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office, 1,405,133 people studied in Poland in the 2014/2015 academic year.

Current status of higher education. In 2013, the *Report on the State of Higher Education* was developed by the *Ministry of Science and Higher Education*. Its details were based on the statistical sources of the *Central Statistical Office* (GUS) and the *Integrated Information System for Science and Higher*

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Education (POL-on). The data indicate the changes that occurred in the higher education system over the years 1990–2011. One of the key changes in the *Polish System of Higher Education* is an exceptionally large increase in the number of students. While in the 1990/1991 academic year, there were 390,409 students (the net schooling rate in higher education was 9.8), in the 2011/2012 academic year, there were 1,764,060 students (the coefficient of schooling was 40.6). This situation was mainly the effect of the *Higher Education Act*, introduced in 1990, which allowed the existence of non-state universities and recognized them as an equal part of the *Polish System of Higher Education*. At the same time, the report calls attention to demographic factors – the most rapid increase in the number of students took place between 1990 and 2005, when the higher education schooling rate increased from 9.8 to 38.0. From 2005 to 2011, the increase is much less marked, and since 2009, a slight decrease (from 40.9 to 40.6) has been recorded. This situation is mainly due to demographic changes like the declining number of young people. The authors also hazarded a forecast for the total number of students for the 2035/2036 academic year. Taking into account demographic factors and the relatively constant net schooling rate of individual age groups, it was assumed that the total number of students in Poland would decline steadily until the 2025/2026 academic year, followed by a slight increase.

According to statistical data, the university with the largest number of students in 2011 was the University of Warsaw (52,101 people, representing 3% of the total number of students). Students preferred faculties related to social sciences, economy and law (37% of students), while the least popular were agricultural faculties (1.7% of students). At the same time, trends observed since 2007 indicate a gradual decline in interest in pedagogical, social, administrative, and legal faculties, and an increasing interest in science and technical ones.

An important trend – especially in the face of the *Bologna Treaty* signed by Poland – is an increasing number of foreign students. From 2004 to 2011, the number of people from abroad studying in Poland almost tripled. The authors note that at the same time, the number of foreign students of Polish origin changed very little, which indicates the increasing attractiveness of Poland as an academic center.

In 2015, the report *Diagnosis of Higher Education* was produced. It includes a program for the development of higher education by 2020. The document describes overall higher education in Poland, taking into account the international, legal and economic situation of schooling and higher education, also referring to demographic trends. Particular attention is devoted to the implementation of the *Bologna Process, Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* and analysis of the situation of Poland in the *European Higher Education Area*. On the basis of the report's findings, the *Strategy for the Development of Higher Education for the years 2010–2020* was developed.

Strategy for the Development of Higher Education. Work on the development of a strategy for higher education started after the publication of the OECD (*Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*) 2007 report on higher education, which found lack of a development strategy for higher education. In Poland, the *Strategy for the Development of Higher Education for the years 2010–2020* was formulated and adopted by a consortium of rectors of Polish universities.

As the authors state, “The *Strategy* is a comprehensive document of a bold but realistic character” (p. 17), noticing not only the need for internal changes in the *Higher Education System*, but also taking into account changes of an external nature, concerning both the domestic situation and the place of Poland in the European Union. Proposals for action under the *Strategy* are based on a stable foundation which is an “academic tradition and appeal to the ethos of higher education and the university values” (p. 16).

The *Strategy for the Development of Higher Education* adopted for the years 2010–2020 indicates the following as priority directions of development:

1. Ensuring equal opportunities and universal access to higher education and the required quality of studies;
2. Achieving an international position adequate to the potential of Poland by higher education, confirmed in a measurable way;
3. Introducing new systemic and institutional solutions to higher education to achieve these objectives (p. 9).

The implementation of these measures concerns four separate areas: (1) educational activities of universities, (2) scientific and research and development activities of universities, (3) cooperation of universities with their environment, (4) higher education system. In each of these areas, strategic objectives have been designated defining areas of change as well as operational objectives defining the directions of actions. For each purpose, specific tasks have been developed to achieve implementation of strategic objectives.

In the area of *Educational Activities of Universities*, the strategic objectives are: adapting the *Educational System* to the changing needs of education and improving the quality of education in terms of its mass production. The activities planned in this area focus on finding and implementing solutions to better adapt universities to the changing reality. The main aim in the *Scientific and Research and Development Activities of Universities* area is to increase the effectiveness of scientists’ research. In the *Cooperation of Universities with Their Environment* area, the strategic objectives are: to expand universities’ servient role to society, to increase the degree of internationalization of Polish higher education, and to improve the position of Polish universities on an international scale. Actions related to these objectives include universities’ activities in the surrounding reality at the local, national, and international level. There are actions of both a systemic (concerning the institution) and personal nature (concerning higher

education staff, students, and other people not connected with the area of higher education). The only goal formulated in the *Higher Education System* field is the need to improve systemic solutions for higher education. The actions specified in this area include a variety of issues concerning the internal functioning of higher education (i.e., from legal solutions to specific budgetary and economic issues). The systemic solutions proposed refer also to the place of autonomous universities in the broadly understood system of higher education.

Education and rehabilitation of people with disabilities

Historical Overview. The beginnings of education for individuals with disabilities on Polish lands are associated with the education of deaf and deaf-mute children. Earlier efforts towards children with disabilities or “morally neglected” children were limited mostly to care-providing actions. Typically, these tasks were performed by institutions related to the Catholic Church – congregations and parishes (Grochowski, 1990). In the sixteenth century, there were three types of specialist institutions in Poland intended for taking care of children and youth. These were: orphanages for orphaned children, establishments for foundlings, and educational institutions for morally neglected youth, called *cuchthauzy* (Grochowski, 1990, p. 10). The role of shelters for abandoned and crippled children was often performed by hospitals, sometimes appointed especially for this purpose (Grochowski, 1990, p. 15).

The origins of special education are related to the education of deaf and deaf-mute children. In 1805, priest Anselm Zygmunt, after passing the examination entitling him to work with deaf children, began to teach a deaf-mute boy. He also developed the first Polish finger alphabet. He is credited with the formulation of guidelines for a school for deaf children in Vilnius. However, the project was not carried out. During that time, attempts were made to create a school for the deaf in Volyn (Grochowski, 1990; Kulbaka, 2012). Establishing the Institute for the Deaf in Szczuczyn in 1816 turned out to be the most important event in the education of deaf children (the Institute was transferred to Warsaw in 1817). Its founder and first rector was Rev. Jakub Falkowski, today considered to be the precursor of education for the deaf on Polish soil. An important event in the history of the *Institute* was the start of education for blind children. Initially, they were taught in classes with deaf students, and in 1942, a branch for blind boys was launched at the *Institute*. Then the *Institute* was officially renamed the *Institute for the Deaf and the Blind*.

The person inextricably linked to the care and education of blind children in Poland is Róża Czacka. In 1910, she founded the *Warsaw Asylum for Blind Women*. In the same year, she created the *Society for the Blind*. She organized shelters for children, hostels for blind old women, and summer camps. She had a significant impact on the spread of Braille in Poland. After World War I, she

founded the *Congregation of Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross*, whose main priority was serving blind children.

The first *Polish School for Children with Intellectual Disabilities* was established in 1897 in Poznań. It was attended by students with milder forms of mental retardation. Children with profound intellectual disabilities remained in special isolation wards at psychiatric hospitals. The first classroom for more profoundly mentally handicapped children in Poland was established in 1907 at a psychiatric institution in Owińska, near Poznań (Gasik, 1990b, p. 76–104). The formation of more schools and centers for children with disabilities in a way necessitated actions aimed at special training for teachers.

Present day. The legal basis for the education of students with disabilities is defined by the *Act on the System of Education* of September 7, 1991 (as amended) and relevant regulations issued by the *Ministry of Education*. This means that the education of this group of students – as well as non-disabled students – comes under the *Ministry of National Education*. Detailed rules define the scope and form of the implementation of support for students with disabilities. The education system provides, among others:

- realization of the right of every citizen of the Republic of Poland to education and the right of children and young people to education and care appropriate to the age and development;
- adjustment of the content, methods and organization of education to the psychophysical abilities of students as well as the possibility of using psychological, pedagogical and special teaching aids;
- the possibility of receiving education in all types of schools by children and youth with disabilities and socially maladjusted children and youth according to the individual developmental and educational needs and predispositions;
- care of students with disabilities by allowing the implementation of an individualized education process, forms, programs of education and rehabilitation activities (Dz. U. of 2004. No. 256, item 2572 as amended).

A child with disability may be subject to appropriate forms of assistance and support once disability has been detected till he or she starts school (in the framework of *early intervention*) and during schooling at all stages of education.

Under the regulation of July 24, 2015, education, upbringing or care cover: students with disabilities like students with impaired hearing, students who are hard-of-hearing, blind or visually impaired, students with physical disabilities, including aphasia, students with mild, moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, students with multiple disabilities, and students who are socially maladjusted or at risk of social maladjustment (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of July 24, 2015). On the basis of this document, rules and forms of education for children with these disabilities are defined. According to the *Act on the System of Education*,

children and youth with disabilities have the right to study in any school, and the decision about school choice is to be made by the child's parents or guardians. Students with disabilities and students who are socially maladjusted or at risk of social maladjustment can receive compulsory education until the end of the school year in which they turn: 18 (primary school), 21 (middle school), and 24 (secondary school). School is responsible for developing an *Individualized Education and Therapy Program (IPET)* for students with statements of special educational needs, which should define, among others: the scope and method of adjustment of the educational program to the child's psychophysical abilities, recommended methods and forms of work, and actions supporting students' families (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of July 24, 2015). Children with disabilities who have not started school are provided with a range of early intervention service. They include comprehensive measures aimed at stimulating the child's psychomotor and social development (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of October 11, 2013). As part of early intervention, a team composed of a special educator, psychologist, speech therapist, and other specialists is responsible for developing and implementing an individual program of early intervention (including work with children and activities supporting their families) as well as cooperation with relevant entities to provide children with rehabilitation or therapy corresponding to their needs (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of October 11, 2013).

Separate rules govern the educational situation of children and adolescents with profound intellectual disabilities from 3 to 25 years of age. For them, remedial education activities are organized which are focused in particular on: communication, networking, independence, developing interest in the environment, shaping the skills of teamwork, and learning purposeful actions (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of April 23, 2013).

Academic training preparing for work with people with disabilities

The origins and some representatives. The forerunner of the scientific approach to disability was Maria Grzegorzewska (1888–1967), who formulated the timeless maxim “There is no cripple, there is a person.” In 1922, she established the Institute of Special Education in Warsaw, which took up research activities in the field of special education and preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities. Maria Grzegorzewska was the first one in Poland who created the scientific basis of disability and undertook systematic research on all subdisciplines of special education, particularly on issues relating to people with visual impairments (i.e., education of people with visual impairments and psychology of people with visual impairments). Her achievements greatly fit into global special education and international research on disability. Between 1958 and 1960, she was a professor at Poland's first Department of Special Education

at the University of Warsaw. The academic status of special education in Poland dates back to that time.

At this point, we mention some already deceased researchers, meritorious for special education. Józefa Joteyko (1866–1928) was a psychologist, educator, and exercise physiologist, president of the *Belgian Neurological Society* and a multiple winner of the *Paris Academy of Sciences*. Janina Doroszevska (1900–1997) was a professor at the *National Institute of Special Education* and at the University of Warsaw. She dealt with the issues of therapeutic pedagogy, prevention and medical, psychological, and pedagogical treatment. Aleksander Hulek (1916–1993) was a strong supporter and promoter of social integration, a proponent of Polish rehabilitation in the international arena. Władysław Dykcik (1942–2013) was a special teacher; he published numerous titles in the field of special education, social education, and sociology of education. Jan Pańczyk (1937–2007) is the author of numerous scientific, theoretical, and research works. He helped to organize Polish terminology in special education. He was a significant figure in laying the foundation for the theory and practice of special education in Poland.

Current professional training. In the Polish education system, teachers are trained in the higher education sector (first- and second-cycle programs, long-cycle master's degree programs and postgraduate programs). According to the latest legislation, bachelor's degree programs prepare teachers for work in pre-schools and elementary schools, while master's degree programs – for work in all types of schools (including middle schools and upper secondary schools). Apart from general and content-area training, teacher education requires pedagogical preparation. Teachers need to improve their qualifications to have professional achievements and to participate in the professional advancement system, in which they need to present documents testifying to their professional development activities (postgraduate studies, training courses or seminars).

Students with special educational needs require essential teaching conditions to be able to successfully follow the core curriculum. One of these conditions is to prepare competent teaching staff to organize and coordinate special education. In Poland, teachers can acquire qualifications to work with students with different types of disabilities as part of: (1) specialties that prepare students for work with people with one type of disability (e.g.: a teacher of people with intellectual disabilities, a teacher of people with hearing impairments, a vision teacher or an educator-therapist), (2) specialties that prepare students for work in integrated and inclusive education programs (a special educator/teacher). Teacher education at the higher education level takes place in the higher education sector in first- and second-cycle programs and postgraduate programs.

Teachers who are involved in special education are the teachers of activities or subjects who have completed a master's/bachelor's degree programs and are prepared to work with a specific group of students with disabilities. Universities also prepare teachers for integrated and inclusive education. The special educa-

tor profession was included in the job classification list in 2015 (Regulation of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy on the classification of professions and professional specialties for the needs of the labor market and the scope of its use). A special educator is a specialist who has the knowledge and skills to work with students with various disabilities in mainstream and integrated preschools and schools (or classes). The special educator's tasks include: co-organizing integrated and inclusive education, coordinating the activities of the team of teachers and other specialists and conducting rehabilitation activities in accordance with his or her qualifications.

Teachers have various opportunities for training and professional development. Universities organize postgraduate programs, courses, and training sessions that enable them to gain suitable qualifications or develop their professional competence to work with students requiring special educational services. Various forms of training are addressed to teachers of special, integrated, and mainstream schools. Since 2012, the Maria Grzegorzewska University – as the first higher education institution in Poland – has been offering the Integrated and Inclusive Education specialty, which prepares mainstream and integrated education teachers for work with students with special educational needs. This specialty is offered in the second circle and in postgraduate programs (see no. 1 in netography).

Faculties and specialties. Students in the Faculty of Special Education more frequently choose education of people with intellectual disabilities (also known as the education and rehabilitation of people with intellectual disabilities or oligophrenopedagogy) and rehabilitation (rehabilitation pedagogy, resocialization pedagogy with social prevention, judicial resocialization, etc.). Increasingly, universities are opening specialties connected to work with people with autism, integrated and inclusive education, early intervention, vocational counseling, and work with the elderly (gerontopedagogy, or education of old people), all of which are the response of higher education to public demand and the changing reality. Also speech therapy and pedagogical therapy are popular, but it is worth mentioning that these two specialties are of interest to both education and special education, so it happens that they are provided as part of these two fields of study. Specialties rarely opened by universities are those connected with the therapy of a specific group of people with disabilities (education of people with hearing impairments, education of people with visual impairments, education of people with chronic illness). It is probably due to a very narrow specialization within the framework of these studies, making it difficult for graduates to later find their place in the labor market (despite the common practice to combine two specialties within a single course of study).

At The Maria Grzegorzewska University, all specialties related to supporting people with disabilities are provided at the faculty of Special Education. Currently (2016/2017 academic year), the following programs are provided at the undergraduate level: education and rehabilitation of people with intellectual

disabilities, resocialization pedagogy, education of people with hearing impairments, early intervention, pedagogical therapy, speech therapy, medical and therapeutic pedagogy, education of people with visual impairments, and social prevention with resocialization (see no. 2 in netography). Second-cycle programs include: education and rehabilitation of people with intellectual disabilities and autism, speech therapy, education of people with hearing impairments with pedagogical therapy, integrated and inclusive education, pedagogical therapy, vision rehabilitation in people with visual impairments, rehabilitation of people with multiple disabilities, resocialization pedagogy with social prevention, socio-professional rehabilitation, medical and therapeutic pedagogy, and social prevention with judicial rehabilitation.

Disability studies as a field of study or specialization. *Disability studies* as an interdisciplinary study of disability is a field of study provided at The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw. It is Poland's first such a course of study, which has been implemented since the 2016/2017 academic year.

Disability Studies at The Maria Grzegorzewska University

The history of the university and the present day. A breakthrough for educating Polish special educators in Poland was the establishment of the National Institute of Special Education (PIPS). The Institute was subject to the Ministry of Religion and Public Education. Among the PIPS lecturers, there were outstanding educators: Józefa Joteyko, Janusz Korczak, or Tytus Benni. The director of the PIPS was Maria Grzegorzewska, who served this function until her death (up to 1967, with a break during World War II). The PIPS trained special educators in four teacher specializations: mentally retarded, deaf-mute, blind, and morally neglected. Three groups were able to study at the Institute: elementary and secondary school teachers (several years of practice were required), special school teachers, and people with higher education (with no teaching practice). People without teaching practice or higher education were not admitted (Gasik, 1991, p. 83). Considering the fact that the students already had basic pedagogical training, the curriculum of the PIPS was dominated by methodical subjects, focused on working with students with specific disabilities (Gasik, 2010, p. 69). Special attention was paid while the practical classes. Until the outbreak of World War II, 660 teachers graduated from the PIPS (Kulbaka, 2012, p. 24) – about 75% of them were teachers of children with mental disabilities (Gasik, 1990a, p. 170).

During World War II, the PIPS' activities were initially suspended and then resumed in the form of several secret courses for inspectors of special education at the turn of 1943 and 1944. During the war, at least 64 people associated with the Institute, including Janusz Korczak, Halina Jankowska, Wiesław Sterling, and Jakub Segal died (Kulbaka, 2012, p. 25). After the war, at the end of 1945, the PIPS resumed its activities. A new specialty was introduced: the education

of chronically ill and disabled children. The creation of such a specialty was planned in the interwar period; however, it did not happen until after the end of World War II. We can guess that the creation of this specialization was related to the new realities of social life (i.e., a large number of crippled and sick children as a result of military actions).

In 1950, the PIPS was transformed into the National College of Special Education. Its primary intention was to train teachers, while the research activities were limited. An important event in the history of special education teachers in Poland was the publication of the course book *Special Education* by Maria Grzegorzewska (1957) as the first Polish comprehensive elaboration of special education issues.

In the post-war period, the PIPS ceased to be the only Polish educational special educators. In 1958, the institution for Special Education Department was opened at the Faculty of Education at the University of Warsaw (initially directed by Maria Grzegorzewska). Teacher training programs for teachers of schools and special centers were also launched at: Gdańsk University, the University of Silesia (Katowice), Jagiellonian University (Cracow), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Lublin), Wrocław University, Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań) and in a number of higher education schools, e.g.: in Bydgoszcz, Częstochowa, Cracow, and Szczecin (Gasik, 1990a, p. 277).

In 1976, the National Institute of Special Education was transformed into Maria Grzegorzewska Higher School of Special Education (WSPS). Since then, the course of study at the WSPS lasted four years, and since 1981 – five years. In 1989, the WSPS earned the right to become an institute and to conduct PhDs and confer the title of Doctor of Humanities. Responding to the changing social needs, the offer of specialties taught in the WSPS was constantly widened. In 1989, they were: education of people with intellectual disabilities, education of people with hearing impairments, therapeutic pedagogy, correction education, education of people with visual impairments, speech therapy, resocialization pedagogy, educational psychology of creativity, school educator, and computer-aided learning process.

In 2000, Higher School of Special Education was transformed into Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education (now: The Maria Grzegorzewska University, APS). Currently, the APS is a two-faculty university (Faculty of Educational Sciences and the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences), which instructs, besides special educators, also psychologists, social workers, and sociologists.

Among the greatest strengths of the university can be mentioned: a highly qualified teaching staff, diversified curricula, and study conditions. Currently, the APS teaches about 7,000 students, both in full-time and part-time programs. At the same time, the University conducts a number of postgraduate courses, which may complement and extend the students' knowledge in the field of special education.

The programs of study offered at the APS focus on educating teachers and therapists to work with children, youth, and adults with intellectual problems, impaired hearing, speech or vision, motor disabilities, and emotional and behavior disorders. Studies are designed to prepare students for work in schools (special education teacher, teaching assistant), as well as in other special centers (therapist, teacher, guardian). An important area of education provided at the APS is also the activity in the field of social pedagogy like family support, cultural activities in the community, adult education, vocational counseling or psychopedagogy of creativity.

A separate field of study is Artistic Education in the field of visual arts. Students who take this course are trained in the field of fine arts to work in educational and therapeutic institutions.

The Faculty of Applied Social Sciences educates students in the field of Social Work, Sociology, and Psychology. The APS is the first university that introduced a full-time degree program in Social Work. The program of study is designed for the social needs of the growing population of elderly, disabled, and chronically ill people who need professional care and support.

In the 2007/2008 academic year, a five-year uniform degree in Psychology was opened at the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences. This faculty has two specializations: clinical psychology and applied psychology. The first prepares students for the role of a diagnostician, therapist, and clinical psychologist, while the second focuses on business consulting, training, and coaching.

Study programs available at the APS in the Polish language are: Psychology, Sociology, Pedagogy, Special Education, Social Work, Artistic Education, and *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* (see no. 3 in netography).

Characteristics of *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies*. The *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program is run in accordance with the humanistic ideal of the University's patron, the creator of special education in Poland, Maria Grzegorzewska, which is expressed in the message: "There is no cripple, there is a person."

The major closely corresponds to the mission of the APS as a university which declares its academic character and conducts both scientific research and teaching and puts into practice the idea of supporting communities that need help. The program combines the University's research and teaching tradition, which is over ninety years old, with a modern approach to disability and social support system development.

The *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* course is an innovative, autonomous second-cycle program – the first such in Poland. The program provides students with interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and social competence that are necessary to understand and explain disability, and to act for the welfare of people with disabilities and their families. The curriculum gives students the opportunity to design practical actions for people with disabilities and their communities. It also

prepares them to carry out research on disability issues from the interdisciplinary perspective of social sciences (including pedagogy, sociology, psychology, media studies, public policy studies, and cognitive studies and social communication) and the humanities (including philosophy and family studies). The curriculum introduces students to theoretical, methodological and implementation approaches to disability at an individual, interpersonal and cross-social level. The results of research studies will help to make recommendations for developing support systems for people with disabilities in society.

The master's degree *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program enables students to acquire knowledge of various dimensions of disability, including personal, social, cultural, legal, and economic ones. At the same time, it gives students the opportunity to start a critical discourse on the place of the Other in society and on the role of society in ensuring equal opportunities for all of its citizens.

The general academic profile of the *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program includes six modules (i.e., theoretical, methodological, research, language, teaching, and optional modules), which address the issues formulated based on current knowledge in the field of the humanities, social sciences, and medicine. The issues studied as part of the theoretical module include: (1) rudiments of disability studies, (2) sociological, ethical and legal aspects of the discourse on disability, (3) anthropological and historical approach to disability, (4) psychological and medical aspects of disability, and (5) pedagogical and strategic contexts of disability. The theoretical module ends up with classes that are conducted via tutoring and that orient and inspire students, developing their cognitive potential and motivating them to further investigate the subject matter on their own.

The curriculum was developed in connection with theoretical studies and scientific research on disability conducted in the APS. As part of the *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program, teachers and students jointly engage in the development of implementation projects on support systems for disabled people and their environments, and research projects on topics related to various issues concerning disability. In this way, majoring in *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* creates the possibility of individual student development, and also strengthens the relationship between teaching and learning.

The *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program is addressed to the graduates of social, humanistic, medical, artistic, and technical faculties who want to link their career aspirations to comprehensive actions in support of people disabilities or who intend to embark on an academic career in the area of research on disability and want to proceed to a third-cycle program.

To complete the second-cycle *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program, students write and defend their master's theses. At the same time, they build their portfolio (in electronic and paper form) throughout the two years of the program, which is one of the conditions necessary to complete the course. The portfolio is

a collection of credit papers assembled during the study period. The portfolio is evidence of students' achievements, the source of their knowledge and reflection, and a tool to systematize, acquire and increase their professional skills and to gain expertise.

General information about the program and the characteristics of the graduate profile. The significant increase in social movements for the welfare of people with disabilities and the growing need to initiate, design and implement consolidated support systems require that professionals, leaders, specialists and researchers be prepared. The competence acquired in the *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program will enable graduates to effectively carry out multi-faceted actions oriented at people with disabilities and their communities, for example, to perform such roles as: an advocate defending the rights of people with disabilities, a leader who struggles for the place of people with disabilities in society and for the change of social attitudes and is involved in preparing the media to promote people with disabilities, or a specialist active in local communities. The *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program will also enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to undertake and carry out research on the personal, social, political, economic, and cultural situation of people with disabilities.

The Interdisciplinary Disability Studies program enables first-cycle graduates in social sciences, humanities, medicine, art, and technology who are interested in exploring disability issues to continue their education.

Detailed objectives include:

1. preparation for professional tasks in public service related to disability;
2. acquisition of broader and deeper knowledge, skills, and social competence in designing and conducting research on disability issues in connection with the humanities, social, and medical sciences;
3. preparation for further education in third-cycle programs;
4. developing the skill of improving knowledge and acquiring new competence with the use of modern methods and means of gathering, organizing, and analyzing data;
5. improvement of competence for lifelong learning;
6. deepening ethical sensitivity and improving a reflective and responsible attitude when undertaking and carrying out activities for the welfare of people with disabilities and research projects on disability.

Social demand gives *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* graduates broad and attractive opportunities for the development of their careers. The program provides students with substantive and methodological tools to design and carry out complex and multi-range activities for people with disabilities. It provides students with the competencies needed to perform expert and opinion-forming activities in the field of disability issues as well as to act as a leader in managing the implementation of projects, to actively participate in social marketing in sup-

port of people with disabilities, and to research into sociocultural, political, and legal issues of disability.

Interdisciplinary Disability Studies graduates have a broader and deeper knowledge of disability in the context of interdisciplinary explanations of the humanities and social and medical sciences. The program enables students to get familiar with tradition and contemporary social movements in support of people with disabilities, the sociodemographic situation of disabled people in Poland and in the world, the historical conditions of research on disability, the most important currents in this research, its current trends, and leading representatives. The graduates have a rich and extensive knowledge of interpersonal and social communication processes, they know the properties of those processes and disorders that might occur, and ways to communicate with people with various disabilities. The key concepts of the human being and human development (including, among others, philosophical, psychological, sociological, educational and medical concepts) explored during the *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program provide students with theoretical constructs to design support systems for people with disabilities and their communities and to initiate research on specific issues concerning disability. The program introduces students to the issues relating to the creativity of people with disabilities, their quality of life, lifestyle and well-being and also to the application of normalization principles in view of social inclusion.

Graduates know traditional and modern trends in research on disability and present advanced knowledge and skills to conduct research on the issue. They can design their own path of development, are able to work in a team and perform different roles on the team, and have organizational skills that enable them to accomplish goals related to planning and carrying out professional activities, including managerial ones.

Graduates also have an established knowledge of ethical principles and standards, and are able to follow them in performing professional activities; they perceive and analyze ethical dilemmas associated with activities in support of people with disabilities and their community. They are aware of the ethical dimension of research and are able to apply ethical principles and standards in the research procedure.

The *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* program educates students to be reflective, competent advocates of the disabled, professionals in the field of designing support systems, and scientists interested in studying the phenomenon of disability. Graduates have the necessary knowledge and abilities to work, study, speak, and write about disability in an individual and social dimension.

Apart from the competences and skills aforementioned, *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* graduates have the competence to perform professional tasks in governmental and non-governmental organizations and the mass media. They are also prepared for an academic career. A graduate obtains a master's degree

and is prepared to act as a spokesman for the disabled, a specialist in the field of designing support systems, a scientist interested in the topic of research on disability, and is also prepared to undertake doctoral studies in the field of humanities and social sciences as far as the specific conditions of recruitment do not contain any limiting clauses.

Previous academic experience and prognosis. The department was created by the decision of the APS Senate on January 20th, 2016. In the 2016/2017 academic year, the first year of the two-year study program began in this department. What present activities of the University prove its involvement in the introduction of Interdisciplinary Disability Studies?

Here are a few justifications. The tradition of the APS and the continuity of the idea of Maria Grzegorzewska build the mission of the University in the scientific exploration of people with disabilities and in seeking opportunities to provide them with appropriate rights as the ones held by other members of society. The University undertakes more intensive cooperation with foreign research centers and universities whose focus is to recognize the phenomenon of disability and prepare professionals to work with people with disabilities. For many years, the *APS Institute of Special Education* has been taking the initiative of a personalistic and interdisciplinary recognition of disability. Since 2003, regular international “PERSON” conferences have been organized. The conferences are scientific meetings whose purpose is a multifaceted discussion and exchange of experiences in the field of studying the phenomenon of disability. In 2016, the participants discussed the issue of early intervention and early support for the development of children with various disorders. Researchers are focused on a personalistic recognition of the phenomenon of disability (Głodkowska, 2015). In 2005, the University created the scientific journal *Man – Disability – Society*, which tackles the issue of disability from an interdisciplinary perspective. In 2013, the portal *Forum of Special Education* was created as a tool to document and spread knowledge in the area of disability (see no. 4 in netography). The university promotes the idea of the integration and social inclusion of people with disabilities by both extending the choice of education as well as carrying out numerous research projects under an interdisciplinary perspective. There are analyses of subjectivity, identity, normalization, integration, social support, family life, rights and dignity of people with disabilities as well as social exclusion.

We believe that the *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies* course in our university is an enterprise with potential for growth, giving ample opportunities of research and teaching. We think it is extremely important to conduct interdisciplinary and collaborative research on the phenomenon of disability with the involvement of researchers from other universities in Poland and abroad.

University activities undertaken for the benefit of people with disabilities. Implementing the mission of the university expressed in Maria Grzegorzewska’s

words: “There is no cripple, there is a person,” the APS conducts a number of activities aimed at promoting people with disabilities. These are continuous, cyclical, and incidental activities.

Continuous actions also constitute the expression of the implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities*, and they center around three main tasks: providing students with disabilities to fully participate in didactical activities, taking action to adapt the architecture of the APS to the possibilities of people with disabilities, and developing appropriate attitudes towards people with disabilities (see no. 5 in netography). In order to allow students to fully participate in classes, academics were provided with documents which contain tips on working with students with visual, hearing and speech disabilities. At the same time, under the *Provisions of November 15, 2007, concerning alternative solutions used for APS students with disabilities*, there are opportunities for additional support for students with disabilities. These solutions are not content-related, but they only refer to adjustments to the environment and formal requirements to meet the needs of students. Depending on the needs of students, they may include consent to the recording of activities, providing a sign language interpreter, increasing the number of allowable absences in classes, or exemption from physical education classes. Separate solutions can be applied during examinations: the duration of the test can be extended, it is possible to use necessary technical equipment and to change the place of examination, and if necessary, a third party can be present during the test (sign language interpreter, assistant, see no. 7 in netography).

Cyclical activities are carried out in form of various events activating and encouraging the cooperation of children, youth, and adults with disabilities. Examples of such activities may be the *OSPAR Festival and Knowledge Competition for Students with Disabilities*. The *OSPAR*, which is the *National Stage of Artistic Performance Presentation* has been organized since the 1996 Festival of Creativity. It involves children and young people with various disabilities from all over Poland. The creators of the *OSPAR* do not impose the form of presentation on participants, so every year, they impress the jury and the audience with their creativity and capabilities. An event of a more scientific nature is organized every three years with the *National Knowledge Competition* for young people with disabilities, in which they can face each other in a positive competition in the field of science.

One time activities are organized as needed, often as a response to public demand.

Conclusion

Scientific recognition of disability in Poland dates back to the twenties of the twentieth century. Since then, special education has been intensively developing, building an image of people with disabilities and preparing professional staff to

work in the area of education, rehabilitation, and therapy. Universities meet the needs of people with disabilities and labor market demand with their educational offers. Evidence of these changes is seen in universities' involvement in creating new courses and specializations, taking on new topics of research and the development of international cooperation. We believe that the new department of *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies*, established at The Maria Grzegorzewska University, referring to international mainstream *Disability Studies* programs, is an obvious example of the process. It clearly indicates the move away from the perception of disability from the angle of limitations, defects, and abnormalities, to the perception and appreciation of the value of each person, the search for each person's potential, and the recognition of differences as inherent human traits. We hope that *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies*, built on the foundations of teaching, will be an important basis for the broadening and deepening of comprehensive, holistic research on the phenomenon of disability.

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tow-prawnych-/archiwum-projekty-ustaw/rynek-pracy/r2014/rozporzadzenie-ministra-pracy-i-polityki-spoecznej-w-sprawie-klasyfikacji-zawodow-i-specjalnosci-na-potrzeby-ryнку-i-zakresu-jej-stosowania-/#akapit5.

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Netography

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- 3) <http://www.aps.edu.pl/university.aspx>.
- 4) <http://www.efps.pl/>.
- 5) <http://www.aps.edu.pl/studenci/pomoc-dla-os%C3%B3b-niepe%C5%82nosprawnych/zakres-pomocy.aspx>.
- 6) http://www.aps.edu.pl/media/8340/rozwi%C4%85zania_alternatywne.pdf.
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Appendix

Selected national legal acts

Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2013/2014. Education in 2013/2014 school year. Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2014, <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/oswiata-i-wychowanie-w-roku-szkolnym-20132014,1,8.html>.

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Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 30 kwietnia 2013 r. w sprawie zasad udzielania i organizacji pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach [Regulation of the Minister of National Education of April 30, 2013, on principles of providing and organizing psychological and educational assistance in public pre-schools, schools and institutions], <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20130000532>.

The system of education in Poland in brief 2015. Polish Eurydice Unit, http://eurydice.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/BRIEF_EN_FINAL2015.pdf.

The list of selected national institutions working for people with disabilities

Fundacja SYNAPSIS, <http://synapsis.org.pl/>.

Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych, <http://www.pfron.org.pl/>.

Polski Związek Głuchych, <http://www.pzg.org.pl/>.

Polski Związek Niewidomych, <http://pzn.org.pl/>.
Polskie Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Osób z Upośledzeniem Umysłowym (PSOUU), <http://www.psouu.org.pl/>.
Stowarzyszenie INTEGRACJA, <http://www.integracja.org/>.
Stowarzyszenie Rodzin i Opiekunów Osób z Zespołem Downa „Bardziej kochani”, <http://www.bardziejkochani.pl/>.

STUDIES ON DISABILITY – POLISH EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING IN THE EDUCATION OF LEADERS, SPECIALISTS, AND RESEARCHERS

Abstract

The article presents the new course offered by the Maria Grzegorzewska University – Interdisciplinary Disability Studies – against the Polish higher education system with special emphasis on issues relating to the historical and modern organization of teacher training for special educators. The Interdisciplinary Disability Studies course is a unique program in Poland that is based on a new, positive and multifaceted approach to and understanding of disability. The authors analyze the legal foundations of the new program, explain the need to open the program, describe the graduate's profile and refer to the curriculum. They describe the history of Polish special education: from the beginning of systemic teacher training for special educators through Maria Grzegorzewska's activities to modern times. They show the place of Interdisciplinary Disability Studies in Polish special education and in worldwide *Disability Studies* in that context.

Key words: Disability Studies, Interdisciplinary Disability Studies, The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Maria Grzegorzewska, Strategy for the Development of Higher Education, Polish teacher training system for special educators

STUDIA NAD NIEPEŁNOSPRAWNOŚCIĄ – POLSKIE DOŚWIADCZENIA DYDAKTYCZNE W KSZTAŁCENIU LIDERÓW, SPECJALISTÓW ORAZ BADACZY

Abstrakt

Artykuł prezentuje nowy, prowadzony w Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej kierunek kształcenia – Interdyscyplinarne Studia nad Niepełnosprawnością, na tle polskiego systemu szkolnictwa wyższego, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem zagadnień związanych z historyczną i współczesną organizacją procesu kształcenia pedagogów specjalnych. Interdyscyplinarne Studia nad Niepełnosprawnością są unikalnym w Polsce kierunkiem kształcenia, skonstruowanym wokół nowego, pozytywnego, wieloaspektowego ujmowania i rozumienia fenomenu niepełnosprawności. Autorzy analizują podstawy prawne powołania nowego kierunku, wyjaśniają potrzebę jego stworzenia, przywołują sylwetkę absolwenta, odwołują się do programu kształcenia. Jednocześnie opisują historię polskiej pedagogiki specjalnej, od początków organizacji systemowego kształcenia pedagogów specjalnych, poprzez działalność Marii Grzegorzewskiej aż po czasy współczesne. Na tym tle wskazują na miejsce Interdyscyplinarnych Studiów nad Niepełnosprawnością w polskiej pedagogice specjalnej oraz ogólnoswiatowym nurcie *Disability Studies*.

Słowa kluczowe: Disability Studies, Interdyscyplinarne Studia nad Niepełnosprawnością, Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Maria Grzegorzewska, Strategia Rozwoju Szkolnictwa Wyższego, polski system kształcenia pedagogów specjalnych