



DANUTA KOPEĆ

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

A report on the 8th International Conference: Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy – The place of the Other in contemporary academic reflection

On 19-20 April 2017 in Poznań, the 8th International Conference was organised by the Special Educational Needs Unit at the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University. The conference has been held regularly since 2007 and it constitutes an event known and recognised by theoreticians and practitioners in the field of education and rehabilitation of people with various disabilities. In the recent edition, Organisers suggested changing the name of the conference to: Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy. As expressed by the Chairwoman of the Academic Committee of the Conference, Professor Iwona Chrzanowska, "the change of the name resulted from the reflection that focused on the need to seek an adequate contemporary framework for considerations regarding the >>place of the Other<< in the field of educational studies as well as in significantly broader, interdisciplinary contexts. Today, the questions related to disability and special education needs require considerations following >>from<< and incorporated «into» other academic disciplines and areas of knowledge. The knowledge base outside pedagogy as well as the research results within social sciences and other academic areas with respect to the questions of disability and persons with special educational needs are already there. One cannot deny it. What seems valuable in this context is the doubtless contribution of the above into development of studies on disability as well as the critical and often controversial perception of the life and functioning of people with disabilities and special edu-

cational needs. All the more so, the recognition of the above indicates the necessity and significance of Our presence in the discourse.”¹ It is worth noticing that in order to maintain the continuity of the conference reflections since 2007, the Organisers decided to keep the original name in the form of a subtitle: The place of the Other in contemporary academic reflection.

It was The Committee on Educational Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Dean of the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Professor Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska, that were the patrons of the conference.

The interdisciplinary character of the conference allowed to see the problems under scrutiny in different perspectives provided by various academic disciplines represented by the event participants. Speakers included: special pedagogues, pedagogues, psychologists, sociologists, speech therapists and physicians. It should also be noted that the participants were people at various stages of their academic career: doctoral candidates, PhD graduates and senior academic staff members. Other participants included scholars from Israeli academic centres.

The conference opening ceremony was performed by the Dean of the Faculty of Educational Studies, Professor Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska. Then the participants were welcomed by the Chairwoman of the Academic Committee, Professor Iwona Chrzanowska, and invited to take active part in all sessions, meetings and panels. The conference Organisers provided three meeting modes: plenary sessions, group meetings and individual meetings.

Plenary sessions were held in four sections: two sections on the first day and two sections on the second day. The lectures in the plenary sessions were given by senior academic staff members representing academic centres from the entire country. The first speaker in the plenary sessions was Professor Bogusław Śliwerski (University of Lodz, Pedagogical University) who delineated the condition of Polish pedagogy as a discipline. He called for care and diligence of all scholars regarding the quality of research projects that lead to academic publications. The next speaker was Professor Andrzej Twardowski (Adam Mickiewicz University) who presented the specific nature of disability studies as an example of interdisci-

¹ Chrzanowska, I. (2017). Conference Invitation: Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy – The place of the Other in contemporary academic reflection.

plinary approach to disability. The lecture given by Professor Zenon Gajdzica (University of Silesia) concerned the problems related to interpretation of data collected under a quality case study. In her lecture, Teresa Żółkowska, Professor at the Szczecin University, presented various receptions of the notion of authority and their impact on the education and rehabilitations processes. Next, Grażyna Dryżałowska, Professor At the University of Warsaw, tracked the “map of alienated areas of integration” in the Polish education system. She also observed that special pedagogy in Poland showed a decrease in the number of academic dissertations regarding integration and problems related to implementation of integration.

The first speaker in the second plenary session on the first day of the conference was Professor Amadeusz Krause (University of Gdańsk). Reflecting on challenges faced by contemporary special pedagogy in Poland, he referred to his experiences as the Polish Accreditation Committee expert. In his lecture, Grzegorz Szumski, Professor at the Pedagogical University, spoke about the Pygmalion effect that is frequently disregarded in inclusive education by both practitioners and theoreticians. The next speaker was Jarosław Bąbka, Professor at the University of Zielona Góra, explained the mechanisms of social exclusion. The lecture given by Sławomira Sadowska, Professor at the University of Gdańsk, concerned a diagnosis of intellectual disability in the context of the three knowledge categories specified by Kowalik: theoretical knowledge, institutional knowledge and common knowledge. The lecture by Jacek Pyżalski, Professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University, and Piotr Plichta, PhD (University of Wrocław) analysed the problems of online reality from the perspective of children with special educational needs and their parents. The final lecture in the plenary sessions on the first day was given by Dorota Podgórska-Jachnik, Professor at the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, who spoke about “good” and “bad” charity in the context of the new dimension of social aid.

The plenary session on the second day of the conference was opened by Danuta Kopeć, Professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University, who presented the relational paradigm in pedagogy of people with disabilities. Next Beata Borowska-Beszta, Professor at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, delivered a lecture that analysed the impact of cultural anthropology on disability studies, referring to the lecture by Professor Andrzej Twardowski. The next speaker was Marcin Wlazło, Professor at the Szczecin University who discussed the contexts of multiple otherness based on

the example of migration and disability. The lecture given by Remigiusz Kijak (Pedagogical University of Cracow) concerned the perception of the parent and partner roles by people with more serious intellectual disability. In his lecture, Mieczysław Dudek, Professor at the University of Social Sciences in Łódź, used the empirical data he had collected in a research project and distinguished three stress management strategies by parents of children with ASD. The lecture by Renata Marciniak-Firadza, PhD (University of Lodz), was devoted to word-formation competence of children with minor intellectual disability.

The fourth plenary session was opened by Anna Jakoniuk-Diallo, Professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University, who discussed challenges faced by the pedagogue in the context of bicultural education for bilingual children. In her lecture, Beata Cytowska, Professor at the University of Wrocław, and Edyta Zierkiewicz, Professor at the University of Wrocław, presented an analysis that was original and unique in the area of special pedagogy in Poland, since it concerned intellectual disability in the context of feminist thought. In his lecture, Tadeusz Pietras, Professor at the Medical University, reflected on the processes of inclusion and integration of the mentally ill. His lecture was referred to by Bernadetta Szczupał, Professor at the Pedagogical University, who discussed the issues related to respecting the rights of disabled patients at hospitals and residential care homes. The next speaker was Małgorzata Czerwińska, Professor at the University of Zielona Góra, reflected on the questions related to digital literacy of people with vision defects. In her lecture, Eva Zamojska, Professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University, analysed cognitive and ethical aspects of selected films and literary works from the point of view of people without disabilities. The final plenary lecture was given by Agnieszka Żyta, Professor at the University of Warmia and Mazury, who spoke about self-advocates with intellectual disability.

Group meetings were held on the first day of the conference and focused on four research problems:

- section one: perception of life and functioning of families of people with disability;
- section two: interdisciplinary collaboration of science and practice with respect to children having special educational needs;
- section three: multi-dimensional adult life of people with disability;
- section four: interdisciplinary contexts of considerations on disability.

The speakers at group meetings were junior academic staff members and doctoral candidates.

The new conference meeting option on the first day was the individual talk with the senior academic staff members who were available for young scholars facing challenges related their academic work, e.g. a doctoral or habilitation thesis.

The 8th International Conference: Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy – The place of the Other in contemporary academic reflection created a platform for interdisciplinary presentation of significant problems related to education and rehabilitation of disabled people from the perspective of theoreticians and practitioners. It was also an opportunity for discussion and exchange of opinions.

The conference was closed by the Chairwoman of the Academic Committee, Professor Iwona Chrzanowska, who expressed gratitude to all participants for active and creative contribution within all aspects of the conference.