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## **Report on the 7<sup>th</sup> *Yes! Meeting* – Scientific Conference (*Non*-)directively, Poznań, 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

*Yes! Meetings* are a cycle of international scientific conferences organised by the Na Tak [Yes!] Association and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. On 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> November 2017, the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting entitled (*Non*-)directively took place. This conference was entirely devoted to the subjectivity of persons with intellectual disability. Its recipients were therapists, teachers, students of fields related to special pedagogy, and parents of intellectually disabled persons. The main topic of the meeting consisted of reflections on the possibility of conducting a non-directive therapy and the meaningfulness of division into directiveness and non-directiveness. We can state with full responsibility that organisers and lecturers managed to achieve their goal, i.e., to implement the ‘theory meets practice’ assumption.

The first day of the conference was divided into two sessions of lectures and a discussion panel *Non-evaluative remarks* hosted by Kamil Łodziński. The participants were greeted warmly by Halina Grzmisławska-Słowińska (Yes! Association), Full Professor Agnieszka Cybał-Michalska, PhD (Adam Mickiewicz University) and Jarosław Urbański (Harpo).

On the first day, we met practical experts who work in the non-directive stream. The first speech was delivered by Maria Dąbrowska-Jędrał, whose motto is: ‘to live easier with autism.’ Apart from conducting a therapy, Maria is the parent of an autistic person. She gave an incredibly interesting presentation of objections to non-directiveness in therapy and explained the actual purpose of non-directiveness. The lecturer said what

this stream of research means to her. She thinks that non-directiveness is adaptation to another person and going hand in hand with him/her. According to Maria's theory, when we let our pupils be themselves, they allow us to do much more. In order to confirm these words, she presented interesting videos showing the progress of a therapy with an autistic person. The punch line of this speech was to mix directiveness with non-directiveness in the therapy of disabled persons.

Another speech was delivered by Beata Waclawowicz. She brought up the subject of the challenge of non-directiveness, i.e., difficulties connected with withdrawal from the delivery of ready strategies to pupils, which is an easier solution. She talked how important it is to learn to wait and to focus on the resources rather than deficiencies of the person with whom we work. She suggested that we should avoid giving instructions and minimise the role of the therapist/teacher in the session. If the patient misunderstands any principle, we should not talk to him/her about this and allow him/her to reach this conclusion by himself/herself. In such case, he/she will understand the sense of doing this and training in 100%. Although Beata works in a non-directive manner, which he also presented on videos, she strongly approves of setting limits during a therapy. Her speech was followed by a short discussion between the first and the second lecturer.

During the break between lectures, participants had an opportunity to visit an exhibition of therapeutic equipment and become familiar with materials of various publishing houses. The third speech was delivered by Katarzyna Ślęczek, who talked about the use of video recordings as an effective supervision tool for therapists working with persons with various kinds of disability. The primary goal of the lecturer was to show how important it is 'to meet during a meeting,' which means observation and the analysis of one's own work and the effects of the therapy. This is achievable thanks to the feedback that occurs when we watch videos together. Such an experience may also be very useful for a supervisor in thinking about a change in such things as efforts and approach to therapy. During her presentation, the lecturer also talked about the most important conceptions related to the theory of learning, the psychology of awareness, and the theory of self-confrontation, which is influenced by the self-image during therapy. Skills necessary to carry out a supervision in a proper and beneficial manner were covered in more detail.

The subsequent lecture was conducted by Wojciech Kozłowski, a motor physiotherapist who works with disabled children. He clarified what

physiotherapy actually means to him: repairing or supporting the development process? The lecturer strongly supports the second definition; he tries to play with his patients so that they could laugh as much as possible. He agrees with the saying associated with laughter therapy: 'You will never cry out the tears that you will laugh out.' In his speech, he defined also the strength of exercises that consist of internal and external motivation and active and passive stimulation. Kozłowski places emphasis on being responsive in therapy, i.e., reacting to the child's initiatives. Moreover, he tries to be an authority without being authoritarian and thinks that the sense of security is the most important thing for the child during the support of its motor development and not only. The lecturer finished his speech with an interesting statement: 'A child does not see methods. It sees a human being; and even if it cannot see physically, it certainly feels.'

After the finished lecture, Wojciech Kozłowski and the preceding speaker Katarzyna Ślęczek conducted a discussion on speeches delivered by them. Then the participants in the Conference were invited to a lunch break, after which the aforementioned discussion panel *Non-evaluative remarks* took place. Acting as master of ceremony, Kamil Łodziński organised a discussion between previous speakers and other participants.

The lecture closing the first day of the 7<sup>th</sup> Yes! Meeting was conducted by Elżbieta Olszak on the subject of the limits of using the non-directive approach. The lecturer presented arguments for the inclusion of assertiveness in therapies of intellectually disabled persons conducted in the non-directive stream. She drew the audience's attention to a significant difference between aggressive dominance and firmness that is necessary in relations between the educator and the pupil. In this context, she pointed out the process of realisation that is necessary in the upbringing and development of each human being. A child is unaware of rules of ethics, so parents and guardians become its guides: they exercise control and impose limits, requirements and obligations. At the same time, they should give freedom and warmth to it and be open to its needs. The educator's task is to teach the pupil how to live in accordance with social ethics by giving minimum necessary help. Olszak also referred to the ideas of autonomy that gives the full freedom of decision-making to the human being. She stressed that the limit of autonomy is also necessary in the non-directive stream because a child does not realise that it has to brush teeth, do the homework or pay for goods taken away from a shop. The educators' task is to serve as role models for their pupils.

The lecture by Elzbieta Olszak was followed by the third discussion between lecturers and participants. Then Natalia Marciniak-Madejska summarised and concluded the first day of the conference.

The second day of the meeting was held in the traditional form of a workshop divided into two blocks. Each participant in the Conference could choose two out of nine available workshops thematically related with working with disabled persons. The workshop was conducted by practical experts working in the non-directive stream. Most of them were the lecturers whom we had heard on the previous day. The workshop concerned, among others, working with difficult behaviours in the non-directive approach, communication by touch between the therapist and the child, the attitudes that inspire children's development and spontaneous games that deepen relations between therapists and children and young people with an autism spectrum. Some specialists conducting workshops familiarised participants with interactive aspects of therapy. These were mobile applications supporting SelfFind, which were aimed at familiarising a person with intellectual disability and introducing AAC to beginners through Interactive Learning.

It is worth noticing that the program of the Conference was constructed in such a way that a broad circle of recipients, i.e., experts and volunteers working with disabled persons as well as their families could obtain much interesting information and reflections connected with the non-directive stream and its use in therapy. Organisers managed to provoke a discussion on the appropriateness of contrasting non-directive methods with directive methods. Speakers fabulously brought up a large number of very significant issues concerning therapies in the theoretical and empirical sense. They presented many practical solutions, using examples from their own experience captured on videos. Another favourable aspect of the conference were auxiliary exhibitions of technologies supporting communication from all parts of Europe. *(Non-)directively* is the seventh conference held as a part of Yes! Meetings. Thus, we can say with full responsibility that these conferences have become a permanent part of the calendar of international meetings bringing up the subject of working with disabled persons.