

## Report on the International Scientific Conference “Challenges in a Child’s Educational Space” Poznan, 18 January 2017

The International Scientific Conference “Challenges in a Child’s Educational Space” was organized by Zakład Edukacji Dziecka (*Child Education Institute*), under the patronage of the Dean of Wydział Studiów Edukacyjnych (*Educational Studies Department*), Full Professor Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska, PhD on 18 January 2017, at Wydział Studiów Edukacyjnych (*Educational Studies Department*) of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan.

The aim of the conference was to exchange experiences of theoreticians and practitioners in the discussed field and to interdisciplinarily analyse difficulties in contemporary child’s educational space in the context of school, family, peer and preschool environment. 20 professors representing leading domestic and foreign academic centres, such as: the University of Ostrava and the Catholic University of Eichstaett–Ingolstadt honoured the conference plenary sessions with their speeches. 51 speakers from many significant universities presented papers in thematic sections.

UAM Professor Małgorzata Cywińska, PhD, the President of the Scientific and Organizational Committee, welcomed conference members and the Dean of Wydział Studiów Edukacyjnych (*Child Education Institute*) of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Full Professor Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska, PhD, gave a speech opening the substantive part of a debate, in which she underlined the significance and complexity of the subject matter discussed during the debate. Then, UAM Professor Małgorzata Cywińska, PhD, presented a paper entitled *Aspects of children’s educational difficulties in the context of contemporary challenges (Oblicza trudności edukacyjnych dzieci wobec wyzwań współczesności)*, with which she introduced the audience to the conference issues.

Speeches opening the conference’s debate were concluded with a performance of Zespół Dziecięco-Młodzieżowy (*Children and Youth Ensemble*) conducted by Ewa Sykulska, MA, from Zakład Działań Twórczych w Przestrzeni Społecznej (*Creative Activities in Social Space Institute*) (WSE UAM).

Plenary sessions started after the conference’s opening ceremony. The first plenary session was moderated by UAM Professor, Małgorzata Cywińska, PhD, UW r Professor Danuta Borecka-Biernat, PhD, and Full Professor Andrzej Twardowski, PhD. The first speaker in this session was Associate Professor Radmila Burkovičová, PaedDr. (the University of Ostrava), who presented a paper entitled *Future in preschools in the Czech Republic (Przyszłość w przedszkolach w Republice Czeskiej)*. The speech concerned the amendment of the education act in the territory of the Czech Republic, pursuant to which obligatory preschool education for children from the age of five is introduced in the territory of the country. The author discussed preschool teachers’ dilemmas regarding implemented changes. Furthermore, she presented new challenges with regard to directors of establishments in Czech cities and towns.

Another speaker was Ivana Gejgušová, doc. PaedDr. (the University of Ostrava) presenting deliberations related with *The difficult path of children and youth to active reading (Trudna droga dzieci i młodzieży do aktywnego czytelnictwa)*. The author of the paper has been studying active reading as well as reading preferences and attitudes of elementary school students in the Czech Republic for many years. In her speech, she presented negative effects related with a decrease in children reading activity as well as manners of counteracting them, including innovative methods of working with children implemented in this scope within schools in the Czech Republic.

Full Professor Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik, PhD (the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, WSE) in her paper *Students' struggle for success in the cognitive machine. Paradoxes of Singapore meritocracy (Walka uczniów o sukces w kognitywnej maszynie. Paradoxy singapurskiej merytokracji)* discussed the idea of "Asian values" implemented in the Singapore educational system. She noticed that the modern educational system based on Singapore ideology should operate, according to the local government, as meritocracy, where leaders are chosen on the grounds of their skills and virtues. The researcher presented various types of difficulties that can accompany the introduction of the aforementioned system.

Another speaker, ASP Professor Barbara Weigl, PhD (the Maria Grzegorzewska Pedagogical University in Warsaw), gave a lecture entitled *Family and environmental barriers in Romany students' education (Bariery rodzinne i środowiskowe w edukacji uczniów romskich)*. The speech comprised a specific reflection on certain limitations encountered, not of their own free will, by children from Romany families starting education in a primary school. The speaker presented the results of the empirical research included in a series of qualitative and quantitative research executed in various Romany and Polish environments. She concluded the speech by stating that a negative stereotype regarding a Romany peer exists among Polish students. Furthermore, the author underlined that Romany education assistants in their work encounter a significant resistance of the pedagogical environment, an unclear division of tasks and very unstable employment terms and conditions that, as a result, hinder planning work with students.

The speech of another speaker, UAM Professor Tomasz Gmerek, PhD (the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, WSE) entitled: *Strategies of equalizing education opportunities of children in Finland (Strategie wyrównywania szans edukacyjnych dzieci w Finlandii)* concerned the Finnish educational system, which, in compliance with the research conducted by the PISA seems to be the most effective educational system. In accordance with the empirical research findings, students in Finland are usually in the lead with regard to reading, mathematics and the ability to apply knowledge in practice. The research shows that approximately 80% of parents and teachers are very satisfied with public educational system in this country. It is related, among others, with effective strategies of equalizing educational opportunities which should be adopted by the Polish educational system.

Professor Irena Kurlak, PhD (the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) presented a paper entitled: *Difficulties in the teaching process of juvenile offenders (Trudności w procesie nauczania nieletnich przestępców)*, in which she noticed that in the area of resocialisation of juvenile offenders residing in homes for detained juveniles and juvenile detention centres, professional education is of significant importance. It increases chances of finding employment after leaving the aforementioned home or centre and contributes to the professional activation of juveniles and, as a result, to their social integration.

The last paper of the first plenary session was presented by UAM Professor Waldemar Segiet, PhD (the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, WSE). The speech entitled *On the advantage of a good home in child's education. Old and new problems (O przewadze dobrego domu w edukacji dziecka. Stare i nowe problem)* concerned presenting the significance of teach-

ing process' environmental conditions, mainly family environment and the child's social status in their educational success.

The second plenary session was moderated by: UAM Professor Małgorzata Cywińska, PhD, AJD Professor Wiga Bednarkowa, PhD and UAM Professor Waldemar Segiet, PhD. Full Professor Andrzej Twardowski, PhD (the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, WSE) was the first speaker in this part of the debate and presented a paper entitled *Family environment as small children with disabilities' development support space* (*Środowisko rodzinne jako przestrzeń wspomagania rozwoju małych dzieci z niepełnosprawnościami*). The speaker characterised the results of the research on the development of children with various disabilities and underlined that the family home is/should be a specific educational space for this special category of children.

UAM Professor Katarzyna Segiet, PhD (the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, WSE) in her speech entitled *Tired from birth: an intensifying phenomenon of contemporary childhood* (*Wymęczeni od urodzenia – pogłębiający się fenomen współczesnego dzieciństwa*) indicated new challenges that a child functioning in postmodernity must meet. Contemporary children are under an increasing pressure of too much stimulation, too great challenges, many a time continuous competition in school environment as well as expectations of parents persuading children to achieve and later to maintain the best student status; the children, who often feel chronically insecure, which with time transforms into a feeling of loneliness, experience too much of excessive stress.

An important problem regarding the area of special pedagogy was addressed in the speech given by SGGW Professor Ewa Skrzetuska, PhD (the Warsaw University of Life Sciences) entitled *A child with visual impairment in school* (*Dziecko z zaburzeniem widzenia w szkole*). The speaker analysed the educational situation of a blind child and a near-blind child in primary school. Apart from presenting specific problems related with educating this category of children, the speaker underlined opportunities from establishing "a school for all", independently of a personal situation of students.

Continuing the topic of special educational needs, Grażyna Mikołajczyk-Lerman, PhD (the University of Lodz) underlined in her speech entitled *Difficulties in educational space of a child with disability* (*Trudności w przestrzeni edukacyjnej dziecka z niepełnosprawnością*) isolation, underinvestment and small possibilities of educational development of disabled students. Furthermore, she stressed that also parents of such students are isolated despite the fact that in the recent years the support offer for families with a disabled child has been extended.

Another speech thematically referred to the issues related with language and communicative skills of a child in educational space. UAM Professor Kinga Kuszak, PhD (the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, WSE) in her paper *Children difficulties in communicating in mother tongue: selected aspects* (*Trudności dzieci w posługiwaniu się językiem ojczystym – wybrane aspekty*) gave examples of changes and modifications of children language that result from, among others, the influence of the media, pop culture, commonness of English in our linguistic space. She presented various examples of borrowings, among others, from cartoons and computer games that have been permanently introduced into the contemporary child's language.

The last speaker in this plenary session AJD Professor Wiga Bednarkowa, PhD presented a paper entitled *When a child cannot breathe...* (*Kiedy dziecku brakuje powietrza...*), in which she presented reflections on metaphorical understanding of a child's educational space as "air" which a developing/learning child "breathes". According to the speaker, the child's educational space understood holistically should reflect a child's trust to... and a trust to the child; experiencing by the child a sense of subjectivity, closeness, safety and respect for their system of values. The author noticed that when "a child cannot breathe", their development is no longer

balanced, ecological, synergetic and as a consequence, the child suffers various types of developmental disorders and dysfunctions.

The third plenary session was conducted by: UAM Professor Małgorzata Cywińska, PhD, UAM Professor Kinga Kuszak and UAM Professor Katarzyna Segiet, PhD. Deliberations in this part of the debate were started by UWr Professor Danuta Borecka Biernat, PhD (the University of Wrocław), who presented the paper entitled *Personal factors and parental attitude in developing an aggressive strategy of managing social conflict situations by the youth (Czynniki osobowe oraz postawa rodzicielska w kształtowaniu się strategii agresji radzenia sobie dorastających w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego)*. The speaker presented the results of own research aimed at a cognitive assessment of the impact of personal factors, a course of own actions and educational parental attitude in generating an aggressive strategy of managing social conflict situations by the youth. The aforementioned research implies that a situation assessed by an individual as posing a threat intensifies aggression in a social conflict situation. It was proven that the participation of adolescents in a situation threatening achievement of own objectives increases their negative emotions. In such a case aggression constitutes a form of dealing with anger felt in a conflict situation.

Another speaker was UZ Professor Marzenna Magda-Adamowicz, PhD (the University of Zielona Góra) presenting a paper entitled: *Creative manners of solving pedagogical problems (Twórcze rozwiązywanie problemów pedagogicznych)*. Therein, the speaker indicated various innovative manners of solving pedagogical problems in the student's environment and their impact on eliminating consequences of difficult situations in the child's educational space.

UKW Professor Krystyna Żuchelkowska, PhD (the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz) in her paper entitled *Educational space and its role in approaching preschool children to nature (Przestrzeń edukacyjna i jej rola w zbliżaniu dzieci przedszkolnych do przyrody)* presented the results of own research aimed at disclosing relations and interdependencies between educational space and familiarising children graduating from preschool education with natural issues. The objective of the research conducted by the speaker stipulated a specific research procedure, which, as a consequence, was supposed to lead to solving the following research problem: To what extent the educational space influences the knowledge of natural issues of children graduating from preschool education?

Guests from abroad, Professor Klaudia Schultheis, PhD and Professor Petra Heibl, PhD (the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt) presented a paper entitled: *Attentiveness in school: children's emotional competences' reinforcement project (Uważność w szkole – projekt dotyczący wzmacniania kompetencji emocjonalnych dzieci)*, in which they characterised models of developing children's social and emotional competences as well as presented elements of preventative programmes for children with behavioural disorders. Furthermore, the speakers drew attention to the manners of eliminating consequences of a lack of proper spectrum of child's emotional competences.

Another guest from a foreign University centre, Karin Fodorová, PhDr. Bc. (the University of Ostrava) in her paper *A teacher and their self-education as one option of improving their work with preschool children (Nauczycielka i jej samokształcenie, jako jedna opcja dla poprawy ich działalności zawodowej z dziećmi w przedszkolu)* presented the concept of self-education of preschool teachers in the Czech Republic. The Speaker presented the research results implying that Czech preschool teachers pay a great attention to self-education, which also results from the Czech law imposing this obligation on preschool teachers.

Last speakers of the third plenary session, Agnieszka Naumiuk, PhD and Anna Steinhagen, PhD (the University of Warsaw) in their paper *Challenges of children with relationship disorders*

with regard to their functioning in school, family and environment (*Wyzwania funkcjonowania szkolnego, rodzinnego i środowiskowego dzieci z zaburzeniami więzi*) presented the research results implying that a vast majority of children suffering from relationship disorders experienced trauma in early childhood entailing a development of improper style of attachment. The groups especially endangered with an occurrence of this type of disorders include: adoptive children, children brought up in foster families or children staying in 24/7 care facilities, such as orphanages or social welfare homes.

After finishing plenary sessions, UAM Professor Małgorzata Cywińska, PhD, the President of the Scientific and Organisational Committee, summarised them and encouraged participants to take part in five thematic sections.

The first section conducted by UZ Professor Marzenna Magda-Adamowicz, PhD and AJD Professor Wiga Bednarkowa, PhD concerned *Children's educational difficulties in the historic and contemporary perspective (Trudności edukacyjnych dzieci w perspektywie historycznej i współczesnej)*. The following was discussed, among others: children's educational difficulties in Polish lands in the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, education of children of Canada's indigenous population, ethical reflections on a contemporary child, school difficulties, peer violence, emotional and formal aspects concerning children's safety and protection of their physical integrity.

The second section entitled *Environmental conditions of children's educational difficulties (Środowiskowe uwarunkowania trudności edukacyjnych dzieci)* was moderated by UWr Professor Danuta Borecka-Biernat, PhD and UAM Professor Katarzyna Segiet, PhD. Child's educational difficulties in the aspect of family, peer, social, professional and school environment were discussed during this meeting.

Full Professor Andrzej Twardowski, PhD and ASP Professor Barbara Weigl, PhD conducted the third thematic section: *Children with special educational needs (Dzieci ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi)*. Deliberations in this group were related with functioning in educational space of a child with Asperger syndrome, autism, haemophilia, hearing loss, a child with oncologic disease and a gifted child.

The fourth section *Space of specific difficulties in learning and selected aspects of children's development support (Przestrzeń specyficznych trudności w uczeniu się i wybranych aspektów wspierania rozwoju dzieci)* was conducted by Professor Irena Kurlak, PhD and UAM Professor, Kinga Kuszak, PhD. During the meeting, difficulties in learning and school functioning of children with developmental dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder were mainly discussed. Moreover, problems of a student with behavioural disorders were referred to and the manners of supporting children's and youth's development at schools and educational establishments were discussed.

The last thematic section moderated by UKW Professor Krystyna Żuchelkowska, PhD and Agnieszka Naumiuk, PhD entitled *Children's educational difficulties in the media area and selected teaching contents (Trudności edukacyjne dzieci w obszarze medialnym i wybranych treści nauczania)*. The educational space was discussed in the context of digital society changes, the use of new technologies in schools was referred to and children's difficulties in the scope of mathematics, linguistic as well as music and movement education were presented.

The conference was officially ended by UAM Professor Małgorzata Cywińska, PhD, the President of the Scientific and Organisational Committee, who underlined the multiple aspects of extremely important and greatly interesting speeches given by the speakers during plenary sessions and under particular sections, and stressed the need of further, in-depth discourse deliberating on the difficulties in the child's educational space.

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