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## **Transforming social atmosphere of educational centres for socially maladjusted teenagers (MOS and MOW), i.e. on the need of professional discourse development and empowering actions**

### **1. Introduction**

A vast majority of young people has issues with entering adult life in a collision-free manner. Partly, the dynamics of modern world's changes is to blame, but an important part of these problems is connected with imperfect functioning of institutions that in theory are there to help solve this particular problem. The aim of this work is to present potential directions of changes in educational-rehabilitation work and suggestions of activities (together with application conditioning) that may lead to them.

The content of this article refers directly to the results of research carried out within the project prepared by the Faculty of Education at the University of Łódź: "Therapy through development. Programme of developing a chain of youth centres for young people at risk of being excluded from education system."<sup>1</sup> Research was carried through between March and end of May 2014 at the centres for socially maladjusted youth and in German centres for extra-curriculum activities managed by Jugendhaus Association (a partner from Stuttgart).

The main subject of the diagnostics were elements of social atmosphere at the youth socio-therapy centres (MOS) and youth educational centres (MOW) that create conditions which allow to undertake action that would prevent premature exclusion of minors from education system and to support them in planning their educational and professional paths. The aim of the analyses was to characterise the selected areas

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<sup>1</sup> The project was financed by the European Social Fund within the Human Capital Operational Programme, subactivity 9.1.2.

of social atmosphere of these institutions and activities needed to support professional career of the wards, which was to allow to point to the direction of changes (model conceptualisation and attempt of partial application).

The general strategy of research was outlined by the notion of social atmosphere, understood by M. Konopczyński as “a system of inter-personal connections and mutual relationships between educational and administrative staff, and other people from the closest environment.”<sup>2</sup> Social atmosphere understood in this way and being the subject of a diagnosis, was not to conclusively indicate what the researchers were to look into or ask for, but to make them more sensitive to a certain dimension of social life of an institution – a dimension of communication between subjects that create this social life in interactions.

Considering the importance of context in the course of communication processes, physical, personal, symbolic and macro-systemic (formal and legal, and organisational) conditionings were of key significance when interpreting interactive data in the studied institutions.

The most important part of empirical material came from observations and surveys carried out among the wards and educators as well as from teachers at MOS and MOW in Łódź.

Diagnostic studies in Łódź were realised in three socio-therapeutic youth centres (MOS) and two educational youth centres (MOW). In all these facilities, the whole personnel was included in the surveys (educators and teachers) and wards older than 12. Altogether, 263 people took part in the survey, including 95 educators/teachers and 168 wards. Moreover, “everyday functioning” of the selected facilities was observed.

Teachers and educators who participated in the study visit in Germany, also took part in a group discussion. More data was provided by the analysis of documentation and interviews that were carried out with the employees of the German partner’s institution.

The image of the diagnosed facilities that emerged from the analysis is not black and white as both potentials and deficits can be observed. However, in the further part of the text we focus on these aspects that do not function well enough and that could be or even should be improved.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Konopczyński, *Metody twórczej resocjalizacji*, Warsaw: PWN, 2007, p. 170.

## 2. Conclusions from the diagnosis of social atmosphere at MOS and MOW

Possibilities of changes proposed further in the field of working with socially maladjusted youth in educational and rehabilitation centres refer solely to recommendations included in the work entitled *Social atmosphere of educational institutions and its conditioning. Perspectives for employees and wards of the youth educational centres (MOW) and youth socio therapy centres (MOS)*.<sup>3</sup>

Presenting conclusions of our diagnosis (not only these we actually answered to) will allow to understand the outlined general direction of the desired changes.<sup>4</sup> The data analysis and their interpretation allowed to conclude that social atmosphere of the studied institutions, understood by the authors as a system of relationships between the subjects who communicate between each other within the space of the facility and environment outside these institutions, is not sufficient in assisting them in education wards and their bio-socio-cultural development.

This general diagnosis is supported by the detailed conclusions presented below:

**1. Similarity of social atmosphere at MOS and MOW.** Despite the different functions that were assumed for these institutions in the legal and social system of preventing depravation and criminal activities in children and teenagers, there is no clear differentiation of aims and rules in educational work of youth socio-therapy centres (MOS) and youth educational centres (MOW). Thus, despite the different way of recruiting youth to such centres (directed forcibly by court vs. directed from outside court on parent's request) and involving various "types" of wards and their needs (facing depravation vs. deprived; "perpetrators of criminal acts" vs. "not capable of living independently"), it is difficult to note relevant differences in the way they are treat-

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<sup>3</sup> M. Granosik et al., *Raport pt. Klimat społeczny instytucji wychowawczych i jego uwarunkowania. Perspektywa pracowników i wychowanków młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych (MOW) i socjoterapii (MOS) w ramach projektu: Terapia przez rozwój, realizowanego na Wydziale Nauk o Wychowaniu*, 2014 - project co-financed by the EU funds as part of the European Social Fund within the Human Capital Operational Programme, sub-activity 9.1.2.

<sup>4</sup> Conclusions presented in this article are a modified version of diagnostic conclusions from the above mentioned report and the article written by M. Granosik et al., "Klimat społeczny instytucji wychowawczych i jego uwarunkowania. Perspektywa pracowników i wychowanków młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych (MOW) i socjoterapii (MOS)", in: J. E. Kowalska (ed.), *Zapobieganie wykluczeniu z systemu edukacji dzieci i młodzieży nieprzystosowanej społecznie. Perspektywa pedagogiczna*, Łódź: Łódź University Press, 2014.

ed or formulate and value the achieved educational aims in those facilities. Characterised by these elements of force and concentration of communicational problems at a similar level of exclusion of wards from establishing rules, social and educational atmosphere remains in contradiction to the formally different character of both institutions MOS being preventive and MOW being of rehabilitation character.

Considering the above, it is worth putting forward a question whether the level of control and discipline that is equally high in both institutions, does not make the first one a facility favouring criminal activities understood as a consequence of social stigma? Voluntariness inscribed in the process of making decisions concerning "entering a facility" juxtaposed with the sense of over-control, painfulness ways of executing rules that one has no influence upon, may lead to intensification of the individual and social processes that this very institution was created to prevent. When we add to it the overwhelming feeling of boredom that can be sensed in this institution, which intensifies the non-formal social life, its interactive layer and the dominant definition of a ward among the educators (as those with "deficit", "different from me", only responsible for the disturbed relation between the ward and the educator/teacher), we receive atmosphere that if more than favourable when it comes to initiating the social process of creating a criminal. Social reaction of employees of the facility to the ward seen as "ill"/"more perverted than others" that can be observed in form of even more increased control, discipline, award deprivation and increase in punishment, etc. stimulates behaviour in a ward that this very institution was to prevent.

Following this lead and anticipating scenarios of reaction between behaviour of a ward seen as "deviant" and a reaction of MOS employees, we express a purely theoretical concern (albeit logically justified by the analysis) whether MOS becomes a driving force for some young people who consequently become wards of MOW.

**2. Similarity of teacher's and wards' attitudes towards institutions.** The first ones are characterised by the low level of satisfaction and high sense of no effects of their work. The latter ones feel they are being held at the institution because this is a punishment, they also have a high sense of slavery, especially in the area of current organisation of life at the facility and the potential possibilities of being active.

This similarity of negative attitudes towards institutions bears the marks of no so much clear antagonism and mutual "combating" as places the participants on opposite sides of the barricade (which is clearly seen in the way the staff and wards express their feelings about

the other party). Worth noting is the fact that, despite the generally negative attitude of educators towards the institution, the study also revealed examples of positive individuals among the educators and teachers (whom the wards pointed out to using names). On the basis of the data analysis, three “pure” types of educators can be outlined here: engaged educators, who negotiate with a ward and try to understand them, educators who discipline and try to subordinate their wards, and those whose specificity may best be described by the description of one of the wards: educators who could “be more at work.”

**3. Defining the role of an educator and a ward is a factor that interrupts communication.** In a generalised professional profile of an educator/teacher who attempts to rehabilitate and be a socio-therapist, which is created in everyday communication, they appear as someone in control, someone who disciplines and executes the realisation of tasks, someone who is a therapist and re-educates. Such an image remains in contradiction with the definition of educational success that is formulated by the employees themselves (that exposes a deepened relation with a ward, trust and impact on positive changes in their life). Because the study allowed also to reconstruct a certain profile of a ward that is burnt in the mind of employees and is expressed by the notions of individual disorders or negative environmental influences, then such auto-definition of a role of an educator and such a concept of a ward may point to ambivalence as a feature that is potentially important in understanding the specificity of social atmosphere in the facilities in question.

Particularly, we consider two possible dimensions of ambivalence here. Firstly, ambivalence may be understood as an attitude of an educator towards their wards characterised by approaching them through contradictory definitions. Such a dimension of ambivalence we referred to as educatory contradiction. On the other hand, the state of ambivalence may outline a certain type of balance that is socially constructed in everyday interactions between wards and educators. From this perspective of ambivalence, educators in their actions refer to different (frequently contradictory) definitions of a ward and different definitions of their own professional role. Then we can talk about an institution as a bivalent space of educatory intentionality.

**4. Neglecting the educational function of free time.** Organising free time does not seem to live up to youth expectations. Surprisingly, neither is it seen as a problem of employees. This is a worrying observation if we look at organising free time through the perspective of a connection between experiencing boredom in little interactive

spaces, behaviour of young people seen by others as problematic and the negative social reaction to them. A similar mechanism has already been described in conclusion No 1. Low expectations of the studied wards are a potential positive aspect of the diagnosis, which does not seem to require much in terms of expenditures concerning this change.

**5. Deficit of organisational culture in educating.** We are particularly concerned here with the revealed problems connected with managing an institution. Especially the faintly drawn issue of working on team work (building work standards connected with creating educational system, managing differences and conflicts between employees, increasing the sense of community, creative management of individual development and career, elaborating internal system of motivation based on appreciating employees who are engaged and respected by the service recipients, i.e. wards).

**6. Faulty system of setting rules and manners in which they are executed.** It is a mistake of a social atmosphere system to assume a limited participation of wards in setting the general rules of an institution. It results in a sense of isolation and misunderstanding as well as lack of acceptance or rejection. The consequence of wards being excluded from formal negotiation of rules is concentrating everyday work on maintaining order instead of working on relations. This increases disorder in communication and tension in interaction, while really being the basis of all conflicts (which, in turn, indirectly places an educator in the role of "an order maker").

The analysis of data collected from wards reveals high exposition of wards to excessive control that they sense. In particular, this reluctance is seen in the prohibition of smoking or using mobile phones. This situation should be seen not from the perspective of claiming behaviour not matching age and proving that wards are perverted (e.g. smoking); it should rather be looked at from the perspective of "double standards" of laws and obligations of the members of the community (wards and staff), because personnel is not limited by these limitations.

**7. No strategy in punishment and rewarding.** Regarding this question, we were surprised by two facts. The first one is a strong position of a simplified behavioural approach that has long been criticised when it comes to the activities of rehabilitation and educational facilities. The very choice of a concept of upbringing is of course a subject of discussion and may be defended by those who consequently implement it, however, its simplified and mechanical variations or even aberrations discovered in the study cannot be questioned. Types of punishment that are illogical and wrong were revealed in answers to open

questions that were directed at wards. They complain about lack of consequence and excessive use of punishment. Neither do they agree to its selective forms, e.g. limiting family contacts (!). Double standards of evaluation, uneven treatment, severity of penalties – these are some of the main factors that weaken efficiency of educating. Diagnosis also showed discrepancy between the meaning of a punishment declared by educators and its actual form or function that can be observed in the majority of facilities.

**8. No strategy in solving conflicts.** No standards in solving conflicts at an institution where they are in abundance is a cause for concern. Not only are the situational standards characterised by superficial efficiency, but they also are negative (e.g. tranquilising), and distributed in the presence of other educators or wards who do not react, they normalise the inappropriate patterns of reaction. Such a process creating social patterns of rather bad practices is hardly stoppable. The mechanism that sustains it is misunderstood professional loyalty – a phenomenon frequently occurring in situations when working conditions are considered bad, uncertain and unpredictable.

**9. Violence towards wards.** From our perspective, this is a question more worrying and requiring radical changes. It should, however, be understood in a strict connection with the deficit of culture of educational work organisation, lack of transparent internal professional discourse, setting rules that are to be followed in facilities with no influence on them on part of wards, lack of strategy in punishing and rewarding and neglecting free time organisation. High ratio of answers pointing to violence is evidence that such approach of not being able to deal with wards is settled among educators.

**10. Insufficient integration of activities at facilities with environment outside.** It draws our attention that educating personnel sees the need and the possibility to work mainly with similar institutions, i.e. those that concentrate on children and youth facing isolation and social exclusion (e.g. children's homes, educational centres). This conclusion is also reflected in the unmet need of "leaving" the facility that is verbalised by wards. These problems deepen the process of stigmatisation and social isolation and are extremely negative from the standpoint of re-adaptation of the minors.

The above conclusions have become the basis on which our recommendations are based, of which the following we considered the most important:

- increasing wards' participation in creating a system of rules of their social existence while in the facility;



- initiating a process of mutual creation of an educational system, e.g. through creating space for discussion and creative confrontation that would become basis of a coherent educational system (setting directions of actions, unifying them, etc.), especially in the area of solving conflicts between wards and educators;
- re-defining the ways in which wards are perceived (from “unsettled” to “skilled”); transformations the area of formulating educational goals (from working on “disorders” to working on “potential and strengths”; aiming at looking for strengths, talents and power);
- realising what rights of a child are, both in wards and educators.

### **3. Modern pedagogy concept of rehabilitation as a framework for the proposed changes in the diagnosed centres**

The directions of changes presented above are reflected in modern way of looking at the aim of rehabilitation and defining its results. By and large, in modern approach to rehabilitation pedagogy, this issue means shifting the emphasis in educational activities from conformities to the development of a ward, which would allow them to function in the conditions outside the institution. The basic categories of modern approach in relation to people who are socially maladjusted are: subjectivity, voluntariness, choice and development. Moreover, contrary to “traditional” rehabilitation, educational relationship is not characterised by the perspective of helping in a change, but organising the life space that would allow a ward to develop as a person.

The starting point for the transformations taking place in modern concept of rehabilitation is a conviction that successful “rehabilitation activities” undertaken within an institution – i.e. eliminating disorders and equipping youth with new social competences – do not equal with educational success that is measured by the desired manner in which a ward functions outside a facility. It is the reasons and mechanisms of discrepancy in the effects of educational “success” within an institution and outside it that are the subject of analysis of contemporary theory and methodology<sup>5</sup> rehabilitation psychology and pedagogy.

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<sup>5</sup> B. Urban (ed.), *Aktualne osiągnięcia w naukach społecznych a teoria i praktyka resocjalizacyjna*, Mysłowice: Wyd. Górnośląskiej Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej im. Kard. Augusta Hłonda, 2010; M. Konopczyński, *Kryzys resocjalizacji, czy(li) sukces działań pozornych. Refleksje wokół polskiej rzeczywistości resocjalizacyjnej*, Warsaw: Pedagogium, 2013.



### 3.1. Rehabilitation as correction. Reclamation as “treatment”

Theory and practice of „classical” reclamation pedagogy in which educational system of a „closed” institution is a strong part of, places the possibility of working with socially maladjusted people mainly on the level of modifying the undesired attitudes, faulty personality features, habits and reactions. The main “subject” of methodological activities is “faulty set” of behavioural personal deficits and disorders that a ward has at their disposal. The starting point when beginning educational work is defining deficits, irregularities and faults. When diagnosis is based on deficiencies and disorders, the basic categories of framing rehabilitation process would be “correction”, “psycho-correction”, “socio-correction” and therapy. The concept of upbringing is filled with nomenclature originating in behavioural psychology and even medicine. Reclamation will be then a sort of “treatment” of symptoms and removing the causes of disorders. In such approach, the ward’s “strengths” are totally left out. The starting point for reclamation is the ward’s past and concentrating on current situation.

Focusing attention on disorders and faults is a consequence of theoretical manner in which practice is expressed when it comes to children and youth socially maladjusted. It was mostly behavioural, psychodynamic and humanistic concepts that mainly influenced the development of “classical” reclamation pedagogy (both theory and practice). Currently, institutional practice of reclamation is predominant with behavioural and psycho-dynamic notions. The first ones treat social maladjustment as a disordered form of behaviour, the latter ones treat them a consequence of psychological injuries and faulty socialisation. It is thanks to the popularity of psycho-dynamic theoretical current that socio therapy was introduced in to the methodology of education of people socially maladjusted. Psychodynamic frames of educational processes of people who are socially maladjusted allow to support these structures and personal functions that have not been activated as a result of corrective reclamation methods (based on behavioural psychology).

These two psychological perspectives of defining social maladjustment create an image of a ward who is unsettled, auto-destructive and whose activities cause suffering and pose a threat to others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See: M. Granosik *et al.*, *Klimat społeczny instytucji wychowawczych...*

### 3.2. Reclamation as adjusting to the conditions of an institution

The function of pedagogy that has been outlined above, which is corrective and remedial as well as therapeutic, have dominated Polish reality for the last few decades and is still rather settled in educational practice of institutions that are to prevent depravation in children and youth.<sup>7</sup> Despite the criticism of upbringing in social isolation, in Poland the basic space where the system of education of socially maladjusted youth takes place is still the reclamation institution, the structure of which favours or even strengthens “traditional” reclamation activities. Depending on the age of a minor, character and degree of demoralisation (and educational measures applied earlier), it is either a socio-therapy youth centre, educational youth centre or a reformatory.<sup>8</sup>

A minor placed in an institution undertakes a number of actions that would help them adapt to the conditions of these institutions. They put much energy and use sophisticated techniques so as to obtain the desired socio-metric status in a group and create an image of a “trouble free” ward.<sup>9</sup> Such a situation is enhanced by a common practice based on putting pressure on the ward by the employees of these institutions so as to make them behave in a certain way within the facility. The basic “instruments” of such pressure is a set of rules and regulations hidden under the form of care and therapy with a huge system of reinforcement (penalties and rewards). The so-called “reclamation activities” are in fact steps that are aimed at adapting a young person to the conditions of an institution and is a way of bullying wards into following the rules at facilities. Also correcting the disordered structures and functions of socially maladjusted individuals fits into the process of adaptation understood in this way. This tendency is confirmed by studies presented in the report mentioned earlier – educators define their professional role primarily through the supervising

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<sup>7</sup> M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna. W stronę działań kreujących*, Cra-cow: Impuls, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> A detailed description of the character of the listed institutions lie outside the scope of this article. The educational status of the institutions are regulated by specific acts and regulations. The institutions in question differ additionally in detailed “specialisations”, however, the description of these criteria of division is not relevant from the point of view of this article. Moreover, contrary to the assumed socio-educational functions of these facilities, in practice we are dealing with one common feature they all share, i.e. a real social isolation of their wards. The concentration differs obviously from the character of institutions and individual formal and organisational regulations of an institution (see: M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna...*).

<sup>9</sup> P. Chomczyński, *Działania wychowanków schronisk dla nieletnich i zakładów poprawczych*, Łódź: Łódź University Press, 2014.

and controlling function that they have and the social and educating atmosphere in the institutions for socially maladjusted youth in Poland is of restrictive and controlling character.<sup>10</sup>

Behavioural concepts caused educational practice to be included in work with socially maladjusted people and are known under the term of *point economics*<sup>11</sup>. It is a very strong element of educational system in modern institutions – evidence of which we found in the results of studies presented in the report<sup>12</sup>. “Educational success” defined from the perspective of behavioural concepts is outlined using eternal forms of a young person’s behaviour. The concept and methodology of assessment is primarily focused on “measurable” and observable features – the ones that underwent some “correction” (e.g. aggressive behaviour vs. non-aggressive behaviour; a ward plays truant vs. ward does not play truant; a student smokes vs. a student does not smoke). Despite scientific critique and presenting a “change” as a consequence of correction through its impermanence, in educational practice it is still a predominating way of defining reclamation activities. The achieved change in behaviour from faulty ones to those socially desired is performed in certain conditions (e.g. within the reclamation facility) and under the influence of certain pressure (the necessity to adjust to the rules and regulations). Therefore, this change ought to be looked at in the category of the ward adaption and an attitude of conformity rather than being of a learnt character. “Conformity” of a ward means a balance of “punishments” and “awards” that they received while being at the institution. The mechanism is best observed in penitentiary practice (the balance of application for awards and punishments is one of the most important notions thanks to which an early release from prison may be granted). Sadly, this system seems to be present also in reclamation institutions for youth. Placing “possibility of contacting family” on the level of an award or punishment for proper or improper behaviour<sup>13</sup> is nothing else than a tribute to “point economics” in reclamation (characteristic for “behavioural” approach to reclamation processes oriented on “here and now”). Moreover, a ward’s resistance towards an institution is treated as a final proof of their social maladjustment. The main goal is thus making the ward adjust to the institution.

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<sup>10</sup> M. Staniaszek, *Klimat społeczny młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych w Polsce. Studium resocjalizacyjne*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Łódź: University of Łódź, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> K. Pospiszyl, *Resocjalizacja. Teoretyczne podstawy oraz przykłady programów oddziaływań*, Warsaw: PWN, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> M. Granosik et al., *Klimat społeczny instytucji wychowawczych...*

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

Only then, when the ward is “adjusted”, further work becomes possible. “Defeated” (or tamed) by the institution, the ward becomes a starting product for further therapeutic and educational activities. As a result of using such methods, we are faced with a phenomenon known as “superficial reclamation.”<sup>14</sup>

Educational practice described above is a result of two factors that become a vicious circle. The first factor lies in certain professional competences and habits of reclamation centre employees that they use to analyse the process of reclamation in the “paramedical” categories (eliminating disorders, concentration on faults and deficits of an individual). This is a result of both many years of tradition of handling wards in and by an institution, and also attitudes learnt at universities. Despite the important transformations on the level of theory and contemporary reclamation methodology, behavioural and psychotherapeutic categories in curriculum of academics pedagogues and reclamation psychologists are still predominant. Systems of education that are alternative to “classical” reclamation are considered unimportant and characterised solely by the desired “tendencies” or “wind of change”. Knowledge and experience concerning reclamation that is provided during the course of studies are basically the methods and techniques of work oriented mostly on the behavioural and psycho-dynamic character and goal of effects. This remains in strong connection with formal and administrative frameworks of reclamation processes of youth, i.e. placing educational work with socially maladjusted youth mainly in the institutionalised conditions. However, it does not bear any “classical” signs of a total institution,<sup>15</sup> neither it is – according to the idea of Polish legal system towards minors – a closed one. Yet, practically, it is a kind of environment that forces “conformity”, including all spheres of a ward’s life and – what is most important – isolating them from social reality. In such conditions of reclamation a difficulty appears: how to evaluate whether a ward is (not) institutionalised? The only measures of educational “success” available to personnel is evaluating its functioning with reference to the following relationships: with peers (i.e. other wards at the institution), with adults (i.e. adults who are at the institution, such as educator, teacher, psychologist, principal, cook, etc.), at school (i.e. within the school environment “controlled”

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<sup>14</sup> More in: B. Urban (red.), *Aktualne osiągnięcia w naukach społecznych...*; M. Kopnarczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna...*; idem, *Kryzys resocjalizacji czy(li) sukces działań pozornych...*

<sup>15</sup> Deliberations concerning “total” character of Polish reclamation facilities can be found in: P. Chomczyński, *Działania wychowanków schronisk dla nieletnich...*

by a teacher-educator). Indeed, it is an evaluation of “laboratory work” with the ward in “laboratory” conditions (in an institutionalised environment). Therefore, it needs to be assumed that a ward who “properly” functions will be able to refrain themselves from inappropriate behaviour also outside this institution. Newly acquired “competences” are evaluated within an institution which evaluated the ward. There is no space for the ward to “test” their new skills in contacts with reality outside the facility.

In such institutionalised conditions it is easy to eliminate negative behaviour by replacing them with reaction of conformity. The measure of success is also achieving certain educational successes (e.g. completing a course, being passed to the next grade). Finally the results of reclamation are described in categories of balancing alignment gaps or acquiring new competences (e.g. refraining from aggressive behaviour). This is not, however, a synonym of personal development.

### **3.3. Reclamation as development. Reclamation as searching for a social role that would be an alternative to a “deviance” social role**

In new approach in reclamation pedagogy, the necessity to ground on potentials and proper management of character features of a ward are stressed that, so that the same features that used to be used in a destructive way, could now be used in a way that is socially acceptable. For instance – a ward who, thanks to their courage and charisma, led to the rebellion in the facility, can use the same features to realise a project that will bring other “effects”. Obviously, this requires a proper organisation of an educational process. It is connected with the necessity to re-formulate the aim of an educator’s activities and most of all – reaching beyond the beaten tracks that are normally used in the process of adapting the ward to the institution – patterns of reclamation formula. As an example, we may have a look at the ward’s charisma mentioned previously, which led to a rebellion at the institution. Undoubtedly, that event was of destructive character and was dangerous as it posed a threat to the safety of all participants of the facility (personnel and wards alike). In a “traditional” reclamation, the aim would be to work with a ward in such a way so as to lead to elimination of all these features that make his popular in his peer group. In a new approach<sup>16</sup> it will be a correction not through eliminating but through

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<sup>16</sup> Proposition of “new educational work” is included in the concept of creative reclamation, but it may as well be realised through other methods that go beyond the sphere of traditional correction or psycho-correction (see: M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna...*).

development of the same features that caused destruction and treating them as potential for which proper aims and spaces of expressions are created. This, however, requires a different approach to the ward and shifting the perspective of "the bad", "the suspected" and dangerous to "strong", "creative" and "active".

The problem outlined above is directly connected with another category of modern reclamation approach such as destigmatisation. Followers of the so-called therapeutic reclamation explain disorders in behaviour conditioned by factors an individual has no influence (e.g. malfunctioning of the school, family, etc.). The starting point for modern reclamation theory and practice is a change in the way of characterising social maladjustment, i.e. presenting it not from the perspective of defective approaches, behaviour and deficits (that are the consequences of inappropriate socialisation and upbringing), but deviant identity, which is a defective way of thinking about oneself and one's own priorities in the context of their social reception.<sup>17</sup> Modern reclamation concepts reach out to cognitive and interactive psychology where "reflexive" and "reactive" identity is one of the basic analytical-theoretical categories.<sup>18</sup>

The "deviant stigma" makes it impossible for socially maladjusted people to begin proper interpersonal relations and becomes a reason why social exclusion is a strengthened factor. It happens because "parameters of identity do not fit into the self-presentation collection of features that are culturally."<sup>19</sup> Escalation of interpersonal aggression level, ways of meeting one's needs that are socially unacceptable and pathological forms of reducing inner emotional tension will become a reaction of an individual to the phenomenon of "not fitting" to the social standards. Self-presentations of people who are maladjusted, are aimed at protecting their own value, meeting their psychological needs and "manipulating" relations with others (e.g. overcoming "shame" and isolation described by Goffman.<sup>20</sup> Finally, self-presentation means sustaining and creating one's own identity (or some of its features).

Accepting the perspective of development in theoretical and methodological assumptions of creative reclamation, aims directly at removing the "stigma". Non-deviant identity is the basic goal and result

<sup>17</sup> M. Konopczyński, *Kryzys resocjalizacji czy(li) sukces działań pozornych...*, p. 122.

<sup>18</sup> M. Bernasiewicz, *Interakcjonizm symboliczny w teorii i praktyce resocjalizacyjnej*, Cracow: Impuls, 2011; M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna...*

<sup>19</sup> M. Konopczyński, *Kryzys resocjalizacji czy(li) sukces działań pozornych...*, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> E. Goffman, *Piętno. Rozważania o zranionej tożsamości*, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2005.

of (creative) reclamation.<sup>21</sup> This happens through using potentials that are present in a person, so as to “appropriately re-adapt this person to the social conditions for him to solve his problems creatively and in a manner that is socially acceptable.”<sup>22</sup> This process is referred to as de-stigmatisation. “The desired change” as a category of success in reclamation, in the light of the above mentioned reclamation concept<sup>23</sup> is analysed and presented in the categories of a long and extremely difficult way that a ward must undergo – from the status of a socially maladjusted individual that is perverted and criminal, to the status of normality (former perversion). Urban describes it even as “superhuman”<sup>24</sup> and “incredible effort on part of the pervert himself.”<sup>25</sup> Destigmatisation itself is a

process of negation or deletion of everything connected with a pervert identity and transforming it in such a way so as to leave no doubt that an individual (criminal) is no longer a pervert and acquired features of normality. In other words, it is a psychological purification as a result of which the defective “I” is replaced by the moral “I”. This takes place in the sphere of lay norms and may also be of transcendental character.<sup>26</sup>

Between the extreme states, the process of destigmatisation (pervert – former-pervert), an individual undergoes certain “changes” – the whole process of destigmatisation (as a result of reclamation) includes several stages.

Identity changes are not acts of individual decision, but are a result of a difficult and time consuming process which engages the intellectual, emotional sphere and primarily the volitional areas of personality. An individual begins to realise that his inappropriate behaviour so far, which cause perversion in his social roles. This is, in fact, realising the results of stigmatisation processes and the burden of “being a pervert”. These transformations begin from the first doubts as to what

<sup>21</sup> M. Konopczyński, *Kryzys resocjalizacji czy(li) sukces działań pozornych...*; idem, *Metody twórczej resocjalizacji*, Warsaw: PWN, 2007; idem, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna...*; idem, „Współczesne kierunki zmian w teorii i praktyce resocjalizacyjnej. Twórcza resocjalizacja – od korekcji do rozwoju”, *Probacja* 1 (2009), pp. 63–87.

<sup>22</sup> M. Konopczyński, *Współczesne kierunki zmian...*

<sup>23</sup> This concept is described as „creative reclamation” (M. Konopczyński, *Metody twórczej resocjalizacji...*; idem, *Kryzys resocjalizacji czy(li) sukces działań pozornych...*) or non-classical reclamation pedagogy (idem, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna...*).

<sup>24</sup> B. Urban (ed.), *Aktualne osiągnięcia w naukach społecznych...*

<sup>25</sup> B. Urban, “Zmiana tożsamości i destygmatyzacja przestępcy w procesie instytucjonalnej resocjalizacji jako warunek readaptacji społecznej”, in: Z. Jasiński, D. Widelak (eds.), *W poszukiwaniu optymalnego modelu więzienia resocjalizującego. Studia i rozprawy z pedagogiki resocjalizacyjnej*, vol. 3, Opole: Opole University Press, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.



is right and what is beneficial for the “pervert”. A person questions this “role” more and more frequently.<sup>27</sup> Educators who are close to the “pervert” may support him in this process.<sup>28</sup> The direct consequence of this stage of destigmatisation is searching for a new role that would be an alternative to the perverted one. It is at this stage that the subjects who “reclaim” the pervert have a very important role to play. An individual uses his own experience and looks for role models who are successful. He also looks for confirmation and reinforcing factors that support his goals and the readiness for a change.

The concept of destigmatisation and the awareness of the level of difficulty and the emotional problems that accompany the “transition” should be an extremely relevant area of knowledge and competences of educators who direct the process of reclamation at the institution. Residing there is frequently a factor that triggers the processes of destigmatisation. “Reclamation” assistance in this process should mean support both internal and external. Firstly, an educator should apply various reinforcements aimed directly at the initiated processes of transition in personality, secondly, he should organise space that would favour searching for an alternative social role. A reclamation educator should be someone who stimulates destigmatisation processes – an advisor in the area of searching for ways of opposing factors that inhibit and prevent an individual from staying on the track of decisions he has made; such an educator should become an assistant in elaborating real life plans (that would be in isolation from the current life environment) and the way of making constructive social contacts.

The directions of changes outlined above requires re-orientation in the system of socio-educational positions and influences at institutions. In a new system, a ward overcomes the status of a person who requires therapeutic and reclamation treatment and becomes a conscious creator of his own space. A ward is no longer a person who passively adapts to the imposed conditions at the institution, but quite actively works in order to change the social reality. In the course of these activities, he develops and recognises his own potential and uses the inner power of the environment. “Resistance” of the ward is not defined through his disorders, but seen as a reaction to the phenomenon of “being unfit” to the imposed social standards. An educa-

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<sup>27</sup> This realisation has the character of “pervert illumination” (M. Konopczyński, *Współczesne kierunki zmian...*) and is a type of a turning point in biographies of people who are socially maladjusted and in criminal epiphanies (see: N. Denzin, *Interpretive Interactionism*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> B. Urban, *Zmiana tożsamości i destygmatyzacja przestępcy...*

tor and a therapist becomes an organiser of conditions that allow such activity of the ward which would allow to search and create an alternative social role for someone who is "a perverted minor". An educator-inspector obtains the status of an educator-partner and advisor who helps the ward in making his decision within the destigmatising activities.

Indeed, in the changes that we propose, we find that they are oriented around social strengths of facilities. The concept of social strengths we understand after Helena Radlińska – the founder of the Polish social pedagogy. Social strengths was a key concept in her understanding of community work.

This term emphasizes the educational and developmental aspects of acting in a particular community. This is also a term which describes the goal of the action (for the community) and the methods used to undertake this action (through the strengths of the community).<sup>29</sup>

Community work was broadly understood by Radlińska as "a conscious activity to reconstruct collective life based on eliciting, multiplying and improving human strengths, and organizing them to work for the good of people."<sup>30</sup>

Our suggestion is to make social strength a "driving force" of the change, not only of the ward himself, but also for the environment in which he will be living, since it is identity that is socially created.

Facilities allowed to discover such potential in form of employees open to negotiation and change, people who are respected by their wards and who are role models. The need to self-development and further education understood not as obligation but as choice is the evidence of social powers. Lengthy answers from the wards to open questions of our survey also reveal potential reformers in this group. Also, the general acceptance of the project, including our study that was seen from the principal, seems a potential in the realisation of the changes. There are plenty of ideas as to how to change the social idea in transforming institutions. In this work we suggest two, that are especially dear to us as they require engagement of the outside social force – the researchers (the authors of the diagnosis and this article).

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<sup>29</sup> I. Lepalczyk, E. Marynowicz-Hetka, "Helena Radlińska (1879-1954) – Poland: A portrait of the person and researcher, teacher and social activist", *European Journal of Social Work* 4/2 (2001).

<sup>30</sup> H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1961, p. 355.

## **4. Suggestions of activities resulting in changes at MOS and MOW**

### **4.1. A group discussion as a factor that initiates organisational culture of facilities**

As was shown in the diagnosis,<sup>31</sup> a significant problem in MOS and MOW functioning, are inefficiencies that make it hard to elaborate a coherent organisational culture at the facilities. On the one hand, internal communication is very weak or not authentic, which makes it impossible to negotiate the methods, aims or even individual aspects of operation for such facilities, on the other hand, there is no external communication that could result in outlining a mutual educational programme and exchange of experiences between educators and wards. As a result, organisational culture develops extremely poorly and no such mutual ground makes it easier to construct local, situational practices (e.g. violence) that often are not complying with educational assumptions of the facility.

Organisational culture as we see it here as patterns of meaning, frameworks of orientation, attitudes, may either be grafted or developed within the same environment. The first solution, even though much quicker, seems less justified if you consider certain organisation – social and cultural placement of the diagnosed facilities. This is connected with no good role models that would be grounded in Polish culture and family conditionings. Moreover, “external grafts” almost always increase the risk of rejection of the adopted “tools”, especially in poorly consolidated teams.

Constructing on the basis of the already present organisation culture resources is, on the other hand, a long-term process that may go into decades. The risk of rejecting such modernisation is low, close to zero, because it is gradually implemented and it is usually agreed with the teachers and wards, and with their co-operation.

Considering the above, it seems that the path of autonomic and mutual creation of organisational culture supported by external inspirations is the most desired one; inspirations could include e.g. German solutions. Apart from initiating the process of developing organisational culture, the following will become additional effects:

- integrating teams of teachers and educators (and eventually also wards) within the facility;
- empowerment of teams who in a bottom-up manner will shape their own cultural space;

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<sup>31</sup> M. Granosik *et al.*, *Klimat społeczny instytucji wychowawczych...*

- initiating and tightening co-operation between teacher and educators from different facilities so that they could undertake mutual activities and even formalise this co-operation through, e.g. establishing an association, which in turn, may have influence on public discourse that is one of the factors which construct the identity of a ward outside the facility;

- possibility of constant evaluation of the process of changes which is interference-free (including self-evaluation).

The general idea of the suggested changes is based on integrating changes, co-operation beyond institutions and interpretative assessment that will be made possible thanks to a tool such as a group/team discussion, which becomes a surface of exchanging ideas (communicative dimension), on the other hand, however, it is also a sensitive instrument useful in diagnosis and evaluation when it comes to structural phenomena, e.g. patterns of meaning, frameworks of orientation, which are a conjunctive space of experience.<sup>32</sup>

Because the process of changes in facilities should be two-fold (on the one hand a more general development is necessary in terms of cultural organisation and practical methodology of social rehabilitation, on the other, it will be necessary to adapt culture elaborated in this way and adjust it to the specific conditions of individual facilities); group discussions also should take place in varied settings:

- a) within teams working together in one facility;
- b) educators/teachers from different facilities;
- c) wards from different facilities;
- d) wards and teachers from different facilities.<sup>33</sup>

The idea of a group discussion that we refer to was worked out and described by Ralf Bohnack,<sup>34</sup> firstly as a research tool (method), however,

<sup>32</sup> K. Mannheim, *Strukturen des Denkens*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980 [English translation: *Structures of Thinking*, London 1982], p. 227.

<sup>33</sup> During our talks, also conversations with wards within one facility were considered, and wards and teachers from the same facility. The first ones were rejected because they bore too much risk of introducing an artificial conversation. Wards are most probably convinced that everyone knows what it is like in their facility, so talking about it to their peers would be rather unrealistic. Their utterances would be directed at the moderator, which would be in opposition to the idea of a discussion. In the latter case, our fears resulted from the relationship (often rather tense) between wards and educators/teachers in the facilities. This could be connected with the risk of wards being less active or, which is even worse, with their protective statements that would be untrue. Due to that fact, the best solution is to allow a discussion between wards of one facility and educators/teachers from another one because then they are in no way dependent on each other.

<sup>34</sup> R. Bohnsack, "Gruppendiskussion", in: U. Flick, E. von Kardorff, I. Steinke (eds.), *Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, Reinbek, pp. 369–384.

it is also used as a communication and evaluation tool.<sup>35</sup> Considering the complexity of aims of the solution suggested here, it is worth pointing out to three key aspects of organisation of such discussions: participants, place and topic.

### Participants

Basically, contrary to a focus interview, the aim of the discussion and also an important task of a moderator is to inspire self-propelled (i.e. spontaneous) threads of interaction between participants. Because of that, group discussions should include participants of similar experiences but nevertheless looked at from different perspectives (e.g. teachers and educators), which may be connected with different patterns of interpretation. It is the juxtaposition of such patterns that generates argumentation (rationalising of the undertaken perspective) and eventually, new solutions triggered by group creative potential. The latter one is the reason why participation in such discussion should be voluntary; it would be of particular asset if individuals were active and engaged (both critically and affirmatively), who care about the facility and who treat their work as vocation. It is these individuals who will later become agents of changes since the ultimate goal of the suggested process is initiating a real process of changes in organisational culture in the facility and not merely a discussion. In case of a discussion of wards with educators (d) it should be emphasised that participants may not remain in direct power – wards should be recruited from a facility that is different than educators.

By the way of such a discussion, there is also a script of conjunctive spaces of experiences to be noted, which – even though it is invisible to the participants themselves – may become a basis of a structural and interpretative diagnosis of an institution. Due to the diagnostic aspect of the suggested discussions, it is important to place a moderator wisely, a person who would be placed outside if possible (outside the formal order of an institution), but at the same time he should not reveal any interest in the discussed subject. The above mentioned features may be presented by a scientist (researcher), preferably someone with some practical experience close to the area of activities of participants, but not in the same area, so that there would be no instructing or too active participation of the moderator. The aim of the discussion is not

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<sup>35</sup> S. Krzychała, B. Zamorska, *Dokumentarna ewaluacja szkolnej codzienności*, Wrocław: Wyd. Naukowe DSW, 2008.

only to elaborate a certain solution, but most of all to create skills that would deepen/create some organisational culture, so that the process initiated in the discourse took place without the presence of the moderator. The academic status of the meeting host is also of analytical importance as an added value to the discussion could be evaluation of changes, which requires, however, knowledge on methods connected with drawing conclusions from group discussion scripts (formulating and reflecting interpretation).<sup>36</sup>

### Place of a discussion

Place of a discussion depends on the list of participants. In case of a discussion that includes the whole teams co-operating with each other on a daily basis (a), it could be their own facility. Presence of an outside moderator who is a guest would most probably additionally expand the opinions of participants by pointing to infrastructural space, context or certain tools used at work.

In case of other groups of participants (listed earlier in points b, c and d), it is highly recommended that their discussion be organised on neutral ground (e.g. university). Such setting will give every participant equal chances of showing their perspective and in case of a discussion with wards, it will lessen the burden of symbolic power (actual relations are already weakened by appropriate selection of participants).

Selecting a place of such meeting should be of particular concern. Wards and educators should feel safe and should fear no critique coming from the moderator, neither should they feel excessive attack from other participants (however, certain tension, controlled by the moderator, is recommended to generate authentic and self-propelled discussion). Placing such a discourse in university space may, to certain degree, ease too fundamental radicalism.

A discussion arranged in this way, apart from features listed earlier, could begin open communication between wards and educators. This will enable articulating one's own perspective, but also understanding other perspectives, without the risk of disciplinary consequences. Such a discussion will allow to diagnose the attitude of youth to the initiatives that are planned but also improve these projects thanks to the opinions of wards themselves and include them into activities as creators and not merely recipients.

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<sup>36</sup> R. Bohnsack, "Documentary method and group discussions", in: R. Bohnsack, N. Pfaff, W. Weller (eds.), *Qualitative analysis and documentary method in international educational research*, Opladen: Budrich-Verlag, 2010, pp. 110-112.

Work on changing the attitudes of staff to pupils – looking for strengths, talents could be another aim. It is essential to find something in each service users that he or she is good at, which gives them the advantage over the others (strength, courage, determination, endurance, patience, agility, sensitivity, sports or artistic talent, sense of rhythm, hearing, achieving results in computer games) and build on this, their self-esteem, which will enable them to come into active being in a group and in the wider community (they may initiate/organize something for others).

### **Topics**

Topics of discussions should be decided upon *ad hoc*, mainly by the participants, however, before this happens, the moderator should have a ready-made scenario with questions that will gently initiate the discussion and will “cool it down” or “heat it up”, according to the needs. Examples of positive practices used in facilities (e.g. German ones) could be a good opening of such discussion. They could also include new forms of work (recommended in this report). Problems to be avoided are such that could become a spring board for a radical critique of some participants; the reason of such a meeting is not to negate a certain activity but to work together on a common positive perspective that could be shared by all participants. This, however, does not mean avoidance of a confrontation with unwanted practices; it is good to assume the principle of showing the bad practices in a more abstract way (without pointing out to specific “culprits”), but showing the good practices and pointing them out.

Because discussions will also include diagnostic material, the following meetings may include issues worked out during previous evaluation. In this way, the process of changes will be permanently bonded to the diagnosis, which will make it possible to construct organisational culture more consciously. It needs to be stressed, however, that the moderator is not a party in this process of changes, but only suggests the topics of conversations, leaving the final decision to the participants.

### **4.2. Activities to provide empowering to the wards**

A suggestion to include the bottom-up initiated change in organisational culture of an institution as part of dynamism, cannot be the only tool of change since it has one disadvantage. Taking into account the need to include the wards’ perspective into the process of creating



organisational culture, which is confirmed by the expectation of both teachers and wards working together, it does not fully cover the key feature of social life at MOS and MOW – the non-privileged perspectives of the wards. To justify this thesis, we need to recall our diagnostic conclusions, particularly the way of defining the role of educators/teachers (defined both by teachers themselves and their wards).<sup>37</sup>

Defining the profile role of wards seems to be one of the most significant conditions of social atmosphere in the centres we diagnosed,<sup>38</sup> as it stabilises, unifies and normalises actions they undertake. The diagnosis showed that in a very generalised profile of a professional role of a reclamation and socio-therapeutic educator/teacher that is built up every day, he/she appears as a person who controls, disciplines and enforces the performance of tasks; such a person is also a therapist and a re-educator. Educators devalue the possibility of friendship with a ward, stressing the meaning of their mission in which they “protect the society” from them.

This diagnosis allowed us to introduce an outline of a definition of a ward that would be shared in the minds of pedagogical personnel in these facilities. A strong representation of choices that would point to the need of control and discipline, shows the perception of wards as “threatening”, “unpredictable”, the one that needs to be “controlled” through imposing discipline and enforcing task performance. It can be assumed that his current is interpreted by pedagogical personnel as a path of “learning evil”, resulting in negative, difficult behaviour and/or emotional problems (which is supported by the high ratio of choices underlining the meaning of re-education and therapy). Not surprisingly then, in the message that is the result of a statistical “spread of answers” concerning the importance of an educator, the ward is defined as a subject that the world needs to be protected against rather than the one that could become a friend. In such a context, it is hard to interpret the meaning of highly valued authority of an educator. Is it understood as a natural authority, or (considering the “bad habits” any ward is attributed with, such as difficulty in self-control, a threat that he is to others) is it rather someone others should be afraid of, someone who is “in charge”?

The analysis of the wards spread of answers to the question: *What do the educators in your facility most frequently do?* seems to show the reflection of the manner in which educators/teachers define their everyday professional role. Among the everyday activities of the

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<sup>37</sup> M. Granosik *et al.*, *Klimat społeczny instytucji wychowawczych...*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

educators, the wards gave the highest importance to three forms (with very similar frequency). It was caring for performing their duties (70.2%), preventing conflicts between the wards (67.3%) and solving conflicts between the wards (61.9%).

Similar conclusions were drawn from the analysis of the answer to the question about the areas of work with a ward that is troublesome. The biggest problem is seen by the educators in their "work with a psychopathic ward" (75.8%, including 43.2% as high difficulty) and related to destructive behaviour appearing as part of "the second life" of a facility (45.2%). "Work with an aggressive ward" was selected as problematic by 41.1% of employees.

A tendency in educators/teachers to see difficulties with a ward in their "sick" features is something that draws attention, this may lead to placing responsibility for everything that "is not right" on just one side, but also this may cause discrimination against those who are "different" – ill, unsettled or even "psychopathic". Subjects defined in this way are hard to be treated as partners who know what they need in their leisure time, what the reasons of conflicts are in the everyday life of an institution and which activities performed by educators/teachers are beneficial for them, etc.

Other diagnostic conclusions presented in the report may support this thesis. Research also pointed out to negligence in considering the wards' perspective in the process of defining the rules of social life of the facility and occurrence of aggression of educators/teachers towards the wards, which is of particular concern.

It would be naive to expect that group discussions were reflected in the institutional change in an equally strong way as the discussions of educators/teachers. This lack of balance shows that our suggestion needs to be supplemented with conditions that would additionally empower the wards in this process. Absent discourses require not only space which makes it possible for them to be verbalised, but they also need to be seen as more important in the dominating discourse. Otherwise, such space of a "minority" group may with time become not just a tool of transformation, but efficient manipulation that would justify the to date balance of power.

#### **4.3. Empowering and advocacy as ideas pervading the change with participation of wards**

When creating a group of wards that would be beyond any institution, the cognitive element would be of importance if it is complemented with empowering activities aimed at wards through developing

certain skills and increasing their contribution and engagement into the process of creating the rules of their functioning in facilities. Empowerment is understood here not just in the categories of increasing the sense of power of an individual over their life, but – mostly – as “using specific strategies that reduce, eliminate and reverse the negative valuation supported by string groups in society, valuation that may concern certain individuals and groups.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, we see empowerment as a “certain change of power in society, where the subject of its activities are not just the victims, but the social system shaped by these who are in power.”<sup>40</sup> In the context of suggesting tools of change, it is understood as a multi-level construction that covers intrapersonal, interpersonal and socially – political elements.<sup>41</sup>

In case of activities that are to empower the users of services provided by the institutions which – by its definition – limits any relationships with the external world (including the appealing structures), and even uses limiting them as an important element of punishment and reward system, planning a change on the basis of mechanisms that increase participation of the users of these services requires particular care and sensitivity to disproportions. Group discussions seem to be a tool of empowering participants through acknowledging them as experts in their everyday activities (institutionalised in this case), whose perspective is equal to the perspective of other subjects who create organisational culture of an institution. Although they were not designed with an aim to empower the participants of the study in its course but rather reconstruct and sensitize their perspective to the phenomenon described mainly by external experts. Just group discussions do not provide clear indications as to what should be done in situations of one of the reconstructed perspectives being not privileged while negotiations the organisational culture of an institution.

Therefore, enriching the idea of group discussions between wards with elements of social advocacy seem to make the formulated proposition a more adequate one for the needs of change which would make

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<sup>39</sup> Payne M., *Modern Social Work Theory*, Basingtoke: Macmillan 1991, p. 229.

<sup>40</sup> A. Gulczyńska, M. Granosik (eds.), *Empowerment w pracy socjalnej: praktyka i badania partycypacyjne*, Nowa Praca Socjalna Series, Warsaw: Centrum Rozwoju Zasobów Ludzkich, 2014, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> N. Wallerstein, “Powerlessness, empowerment and health: Implications for health promotion programs”, *American Journal of Health Promotion* 6 (1992); C. Rissel, “Empowerment: the holy grail of health promotion?”, *Health Promotion International* 9 (1994); M. Sarup, *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996; L. Williams *et al.*, “Upelnomocniające działanie społeczne poprzez tworzenie narracji kultury i tożsamości”, in: A. Gulczyńska, M. Granosik (eds.), *Empowerment w pracy socjalnej...*

the institutionalised environment more democratic, despite all inadequacies and conflicts being permanently inscribed in its nature. Additionally, the above mentioned activity may find its development in a further perspective of a public discourse as empowering within an educational facility must be connected with empowering within society which an individual is to eventually join and function in dignity.

Advocacy means representing the interests of the users of services to the individuals or social structures in power.<sup>42</sup> Activities in this field are “used so as to minimise the effects of stigmatisation, manifestations of discrimination and explaining the logic of ‘the majority’ to the representatives of minorities that are facing restrictions in case of deficiencies on the level that requires mastery”.<sup>43</sup> External subjects may become advocates for the marginalized group; it could also be a group who experiences problems that are shared by a bigger population whose voice they are trying to express and emancipate.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4.4. Participatory research with a group of wards

Empowering a minority or a group discriminated against in institutions and society is a terribly time-consuming process which needs determination and integrated activities of many subjects. However, any great change must have its beginning. Participatory research (PR) seems to be an answer to the needs to increase the potential of empowering of wards and their perspective in designing their activities.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> M. Payne, *Modern Social Work...*

<sup>43</sup> A. Gulczyńska, “Model radykalnej pracy socjalnej – analiza na podstawie badań nad wrastaniem społecznym nastoletniej młodzieży w wielkomiejskim środowisku życia”, in: E. Marynowicz-Hetka (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna. Podręcznik akademicki*, Warsaw: PWN, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> In report (M. Granosik *et al.*, *Raport pt. Klimat społeczny instytucji wychowawczych...*) we suggest introducing an institution of an independent spokesman for the wards of MOS and MOW. In our opinion, this is the role of social pedagogues whose perspective of reality seems to differ from the perspective of reclamation or psychology graduates. By stressing the need for an independent institution, we point not to the students spokesperson, but to the wards spokesperson who, having become familiar with their perspective, represent it in relations with the personnel representatives, support institutions in the process of democratisation and while introducing the bottom-up changes in the structures that are subjectively inaccessible to the wards, or they combine what is individual with what is systemic, thus defining the frames of the necessary changes on the local or legislative level.

<sup>45</sup> Nomenclature for the research that fit into the paradigm of engaged studies is various. The first issue in defining is the differentiation of participative studies and action-research. Here, we are closer to the stand presented by Kemmis and McTaggart (“Participatory action research. Communicative action and the public sphere”, in:

Participatory research “is to enable different groups, usually marginalised users of social services, to exist in the public and political discourse. This, a historic moment appears where there is a change in a role from researching the knowledge and its broadening to freeing the emancipation of the participants of the study, and this is only possible when they participate in elaborating the procedures and realisation of individual stages.”<sup>46</sup> According to Berghold and Thomas,<sup>47</sup> “participatory research is conducted directly with the immediately affected persons; the aim is the reconstruction of their knowledge and ability in a process of understanding and empowerment. In the majority of cases, these co-researchers are marginalized groups whose views are seldom sought, and whose voices are rarely heard. Normally, these groups have little opportunity to articulate, justify, and assert their interests. This is expressed succinctly by Fals-Borda and Rahman,<sup>48</sup> who define participatory action-research (PAR) as the “enlightenment and awakening of common peoples”, among other things.”<sup>49</sup>

During participative research, there is not just generating the theory representing the perspective of participants on an interesting phenomenon/problem that takes place, but also there is work on individual empowering of people and increasing their influence on social and political changes.<sup>50</sup>

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N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005, p. 563) who point out: “Not all theorists of action research place this emphasis on collaboration.” Participative research exposes the meaning not of an action that influences the course of study but it stresses the meaning of the process of collaborative research activities.

<sup>46</sup> A. Gulczyńska, M. Granosik (eds.), *Empowerment w pracy socjalnej...*, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> J. Berghold, S. Thomas, “Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion”, *Forum Qualitative Social Research* 13/1 (2012), art. 30.

<sup>48</sup> O. Fals-Borda, M. A. Rahman, *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research*, New York: Intermediate Technology Pubs/Apex Press, 1991.

<sup>49</sup> J. Berghold, S. Thomas, “Participatory research methods...”

<sup>50</sup> Literature provides various typologies of empowerment. One of the more common is the division into individual and structural empowerment. The first one includes “activities and processes that are to increase the control of an individual over their own life, equipping them with higher self-esteem, better perception of themselves, enriched with skills and knowledge” (O. P. Askheim, in: J. Szmagański, “Metody pracy socjalnej w kontekście funkcji prakseologicznej pedagogiki społecznej”, in: E. Marynowicz-Hetka (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna...*, p. 414). Structural empowerment “relates to social structures, barriers and relationships that sustain differences and injustice that lower the chances of controlling one’s own life. It is the aim in itself for the groups deprived of causative possibilities, emerged from that state and become capable of re-stating their status as equal and competent citizens in society. At the same time, empowerment is

There are different schools of development of methodology that is engaged and participative. Considering the conclusions of our diagnosis which – regardless of the studied aspect of social atmosphere in the facilities of MOS and MOW – presented the non-privileged situation of the wards in the process of creating formal rules of social life as the source of diagnosed problems, the school of participative research developed by Peter Beresford seems to offer a suggestion that is the answer to the need of changes.<sup>51</sup>

Beresford also presents a list of user involvement research as well as user controlled research. Considering the level of engagement of the users in the study, we may distinguish studies in which academic researchers and professional practitioners collaborate as well as studies in which the practitioners are either involved in the research or carry it out themselves with the support of professional researchers.

Problems at MOS and MOW defined in our diagnosis seem to represent the types of involvement of knowledge, research and social practice that for Beresford are a justification for developing participative research in social work and thus balancing the achievements in methodology of traditional research. In his opinion, regardless of the social nature of social work, individualistic approach to the users of services dominate.<sup>52</sup>

Dominance of this perspective is also characteristic for modern social work with its excessive reliance on medical and individualised interpretations that frequently approach social problems as if they were pathological. This is reflected, for instance, in frequent attachment to psychiatric and medical concept of disability and the theory of attachment.<sup>53</sup>

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a means to a change in the authorities" (O. P. Askheim, in: J. Szmagalski, "Metody pracy socjalnej...", p. 414).

<sup>51</sup> Peter Beresford is a professor of social politics and the director of the Centre for Citizen Participation at the Brunel University in London. He also manages the independent national organisation and the net for the disabled people "Shaping Our Lives" which associates the disabled and the users of ([www.shapingourlives.org.uk](http://www.shapingourlives.org.uk)). He is a long-term user of mental health services. He is interested in participation as educator, researcher, writer and activist. He is also a co-editor of *Użytkownicy usług, opieka społeczna i zaangażowanie uczestników*, published in 2012 in Research Highlights Series (A. Gulczyńska, M. Granosik (eds.), *Empowerment w pracy socjalnej...*, p. 9).

<sup>52</sup> M. Oliver, *Social Work With Disabled People*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983; D. Howe, *Attachment Across the Lifecourse: A Brief Introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; M. Davies, *Social Work with Children and Families*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> P. Beresford, "Upełnomocniająca wiedza dla upelnomocniającej pracy socjalnej (Empowering Knowledge for Empowering Social)", in: A. Gulczyńska, M. Granosik (eds.), *Empowerment w pracy socjalnej...*, p. 28.

Movements of service users, beginning with the movement of the disabled, have long been attacking the theories of social work. Beresford points to the period between the 1960s and the 1980s as the time of emerging of various organisations and movements of service users who showed their dissatisfaction with the received support and services. Among other movements, he lists the one of the disabled, users of psychiatric care services, people with difficulties in learning, elderly and HIV/AIDS positive people, and there, the movement of wards of care and educational institutions. "They were more connected with fighting for the rights than with searching for social care. They developed their own organisational cultures, ideas, theories, fighting methods and collective activities. They also began to influence politics and thinking more broadly."<sup>54</sup>

Movements of users „represent the determined attempts of people to speak and act on their behalf, to organise themselves and develop ideas, ways of work and their own cultures so as to achieve goals that they set themselves."<sup>55</sup>

These movements, seeing the connection between the traditional research and the discrepancy between the services and their users, started to be more active and most of all, they developed their own research – into their own users. Such research were carried out by: the users of psychiatric care, the elderly, people with difficulties in learning, with alcohol or drug problems,<sup>56</sup> etc., so these categories of people who usually are spoken of by experts from outside. Contribution of users into advocacy and empowering of marginalised groups is inestimable. Let's just mention that in the UK alone, research projects of participative character are treated as a priority when establishing research budgets and certain changes in legislation in the field of social care and work.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.5. Process of participative research with MOS and MOW wards

Caring for potential of empowering and advocacy in the participative research suggested by us with a group of bottom-up activated wards of MOS and MOW gave its general frames. Considering the key

<sup>54</sup> M. Oliver, C. Barnes, "Disability studies. Disabled people and the struggle for inclusion", *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 31/5 (2010), in: P. Beresford, "Upełnomocniająca wiedza...", p. 29.

<sup>55</sup> A. Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Palgrave, 2002, in: P. Beresford, "Upełnomocniająca wiedza...", p. 29.

<sup>56</sup> P. Beresford, S. Croft, *User Controlled Research: Scoping Review*, National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), School for Social Care Research, London School of Economics, London 2012.

<sup>57</sup> J. Berghold, S. Thomas, "Participatory research method..."



importance of independence of the constructed process from institutions, the moment of being recruited by a researcher – the initiator of a group of wards from different institutions would be a moment of transferring the research headquarters to the university or to any other – neutral place. The group should include several people the most.

The first stage following the recruitment of potential participants would be to create a team. This stage would include:

- explaining the reason for research performed by the researcher (initiator) and elaborating the way of common understanding for participants (co-researchers), setting norms of communication within the team, outlining the plan and the ways of its evaluation;

- appointing an advisory team whose task would be to help analyse the material, distance the involved researcher, assistance in taking decisions:

- methodological ones as preliminary frames of research are detailed and more precise, depending on the research problems that are discovered,
- relational ones, as the team becomes as if a social being whose key layer are relations within the group and relational changes in relations between its members in institutions.

The second stage would include the group discussions of wards described earlier (marked as c). Depending on the evaluation of group communication, it may be initiated by general questions about problems or difficult experiences as wards of MOS and/or MOW, or presenting youth with problems defined in our diagnosis.<sup>58</sup> The initiated discussions would not only verify the accuracy of hypothesis that are the result of our diagnosis, but they would also enrich the discussion by discovering its various differentiation. Consecutive meetings would have a similar course. They would begin with communicative validation, i.e. verifying accuracy of theses formulated by the researcher managing the group on the basis of its previous meeting and initiate a new discussion around a different problem.

During the third stage – choosing problems – participants would decide which of the issues are most important for them and should become the subject of their advocacy. A survey designed by them and carried out among their peers in their native institutions would serve to verify the importance of problems for other wards.

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<sup>58</sup> It would be worth considering whether the group advocacy should consist of wards of both types of institution or – considering other assumed goals – two different groups should be established.

The fourth stage, as may be assumed, would include not only preparation of their own research, its course, analysis and team interpretation, but previous introduction of participants into basic methodology.

The fifth stage is a discussion on the desired directions of changes in institutions and preparing a final stage – presenting the results of the survey in different circles – native institution, seminary with all local signatories of socio-therapeutic and reclaiming institutions, scientific conferences or media appearances.

The sixth stage would include group advocacy on changes in MOS and MOW institutions in environments listed as examples above. Other possibilities of group work popularisation are also assumed, e.g. publishing a research paper together with a researcher who initiates the advocacy group.

The last stage would serve as evaluation and – perhaps – would define further goals of mutual activities in a similar group form.

## 5. Conclusion

Theoretical perspectives and suggestions of activities presented in the article may seem radical and they probably are. Initiating a true internal dialogue that has not been undertaken for many years or has taken forms of ritual form of testing and presenting; it is not a simple task and that is why it needs unusual course of action. It is even more difficult to really empower these who have never in the history of corrective – reclaiming institutions had any saying on their own matters.

The above mentioned tendencies seemingly trendy, supported by the EU, connected with democratisation of social space and promotion of civil awareness, seem to favour the suggested changes, however, as practice shows, they frequently result in ritualised and superficial applications of the most fashionable ideas that more enable obtaining resources effectively rather than actual changes.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the whole idea of empowerment, or participatory action-research, as any other emancipating idea, may be a way of balancing the social changes, transformations in institution and system changes, and

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<sup>59</sup> See: M. Granosik, "Europeanization of social work: Some discursive side-effects in Poland", in: J. Csoba, F. Hamburger, G. Graßhoff (eds.), *Soziale Arbeit in Europa. Diskurse der Sozialarbeit, Europäisierung, soziale Bewegungen und Sozialstaat*, Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag, 2014, pp. 264–280.

constructing a common society, but also becoming a more advanced form of control, which – in turn – is a more sophisticated variation of even more scattered and hidden power.<sup>60</sup>

All these difficulties and weaknesses cannot, however, justify the lack of any activity and undertaking self-critical actions is only to safeguard from too fundamental application of any, even the most appropriate perspective. These changes are unavoidable, but it is important that they take place realistically and with all social partners considered, particularly the weakest and marginalised ones. This “consideration” means remembering that they may have a different opinion, different even to the one presented in this text.

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<sup>60</sup> See: M. Granosik, “Discursive participation of social work research – a critical perspective”, in: D. Paturol (ed.), *Recherche en travail social: les approches participatives*, Nîmes: Champ Social, 2014, pp. 116–132.

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