

# Summary

## Early Childhood Education – Between Instrumentalization and Accompaniment in Development

### Selected Aspects of Polish Reality

The principal subject of this study is early childhood, institutional education functioning in the dilemma rooted between instrumentalization and accompaniment in development. Similar dilemmas in Polish pedagogy are also described by the following authors (in alphabetical order): Katarzyna Gawlicz, Marzenna Magda-Adamowicz, Aleksandra Maj, Monika Mielcarek, Małgorzata Karwowska-Struczyk, Dorota Klus-Stańska, Aleksandra Kram, Kinga Kuszak, Agnieszka Olczak, Katarzyna Segiet, Waldemar Segiet, Lucyna Telka and other eminent authors, whose writing has provided inspiration for the author's theoretical reflections in this paper.

The author understands instrumentalization through unification, excessive standardization, excessive formalization of education, which in the modern world is taking on more and more new forms. Instrumentalization is directly related to the misalignment of stimuli to the capabilities and needs of the child, and seems to be dictated by the concern to provide the child with “a good education” right from the start, which “will pay off in the future”, and stemming from the concern to provide the children with a rich educational offer “in surplus”. The author's assumption is that solutions of this nature are not always beneficial and often curb the autonomy of the child. They also frequently have the character of behavioural training, block independent thinking and progressively inhibit children's creativity.

As Aneta Brzezińska-Gębicka puts it, one of the reasons why it is worth raising the issue of instrumentalising a child's education, especially in infancy and postnatal age, is the way adults marginalise the role of free play in bringing up a child. As the author notes, for contemporary “children - projects - programmed for educational and social success at the expense of sacrificing their childhood”, playing has become a privilege, while for parents it is “educational failure, a state of undeveloped boredom, an infantile and non-developmental category”.

The study includes the assumption that the working methods in nurseries often originate in the tradition of the directive, behavioral trend in education, but as Lucyna Telka notes, they also stem from the needs articulated by modern-day parents. Therefore, early

childhood education often has a dimension of formal education and, as in the case of Telka's earlier observations, what can also be often observed today is: "[...] the caregiver's effort in preparing classes: intellectual effort (idea and plan) and physical effort (aids, participation in...)". However, this "diminishes the manifestations of the child's activity: its spontaneity, initiative, different solutions applied".

Following Agnieszka Kram and Monika Mielcarek, Katarzyna Sadowska postulates that "there has been a change in the still-widely-held conviction that education only begins after the age of 3 and that small children should first and foremost be provided with proper care. This change is also visible among specialists." This belief is a manifestation of the infantilization of the child itself.

The study assumes that the answer to the educational needs of a child under the age of three could be to implement the concept of non-instrumental accompaniment in development. Accompanying in development, as a non-directive concept taking into account the child's resources and aiming at sustaining them with the participation of an adult who creates social and physical space for the child according to its current needs, seems to be a solution that would allow to design education in the educational constructivism while maintaining personalism and integral education assumptions. Accompaniment by an adult to a child can also be considered as bringing the child up to be independent, the extraordinary importance of which was argued by Kinga Kuszak, among other researchers.

The text discusses the place of a young child in Polish educational reality in terms of the Act on the Educational System and the regulations applied. It also seeks to define the tasks of a nursery school in the context of the "nursery law" and the terms of the child's developmental needs. Efforts are also made to acquaint the reader with the concept of the instrumentalisation of education as the opposite of education in natural situations.

In the discussion in Chapter Three, an attempt is made to describe selected concepts of non-directive ways of supporting the development of a child under three years of age. The fourth and final chapter presents the research methodology concerning courts and the opinions of young children's teachers on the implementation in nurseries of non-directive methods of supporting children's development and describes the results of research conducted among the respondents. This study is a natural continuation of the author's search for development-promoting solutions in early childhood education.

Since nursery education is fundamental education, it seems necessary to "penetrate" nurseries and to improve the practice of working with children up to the age of three. The reason for this is that although under Article 5 of the Law on the Care of Children up to the age of three, "[...] the minister responsible for the family [...] inspires research, expertise and analysis on the system of care for children under 3", these expert opinions often concern adults' labour market activity during their children's stay in crèches, less frequently, ways to support the development of the children themselves, and thirdly, the "professional intellectual life" of crèche staff, who as persons of importance in the life of the child, should have the right to special social respect and decent working conditions.

*Translated by Rob Pagett*