



The interdisciplinary approach of defectiveness from a societal point of view

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Diana Szabó



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Abstract

The results of international surveys prove that the societal mechanisms of discrimination can turn into decisive dimensions in the forming of the social system (Halász, 2001; Hradil, 1992). Educational inequity problems concerning handicapped students are really complex ensuing from societal inequity; and it is also influenced by several individual, societal, economic and institutional facts. Among the groups who live in marginal positions the most defenceless ones are the handicapped (Katona, 2013), as theirs are the worst schooling chances in the EU within the schooling age population (OECD, 2012). The aim of the essay is to circumscribe the definitions and the political sociological terms regarding equal rights of disabled people and further on it takes an interdisciplinary approach to present national and international scientific ways of thinking and understanding problems.

Keywords: discrimination, education policy, prejudice, societal integration, stereotype

Preface

Handicapped form one of the most disadvantaged groups of people in the European society, the lives most of them are not only rendered more difficult by their medical state but also by their societal circumstances. In the course of their successful integration into any societies handicapped people have to overcome a twofold obstacle. On the one hand they have to overcome the difficulties raising from their state and on the other hand those that are forced on them by the society. It is commonly known that the schooling chances and educational success of handicapped students lag far behind the expected rates and Hungarian schooling system is one of the most segregating ones (OECD, 2012; EADSNE, 2011; Birinyi-Szabó, 2014). The significance of this problem is proved since the Europe 2020 strategy looks on the creation of educational equity as a high priority initiative (European Commission, 2010). The Special Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2012) results show that it is generally believed by European citizens that Europe is still a debarring place and they frequently meet forms of discrimination. Among the main aims of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 which fits into the Europe 2020 programme one can observe the creation of equal opportunities, securing equal rights and the total elimination of discrimination against the handicapped in European societies (Commission, 2011).

The aim of this present essay on the one hand is to present disabilities from an interdisciplinary point of view and to show the societal judgement concerning the disabled within a national and international comparative framework. On the other hand it intends to sketch the current questions of equal rights regarding disabled people in outline and taking into consideration the aspects of educational policy as well.

The interdisciplinary approach of disabilities

The societal judgement of disabled people

The circumscription of the disabled population is not unambiguous but it can be uttered that the number of disabled people has increased all over the country. The author of this essay tries to make an attempt to define their approximate number relying on the representative research data of national and international statistics. In the EU every sixth person lives with a deficiency which means more than 80 million people (European Commission, 2010).

In Hungary according to the statistical results (Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), 2013) the number of the disabled people has increased significantly while their schooling indexes show hardly any changes and they still notably diverge from the schooling indexes of the average national population. In Hungary according to the results of the latest population census in 2012 there were 457 thousand people who lived with disability which meant the 5.7 percent of the whole population. In accordance with these census data 56 percent of these disabled people have only completed elementary education and the proportion of those who has not completed elementary education is

relatively high among the intellectually disabled and those who have speech and language disorders – referable to their young age - and among autistic people. However, 9-10 percent of the hard of hearing and the physically disabled people have a Bachelor or Masters Degree graduation, which is probably the result of their integrated education (KSH, 2013). The rapid increase in the number of the disabled can probably traced back to statistical and diagnostic miscalculations and to the fact that many people have taken refuge in disability pension in order to escape unemployment so they may not reflect reality (Nagy, 2005).

Researches on the above issue can also be found from sociological aspects in the fields of psychology, sociology, sociopedagogy and labour policy, which mainly deal with the disabled groups' lifestyle characteristics, with their emancipation and in connection with these with their employability and with the basic questions regarding their communication (Hatos, 1996; Bánfalvy, 2008). Eurobarometer in 2001 carried out a survey among 16 thousand European citizens and their experience was a positive attitude towards the handicapped while the very same survey in 2007 realised that most European citizens (79 percent) said that living with any kind of defectiveness means disadvantages in a society (European Commission, 2001; 2007). The Special Eurobarometer 2012 survey had the same outcome as in 2007 that today bias against the handicapped is a little bit stronger in Hungary than in the other states of the EU. In 2001 the pollees 72 percent supported the idea that disabled children should go to school together with their non-disabled contemporaries however the attitude of each country is still very different in connection with their schooling integration (European Commission, 2001; WHO, 2011). These days Belgium, Germany and Latvia are among the strongest opposers where special need students can only study in special institutions. The most receptive ones where the education of special need students' education takes place in inclusive classes are Iceland, Malta and Lithuania. However, there are countries where special need students have the right to choose to be educated either in inclusive classes, in special schools or in special classes in integrating schools. In Hungary the number of special education institutions is almost the same as the number of the inclusive classes so there are two possible forms of education lying ahead of special need students (WHO, 2011).

Prejudice, stereotype and discrimination

Those policies belong among the policies of equal opportunities and equal treatment that deal with people who are in unequal position either socially, economically or physically and for whom the government allocates state intervention, or it equalizes the existing differences or it tries to make them disappear. Concerning equal treatment individual behaviour types may arise: prejudiced behaviour, discriminative enouncements or thinking in stereotypes which seriously inhibit the handicapped from adapting themselves successfully to the society (Könczei, 2009).

Kövé (2006) in her work tabulated the main terminologies that have any influence on the equal opportunities of those who are disabled to show the differences. On the basis of

her work the chart has been completed. In Chart 1 categories have been attached to each terminology in order to make them more comprehensible.

Table 1. The comparison of the terminologies prejudice, stereotype and discrimination. Made by the author, based on Kövér (2006)

	Prejudice	Stereotype	Discrimination
Definition	It is an opinion, a judgement and an attitude that is based on no experience but, first of all, it is a form of judgement based on emotions (Aronson, 1995).	It is a group of negative concepts and prejudice based on distortion, exaggeration and simplification against a group, the individuals within the group are treated not individually but according to the fact that they belong to the group (Aronson, 1995; Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 2004; Zick, 2005).	Injurious treatment of certain individuals and groups or those actions that refrains them from achieving financial sources and benefits that are available for other groups, and also the individual is treated prejudicially just because one belongs to a certain group (Sik-Simonivics, 2006).
Forms of exhibition	Negative prejudice is not necessarily followed by negative behaviour or rejection. It can be uttered openly and directly or tactfully indirect and hidden ways (Allport, 1997; Zick, Krüpper and Heitweyer, 2010).		It always manifests itself in actions, which are very often structurally encoded.
Orientation	It can be either positive or negative.	It can be either positive or negative.	It can be either positive or negative.
Examples	Positive: all the left-handed people are talented. Negative: if someone avoids meeting handicapped people even in the streets just because one does not want to help as the presence of such a person is annoying to him.	Positive: the handicapped always smile. Negative: all handicapped are mentally retarded.	Positive: granted positive discrimination, accessibility. Negative: job applications are turned down because one is a person with special needs.

Characteristically negative prejudice as a social and psychological phenomenon is tightly connected to the people who belong to minority or handicapped groups as they are mostly the target of it. In our society – we can say – prejudice is relatively strong against the “foreign” ethnic groups – Romany, Jews, Arabs, Chinese – and the disabled. In Hungary there is a strong prejudice and stereotypes against those who have learning disabilities and in the background there is ignorance, a phobia of them or the lack of knowledge. Contemporary sociologists, psychologists and political sociologists search the rate of attitude, the reasons behind its emergence against the people with special needs, which means the core problem to their rehabilitation (Erős és Gárdos, 2007; Murányi, 2006;

Takács, 2007; Billédi, 2008; Laki, 2010). Their integration into the community is essential in order to make the receptive medium the least prejudiced towards them. Torgyik (2005) and Torda (2004) have found that the intensification and the correction of self-understanding, the development of one's knowledge of human nature, the understanding of the characteristics of the human nature and making one aware of the hidden prejudices and stereotype is an important aspect in overcoming prejudice.

Contemporary questions of equal opportunities regarding people with special needs

Equality (rightfulness), equal opportunity

Supporting equality or rightfulness and equal opportunities from the very beginning should be a common (EU) aim in education policy. Equality, equal opportunities and the question of inclusiveness are tightly connected to quality and efficiency, effectiveness. Equal chances are understood as the evincible elimination in drawbacks regarding the accessibility to educational services and equity as the evincible reduction of inequality in different educational results. An OECD report in 1997 thus explaining the phenomena of equity in education with a pedagogical and sociological explanation of the educational environment, where the individual has rights and opportunities to make decisions according to his abilities and where one is not influenced by stereotypes, one-sided demands and discrimination. This educational environment makes it possible, regardless of one's ethnic background, social status or gender, to develop skills and even more it provides access to a great deal of economical and social opportunities (OECD, 1997).

The White Book about Education (hungarian name: Fehér könyv az oktatásról) (2013) highlights equality and equity as those two factors that have an influence on the functioning of any educational institute with laying down the understanding frame and the principles of investigation from the social disadvantages and schooling failure points of view. As the contrary of the notions, mentioned in the subtitle, types of contest against exclusion and discrimination emerge in three perspectives in community policy (1) universal, human rights "European value"; (2) community – first of all left-winged – policy forming priorities; (3) aiming the foundation of educational system development emerging from politico-economical analyses (Halász, 2012).

We can understand the terminology of equality according to numeral dimensions. Among these the most important ones are the income, the poverty and employment rates, educational, health, ethnic and regional divergences.

Radó (2007a,b) has defined the educational equality among the different student groups along similar societal dimensions as it was written down in The White Book of Education, though he has also marked the possible outcome of the dimensions concerning the educational system.

Radó (2007b) the mapping of evolving inequity measures and the estimation of the relative importance of each dimension is called the educational systems equity profile in his essay. In the Hungarian educational system equity profile can be measured with inequity in education by the results and chances of those who belong to different student groups. According to this everybody receives so much financial and other share (knowledge and schooling also) as much one puts into the public good and this would mean the basis of educational equity. Certain inequities are unacceptable (e.g. ethnic differences), others are bothered by not the existence of it but by its quantity (e.g. the schooling differences of the special need students) (Tausz, 1998).

It is difficult to see clearly within the framework of the interpretation of educational inequity because of its divergent characteristics. The phenomena, educational equality, can only be examined in a wider explanatory span, for example what the welfare, social and economic inequities are in a country and according to them what the individuals' schooling chances are. The OECD (2012) inquiries made such comparisons possible when the countries were graded according to the different extent of their inequity. The social and economic inequities are measured with the so called Gini-index by economists.

Hereunder the educational inequities are going to be examined from the integrated education point of view. Since the results of the Coleman report (1966) and the PISA tests (2000, 2012) it is known how and to what extent social inequities within the public education system arise. The results of the above cited PISA-examinations correctly demonstrate educational inequities in Hungary. According to them the differences in the Hungarian students' scholastic performance is outstandingly influenced by the parents' qualifications and the student constitution within an institution (Knowledge and Skills for Life, 2001; OECD, 2013). The influence of the local social structure can be traced in the schooling system that mirrors social inequities. Educational deficiencies (low qualifications or rather the different labour market chances) impose a vitally negative effect on people's social structural situation resulting in a kind of segregation (Havas, 2008). The data of the OECD "Special Education Needs" and of the PISA examinations draw attention to numerous educational inequities such as the insufficient care of the special need students and to those enormous student performance differences that are determined by the parents' socio-cultural distinctions (Keller-Mártonfi, 2009).

The educational inequities concerning the special need students create a coherent set of problems. Educational policy is still looking for the answer to the questions having been raised during their integrated education. The problems pertaining to this issue have been defined by Radó (2007b) as follows: (1) the education of special need students for organic reasons. The education of children who suffer from different educational difficulties. Education of students who do not belong to the above mentioned category but for various reasons they need special educational services (like Romanies or migrant children); (3) Supporting education of the outstandingly talented – in certain areas – children to put forth their talent.

Nowadays, on the basis of Radó's (2007a,b) thought provoking ideas, the following education-political questions could be pointed out that are needed to be clarified: (1) Integrated education of special need students who take part in special education; (2) The educational environment and the quality of education of special need students who are integrated and take part in special education; (3) It is no longer a question anymore, with the spread of inclusive pedagogy, whether a special need student can successfully be integrated into mass education regardless to their disadvantages, but even more important questions should be answered, whether and how could the educational system be transformed and new educational environment be created to make them suitable for the large diversity needs of special need students (Györgyi-Kőpatakiné, 2010); (4) The integrated education of special need students who need high priority attention; (5) The education of the prominently talented special need students. The status of latter ones is not yet settled in the educational regulations either. (6) The teacher education and preparation of those who co-educate special need students.

The successful integration of the special need students is defined by the workmanship of the receptive educational institution and how it is able to grant integrity conditions. In order to make it possible for integrated education to reach its aim and for special need students to become full value members of a society the receptive characteristic of the whole educational system should be strengthened. As the more a society is stratified and organized along ethnic groups, the stronger are the inequities experienced in education and the less is its ability for compensation (Radó, 2000). While teacher training of special education teachers is one of the most important issues in the OECD member states, the teachers who take part in co-education in Hungary are not prepared for it in higher education (Györgyi-Kőpatakiné, 2010).

The Hungarian educational system nowadays does not grant/provide equal educational chances for the students who suffer from different types of disabilities from many aspects. The most important ones are the following: (1) Public education does not cover all types of disabilities. For students who belong to the seriously or multiply disadvantaged groups the present institutionalized educational system is out-of-reach in practice. Although their institutional generative education is legally provided, in most cases it cannot be fulfilled because the necessary facilities are missing and because of the lack of receptive schools it only remains a principal possibility (Keller és Mártonfi, 2009); (2) Good quality education is also out-of-reach (Keller és Mártonfi, 2009); (3) Reaching public utilities is also unequally provided for students in need depending on regional inequities and financial problems (Cs. Czaczhesz és Radó, 2003); (4) Györgyi and Kőpatakiné (2011) also place system-like inequities here as they are presented institutionally or in the form of inequity programs. They can be traced in school documents or in regional educational development plans; (5) For special need students transit is not ensured between institutions that provide special education and those that integrate special need students; (6) Educational terms and the chances for further education are also uneven.

The above considerations prove that situation of integrated education for special need students is iniquitous, and it is not always harmonized with equity rights and equal treatment ideas or with constitutional and international laws. National educational policy should make an attempt to draw special need students' educational terms nearer, as much as it is possible, to the system of those who are non-disabled. To this belongs the acceptance and introduction of that idea in practical pedagogy that special need students would be able to get education and those extra pedagogical services in those institutions that are the most optimal for them (Papp et al., 2012).

The success of special need students' integrated education is not only school structural and financial problem but it has also influence on social and education policy. Equality and education appear as factors that strengthen each other continually. We can only talk about quality education if it is inclusive and its aim is to ensure the participation of each student in the educational process (UNESCO, 2005). Initiation of the conditions for successful integration in public education can only be the result of a long-term developmental course. It is merely a question of time whether our education system will be able to create equality in such a manner that it will also be the measure of effectiveness, in other words what kind of extent of success will it be able to reach with given sources education equity (Halász, 2012).

Summary

This essay has made an attempt – following out the spirit of complexity – to circumscribe the definitions and policies regarding equal chances of the handicapped. It is clear that even nowadays discrimination, stereotypes, negative and excluding attitudes exist in common knowledge against the disabled and that has a clear connection with institutional discrimination either open or hidden (Eróss and Gárdos, 2007; Murányi, 2006). There is a growing demand to know the opinion and the attitude of disabled children, adults and of those nurses, teachers and parents who look after them about their integration in order to create really effective services and help their social integration with a more successful institutional system from the very beginning.

As it has already been unfolded in the “Equity, justice, equal chances” sub-chapter of this essay that educational inequality regarding special need students make up a correlative mass of problems and for what education policy is still looking for answers.

It has been clearly outlined while I was writing my essay that in order to integrate disabled people into society the operative inter-trade cooperation of science fields is essential. It is also important that beyond the homogeneous use of technical terms and interpretational frames in order to reduce unequal treatment it is essential to form receptive attitude and to reduce discrimination. Nowadays anti-discriminative regulations are getting widespread in the world; however we have got only little information about the mechanism of discriminative attitude and sociological exclusions. Researches that aim at testing the different types of discrimination and at mapping

prejudice or the questions of institutional education must form the objects of further investigations.

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