

## **EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS AMONG CHARGES FROM EDUCATIONAL CARE CENTRES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF LUBELSKIE VOIVODESHIP)**

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***Abstract.** In times of ongoing changes, schooling and education have become the areas at particular threat since they need to comply with the requirements of time and expectations of both the children and their parents or guardians. Education is perceived as the basic task in the life of each human being, conditioning his or her obtainment of education which determines chances of success in professional activity as well as participation in the social and cultural life. When a child is brought up outside the family environment, thus, in foster custody, the meaning of schooling and education becomes particularly crucial. The research, for the purposes of this publication, was conducted on the territory of Bialski and Krasnostawski districts, which are part of the Lubelskie voivodeship. Its implementation was planned within the framework of the project "Education, levelling developmental and educational deficits deficiencies of children under the care of family-run children's houses homes as well as the educational care centres care and educational institutions (on the example of the selected poviats of the Lublin province)". The method of diagnostic survey as well as individual research study were applied in the following research. Within the range of the survey, not only proprietary questionnaire intended for the dependants brought up at educational care facilities and family-type children's homes but also interview questionnaire dedicated for counsellors employed at both family and institutional facilities were applied. The individual case studies study of individual cases involved the use of an observation sheet and interviews with coordinators of the researched care and educational centres, directors of family-run children's houses. The subject of the article reads: educational problems among children from educational care centres. The aim of the research was to determine whether the charges of family and institutional facilities exhibit educational difficulties, how are educational gaps compensated, and what factors affect the proper satisfaction of educational needs? The aim of the research was to determine whether the dependants of both family and institutional facilities display educational difficulties. The author also attempted to answer the question how educational deficiencies are compensated and what factors influence the appropriate satisfaction of educational needs. The analysis of the results allowed to conclude that the foster care pupils display numerous educational deficiencies conditioned by previous educational negligence. The greatest problem for them is the acquisition of knowledge in the field of mathematics. A large group of children participating in the research (over 40 %) stated that there are no problems with studying at all. However, contrary to the statements of the dependants, educators and guardians argue that the main problem many dependants face are not only falling behind with the schoolwork and negligence, but also lack of regularity, lack of a learning habit as well as inability to organize learning. Among the indicators determining the*

*proper satisfaction of educational needs the following should be mentioned: location of educational care facilities; willingness and motivation to learn, time devoted to learning, dependants' age, lack of interest in studying, lack of educational-professional aspirations, lack of patterns connected with learning observed at home as well as pretty low level of intellect.*

**Keywords:** *Biała Podlaska powiat, educational care centre, educational problems, Krasnystaw powiat.*

## **Introduction**

In times of ongoing changes, schooling and education have become the areas at particular threat since they need to comply with the requirements of time and expectations of both the children and their parents or guardians. Education is perceived as the basic task in the life of each human being, conditioning his or her obtainment of education which determines chances of success in professional activity as well as participation in the social and cultural life. It is thus treated as an overall scope of actions, processes and conditions facilitating human development (Kwiecińska, 2000). School as an educational institution is designated to prepare young people for their socially accepted functioning, compliant with the applicable norms, patterns and values. Equipping a person in knowledge, competencies and skills allows them later on to fit well into the world of adults. The assumptions also encompass an institution which strengthens the correct socialization in a family and corrects any deviations from the accepted assumptions (Oliwa-Ciesielska, 2017, 76-77). When a child is brought up outside the family environment, thus, in foster custody, the meaning of schooling and education becomes particularly crucial.

In modern systems of compensation care the tendency of supporting the family, strengthening its potential without the necessity to separate children from their parents and placing them in care and educational institutions have been in place for several years. The European systems are somewhat different when it comes to activities undertaken in this scope. Nevertheless, a common direction is noticeable, which is the strive to overcome crises in families and the so called ecological approach, enabling children to be brought up in a familiar environment, being their own family, while at the same time supporting the family through activating its own capacities and the capacities in place within its closest environment (Róg, 2017, 185).

In situations of family dysfunctionality, especially in case of various types of negligence on the side of the parents, it often occurs that a child is placed outside of the family home. The country's task is to organize foster custody which may be of family nature (foster family, family-run children house) or of institutional nature care and education facility).

The subject of the article are the educational difficulties of the charges in foster care. The research objective was to establish whether educational and pedagogical difficulties are visible among the charges of foster care and to assess the compensation of educational deficiencies as well as determine which factors have an impact on the correct fulfilment of educational needs?

### **Methodology**

Researches carried out for the purpose of the hereby publication were realized in the educational care centres and family-run children homes within the territory of the Biała Podlaska powiat, situated in the eastern part of Poland, as well as within the area of the Krasnystaw powiat, located in the centre of the Lublin province.

Their completion was planned under the project “Education, equalising development and educational deficiencies of family-run children homes’ and educational care centres’ charges (on the example of the selected poviats from the Lublin province)” realized by the Department of Pedagogy of Pope John Paul II State School Of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska.

There are currently three facilities of institutional nature which operate within the Biała Podlaska powiat. Care-Education Facility in Komarno launched in 1997 which is a socialising institution which may accommodate 30 charges. This facility provides a 24/7 care and education to children who are entirely or partially deprived of parental care for whom foster care has not been found. It employs 14 educators. At present, the facility provides care for 25 children.

Another facility is Care-Education Facility in Szachy. It has operated since 2003. Independent living resembles the pattern of family life to a greater extent for its inhabitants. The facility in Szachy is designated for children above 10 years of age. It has 14 places at its disposal. It employs 5 educators. At present, 10 charges remain in the facility.

The last of the three analysed facilities within the Biała Podlaska powiat is the Care-Education Facility in Janów Podlaski. It commenced its operations in 2010. This facility was created on the basis of the former border guardhouse and its building was adjusted to the binding residential standards for 12 vacancies at its disposal. 5 educators work with the children who live there. There are currently 10 charges who occupy the facility.

For comparison, the second part of research was carried out in two facilities of family type in the town of Bohukały and in the Family-run Children Home in Neple. Both these towns form part of the Terespol municipality. Within the Biała Podlaska powiat there is one care-education facility of family type in the town of Żabie in the Międzyrzec Podlaski municipality. Unfortunately, despite the undertaken attempts it was not possible to gain permission for the conduct of

research in this place. Each of the indicated family-run facilities looks after eight charges.

It is worth noting that the facilities which function within the area of the Biała Podlaska powiat are located within the rural areas, therefore in order to gain counterbalance another part of research was carried out in the urban environment, within 4 care-education facilities in Krasnystaw, forming part of the Administrative Centre of Care-Education Institutions in Krasnystaw. There are 20 charges looked after by 12 educators within the above noted facilities. These institutions provide educational, socio-therapeutic, corrective and compensating classes. Appropriate treatment, rehabilitation and remedial classes are ensured in case of the disabled children since, contrary to the facilities from the Biała Podlaska powiat, these units also host the disabled children.

Researches carried out within the Biała Podlaska powiat took place in the third quarter of 2017, whilst within the Krasnystaw powiat-in the first quarter of 2018. The researches were of qualitative-quantitative nature. Initially, survey tests were performed on a relatively small research sample among 25 charges of care-education facilities from the Biała Podlaska powiat and 16 charges from the Krasnystaw powiat, within the age range of 11 to 20 year of age and 10 charges of family-run children homes from the Biała Podlaska powiat in the same age group. The facilities of family-run type do not function within the town of Krasnystaw. The applied technique was a survey with both closed-ended questions and open-ended ones.

Furthermore, 20 interviews were carried out with the selected educators from the care-education facilities as well as 6 persons running the family children homes. Both men and women were among the research participants.

In addition, under the study of individual cases observation sheets were filled out and the obtained information were supplemented by discussions with two coordinators of care-education facilities and a director of family-run children home. The observation, which was of participatory nature, whilst its objective was to investigate the situation of the tested institutions and mutual relations between educators and charges, somewhat enriched the obtained research material. On the other hand, they constituted a supplementation and completion of the missing information, allowing also for the explanation of doubts in the analysed issues.

## **Results**

Educational difficulties (difficulties in learning) which may be understood as the impossibility of reaching success in learning despite the correct level of intelligence, maturity in general development, remaining in the right cultural environment and proper didactic conditions for the acquisition of knowledge and school abilities (Dąbrowska-Jabłońska, 2005, 816). Sometimes, the expression of

learning disorder concerning a child's functioning in school is used in situations where his or her learning progress remains at a lower level than the expected outcome due to the child's age, the result of intelligence assessment and education level (Bogdanowicz, 1996). The phenomenon of school difficulties is uniquely significant since, as indicated by W. Pilecka, may have an impact on further life circumstances of people contributing to, among others, inadequate social-professional adaptation (Pilecka, 2005).

Types of experienced educational difficulties by the tested charges in foster care have been included in table 1.

*Table 1 Indicated difficulties in school education*

Types of difficulties	Institutional facilities in the Biała Podlaska powiat		Foster care		Institutional facilities in Krasnystaw powiat	
	Number of persons	Percentage	Number of persons	Percentage	Number of persons	Percentage
Problem with learning maths	10	40%	2	20%	9	56.25%
Problem with learning other science subjects	3	12%	1	10%	1	6.25%
Orthographic errors	1	4%	1	10%	1	6.25%
Problems with learning foreign languages	7	28%	1	10%	4	25%
Problem with learning history	6	24%	0	0%	3	18.75%
Problem with physical education lessons	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%
Other subjects	2	8%	0	0%	0	0%
Lack of learning problems	10	40%	5	50%	7	43.75%

*Note: research results do not sum due to the fact that it was possible to select more than one answer, the percentage was calculated for n1=25 charges of care-education facilities from Biała Podlaska powiat, n2=10 charges of family facilities of the Biała Podlaska powiat and n3=16 charges of care-education facilities from the Krasnystaw powiat*

On the basis of the placed data one may note that children who remain under the foster care indicate numerous educational difficulties, whilst the greatest problem for them is to acquire data in the scope of mathematics (40 % of charges from care-education facilities in the Biała Podlaska powiat and almost 60 % from the Krasnystaw powiat and 20 % of charges under the foster care).

Problems with learning history or foreign languages occur significantly less frequently. Unfortunately, contrary to mathematics which pupils must understand, learning history, English, Russian or another foreign language requires good and

trained memory and a lot of time devoted to homework. The conducted survey research showed that an average charge of the facility in Krasnystaw devoted on average an hour for learning and doing homework whilst a charge from the care-education facilities and family-run children homes from the Biała Podlaska powiat spent the same amount of time or did not spend at all the time doing homework. Small amount of time devoted to doing homework by charges from the care-education facilities was also noted by Waldemar Basak (Basak, 2012, 237).

Only some charges were diagnosed with dyslexia, dysgraphia or dysorthography and many times it stemmed from the fact that children often reached foster care while attending the last classes of primary school or gymnasium at which time no one diagnoses the charges under psychological-pedagogical clinic in terms of dyslexia.

Under the hereby researches, a significant percentage of the respondents noted that they had no problems with learning whatsoever. However, this is denied when we look at the replies of educators and guardians who claim that the largest problem for many charges is not only the backlog and negligence but also lack of systematicity, lack of the habit of learning, inability to organize work.

Marzena Ruszkowska states that low school achievements of the charges of foster care are conditioned by many risk factors which occur much more frequently in this particular group than in the overall population. Apart from this, these children, from the early years have been experiencing negative, traumatic phenomena, such as violence and various types of negligence, shortages, humiliations which may additionally deepen educational troubles. They usually have a poor vocabulary range, little or no knowledge of the world that surrounds them, lack of basic information on civilization advances (Ruszkowska, 2013, 78-79). Józefa Matejek writes that usually the charges of foster care present reluctance to learning, low aspirations stemming from lack of faith in their abilities and, in addition, their motivation is decreased by failures which they experience at school as well as problems with acceptance among peers. Thus, a diagnosis carried out in psychological-pedagogical clinic, the objective of which would be to explain the mechanisms standing behind the development, behaviours and the functioning of a child in a school environment is critical (Matejek, 2014, 98-99).

It should be underlined that children who reach care-education facilities and family-run children homes usually require undertaking compensation measures concerning equalizing educational shortages stemming from the previously stated negligence on the side of the family environment. It thus seems significant to check which forms of support may be granted to the researched charges. Breakdown of data has been presented in table 2.

Data placed within the table revealed that almost half of the charges under institutional care and 60 % of charges under foster care avail of the educator's or

guardian's assistance. It is worth noting that this type of support may be used by all charges, however, some do not show willingness to learn at home, whilst they justify lack of such willingness in the following way: "I don't feel like learning, I prefer to meet with my friends", "I don't like learning", "I don't feel the need to learn", "I would rather talk and laugh with my friends", "I don't know how to learn, I've never done it before". Answers of this type occur not only in care-education facilities but also in foster care; lack of support on the side of the guardians is treated as lack of such necessity, since a child can cope on its own.

*Table 2 Forms of granted support in educational difficulties*

Types of difficulties	Institutional facilities in the Biała Podlaska powiat		Foster care		Institutional facilities in Krasnystaw powiat	
	Number of persons	Percentage	Number of persons	Percentage	Number of persons	Percentage
Educator/Guardian's assistance in the facility	12	48%	6	60%	7	43.75%
Compensatory classes	1	4%	1	10%	0	0%
Tutoring	0	0%	1	10%	0	0%
Peer self-assistance/assistance of older siblings	5	20%	2	20%	2	12.5%
Classes at the psychological-pedagogical clinic	0	0%	0	0%	1	6.25%
Corrective-compensatory classes	0	0%	0	0%	1	6.25%
No support	12	48%	2	20%	8	50%

*Note: research results do not sum due to the fact that it was possible to select more than one answer, the percentage was calculated for NI-25 charges of care-education facilities from Biała Podlaska powiat, N2-10 charges of family facilities of the Biała Podlaska powiat and N3-16 charges of care-education facilities from the Krasnystaw powiat*

Very small percentage of charges from amongst all the researched forms of foster care availed of tutoring (for which there usually are simply no funds-institutional care, or possibilities of employing a tutor due to a large distance from the city-family care). Apart from that, as noted by Piotr Długosz, tutoring is mostly used by the youth from the families with upper socio-economic status, with cultural capital, high educational aspirations, undertaking education in prestigious schools and living in the cities (Długosz, 2017, 114).

Only some respondents availed of compensatory classes (which, in turn, are perceived as finality, since the children write that: "They don't want others to think of them as dunces", "they are ashamed of participating in this kind of classes"-

this situation concerns particularly the older charges with substantial educational backlogs stemming from environmental negligence).

Every fifth charge of care-education facilities uses assistance of older colleagues, or peers with better results at school. Often times this kind of help is a result of individual teacher's or school tutor's initiative. It may also occur that such help is sought from a child's older siblings.

Educational problems are often associated with school failures, understood as an incorrect way of functioning of a pupil in different areas, which stems from discrepancies between didactic and pedagogical requirements and the child's behaviour and the obtained by them achievements at school (Ochojska, 2018). School failures are treated not only as difficulties in learning, but also as inappropriate behaviours of a child (Kozieł, 2008), that is pedagogical difficulties which ought to be interpreted as congenital or acquired structures of one's behaviour, especially in case of children and the youth, shaped by the social environment, manifested in the behaviours which deviate from the accepted norms and patterns both in psychological and social sphere of an entity (Cudak, 2005, 818). Mieczysław Łobocki on the other hand considers that "difficult" children cause various types of trouble to others of pedagogical nature, as well as coping with themselves and the environment to which they are unable to adjust (Łobocki, 2004).

The researched charges especially those remaining under institutional care, in the opinion of the educators, cause large amount of trouble, which include: aggression, uncontrolled anger outbreaks, abuse of vulgar language, nicotine addiction, use of psychoactive substances, consumption of alcohol, selfmutilation, neglecting personal hygiene and chores, escapes from the facility they live in, skipping school, pregnancies among minor girls, ignoring requests and instructions of the educators at the facility and teachers at school, non-compliance with the rules in place both within the area of the facility and the school, unwillingness to learn, systematic delays in arrival to school.

Educators try to cope with this type of behaviours during individual pedagogical consultations or group discussions, applying positive reinforcement, using persuasion methods, being consequent in applied awards and penalties, entering into contracts with the charges, warnings, using the assistance of specialists, therapists, and psychologists.

Guardians consider the following as having an impact on this type of behaviours: bad patterns from their family homes, difficult family situations, parents' attitudes (i.e. not keeping promises, passivity, not being interested in child's affairs, not maintaining contact with a child), homesickness, lack of authorities, sometimes peer environment, low intellectual level, lack of willingness and motivation for a change, personal characteristics, child's age (i.e. Puberty), lack of feeling of safety and stabilization.



These answers have led to identifying a number of factors determining not only the occurrence of pedagogical problems, but also the didactic ones, such as lack of will and motivation to study, lack of interest in education, lack of educational-vocational aspirations, lack of patterns related to learning taken from family home, relatively low intellectual level, serious emotional disorders impacting educational progress, type of foster care. Guardians who run family-based facilities underline that it will not be possible to speak of educational success of a given child as long as his or her emotional problems remain unsolved which impact both troublesome behaviours at home and at school as well as the learning processes.

### **Conclusions**

The material obtained through research allows for the formulation of some conclusions:

- Children who remain under the foster care indicate numerous educational difficulties, whilst the greatest problem for them is to acquire data in the scope of mathematics.
- Very small percentage of charges from amongst all the researched forms of foster care availed of tutoring.
- Only some respondents availed of compensatory classes.
- Respondents cause large amount of trouble, which include: aggression, uncontrolled anger outbreaks, abuse of vulgar language, nicotine addiction, use of psychoactive substances, consumption of alcohol, selfmutilation, neglecting personal hygiene and chores, escapes from the facility they live in, skipping school and others.

### **Summary**

The charges under the foster care have been identified to experience numerous educational deficiencies caused mainly by environmental negligence. Learning science subjects and, above all, mathematics, causes significant difficulties for them. Despite the various educational problems, these children avail of compensatory and remedial classes extremely rarely and the only form of support is the assistance offered by class teachers, guardians, which is used normally only by the youngest charges.

This stems from the fact, as indicated by W. Basak, that before coming to the facility, these children were not taught how to be systematic, had no chores and often missed out on school, failing to acquire the learning skills in their early years (Basak, 2012, 237). In addition, the hereby researches revealed the impact of the type of foster care on the occurring didactical-pedagogical difficulties.

Foster care has proven to be a significantly better solution here and it stems from an ongoing supervision over the quality of child's functioning by two guardians, similarly to the situation in a family environment, whilst constant rotation of personnel in care-education facilities does not facilitate the elimination of educational-pedagogical problems experienced there.

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