



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Resource sheet

The pioneers in Poland

Section of the module / R

1/ Scope and content

This document is a presentation of selected pioneers of the disability issue in Europe.

Sources:

Życie w integracji. Stargardzki model lokalnego systemu rehabilitacji i wsparcia społeczno-zawodowego osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną; authors: Marian Anasz, Krystyna Mrugalska, Joanna Wojtyńska, Maria M. Ferenc, Warsaw, Polish Disability Forum, 2012

Taka dobra historia. Czterdzieści lat działań rodziców na rzecz osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Editor: Barbara Abramowska, Warsaw: PSOOU (Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability), 2012

2/ Background

Maria Grzegorzewska

A Polish pedagogue, professor, creator of special pedagogy in Poland.

Maria Grzegorzewska studied natural science at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, pedagogy in Brussels at the International Pedagogy Faculty led by Józefa Joteyko, and psychology at the Sorbonne where she received her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in 1916. Upon her return to Poland (in 1919) she worked at the Ministry for Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment where she was in charge of special education. In 1922, Maria Grzegorzewska established the National Institute for Special Pedagogy in Warsaw. Since that moment she focused her research on special pedagogy and teacher training. In the years 1930-1935 she managed the National Teachers Institute (Państwowy Instytut Nauczycielski). Her works pertaining to teacher training are regarded as her most significant scientific achievements.

Apart from the didactic work, Maria Grzegorzewska was also involved in other research and published extensively. She was the first person in Poland to professionally deal with special pedagogy. Maria Grzegorzewska developed an original teaching method called the "method of work centres" which is now extensively applied in special education.

The leitmotif of her work and her motto was: "There are no disabled persons – there are human beings". She uncompromisingly fought for a full right to education, work and respect for persons with disabilities.

Janusz Korczak

A Polish Jew, doctor, pedagogue, writer, journalist and social activist.

After graduating from medical studies at the University of Warsaw, Korczak began to work as a pediatrician at Warsaw's hospital for children. Soon he became popular as a doctor who served

the poor and did not expect money for his medical help. He expanded his knowledge in clinics in Berlin, London and Paris.

Janusz Korczak soon joined the “Help the Orphans” society and its initiatives. He was involved in the efforts to build a home adapted to the needs of orphans. The Orphan’s Home became his workshop and a place to conduct his research. That is also where Korczak developed his original system of upbringing and education.

After Poland regained independence [in 1918], Janusz Korczak and Maria Falska organised a care centre for children and orphans from Warsaw’s poor suburbs and for children of arrested, imprisoned and persecuted activists of workers’ parties.

In 1939 World War II broke out with Hitler’s Germany. The occupants invaded the capital of Poland and created the Jewish Ghetto where the Orphan’s Home was moved. Life in the Ghetto was marked by nearly two years of desperate efforts by Korczak (himself suffering from debilitating diseases at the time) to ensure food, firewood and medication for his 200 children. Korczak’s friends from the other side of the Ghetto’s wall made several attempts to secretly lead him out of the zone to a safe house in the city. However, the two hundred children looked after by Korczak couldn’t count on the same opportunity, so he heroically declined the offers to escape as he didn’t want to leave the children.

In Nazi Germany’s final effort to burn down the Ghetto commenced on 22 July 1942, transports of Jews in cattle cars left the holding area at the Umschlagplatz and headed to the gas chambers of Treblinka death camp. Transports for children were organised between 5 August and 8 August and included approximately 4,000 children from all orphanages with their teachers. This group also included Korczak’s children with their green banner of hope. Janusz Korczak did not leave his students: he carried the youngest of the kids in his arms to the cattle car. He then died a terrible death with all the children he had looked after. Janusz Korczak soon became a martyr and a symbol of the suffering of thousands of anonymous victims of Nazi death camps.

Krystyna Mrugalska

A Polish pedagogue, social activist, founder and long-term President of the Polish Association for Persons with Mental Handicap (current name: Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability).

At her initiative, a movement of parents of children with intellectual disability was established in 1964. Until today, this movement has been the avant-garde of changes to the system of care for persons with intellectual disability. Krystyna Mrugalska is the author of the concept early intervention in Poland and its key organiser.

Anna Firkowska-Mankiewicz

A Polish professor of sociology, psychologist, President of the Polish team of the International Association for Scientific Study on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASIDD) and the organisation’s active collaborator. Her research interests include health care and disability (particularly intellectual disability) as well as the issue of death and dying. Anna Firkowska-Mankiewicz is a pioneer of research on inclusive education in Poland.

Grzegorz Szumski

A Polish professor of pedagogy, author of the norms and curricula for the specialism of “Inclusive and Integrative Education” for students of pedagogy. Grzegorz Szumski is a pioneer of research on inclusive education in Poland.

Kazimierz Nowicki

A Polish disability activist who created and implemented a local system of rehabilitation and social/vocational support for persons with intellectual disability (often referred to as the “Stargard

model”). The model is an element of a systemic solution to the problems of persons with intellectual disability in Poland. It is based on individual plans and comprehensive recognition of needs, and uses the experience of the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability enriched with own experience and statutory services offered in accordance with the relevant Polish legislation. The system is an effective form of support for persons with intellectual disability. It offers long-term, comprehensive and multi-disciplinary support. The conceptual goals of the model focus on the development of the capacity to overcome functional constraints, barriers in the physical or social environment, as well as growing one’s own potential and a maximum of self-dependence to facilitate participation in the mainstream of social life.

Antonina Ostrowska

A Polish professor of sociology. The research she carries out focuses on social and cultural aspects of health, disease and disability, and the resulting social inequality. Professor Ostrowska is the coordinator and pioneer of cross-disciplinary disability research in Poland.

Barbara Gaćiarz

A Polish professor of sociology. Her work focuses on the institutional aspect of disability. She conducts research on the situation of disabled persons in Poland, and on the system which supports such persons.

3/ Objective

Part P – the document presents selected pioneers of the disability movement. The key selection criterion was an innovative component in the activities of the pioneers.

4/ Constraints

This document presents a subjective overview of persons important for the disability movement.