

Preparation of Socially Maladjusted Youth to Professional Independence in Youth Educational Centres

Przygotowanie młodzieży niedostosowanej społecznie do samodzielności zawodowej w młodzieżowych ośrodkach wychowawczych

DOI 10.25951/4667

Introduction

When educating young people entering adult life, one cannot forget what they expect from reality, what they want, what they will strive for and what is important to them. Young people expect from adults to be properly prepared for independent living, receiving careful education, and showing the right path. Without it, they get lost in the meanders of everyday life, in a reality that requires a lot and sometimes gives nothing in return. At the same time, it should be remembered that one of the aspects of achieving independence in life is preparation for the role of an employee.

When starting to build your own career path, you should not wait for an accident or opportunity, but plan and take appropriate actions yourself. The ability to make realistic decisions is important when planning professional activity. The way to acquire this ability leads through getting to know yourself and confronting your strengths with the requirements of the professions and the labour market. Only a person who is aware of his/her abilities and goals, as well as who knows the requirements of the professions and all other factors influencing professional success, may start to pursue a professional career. Such conscious functioning on the labour market is an element that young people sometimes lack, especially socially maladjusted, who, for various reasons, were placed in a youth educational centre. Thus, the activity of social rehabilitation institutions should contribute

not only to the compensation of any disturbances in behaviour, but also to proper preparation for professional independence.

Each facility is obliged to equip its pupils with the necessary competences and qualifications, which will become a ticket to independent functioning in an open environment. It is extremely important, especially within the framework of the self-empowerment process that begins with the placement of the charge in the centre. While reflecting on the process of becoming independent, it is worth pointing to the concept of independence by Grażyna Gajewska (2004, pp. 114–120), which assumes that a person leaving the facility should be prepared for independence in four basic spheres: family, social, civil, but also professional.

Taking up the issues of professional preparation of minors from youth educational centres was constituted by a small amount of research and literature. The available studies around the selected issue focus mainly on units imprisoned in pre-trial detention centres and prisons (Becker-Pestka 2019). However, little attention has been paid to the preparation of minors from youth educational centres for the profession (Mielczarek 2019; Kukla, Mielczarek 2019a; Kukla, Mielczarek 2019b).

Preparation of juveniles placed in youth educational centres for professional independence

In Polish law, socially maladjusted youth, thus causing educational problems, against whom institutional rehabilitation measures are taken, are referred to as “minors”. Pursuant to the Basic Law, this term will be used to refer to persons who: (Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 35, item 228, as amended, Art. 1, § 1):

1. are under 18 years of age, to whom the provisions of preventing and combating demoralization apply;
2. in relation to persons who have committed a criminal offense after the age of 13, but under the age of 17;
3. in relation to persons under the age of 21 who were granted educational or correctional measures.

In the case of minors, the court may apply educational measures and the most severe – correctional measure in the form of placement in a juvenile detention centre. One of the educational means at the court’s disposal is placement in a youth educational centre (MOW). The indicated facility is part of the institutional system of juvenile rehabilitation, to which socially

maladjusted youth are directed. The Centre for Education Development (ORE), acting as the central system of referring minors to youth educational centres (also to youth sociotherapeutic centres – MOS) indicated that in November 2019 there were a total of 95 such institutions in Poland. The structure of youth educational centres is divided into two types: social rehabilitation and education designed for socially maladjusted youth in the intellectual norm, and social rehabilitation and revalidation for socially maladjusted youth with mild intellectual disability. Most often, educational centres are run separately for each sex. There are coeducational institutions where boys and girls are present at the same time (6 centres) to a much lesser extent. Therefore, the structure of youth educational centres is divided mainly according to gender and the degree of intellectual efficiency. Establishing and running public educational centres is a task of the district. On the other hand, non-public centres may be established by legal and natural persons. Establishing and running youth educational centres and the rules of their functioning are specified in the provisions of the Act on the education system and the implementing acts issued on their basis.

The main goal of establishing youth educational centres is to eliminate the causes and manifestations of social maladjustment in minors, to enable them to acquire education, educate them in a sense of responsibility, introduce patriotic and pro-social values. It also means providing safe conditions for learning and upbringing, preparation for independent living in accordance with the generally applicable legal and social standards. Social rehabilitation institutions such as youth educational centres, as a rule, are open and usually do not have isolation barriers. In their structure, they resemble more generally accessible boarding schools. There are primary schools, trade schools, technical schools and high schools in the area of youth educational centres (Siemionow 2013, pp. 104–105). The employees of educational centres include management and pedagogical staff (educators, teachers), psychologists, therapists, social worker, nurse, instructors of specialist classes. Youth educational centres (also MOS) have been under the competence of the Ministry of National Education since 2004, after they were taken over from the Ministry of Social Policy (Kaniowska 2015, pp. 13–15).

Significant statistics are the reasons for placing minors in youth care centres. The table presents data collected by the Education Development Centre in 2014 and by the Supreme Chamber of Control (NIK) from 2017. Unfortunately, the data collected by the Supreme Audit Office did not take into account the percentage distribution. The table distinguishes those causes that appear in both statistical summaries by means of bold type and placing in one line.

Table 1. Reasons for placing minors in youth care centres (MOW)

Reasons for placing minors according to a survey conducted by the Department of Rehabilitation and Sociotherapy of ORE in September 2014		The reasons for placing minors according to the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) of 2017
Reason	Percentage [%]	Reason
Failure to complete school or study compulsory education	83.8	Truancy
Violation of the principles of social coexistence	62.7	Failure to adapt to the existing educational measure
The use of psychoactive substances	59.8	Taking dopes and psychoactive substances
Committing prohibited and punishable acts	51.3	Extortion and theft
Aggression and violence	46.2	The use of aggression and violence
Home escapes	42.1	Home escapes
Participation in negative peer groups	19.4	Participation in destructive subcultures, sects
Self-aggression (suicide attempt, self-harm)	15.3	Educational problems
Behaviour exceeding moral norms of a given society in the sphere of sexual relations	5.3	Premature sexual activity
Other	1	Addiction to nicotine and drugs
		Alcohol abuse

Source: own study on the basis of: Kaniowska 2015, p. 15; Supreme Audit Office 2017, <https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,15816,vp,18331.pdf> (access date: 13.11.2020, p. 31).

As can be observed from the table, excessive school absenteeism is the main reason for placing minors in youth care centres. Violation of the general principles of social coexistence as well as the use of psychoactive substances is also a large percentage. Every second juvenile committed prohibited and punishable acts, and less than half were aggressive and violent. It is very disturbing that slightly more than 15% of socially maladjusted youth attempt suicide or commit self-mutilation. It should be emphasized that the published research reports do not differ significantly from each other. This indicates that over the years 2014–2017 the reasons for placing minors in youth care centres were similar.

In youth educational centres, socially maladjusted youth receive education at various levels, including preparation for the profession. Nevertheless, the issue of preparing minors for professional independence in the conditions of rehabilitation centres in the literature is taken up relatively rarely. Thus, it seems unjustified to omit such an important area of human life as work. The idea of work has long been used as one of the basic methods in social rehabilitation. The two main representatives and precursors of Polish rehabilitation pedagogy, Czesław Czapów and Stanisław Jedlewski (1971, p. 370) classified the work as one of three, apart from learning and recreation, resocialisation forms of cultural engineering. Culture engineering uses work to initiate changes, stabilize them and sustain them. Work is related to culture because it is thanks to it that its products, both material and non-material, are created. Czesław Czapów (1978, pp. 262–266) pointed to three types of work fulfilling a servant role in the formulation of pro-social changes in social rehabilitation units: professional work, economic and order work, and socially useful work. By taking up work, an individual subject to the process of social rehabilitation acquires respect for work, learns responsibility and duty.

Stanisław Górski (1985, pp. 208–209), the author of the only methodology of social rehabilitation in Poland, also pointed out to the evaluating role of work in the process of social rehabilitation. The educational interactions described in the methodology assume, *inter alia*, that within the process of social rehabilitation, particular emphasis should be placed on shaping appropriate attitudes towards work. This is especially important since young people referred to social rehabilitation centres usually come from marginalized environments where work was not understood as a value, but as a necessary evil. Kazimierz Ptak and Cecylia Ptak (2007, p. 268) report that the work of juveniles from rehabilitation facilities helps to shape specific social roles, including the role of an employee. Thanks to work, maladjusted youth learn proper interpersonal relations and group cooperation. In social rehabilitation work, vocational education should not be ignored and played down. Obtaining it not only entitles to work in a specific profession but may turn out to be a key element for social reintegration (Woźniak 2015, p. 192).

Among the practitioners of social rehabilitation pedagogy, one can see the thesis that “one of the most important goals of social rehabilitation interactions nowadays is shaping the social, personal and professional competences of charges of various institutions” (Moczydłowski, <http://www.mowgoniadz.pl/files/s-awomir-moczyd-owski-kompetencja-spo-eczno-osobiste-i-zawodowe.pdf>, p. 1, access date: 14.11.2020). It is difficult to argue with this attitude,

especially since developing or shaping appropriate social, professional and personal competences undoubtedly translate into fulfilling social roles in adulthood. This aspect should be especially raised in the context of the process of gaining independence by the pupils, and vocational education itself is to constitute the basic educational value. Most often, rehabilitation centres leave adults i.e. those who were and still can be included in the process of becoming independent. The main element of this process should be professional activation. The modern labour market poses many challenges for young people looking for employment. The scale of difficulties faced by charges of social rehabilitation centres is even greater. Therefore, the need to analyse professional competences is justified not only at the level of economic sciences, but also on the basis of rehabilitation pedagogy.

The key issue is the professional fate of former charges of social rehabilitation institutions. Unfortunately, many institutions still do not monitor the further fate of their graduates, who ended their stay after reaching 18 years of age (Górka 2015, p. 12). Keeping detailed statistics on former charges can undoubtedly complete the role of evaluation. The lack of such activities adversely affects the social rehabilitation work because it is not only difficult to verify the correctness of the methods used, but also to know the scale of the individual's return to the criminal path or the success of the process of becoming independent. There are educational centres which publish questionnaires addressed to graduates on their websites. Such activities help the staff to make possible modifications to the previously used social rehabilitation interaction programs. Monitoring the fate of former charges is very important, if only because it helps to verify the issues of preparation for professional independence.

According to the research by Justyna Siemionow (2012, p. 106) on the fate of graduates of youth educational centres and youth socio-therapy centres, a small percentage of this group undertakes further education, but also permanent employment after leaving the facility. The biggest problem is those minors who reach the age of majority before completing a given educational stage. In theory, they can finish their education in a given school year, but only in the year in which they are 18. However, this requires the appropriate court approval. From the research by Arkadiusz Kamiński (2011, pp. 11–29) it can be concluded that the vast majority of former charges of male youth educational centres started work. In the first outlet, this indicator was at the level of 77.9%, while in the second one it was 81.8%. The opposite tendency was observed in the group of girls, as only 35% of former charges started their professional activity after leaving the centre. The most common forms of employment undertaken

by minors were temporary or seasonal work. The report on the entry into the labour market of young people at risk of social exclusion shows that after the age of 18, minors from educational centres return to family homes. Only a few of them continue their education and get a profession (Kwiecień, Miszczuk, Spudy 2014, p. 12). In the interviews conducted for the “Life coaching” project, the staff of youth educational centres pointed to a number of problems that make it difficult for their students to start an independent life after leaving the facility. One of the elements mentioned concerned the lack of appropriate support programs taking into account local job offers (<https://docplayer.pl/4000750-Analiza-indywidualnych-wywiadow-poglebonych-raport-czastkowy-zadanie-5.html>, access date: 13.11.2020).

The pupils of youth educational centres are sometimes surrounded by a specific map of problems and threats, among which there are those affecting professional independence. Young graduates of educational centres have difficulties with employment, further education or their continuation, or the lack of trust in them on the part of the society. Juveniles are often characterised by significant school delays, sometimes reaching two or even three years. Learning usually ends when you reach the age of majority, which is tantamount to no further obligation. As a result, this results in the lack of a learned profession, and the courses offered by public and private institutions require a significant financial outlay, which is a barrier (Siemionow 2013, p. 18).

Elementary comments seem to be Barbara Górka’s considerations on the preparation of juveniles in rehabilitation and sociotherapeutic centres for professional independence. These proposals focus on including the subject of the labour market and entrepreneurship in the education programs, but also on shaping one’s own professional career. Such classes should be highly practical and based on cooperation with local entrepreneurs. For some graduates, this would give them a chance to gain valuable experience, and perhaps, over time, to find employment. It is also an opportunity to get to know the labour market and confront it with other proposals in other parts of the country (Górka 2015, p. 12).

In the comments submitted by the Ombudsman for Children together with a team of experts, it was emphasised that pupils of rehabilitation and sociotherapeutic centres during their stay, acquire identity parameters that can be described as parameters of “the pupil’s identity”, not “the identity of a young person” (Ombudsman for Children, https://brpd.gov.pl/sites/default/files/standardy_ochrony_praw_dziecka_-_ebook.pdf, access date: 13.11.2020, pp. 98–126). After leaving the centre, minors cannot function in commonly

accepted life and social roles, because during their stay they are not socialized to basic roles (the role of a boy or girl, friend or colleague, man or woman, husband or wife, father or mother, employee, young citizen). These conclusions lead to reflection on the further life fate of graduates of social rehabilitation centres. The period of adolescence is the right stage for building the foundations for future professional and social activity. Disruption of this stage will result in great difficulties in presenting socially accepted roles, including the role of an employee (Górka 2015, p. 12).

Education is strongly stressed by social situation. It determines life prospects in the global world. One of the factors of marginalization is the lack of appropriate education. Having an appropriate educational diploma can significantly reduce the risk of unemployment, low quality of life or poverty. Education is a kind of guarantee for a dynamically developing world, and at the same time uncertain times. Among people who have a university degree, the unemployment rate is still lower, salaries are higher, and it is easier to find a job. Appropriate educational qualifications do not give you the full chance to achieve professional success, but their lack may guarantee failure (Długosz 2013, pp. 154–155). In the past, it was often emphasized that graduates of vocational schools constitute the risk group. This dependency was pointed out by Zbigniew Kwieciński, who concluded that

for a significant part of young people, to be on the threshold of the basic vocational school means a feeling of being thrown out by fate, by the environment, by school, by one's own neglect on the dramatic trajectory leading to collapse, to be permanently the worse, those at the bottom, constantly threatened, and maybe never happy and maybe always helpless in this colourful, flickering world of consumer and joyful offers, having fun, enjoying the life of educated and wealthy people, known from street, commercials, TV series and colourful weekends (Kwieciński 2002, p. 12).

After many years, the basic vocational schools were replaced by first and second-cycle professional schools due to the education reform. In recent years, there has also been a noticeable tendency for graduates of vocational schools to find a job more easily, and their earnings often exceeded those of people with higher education.

When discussing the preparation for professional independence of minors, it is worth considering the phenomenon of educational exclusion that affects them. Undoubtedly, access to education plays an important role in vocational education. It should be noted, however, that it is limited to young people

directed to educational centres. The educational measure that is applied to a young person should take into account not only the judgment, but also his individual characteristics and predispositions. Accordingly, it is imperative that the measure applied does not act as a punishment for the individual, but takes into account, first of all, his educational and development aspirations. Meanwhile, in practice it is quite often different, and the issue of education is not prioritized. Placing a minor in a given centre sometimes depends on the availability of places.

The collected data show that in mid-2019 there were 4.1 thousand youth minors in 95 youth care centers. It is a number that takes into account the students in the intellectual norm and with a slight intellectual deficit. Special education is organised for minors placed in youth care centers. Each institution includes at least a special primary school or a special secondary school. The detailed distribution of individual types of schools is illustrated in Table 1. The data presented in Figures 1, 2 and 3 are not generally available. In order to obtain them, the Center for Education Development in Warsaw was asked to make them available to the authors of the article.

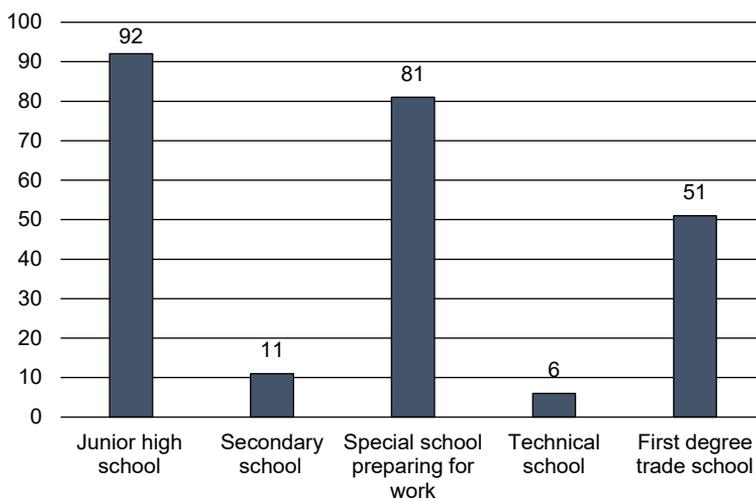


Figure 1. Education at youth care centres (MOW) in the 2018/2019 school year

Source: own analysis of data obtained from Centre for Education Development (ORE).

Figure 1 shows that 51 out of 95 institutions operating in Poland offered vocational education. To the smallest extent, youth educational centres educated at the technical school level ($N=6$). It should be emphasized that

this level of education also prepares for the profession, and at the same time allows to take the Matura exam. In 11 facilities, minors could study in a general secondary school. The largest educational offer in youth care centres was education at the lower secondary school (N = 92) and primary school (N = 81) levels. Some educational centre provided more than one level of education. This procedure seems right, because a minor, upon completion of a given stage of education, does not have to change the centre in order to continue further education.

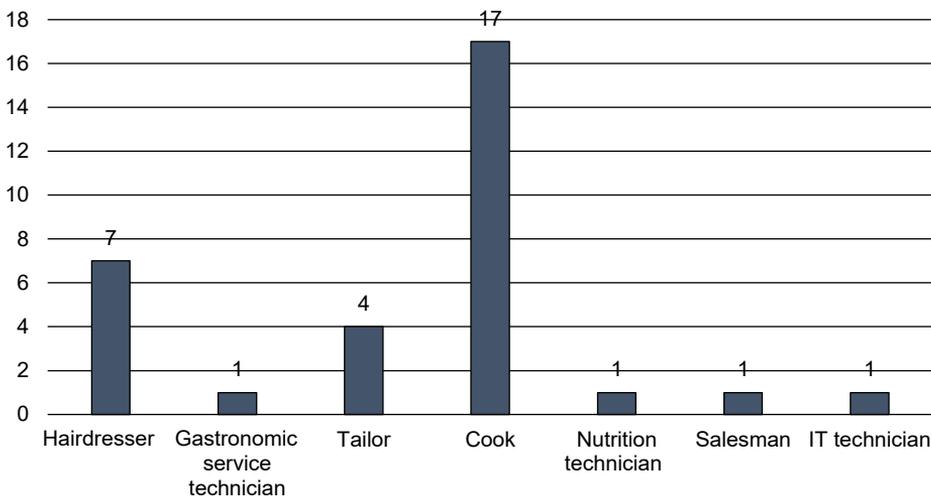


Figure 2. Vocational education of girls at youth care centres (MOW) in the 2018/2019 school year

Source: own analysis of data obtained from Centre for Education Development (ORE).

The comparison no. 2 shows that the greatest number of youth educational centres educated girls in the profession of a cook (N = 17). To a lesser extent, education could be obtained in the occupations of hairdresser (N = 7) and tailor (N = 4). The individual institutions were those educating in the profession a gastronomic service technician (N = 1), nutrition technician (N = 1), salesman (N = 1) and IT technician (N = 1).

Figure 3 shows that the greatest number of youth educational centres offered education for boys in the profession of a cook (N = 18). This is the same situation as in the case of institutions for girls. There were fewer centres where education in the professions of locksmith (N = 9), carpenter (N = 8), fitter of construction and

finishing works (N=8), car mechanic (N=6) was conducted. Two institutions each trained as bricklayer-plasterer, baker and IT technician. The rarest form of education for boys was a tinsmith, a confectioner, a hairdresser and a varnish worker. Individual centres offered education in these professions.

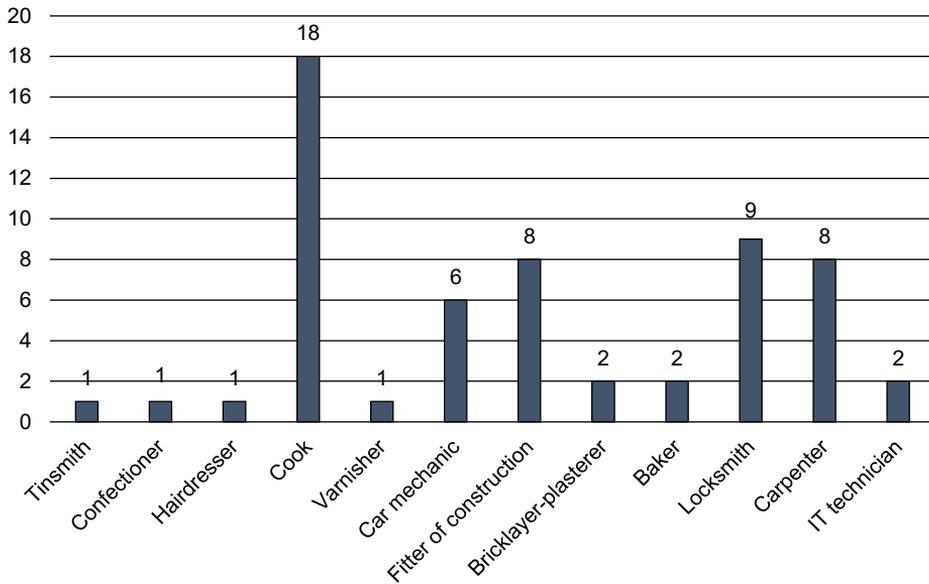


Figure 3. Vocational education of boys at youth care centres (MOW) in the 2018/2019 school year

Source: own analysis of data obtained from Centre for Education Development (ORE).

On April 11, 2019, the subcommittee for vocational training of the parliamentary education committee meeting took place. The participants of the conference dealt with education in youth educational centres, youth social therapy centres, as well as voluntary labour camps and shelters for minors. The aim of the meeting was to work out the best possible solutions conducive to the preparation for professional independence of young people staying in social rehabilitation and sociotherapeutic centres and learning in an open environment – voluntary labour corps. A position was developed that special branch schools operating, inter alia, in youth educational centres, like generally accessible branch schools, are to be obliged to organise education that meets the needs of the modern labour market. The new sectoral education set up along with the education reform is to be based mainly on cooperation with the

employers' community. The head of the trade school is immediately obliged to establish valuable cooperation with the employer competent for the profession or industry to which the profession will be assigned or with the person running an individual farm before introducing a new profession to school education. The information obtained from the above-mentioned institutions; officials of the Ministry of Education concluded that their directors undertook such actions. These efforts consist in particular in analysing the labour market, conducting extensive cooperation with district labour offices, obtaining information from alumni in which professions they would like to study, collecting information in the local environment about the demand for employees. The final effect of this is to introduce new fields of study to schools, but in line with the needs of the local labour market. Examples include such professions as: locksmith, building and finishing works fitter in construction, machinery and equipment fitter, hotel service worker, gardener, confectioner (Komża, <http://wartowiedziec.pl/edukacja-kultura-i-sport/50456-ksztalcnie-w-mow-ach-mos-ach>, access date: 14.11.2020).

Conclusions

Planning a professional career is a stage that every young person should face. Work should not only be a source of income, but also own satisfaction, passion and a field for pursuing own interests and personal development. The moment when it comes to making a decision on vocational education should be a decision-making process that takes a long time. It is extremely important because the choice of the right profession affects not only the professional career, but also the personal life (Kukla 2012, p. 173). The socio-economic reality, the difficult process of transition to the labour market and maintaining a once-occupied professional position, are conducive to building mosaic, unique and non-linear professional careers that go beyond the usual patterns. In planning a career, the abilities to make realistic decisions are used. The way to acquire this ability leads through getting to know yourself and confronting your strengths with the requirements of the professions and the labour market. The dynamics of the modern world means that we are often forced to make difficult professional decisions. Current technological progress causes rapid changes in market trends. Some jobs will become past jobs, and some will become jobs in the future. All these consequences and dependencies make it difficult for minors not only to take up professional activity, but also to maintain

it. The pupils of social rehabilitation centres are not used to independent decision-making, they often do not notice cause-and-effect relationships, have low self-esteem. Ignorance of one's own strengths, limited influence on the choice of education in a social rehabilitation facility makes preparation for professional self-reliance among a group of minors much more difficult than in youth receiving education in public schools. Nevertheless, it is worth engaging the pupils to receive vocational training, encourage them to participate in various professional courses and internships. It also seems important that the teaching staff of youth educational centres encourage minors to take up paid work during longer leave, for example during summer or winter holidays. An equally valuable and effective method in choosing a profession is professional pre-orientation, which helps to define professional predispositions and competences (Mielczarek 2018, p. 166).

It would be good if the education and preparation of minors for professional activity could focus on such professions that will give the opportunity to find a job after leaving the institution. Education in the conditions of institutional rehabilitation should be a priority task, and its implementation should involve not only teachers, but the entire teaching staff. The limited educational offer of youth educational centres, most of which is dominated by vocational education, is a kind of educational exclusion of maladjusted youth. A question must be asked whether such professions as: cook, hairdresser, tailor, construction worker, locksmith or carpenter are the ones that satisfy the educational needs of maladjusted individuals. It is indisputable that in many cases such an educational offer is commensurate with the individual predispositions and abilities of the pupils, and the offered professions give a chance for professional success at lower levels.

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SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to analyse the preparation of minors staying in youth educational centres for professional independence. This issue was considered extremely important, especially in the aspect of the process of becoming independent, which is carried out by the institutions, to which each pupil is subject. The starting point for the chosen topic is the legal aspect of the juvenile and the organisational structure of youth educational centres. The main part of the text focuses on the idea of applying work in social rehabilitation with socially maladjusted individuals and their vocational training.

KEYWORDS: socially maladjusted youth, minors, youth educational centre, preparation for the profession, juvenile rehabilitation

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł jest próbą analizy przygotowania nieletnich przebywających w młodzieżowych ośrodkach wychowawczych do samodzielności zawodowej. Kwestię tę uznano za niezwykle ważną, zwłaszcza w aspekcie prowadzonego przez placówki procesu usamodzielnienia, któremu podlega każdy wychowanek. Punktem wyjścia dla obranej tematyki stał się aspekt prawny nieletniego, a także struktura organizacyjna młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych. Zasadnicza część tekstu skupia się na idei stosowania pracy w resocjalizacji z jednostkami niedostosowanymi społecznie oraz ich kształceniu zawodowemu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: młodzież niedostosowana społecznie, nieletni, młodzieżowy ośrodek wychowawczy, przygotowanie do zawodu, resocjalizacja nieletnich

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Pedagogika / Pedagogy

Przysłano do redakcji / Received: 9.02.2020

Daty recenzji / Revised: 1.09.2021; 25.09.2021

Data akceptacji do publikacji / Accepted: 15.11.2021