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Space and place – reflections in the context of inclusive education

Przestrzeń i miejsce - refleksje w kontekście edukacji włączającej

Abstract: The concept of space and place is currently experiencing its renaissance in the discourse of social sciences and humanities. Their understanding, interdependence, and importance for the processes of individual and social (group) development of students, especially in the social and cultural dimension of space, seem to be invaluable in planning changes in the educational space of an inclusive school. The assumption of inclusive education in Poland is education of the highest quality for all students, regardless of the resources and potentials they have. The aim of the reflection undertaken in the text is to show the theoretical foundations and justifications for recognizing the importance of place and space in building educational space in inclusive education, taking into account its relational and community character. Understanding the meaning of the concepts of space and place, conditions and regularities that are related to the location of individuals and groups in space are the basis for all activities aimed at shaping space in such a way that it enables the development of people and social groups. People value space and determine the ways in which they use it. Space determines their behavior through the quantity, quality and availability of places where they can satisfy their needs, including the need to act. However, it should be remembered that the “production” of space depends on the habitus assigned to a human being, structurally fixed in inclusion or exclusion (Löw, 2018). In this context, it seems important to reflect on increasing the role

of students with developmental disorders in building a common educational space, which may indirectly change their social position.

Keywords: space and place, inclusive education.

Introduction

Inclusive education is an important area of consideration in pedagogy and special education. The very idea of inclusive education has a history, both in terms of scientific research and legislative activities undertaken on the international arena. Already in the 60s-70s of the twentieth century, activities were undertaken around the world to promote the idea of inclusion (Wizner and Mazurek, 2000). Initially, the focus was on preparing education open to the admission of children/pupils with disabilities (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2005, 2010; Lechta, 2010). Over time, it was decided that its essence should be to notice the diverse needs of all students, not only those with serious developmental deficits. According to David Mitchell (2005, p. 1), the concept of inclusive education goes beyond the specific needs resulting from disability and includes considerations relating to the sources of disadvantaged situation and human marginalization. The beginning of all activities related to inclusive education should be the recognition of the phenomenon of exclusion (Walton, 2015, p. 10). This will only be possible if the reflection covers a broad social context, not only educational, phenomena. This should mainly concern the issue of social inequalities, marginalization or exclusion, but also the redefinition of the sources of learning and behavior, taking action, the formation of a system of values and, finally, the cultural contexts of social life (Mitchell, 2005, p. 4). Identifying the causes of the determinants of the phenomenon of educational exclusion, understanding them, can contribute to creating the possibility of implementing the assumptions of inclusive education with its flagship slogans of full participation and participation in education of the highest quality (Walton, 2015, p. 13).

Inclusive education is not only intended to enable full participation in the learning process for all students, but also to equip them with the competences necessary to create an inclusive society in the future. A society in which people, regardless of the differences m.in. in health, fitness, origin, religion, are full members of the community and constitute a valuable resource for the development of civilization. An inclusive community culture is based on ensuring equality and fairness for all learners. Diversity is treated here as social capital that stimulates development, forces to confront beliefs and attitudes, increases the adaptive potential of the subject, including openness

to new experiences and readiness for change. It is these qualities that are crucial in the process of finding oneself in a dynamically changing reality (MEN, 2020, p. 19).

The assumptions of inclusive education (education for all) in Poland

“are not a complete novelty under Polish law. Every person studying in Poland, including every child, has the right to education in accordance with individual predispositions and abilities, carried out together with peers as close to their place of residence as possible. The regulations guarantee the right to social inclusion and the right to freely express views on matters concerning one’s own education and to treat them with due attention, according to age and level of maturity” (MEN, 2020, p. 13).

The concept of an inclusive school emphasizes the importance of creating an educational environment where every student has an equal opportunity to succeed. An important issue for considerations in relation to inclusive education is the reflection undertaken by Mel Aiscow, Tony Booth and Alan Dyson on how schools should change in order to meet the postulates of inclusive education as education for all. The authors point out that in most countries the path to achieving the goal was similar. At the beginning, inclusive activities focused on people with disabilities or people with special needs in the area of education, and through subsequent activities it will lead to a moment when it will become important to identify the conditions of education and prepare the school to accept students with various needs (not only related to disability), which can be identified with the slogan - school for everyone - and further - education for all. In education for all, we focus on the needs of all students regardless of their resources or potentials (Aiscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006). This approach clearly indicates the educational environment and its important role in the inclusion process. It is necessary to change the organizational culture, the way of functioning and school practice so that they take into account the diverse needs of students in a given community (Booth and Aiscow, 2011, p. 5). In this context, the reflections of Zenon Gajdzica are similar, as he refers to the perspective of creating a community in his reflections on the concept of inclusive education in Poland (Gajdzica, 2022). However, it can be understood in different ways, depending on the stage of development and implementation of the concept of joint education of students. Gajdzica thus points to the stage of: the common space of education and education

(understood as physical presence in space); focusing primarily on the needs of pupils requiring specialist support; focus on the needs of all students. The current Polish experience of inclusive education places us somewhere between focusing primarily on the needs of students requiring specialist support and focusing on the needs of all students (2022, p. 15).

The issue of space should be looked at from many perspectives, and its conceptualization as a concept should take into account a broad interdisciplinary context (Gajdzica, 2018, p. 57).

Yi-Fu Tuan, the precursor of humanistic geography, points to the reciprocity of the concepts of space and place. A place is what gives a sense of security and stability, while space gives freedom, opens you up to new experiences. By its nature, space is more abstract than a place, but it becomes so when it is known and given value. As Tuan points out, a space perceived as well-known becomes a place (1987, p. 99), and the meaning given to it by man makes it a place that is known, permanent and safe (1987, p. 121). In experience, the meaning of space is often superimposed on the meaning of place (Tuan, 197, p.16). Places are phenomena born out of the encounter between man and space. "A place is always someone else's, it arises as a result of the overlapping of topography and biography", is "(...) "humanized space" that people try to know, understand and give it a personal, but also social meaning" (Wróbel, 2022, p. 55).

Understanding the meaning of the concepts of space and place, conditions and regularities that are related to the location of individuals and groups in space and the resulting consequences for their functioning, are the basis for all activities aimed at shaping space in such a way that it enables development, is safe, friendly, activating, gives a sense of belonging, or at least is not restrictive.

Adapting the space, in this case educational, to the needs of a diverse group of students may seem a difficult or even utopian task, because experience tells us that the greater the diversity of needs or potentials, the more challenges and requirements to meet. Usually, however, as experience tells us, the barriers are actually in our minds. Becoming aware of how space and places affect the processes of individual and social (group) development seems to be crucial for overcoming the limitations inherent in ourselves.

Space and place as a subject of consideration in various scientific disciplines and their importance for inclusive education

The concepts of space and place and reflections on them, as well as the relationship and importance of these concepts for human functioning and development, are present in the interests of numerous disciplines and scientific fields. As Maria Mendel (2006) points out, they can be found in philosophy, which provides theoretical foundations for meanings and concepts (space and place) based on the obvious existential relationship between man and his environment.

We can talk about four main philosophical concepts of understanding or perceiving space. In the ontological concept, it has an absolutist character (the metaphor of the box). Space (and time) is the place where things are, at most it is the place where there are places for things. In the epistemological concept, space is subjectivist (the metaphor of glasses). It is a category of the human mind, a way of looking at reality, a kind of matrix each time imposed on reality. The physical concept of space refers to its relativistic-attributivist understanding (the metaphor of the coordinate system). According to it, space (and time) are attributes of matter itself, they are a coordinate system for relations between things. The anthropocentric (anthropological) concept of space, or as Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz points out, the hermeneutic concept of space (the metaphor “stone – lizard – man”), perceives it (space) as a creation of man, his way of experiencing the world. Only in this sense is space not associated with time. It can be recognized regardless of the existence of temporal relations. Space “is perceived through the relations between things”, which results in the “de-absolutization of space” (Buczyńska-Garewicz, 2006, pp. 52, 69).

In sociology, on the other hand, it is assumed that man cannot exist outside of time and space (Löw, 2018, p. 25). However, space was often treated here as a material object (Giddens, 2003; Parsons, 1977), which reduced it more to the environmental conditioning of human functioning and development than to an important category to be recognized, both in the theoretical and empirical scientific dimensions. Over time, however, as Martina Löw points out, the importance of space also began to be appreciated in the field of sociology.

Florian Znaniecki points to the humanistic meaning of space. People value space and determine the ways in which they use it. Thus, the recognition of the meanings of space is possible in its individual (human) experiences. But the experiences of space are qualitatively diverse, indivisible, and changeable, just as people are different and their experiences changeable. Therefore, the

experience of space can be assessed by them in various ways - positively or negatively (Znaniecki, 1938, p. 91). Znaniecki points out that space has not only a material dimension, but also a symbolic one, and through social marking it acquires an intrinsic value (1938, pp. 91-94).

In this respect, the position of Bohdan Jałowiecki is similar, as he points to at least the duality of space. On the one hand, it is an abstract idea, but also a property of matter, a natural environment created in the course of evolution, as well as a human, cultural and social creation, created by a man, a group or a human community (2010, p. 19). As Jałowiecki points out, space determines human behavior through the quantity, quality and availability of places where man can satisfy his needs, including the need for human action. Thus, it also becomes a carrier of emotions and is marked by values (2010, pp. 23-24).

Henri Lefebvre also points to the social dimension of space. He recognizes that space is a socially produced product. There are three dimensions of it, which are at the same time the dimensions and areas of its production. These include: spatial practice – relating to everyday activities, relations between people in space and objects in space; representation of space - it is related to the conceptualization and perception of space, it is a physical space depicted by means of specific solutions, it is a dominant space, and at the same time it creates the possibility of domination; space of representation – in turn, it includes the sphere of symbols, cultural codes, ideas about space (Lefebvre, 1991). Therefore, people not only live and act in space, or produce it, but also give it meaning and assign values. The space in which people live is thus not passive and neutral, but created and recreated thanks to human activity. As Lefebvre points out, this means that space can be the subject of struggle for dominance and conflicts (1991). This issue is also referred to by Edward T. Hall, who, pointing to the existence of non-verbal and purely cultural forms of spatial communication, was convinced of the existence of a “hidden culture” (1984, p. 34) operating its own codes, among which the main one is the spatial code, called the “hidden dimension” or “silent language” (1987, pp. 105-111). In this way, Hall points to the culturally relativized nature of human space, in which hidden cultural codes can be the cause of conflicts and misunderstandings between representatives of different cultures (1984). This - silent language - in Hall’s concept is culture, and hidden cultural codes are non-verbal means of communication, characteristic of every society. They can be found in three cultural layers: communication as culture, culture as a specific space, and in unnoticed levels of culture (Hall, 1987).

Space can therefore certainly be considered complex and multifaceted, but also closely related to the general mechanisms of social development (Lefebvre, 1994). In this context, according to Löw, it is necessary to reformulate the sociological concept of space as actively produced by people. It is also important in this context that the creation of space depends on many factors, including the functioning habitus, “structurally fixed inclusions and exclusions” (2018, p. 258).

Jałowiecki points to certain parameters of the mutual location of individuals and groups in space, such as: location, direction and accessibility. In relation to location, one can speak of a central or peripheral location of people and social groups in space. The central location gives a sense of influence, the possibility of using goods. This is where the exchange of information takes place to the greatest extent, it is here that it is cumulated. The people or social groups in the centre decide to a large extent which information will be considered important, which problems will be important for consideration and solution. Being in the center is therefore a sign of the strength of a person, a social group (Jałowiecki, 2010, p. 30), it is a privileged position.

If this category were to be applied to the educational situation of students, e.g. with disabilities, then their participation in segregated forms of education in particular seems to be the one that exemplifies the peripheral position. Over the years, this has resulted in the fact that educating students with disabilities has not been an important topic of consideration in the area of education. It can be said that this group, or its representatives, were not able to introduce information about the educational situation, possibilities and limitations and the effects that resulted from it, as important or worth learning.

The concept of inclusive education is therefore an attempt to change the peripheral position of both the issue of disability, diverse developmental and educational needs, and the education of these people. It is not a matter of making these issues dominate the theory or practice of education, or of giving them a central importance, but of attracting researchers and practitioners as much as those relating to the education of students without developmental and educational disabilities. That is why, among other things, nowadays the term “inclusive education” is used more and more often, but rather education for all. It is important to change the school in such a way that it better meets the needs of all students by including a group of students with disabilities in the mainstream of education.

The second parameter of the mutual location of individuals and groups in space is - direction. It can be referred to, for example, the categories: front

- rear, right side - left. Front - is identified with rank, importance, privilege. Similarly, evaluative connotations are associated with the terms right/left, where the first of them is associated, in most languages of the world, with righteousness, honesty, as opposed to synonyms associated with the second of them – unsuccessful, harmful.

The third category is related to the availability of space (Jałowicki, 2010, pp. 30-31). In the field of sociology, this category is referred to the boundaries of territories and areas. Some are formal in nature, others are conventional. The important thing is that we have openness at one pole and closure at the other. Closely related to this category is another one – the category of transition. Jałowicki describes it as “all kinds of doors, gates, gates, thresholds and bridges” and indicates that they determine the scope of interiority and exteriority, they are the basis for controlling exchange with the environment (Jałowicki, 2010, p. 32).

With regard to the issue of inclusive/for all education addressed in the text, the category of transition can be symbolically understood as building understanding and understanding for the perception of value in diversity. Opportunities for students to function in a common space, regardless of what their capabilities, resources, potentials are and to what extent they are limited for various reasons. This will make it possible to share a common space and function in it on an equal footing.

All these categories, as Jałowicki emphasizes, “play an important role in the process of perceiving, producing, marking and assimilating space. They are so deeply encoded in our psyche and experience that we perceive them in a subconscious way, treating them as natural components of space” (2010, p. 33). If any of these elements are missing, a person feels lost and anxious (Jałowicki, 2010, p. 33).

This understanding can be related to the specific need for the stability of the environment, its unambiguity and predictability. In the concept of social comparisons, social psychologist Leon Festinger points out that the need to maintain a sense of normality, predictability and unambiguity of one's own life is one of the basic human needs. When one of these needs is frustrated, i.e. there is difficulty in understanding oneself and the surrounding world, affiliative tendencies appear in people. People want to be together to understand what is happening by observing each other and restore a sense of normality. Affiliative tendencies lead people to compare themselves to others, but this can lead to an even greater sense of abnormality in themselves, which can result in a shift in attitude from approaching people to wanting to distance oneself from them. This can occur especially

when the comparison results in shame and a sense of being inferior. Such a comparison effect can effectively block affiliate tendencies (Festinger, 1954). This way of understanding could become an argument for maintaining the homogeneity of groups, e.g. school groups, because it would potentially result in a lower chance of feeling inferior, for example in comparing students, e.g. with disabilities, with non-disabled students. Nevertheless, the continuators of Festinger's thought came to less deterministic conclusions over time. It was pointed out that it is important in this process with whom we will compare ourselves and that both the comparison - up - and - down - can bring pessimistic and optimistic results. To describe the comparison in a nutshell, upwards – that is: others are better than me – can result in the feeling of being inferior, but at the same time give hope that if someone succeeded, then I can succeed as well. Comparison – downwards – gives a sense of satisfaction, but also anxiety – that is: if they failed, I may not succeed one day (Yberma and Buunk, 1995). In this context, Stanisław Kowalik points to the need to arouse affiliative tendencies in the case of educating people with disabilities in inclusive forms of education (2001, p. 51). Instilling affiliative tendencies in students is not only about nurturing the diversity of experiences, but also about equipping the person with coping mechanisms for dealing with the emotions that arise in connection with it. There is no doubt that the implementation of the postulates resulting from Festinger's concept in relation to some students of inclusive schools, e.g. students with ASD, will require the transformation of the educational space and the introduction of adaptations to it, which are still not the reality of most Polish schools. In this case, for example, creating places where the student can calm down, where the access of external stimuli is limited. This can be achieved through a well-designed space for joint learning, including a space in its social dimension, where diverse experiences of meeting and sharing by people with different resources and potentials, with the presence of effective support, can serve to build affiliative tendencies in each student.

However, it is important to remember what Jałowiecki points out, that “a person in a space devoid of cultural archetypes [patterns of reacting and perceiving the world] feels bad” (2020, p. 33). One of them is the hierarchical nature of space and places, which Pierre Bourdieu draws attention to. As Bourdieu claims, space is always hierarchical in the sense of social meanings, and the place of an object (a person, a social group) in the space determined by the surrounding space determines the social hierarchy. Location in physical space is therefore a reflection of social position, just like

occupying specific places in the space of rooms or halls (Bourdieu, 1996 after Pachura, 2021, p. 20).

In this context, in relation to inclusive education, it seems very important to take care of changing unfavourable social positions, e.g. people with disabilities or with various developmental and educational difficulties. Numerous studies from recent decades have indicated an unfavorable situation in this area of students with developmental disorders and educational difficulties (e.g. Janion, 2001; Chodkowska, 2001; Bąbka, 2003; Wiącek, 2005).

Isolation, rejection and exclusion were common experiences of a large percentage of students, e.g. with disabilities (e.g. Mahler, 1993; Silver 1995; Chodkowska, 2004; Musialska, 2011; Jaskulska and Poleszak, 2015). Nowadays, we can still observe diverse forecasts regarding the acceptance of students with particular types of disabilities as peers. Teachers in mainstream institutions indicate that at the stage of preschool education, the most vulnerable to peer isolation are students with hearing impairment, chronically ill students, and moderate and severe intellectual disabilities. At the stage of early education (grades I-III) and in the older grades of primary school, pupils with motor disabilities, multiple disabilities and moderate and severe intellectual disabilities (Chrzanowska, 2019, pp. 167-174).

Past experience of integration forms of education (special classes in mainstream schools, classes, integrated schools) has also clearly shown that in many cases of school practice, pupils with disabilities in an integration class were physically separated (a separate place in the classroom space for a group of pupils and their support teacher). It was then that attention was drawn to a specific form of integration, which was defined as locational integration (Hulek, 1987), formal integration (Maciarz, 1987) or institutional integration (Krause, 2003). It meant the presence of students, e.g. with disabilities, in the space of mainstream institutions, but it was not associated with its (space) adaptation to the needs and abilities of students and did not have a positive impact on building a community. It was rather pointed out as the lowest dimension of integration with a simultaneous lack of interpersonal and intrapsychic integration (Krause, 2003). It is difficult to talk about such a space in the context of a common place, the feature of which, as Mendel points out, is precisely commonality (2017, p. 284).

We get attached to places and this is one of the primary human traits (Copik, 2014, p. 180). Man distinguishes his own and safe (closest) area from space, and behind him there is always a smaller or larger area of familiarity that determines belonging to a specific community. The community shares the same values, and its members cooperate with each other (Tönnies, 2008,

p. 39) and these activities are interrelated, aimed at achieving a common goal, good for everyone. In contrast, there is an ordinary community (association or association after: Tönniesem, 2008), i.e. a group of people who share the same space, time and situations. They act in a community, sometimes even in a similar way, but in a sense next to each other. In a community, the common good is more important than the person, the community cares about the good of the person. A community can educate, support a person in shaping himself (Lendzion, 2010, p. 18). Nowadays, however, the disappearance of communities is pointed out because, as Zygmunt Bauman claims, their formation is a difficult task to accomplish due to the increasing fragmentation of human identity (2008, pp. 10-11). Despite the fact that man is aware of the value of community, at the same time he has a strong need for individualism. The attitudes that build the community are: solidarity and opposition (as the need to seek one's place in the community, and thus fuller participation in it). On the other hand, the attitudes of conformism and avoidance pose a threat to the community. An alienated person, deprived of authentic participation in the community, can only seemingly participate in it, adapt without conviction, which leads to resignation from oneself in acting together with others (Wojtyła, 1994, pp. 326-329). In these different dimensions of space: personal, life and ecological (Jałowicki, 2010, p. 34), or public, private and intimate (Nalaskowski, 2001, pp. 33-34), people try to participate and at the same time reconcile them. It is more difficult the more they are divided, the more they differ.

The importance of space and place for the effective implementation of the idea of education for all

In the pedagogical reflection on the space and place in education, one can refer to the views of Maria Mendel, who points out that education always takes place "somewhere" and has "its place". Places are what people make them and therefore should be understood primarily as a cultural artifact of a basic (primary) character. From the pedagogical point of view, this constitutes the need to form closer links between education and the places where it takes place (2006, p. 23). Mendel, in his reflections on the pedagogy of place and the very concept of place, indicates that it is "pedagogical" (2006, p. 32). The process of education and the place where it takes place are characterized by the reciprocity of relations. Such a place thus becomes a "place of education" (Mendel, 2006, p. 23). Such an approach is characteristic of Martin Heidegger's (1977) phenomenological ontology. The human-place relationship is not only about physical being in a specific place,

but about constructive reflection related to it. This leads to the perception of place as a phenomenon thanks to which man constantly becomes himself, joining in the participation of building meanings (Heidegger, 1977, Buczyńska-Garewicz, 2006). The constructivist perspective of perceiving place thus allows us to conclude that “places are not what they are, but are what people take them to be. Above all, their meanings are important” (Mendel, 2006, p. 29). Place, as Mendel points out, is relational and dialogical (2006, p. 32). The essence of the human-place system is not passive belonging, but the mutual relationship between them. We must be aware that we can change places so that they are what we want, but at the same time they will change us (Mendel, 2006, p. 32). Man shapes the environment and it depends to a large extent on him what it will be like. Noticing the needs of different groups of people and taking into account the maximum possible spectrum of criteria for these needs gives a chance to create an environment, including an educational one, that is friendly to people, regardless of the potentials and resources at their disposal. The experience gained in the process of eliminating architectural barriers related to international declarations accepted by Poland (e.g. the Salamanca Declaration, 1994) or ratified conventions (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, United Nations, 2006) turned out to have a supra-individual dimension (supra-group, in the sense of one group to which it was originally dedicated). The abolition of architectural barriers has made it easier for many groups of people to function in the social space, not to say for all of us. Certainly, their introduction did not hinder anyone’s functioning. A similar approach should accompany changes in education. Many researchers are looking for an answer to the question of what the educational space should be like to foster the development of students regardless of their resources and potentials, and thus fit into the idea of education for all. Referring to just a few of the numerous research results, it can be pointed out that, for example: greater access to natural light is conducive to higher achievements in mathematical tests (Schneider, 2002); poor technical condition and neglected appearance of the school results in more frequent occurrence of undesirable behaviors and worse learning results (Evans, Yoo and Sipple, 2010), and renovation of the school’s external environment by introducing, for example, more greenery reduces students’ stress and improves their well-being (Kelz, Evans and Röderer, 2013). On the other hand, separating students, e.g. with disabilities in the classroom space, is not conducive to their integration with their peers (Gajdzica, 2008), makes it difficult for them to cooperate with others, establish positive relationships or achieve common goals (Wojtas-Rudch, 2020). The presence of students with disabilities in a common educational space makes

it clear the need to “implement into the everyday school life of students with disabilities all available assistive devices adapted to their abilities and needs, enabling them to overcome barriers and engaging them” (Chimicz, 2020, p. 178). Failure to adapt the physical conditions of the building and the school environment to the needs of, for example, a person with a visual disability, may result in the loss of a sense of independence and self-esteem as a person and a member of the school community. Fear and uncertainty about moving independently can lead to dependence on others (teacher, peers), and often also social isolation of a person with a visual disability (Czerwińska, 2014).

With regard to inclusive education and the issues of space and place taken up here, one of the key issues is the need to orient educational practice towards shaping its full accessibility, so that it responds to the diverse needs of participants in the educational process. The concept of universal design in education fits into this thesis. David H. Rose and Anna Meyer, the creators of the concept, already in the 90s of the twentieth century pointed to the need to make the education system more flexible (Meyer, Rose and Gordon, 2014, pp. 4-5). Universal design in education is “an approach to the organization of inclusive education constructed on the basis of clearly perceived inclusive values: recognizing the diversity of all students, cultivating equal rights for all students, creating conditions for full participation, ensuring equal rights and creating community relationships” (Galkienė, 2021, p. 7). Meyer and Rose recognized that in the traditional education system, students face obstacles that limit their access to the curriculum and the ability to implement their knowledge. They are even stigmatized by the educational environment, which is beyond their control and which becomes an obstacle to their effective learning (Meyer, Rose and Gordon, 2014). Universal design in education is intended to improve and optimize learning and teaching for all students and should be based on scientific evidence of how people learn (2014, p. 3), including in relation to neurological processes, but also programs, methods or forms of teaching. In the context of socio-cultural theory and the zones of Wygodski’s (1978) proximity to development, Meyer, Rose and Gordon (2014) believe that the subject of differentiation should not be so much the satisfaction of separate educational needs of the student, but the creation of a flexible and universal educational environment. This refers to optimising and increasing accessibility, but also to ensuring the conditions for full participation for all learners. The importance of educational space also resonates in the views of Zenon Gajdzica, who points to a triad of assumptions, enumerating among them: the learning environment, the accessibility and accessibility of the educational environment, and rights and opportunities

(2020). In inclusive education, the student becomes the real subject of the teaching-learning process, as opposed to the behaviorist or transmission model. Unfortunately, education in Poland is still focused on:

the certainty of one's own assumptions and proposed solutions, progress as a vision of individual and societal development, and adaptation. Certainty, progress, and adaptation are characteristics of education suited to a world that no longer exists, a reality that no longer exists (Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2014, p. 31).

It is important to remember that “a person becomes themselves with the educational help of place” (Mendel, 2006, p. 27). The search for the meaning of place in situations where a person experiences developmental or educational difficulties cannot be schematic or ignored. It must consider the need to recognize it. This should be based

on social solidarity and the sense of community, expressing the conviction about one's own contribution to what we create together with others, the conviction that we are needed, that others see and understand how we participate in the collective effort of the whole community (Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2020, p. 85).

This builds a sense of usefulness to others and self-worth (Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2020, p. 134).

Conclusion

In the initial phase of the development of inclusive education in Poland (the 1990s), individualisation was considered to be the key principle of working with pupils as an expression of the necessary focus on the needs and abilities of pupils, e.g. with disabilities. This was due to the fear that without focusing on their difficulties and limitations, it would not be possible to achieve the goals assumed in education. Individualisation has acquired, over time, the status of an obligatory approach, which has so far cast a shadow over the changing concepts of joint education. Nowadays, however, in the reflection on how to change schools to respond to the challenges of the 21st century, there is an increasingly frequent criticism of the school model focusing on individual successes and dealing with failures alone. This also applies to a student with a disability. Nowadays, it is indicated that instead of focusing on individual support for a pupil with special educational needs, it is necessary to plan the interactions, the curriculum and the means of its implementation in such a way that they allow to cover a wide range of needs

and abilities of the entire group of pupils. Create a learning environment that enables all students to reduce barriers to learning (Sanger, 2020). There should be a shift from a focus on recognising individual needs to recognising the diversity of all learners and thus to creating a barrier-free learning environment that responds to the individual needs of all learners. In addition, a school focused mainly on individualization is more conducive to comparing oneself with others and competition than teamwork or building a sense of responsibility for common goals. This will be possible when, becoming aware of the relational nature of the educational space, we focus on shaping students' competences that will be conducive to building a community. Among them, we can mention communication, which gives the opportunity to build peer relationships and effectively communicate with others. It is also the already mentioned cooperation in achieving common goals and responsibility for them. If the relationality of space means that space influences us, but we also influence it, then other competences logically come to mind: creativity and critical thinking. All of them are part of the key competences for education of the 21st century. If inclusive education, education for all, is to achieve the goal of the highest quality education, then it must focus on these competences. They can be implemented in a conducive educational space, one that is co-created by students, students who trust their teachers and are not afraid to communicate it to them.

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