LEISURE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF REHABILITATION AND SOCIALIZATION OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES. ENTER DISCUSSION

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Abstract:

The problem of mental retardation / intellectual disability is constantly evolving. The main element pointing to the essence of functioning of people with intellectual disabilities is a person's position in the society (Błeszyński, 2013, pp. 11-25; J. L. Aber …, 1997, p. 463). "*The number of children with select developmental disabilities (autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other developmental delays) has increased, requiring more health and education services. Additional study of the influence of risk-factor shifts, changes in acceptance, and benefits of early services is needed*" (C. A.Boyle, …, 2011, p. 1034). As indicated by D. D. Smitrz, the twenty-first century brought a paradigm shift from the traditionally negative conception (as a lack or limitation), to a more positive conception, in the spirit of R. Luckasson. The new approach highlighted the importance of the search for the capacity of each person and the environment in which this person lives, learns and works. The place of a person in society has become more important than their intelligence. The concepts of adaptive behaviour and supporting systems are becoming a more important element than the averaged results of particular functions - identified by IQ. Currently, the most common approach in the field of intellectual disability introduced from 2013 is found in the DSM 5 Classification (Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). In this classification of intellectual disability (impaired intellectual development - the diagnostic term 'intellectual disability' is a term equivalent to the ICD-11 diagnosis of disorders of intellectual development. Although this guide uses the term intellectual disability, these two terms are used in the title, to explain the relationships with other classification

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systems. Moreover, the United States federal statute - Public Law 111-256, Rosa's Law - replaces the term mental retardation with the concept of intellectual disability. Scientific journals also use the term intellectual disability. This concept is widely used in medical and educational environments, as well as by groups of attorneys). There are three important basic criteria of disorders: 1) intellectual, 2) adaptive (highlighted in our work), 3) intellectual and adaptive in adolescence.

Keywords: intellectual disability, rehabilitation, socialization

Research Methodology

The results of the research were a part of the educational process conducted by educational institutions of which the NCU has custody of the content and offers social advisory services. The research material was collected in kindergartens and schools attended by children with an equal degree of intellectual disability (with a predominance of mild disabilities). The study used questionnaires for parents of disabled children and teachers (who also submitted their comments on the results of their work of teaching the pupil), and the analysis of children's utterances (in the oral and written form - which was conditioned by development opportunities). The research material was limited to the methods of spending free time by a child with intellectual disability.

Research results

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989, Journal of Laws No. 120, item 526, of April 30, 1991 clearly states the need to meet the needs of development with a particular emphasis on the needs of free time (Article 27. 1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development; Article 31. 1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. 2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity). Meanwhile, studies conducted by the Polish Central Statistical Office, a government agency, reveal that this is one of the most deficient needs. Every third child in Poland could not, for the reason of lack of money, go on at

least a weekly rest once a year (Shukeloits - Bieńkuńska, 2011, p. 7). Meanwhile, among children with disabilities involved in later studies (N-43) (Orłowska, Błeszyński 2014), this indicator concerned 44%. So, almost every second child with intellectual disabilities in the study group did not have any opportunity for at least a weekly rest. At a similar level of deprivation were the needs of socialization - 24% of children did not have the possibility to invite their peers to their houses, and 7% had no funds to celebrate birthdays and other celebrations of this type (indicators for all Polish children were 7 and 9 percentage points - according to Shukeloits - Bieńkuńska 2011, p. 7).

In this situation it seemed interesting to the researchers: how do children with disabilities understand free time, how do they perceive it and how do they spend it. All the more so because leisure takes a prominent place in the system of revalidation and is in line with the fundamental paradigm of special education.

A.   Perceiving free time

Memories from vacation - was the subject of one of the first lessons carried out in early September. This is how the vacation stay was described by one child.

„Wspomnienia z wakacji – Karpacz. Z rodzicami wyjechaliśmy w góry. do Karpacza było fajnie poszliśmy sie przejść były takie samochody co ciogona na linie potem kawałek dalej pószczały linie i to tak szybko sie jechać 35 na godzine. Potem na drugi dzień przyjechał Maga park co tak były k kłady, Krosy taka kula duża doniej się Wsiada i dwóch to kóle pchała a ja musiałem sie odpychać było fajnie. Potem na 3dzień pojechaliśmy na śnieżke jechaliśmy wyciągiem Poszliśmy tam weszliśmy wysłaliśmy pocztuwki potem szliśmy po takich skałach dużych jus schodziliśmy na dół potem jus szliśmy do hotelu bo byliśmy zmeczeni i na drugi dzień jechaliśmy do Torunia i reszte szpedziłem w Toruniu. Było super” (Memories from vacation- Karpacz. I went to the mountains with my parents, to Karpacz. It was fun. We did some hiking, there were some cars towing us and then letting go of us and you could go as fast as 35 km/h. On the second day, there came a funfair with quads, cross bikes, and a big ball you could get inside and two people had to push it and I had to push it too. It was fun. On the third day, we went to Śniezka Mountain. We got to the top on a lift and then we walked down to the hotel. We were tired and the next day we came back to Toruń. The remaining time I spent in Torun. It was super.) Mateusz 18 (Source: own research).

In the written work there are various errors, for example, failure to mark nasalization - the so-called - sonorants, which is present also in speech, as well as misspellings, which prove not only the lack of consolidation of the rules of spelling, as in the case of mentally handicapped children but also difficulties in long term memorisation (as mentioned earlier). In the account there is mainly enumeration, often without regard for the principles of logic and grammar. For the analysis of the problem

of leisure time, however, the important elements pointed out by the student are primarily dynamic activities in which the subject participated during the holiday.

Many statements about organized activities ended with a statement: *„[W]akacje spendziłam super. Bardzo szybko mi mineły"* (I had a super holiday. It went very fast) (Justyna, 16), or *„Bardzo mi się podobały te wakacje. Spędziłem je mile i bezbiecznie. Poznałem wielu przyjaciół i przyjaciółek. Do zobaczenia za rok"* (I really liked this holiday. I spent it nice and safe. I made a lot of friends. See you next year) (Artur, 18), or *„Czas nam minął bardzo szybko"* (Time passed very quickly) (Krzysztof, 14).

The most important elements of the description of spending leisure time are the activities which were element of the description of spending of leisure time is an activity which was significant for the respondent, which carried the essential elements. The scarcity of thought transmission or even its brevity should be noticed. This stemmed from the author's awareness of unattractive activities as well as the author's unacceptable behaviour (which if described, could result in disciplinary education).

The written statement presented below is a form of an account often used in utterances created by mentally disabled children: *„Wakacje spędziłam w domu słuchałam muzyki, pilnowałam brata, pomagałam mamie sprzątać"* (I spent holidays at home, I listened to music, took care of my brother, helped mum clean) (Judyta, 12). (Source: own research)

The statement written correctly in terms of spelling presents a short, but also very intentional report on spending free time. The girl did not benefit from organized leisure holiday because of family reasons (as the eldest, she was obliged to watch over her brother, help her mother in the household)

B. Ways of spending free time

In the next stage of the study, it was analysed how students spend their free time. Subjects were asked a question that they could choose several answers to, add their comments and make additions concerning the preferred forms of leisure.

Table 1: Preferred leisure time activities of students [N = 32]

Type of activity / behaviour	Number of responses
I do nothing	22
I sleep	37
I get bored	24
I have nothing to do	26
Time off from school	26

(**Source:** own research)

Most of the students demonstrate a lack of skills in managing their free time. The most frequently chosen form of spending free time is sleep - passive rest, which may be the result of specific disorders common among students such as meteoropathy (the research was conducted in autumn), easy fatigability, etc., as well as a result of the adolescence period of students who participated in the study.

Table 2: Most common ways of spending free time

Type of activity	Number of responses
Going to a disco	18
Meeting friends	29
Shopping	28
Going to the cinema	19
Reading books	23
Sports	26
Computer	27

(Source: own research)

Some students indicated active pastimes like: meeting friends, games (billiard, football), cycling (2 children), playing (not specified).

Histogram 1: Most common ways of spending free time in a symmetrical arrangement [N = 32]
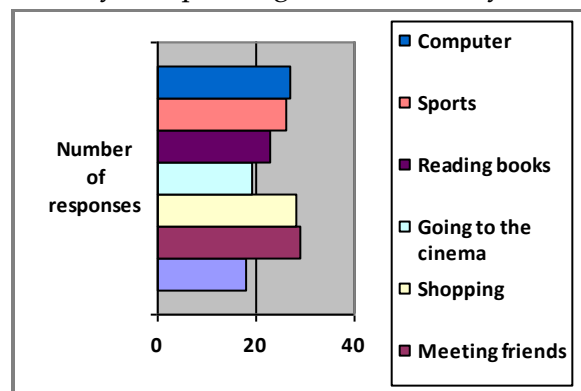
(**Source:** own research)

The most preferred form of spending free time was meeting friends, in different places and for different purpose. Meetings were most frequently organized in shopping malls, and were rarely associated with shopping, more often with taking part in promotions and similar events. Often, students also chose to spend time at a computer, here preference is given to games, as well as to communication via various forums.

In the case of sports, respondents most frequently named football (5), running (2) and roller skating (2), as well as other forms, e.g.: volleyball (1), basketball (1), cycling (1). Less frequently selected forms of leisure were reading, cinema and disco. This is

connected with the necessity of having funds (cinema, discotheque) and often the lack of an adequate book collection in school libraries.

For the researcher, statements related to the form of organized extracurricular activities were interesting.

Table 3: Organizing leisure time [N = 32]

Organizers	Number of responses
Teacher	10
Parent	14
Friends	22
The subjects themselves	14
The organizer is irrelevant	10

Note: The responses do not add up as the subjects of the research gave multiple answers.
(**Source:** own research)

The largest group of students were those who preferred to have someone organize their free time. This may result from the lack of habit of managing time, awareness, as well as difficulty in deciding about how to spend spare time (due to disability, the caring environment as well as the cultural and economic situation).

Subjects prefer to have their free time organized by colleagues. The choices made by parents and teachers are also important. Extracurricular activities organized by educators, as well as periodic classes, or incidental - which students did not mention- play a special role.

With age, students are increasingly aware of the option of organizing free time themselves, depending on the age, environment and contacts - resulting also from personality.
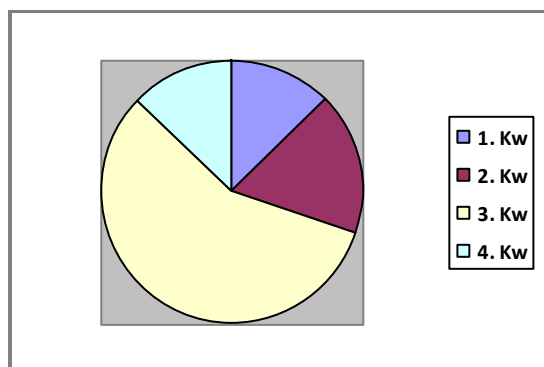
Another question concerned the number of hours that students have at their disposal after school - how much free time they have after school.

Table 4: Leisure time that students have after school [N = 32]

Number of hours	Number of responses
2	3
4	7
5	9
8	5
9 and more	8

(**Source:** own research)

Graph 1: Leisure time that students have after school [N = 32]

(**Source:** own research)

Most of the students have free time after school in addition to their homework and duties at home. Due to the type of disability, students mostly work in the classroom, which allows them to spend their remaining time on other tasks. The subjects were students of lower and upper secondary schools, who are characterized by their search for a system of values and a sense of belonging to a group of school children. Among the answers given by the students, relating to the proposal to spend free time that is not planned and organized by others (what would you like to do in your spare time), were those that concerned the use of free time, but also the realization of students' dreams.

The statements can be divided due to the preferred interests - how these people would like to spend their free time.

Table 5: Preferred pastimes [N=32]

	Subject would like to	Options	Number of responses	Total
1	Play sports	- cycling	1	11
		- running	1	
		- horse-riding	1	
		- water sports (swimming)	2	
		- basketball	2	
		- football	2	
2	Meet / spend time with	- peers / friends	4	11
		- boyfriend / girlfriend	3	
		- parents	2	
		- siblings	2	
3	Take part in	a party	2	4
		games	1	
		fooling around	1	
4	Spend time	shopping	1	8
		in the cinema	1	
		at home	1	
		at the computer	1	

		walking	3	
		in front of the TV	1	
5	With animals	dogs	1	1
6	Away from home	trips	1	1
	Total			36

(**Source:** own research)

We can states that the leisure activities are typical for the younger generation - preference is given to active forms of relaxation (division according to K. Migdał 2011, p. 36, religious practices and others were not mentioned.), such as contacts with friends (mainly peer or younger) and passive rest - spending time alone, which indicates a difficulty in establishing contacts *across generations*, resulting from a different method of establishing contacts and different preferences for leisure time activities;

1. Preference is mainly given to *costless* ways of spending time, which are organized in groups (meetings, shops, disco, sports, etc.) - what is reflected in the enumerated preferable pastimes.
2. The subjects demonstrated that they are primarily participants, rather than organizers, with preference for the peer group (less interest in the proposals of older people);
3. The respondents indicated that they have more than 4 hours of time that they can spend on their own interests, which should be considered a large period of time after deduction of hours of sleep and time spent fulfilling their duties (including school and non-school).

Discussion

The conclusions that arise from the study indicate that the subjects are primarily interested in peer contacts which meet their expectations and match their interests in the field of leisure. Traditional organized forms of leisure time do not meet their expectations. Organized trips and tours are not attractive enough to meet the needs of the study subjects. Important elements are sport and active ways of spending time. The results do not confirm the images of a passive preference for spending free time at the computer or television. The respondents also want to participate in social life, which is not always perceived by adults as creative, allowing them to develop, such as spending time "*being in shops*". It is not just the problem of the lack of adults – guardians next to them "*who could provide support and care*" as noted by E. Piatrzyc (2011, p. 190), describing measures taken by the authorities towards young people threatened by exclusion but a programme that can be offered to those young people.

All of these studies indicate that young people with an intellectual disability try to adapt to the social icons presented in the media, the trend referred to as postmodernism and consumerism. It is undoubtedly the result of the attitudes that occur in families who are often referred to as educationally inefficient, not fully providing care for minors, and as the research has shown - who do not meet the requirements of the study subjects. It is a very generalized conclusion, not quite unambiguous. As the results of the research show, young people look for friendship, love (entering relationships), which is a symptom of emotional maturity, and these needs are met in the peer environment, which on the one hand is the closest mentally, emotionally, temporarily (at school, in the classroom), but also functionally. Undoubtedly, we can observe the following popular models, especially based on mass media and instant messaging (It is common for children to possess mobiles and smartphones which they cannot use at school (limited access to Wi-Fi), while they can use it freely in shopping centres), which is often an uncritical process marked by a sense of independence and shaping one's own image; a sense of being an adult - but without the consequences.

The research shows the low attractiveness of free time activities offered by schools and adults, as well as the low effectiveness of undertaken programmes and organized free time activities. Unattractive extracurricular activities organized mainly as additional teaching hours in the didactic work of the teacher become forced, not very creative and do not meet the customer's (student's) interests. Also, computer classes, despite great interest in them, are often reduced to describe the structure and function of selected programs. As such, they are not appealing to young people who have mastered the basic functions of these devices. Sports activities (school sports clubs and similar organizations) are an interesting pastime. An opportunity is created to succeed and earn rewards accepted by peers and the immediate environment.

The analyses show that young people arrange their free time in a very informal manner, characterized by the occurrence of spontaneous behaviours, allowing for entering into closer interactions and not requiring financial resources. On the opposite side there are free time activities organized by institutions - which are a contradiction to the forms expected by the surveyed students. It becomes necessary to review the possibilities and limitations of mentally disabled youngsters, which in addition to the economic analysis, should include far-reaching goals, identifying the prospective - what is strived for, and thus what type of people do we want to shape and/or how disabled individuals can shape themselves. These activities *clarify* a person's civic dimension, as a member - and therefore a creator of society in which a person develops, and to what

extent this person is capable of creating himself/herself and the society in which he/she lives.

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