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CHARACTERISTICS OF TOTAL INSTITUTION BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF EDUCATIONAL CARE

INTRODUCTION

Organization and structure of orphanages has a very important role especially in the situation when these institutions replace the functions of a family. The article presents excerpt from author's Ph.D. thesis concerning the analysis of research conducted. One of the theoretic-cognitive aim was to recognize the functioning of children in care in educational care facilities taking into consideration Erving Goffmann's (2006; 2011) theory of total institutions.

The research group consisted of children in care both without mental disabilities and with mild mental disability. The article shall present the characteristic of total institution based on one of educational care facility, methodology, result of the research and the conclusion.

INSTITUTIONS INCLUDING TOTAL INSTITUTIONS VERSUS *EDUCATIONAL CARE FACILITIES*

Institutions are a group of people bound by common tasks and rules. Every institution consists of aims, values, norms, equipment/facilities or functions it serves. The aim of the institution is fulfilling biological and social needs of people. According to Bronisław Malinowski:

primal needs are fulfilled by primal institutions: a) institutions providing food, b) institutions of kinship, marriage and reproduction, c) institutions of security and defence against threats. Secondary needs however are fulfilled by legal, economic, educational and political institutions. (Sztompka, 2012, p. 306)

Social institution has a very broad sociological meaning and is:

a set of different positions and structures which aim at solving problems crucial for the human beings – the species whose existence is based on cultural mediation of social

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organisation. Majority of norms which influence behaviour is – because of their importance – commonly known and based on values and beliefs (Turner, 1998, p. 178).

Definition of institution in this article will have a broad context as upbringing, educating and socialising of children in care of educational care facility. The orphanage will be the institution being a symbol of care over the child abandoned. The organisation will be understood as instructions, set of rules, statuses, legal regulations concerning the facility; the organisational structure of the facility, people it takes care of and instructors as well together with the necessary facilities and equipment enabling reaching the aims.

The way the institutions function in modern society was described in Erving Goffman's (2006; 2011) theory of total institutions. He believes that total institutions are any social institutions with the closed structures: places of work and residence where a great number of similarly situated people, cut off from the wider community for a considerable time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. The examples can be nursing homes, prisons, psychiatric hospitals, monasteries or social care centres or institutions: "they absorb plenty of peoples' time giving them separated world" (Goffman, 2006, p. 316), which means that the aim of these institutions is a kind of *enslavement*.

The author of theory of total institutions distinguishes five total institution groups. First group are the institutions established to care for people felt to be both harmless and incapable: orphanages, poor houses and nursing homes (Goffman (2006; 2011) calls them *children's homes*). Second group form places established to care for people felt to be incapable of looking after themselves and a threat to the community, albeit an unintended one, e.g. mental hospitals. The aim of these two groups abovementioned is taking care of people in care. The third type of institutions is organised to protect the community against what are felt to be intentional dangers – people kept there intentionally harm themselves or other people. The examples are P.O.W. camps, penitentiaries, and jails. Ships, army barracks are the examples of fourth group, which consists of total „institutions purportedly established to better pursue some work-like tasks and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds" (Goffman, 2006, p. 316).

Fifth group are establishments with typically voluntary character, designed as retreats from the world even while often serving also as training stations for the religious; examples are convents, abbeys and monasteries.

Concerning the features of both total institution and its staff we shall enumerate the following:

- strictly hierarchic statuses,
- division: superior vs subordinates (we – them),
- formalism (often over-attention to rules),
- dehumanization,

- lack of subjectivity in interpersonal relations,
- task- not human-oriented approach.

After a deep analysis of organization, structure and functions of educational care facility there are no doubts that they fully fit the theory of total institutions.

Educational care facilities (now called in Polish *placówka opiekuńczo-wychowawcza*), previously called orphanages (previously called in Polish *sierociniec*), Goffman placed in his theory in the first position as a place for people looking for help. The fact is that a modern educational care facility for orphans has no bars in windows, locked doors or any other obstacles which clearly separate children from the society. However, they have their own specific structure, a kind of closure, alienation, social stigma and “relatively durable structure of complete care” (Kamińska, 2005, p. 86)

Every total institution (and educational care facilities are that kind of institutions) has some characteristic qualities concerning its functioning thus it is crucial to show educational care facilities from the perspective of total institutions. The most important quality of such institution is mixing of three important spheres of people’s lives which are inevitable in fulfilling their basic needs: sleep, entertainment and work. Everyday activities such as relax, eating, entertainment or learning children in care perform in the same place – in the orphanage. The exception to the rule can be a situation when they go to school outside the facility.

The second important element of this structure is the fact, that none of the children is ever alone, each is treated in the same way, which causes lack of intimacy and individualization. At the same time, the third issue mentioned by Erving Goffman is that „everyday activities in every moment are strictly regulated in that way that one activity inevitably leads to another one, assumed in advance, and follows it directly” (2011, p. 16). Thus – the question arises – is it possible to find a similar analogy in running of educational care facilities? Albin Kelm’s example of scheme of systematic units in educational and care work in a weekday shows that the timetable of children in care is strictly organized so each of the spheres of life mentioned by Goffman mixes together and depends one on another.

It can be assumed that the purpose of creation of set of rules or instructions is to control children in care because “all those obligatory activities together make up one rational and well-balanced plan which helps to make official objectives of the institution real” (Goffman, 2011, p. 16). We shall not forget that “the essence of total institution is fulfilling majority of needs of the residents within the bureaucratic organization” (p. 16). Fulfilling needs of children and youth is an educational task and result from caring function which role is to “fulfil needs and taking care of health and safety of children” (p. 16).

Educational care facility as an institution is a set of cultural rules. As for the definition of institution it is not only a group of children living in one building but a set of rules such as: rights, obligations both of children and instructors; standards of education, rules of procedure and functioning, conforming to the instructions and so on.

The values are represented by respect for other people, subjective education, preparation for leading a decent life and obtaining social skills and competencies as well.

An orphanage is „an educational care facility with socializing functions, providing children with 24-hour care and education/upbringing whose parents permanently or temporarily are not able to, cannot or do not want to create proper conditions for life and development” (Dobrzycka and Kozdrowicz, 1997, p. 733). Important element in defining an orphanage as an institution is highlighting the fact, that „placing the child in an educational care facility should lead to family reintegration and bringing back competencies to parents” (p. 734).

Ewa Kozdrowicz defines an orphanage as:

an institution which replaces a family and provides care and education, suitable conditions for development and preparation for an independent life to children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of care of their own family. Children are being taken care of until they are 18 or in case they continue education – until they are 25 years old. (Kozdrowicz, 1999, p. 60)

The name orphanage (Polish: *dom dziecka*) is used colloquially, in legal regulations since 1 January 2000 it was replaced by an educational care facility (*placówka opiekuńczo-wychowawcza*). They are one of the elements of foster care system over the families under Polish **Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (Polish: Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej)** which role is to „provide care and education to children who are fully or partly deprived of care of their own family and to children socially maladjusted” (Gumienny, 2005, p. 27).

METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The aim of the article was to show a piece of consideration over educational care facilities from the perspective of social interactionism and mainly the theory of total institutions. The following research question was defined: What are the characteristics of total institution in educational care facility where the research was conducted? This shows that educational care facilities are based on constant exchange of meanings and symbols which occur between actors of social life of the institution.

The case studies method was used, the research technique – participating observation, and the tool – observation schedule containing designated categories. Presented part of the research is related to qualitative research strategy.

As social interactionism theory was assumed to be appropriate to describe educational care facilities, qualitative case study method was used. As for the quality, its advantage is “optimizing the possibility of understanding a phenomenon or the specific case by answering the research questions and credibility which gives constant triangulation of descriptions and interpretations throughout the whole research process” (Stake, 2009, p. 624). Research conducted with the use of this method mean

deepened analysis of the interesting research problem. It is crucial, that the method of collecting the data is characterized by little representativeness which excludes any possible generalization. It is “a perfect tool for problem exploration thus planning any future research activities is burdened with smaller risk of their inaccuracy and irrelevance for the research purposes” (Miller, 2013, p. 18).

The choice of case (phenomenon) is both simple and complex at the same time. The case could be a person, a group, an institution or an incident. The case will be interpreted as a system because “in social sciences most cases consist of functional elements and work on purpose; a lot has a feeling of independence. Functional or dysfunctional, rational or irrational – the case will always be the system” (Stake, 2009, p. 625). Krzysztof Konecki states that „the case chosen for further research should be easily distinguished as a kind of the system and any activities observed within its performance shall work as patterns that could easily be reconstructed. Clear limits (borders) or patterns of behaviour are the key elements which enable to understand particular case” (2000, p. 126)

For the research needs one educational care facility was chosen. The case was thus the chosen orphanage. On the second hand, however, the relations between characteristics of the institution and the level of social competencies of children in care were interpreted. The orphanage is in that way understood as a system and the matter of interest is the phenomenon itself. The aim is not only understanding the phenomenon, but also broadening the knowledge about it, as well we can talk about instrumental case study where the case and its context are “deeply and precisely researched in order to facilitate acknowledging the broaden phenomenon” (Stake, 2009, p. 628).

Commencing the research the scientist is obliged to gather as much information as possible about the researched place. Thus, it is important in the initial stage „to take into consideration nine dimensions of every social situation and the complicated relations amongst them” (Ciesielska et al., 2012, p. 44), including (p. 44):

- a. space – physical place or places;
- b. actors – people involved in a particular situation;
- c. action – set of activities performed by people;
- d. object – physical objects present in a particular situation;
- e. activity – single activities performed by people;
- f. event – set of actions related to each other;
- g. time – time sequencing, pace of events;
- h. aims – what people try to achieve;
- i. emotions – feeling and expressing.

CATEGORY INTERPRETATION: SPACE AND DAILY TIMETABLE IN RESEARCHED ORPHANAGE

Zespół Dom Dziecka (the orphanage) is an educational care facility of socialisation type. Children in care live in a big, 2-storey detached house. On the ground floor, there are a dining room, a kitchen, a kitchenette, a common room, a principal office, as well as offices of a psychologist, an educationalist and social staff room.

On the first floor, there are: an instructors room, children's bedrooms, a play room, an isolation room and a surgery. The children's bedrooms meet the generally accepted caring standards. Every child in care has a sofa, a desk and a wardrobe in his/her disposal. On this floor, there are 7 rooms for children in care. Total number of children is 27 of which two of them are in Youth Educational Centre (*Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy*), two are released and one was relocated to Special Purpose School and Education Centre (*Ośrodek Szkolno-Wychowawczy*). On one side, it is a housing community, on the other – formal organisation (Goffman, 2011, p. 22). Children in care are provided with excellent social conditions. The institution takes also into consideration their emotional, social and cultural needs. The staff are responsible for fulfilling the children's needs. One of the examples of fulfilling the social and cultural needs was a trip to the cinema.

Every child in care in his/her room have an access to a sofa, a desk and a wardrobe. Every room is neat which is controlled by the instructors. During the week, until the midday there is peace and quiet in the institution as a majority of children are at that time at school or in the pre-school. They come back around the midday and then they spend time in their rooms, in the garden; do the homework or are engrossed in their own matters. Usually on every Saturday there is big cleaning of bedrooms and the whole house. The participating observation in relation to cleaning activities presented the following image:

Situation one: 3 April

10.00 in the morning, the house is full of hum. It is a time of big cleaning. In one of the room two boys (brothers) tidy the room together with an aunt (an instructor). They are putting books on the shelves and their clothes in the cupboards. The instructor helps them in sorting out things and selecting the unnecessary ones and encourages to further work. Younger of the brothers is very engaged in cleaning. However, the older is sitting disgruntled on his bed full of notebooks, papers and clothes. He is angry that he has to clean just right now. However, the instructor is tireless, she encourages the boy to finish tidying the room even if he ignores her and does not react. In the room, there are more and more children who came to watch boys' "cleaning process".

The important element of this situation was the fact, that the boys' cleaning activity was performed in the presence of other children in care living in the same facility and that there was a number of children watching. Everybody wanted to see how the boys follow the instructions and perform their duty. It can be observed that the order was not a need of one of the boys but resulted from

the obligations imposed on children living in the orphanage. The aim is not to negate the rules being in force in the facility – it only shows, that almost every activity performed in the orphanage is performed in the presence of the others. Children in care not only clean together but in the same way they dine, perform hygienic activities or play. It can be concluded that a child in care do not really have their own territory, space because the living conditions cause, that “in every moment of performing (...) the activities a man is never alone, everything happens in inseparable presence of other people being at that very moment in the institution” (Goffman, 2011, p. 16).

There are no doubts that residents of the facility form a sort of community “living in a shared place and knowing each other. They perform most of their living activities giving them strong identification and making the participation the element of their own, individual identity” (Sztompka, 2012, p. 284). This community is a unique community of children living in the orphanage abovementioned, since they together perform a number of everyday activities, accompany each other in these activities or feel the identification with the place.

Another confirmation that the mentioned orphanage has the qualities of total institution is the existence of instructions and daily timetable which results from daily activities. In the orphanage in Sosnowiec there is no set timetable. It is dictated by times of meals, times of going to school and coming back. There is no hesitation that most of family homes have the same *unwritten* timetables. However, the institution is total in assumption, that “everyday activities are in every moment precisely determined in that way that one activity inevitably leads to another, assumed in advance, and follows it directly” (Goffman, 2011, p. 284).

From the pedagogical perspective imposed rules and the timetable regulate the life of the children in care, give them some safe and secure stability and teach obeying the norms and rules. However, totality can be perceived due to the fact that the same timetable is obligatory and uniform for all the children, whatever their psychophysical predispositions, talents, pace of development or pace of performing the tasks.

CONCLUSION

The interpretation of the researched phenomena was a difficult research undertaking. It was hard not to generalise the analysed subject of research. The observations were introducing the scientist into the *inner* world of the institution, where the essential issue was the relationship or exchange of the meanings and in the foreground, we can see a human being forced to deal with the daily running of the institution.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF TOTAL INSTITUTION BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF EDUCATIONAL CARE

Keywords: orphanage, institution, total institution, children in care

Abstract: The article presents the structure of orphanages and educational care facilities related to E. Goffman's (2006) theory of total institutions interpreting the following category: The space and the timetable of the researched orphanage.

CECHY INSTYTUCJI TOTALNEJ NA PRZYKŁADZIE PLACÓWKI OPIEKUŃCZO-WYCHOWAWCZEJ

Słowa kluczowe: dom dziecka, instytucje, instytucje totalne, wychowankowie

Streszczenie: Artykuł przedstawia m.in. strukturę domów dziecka oraz funkcjonowanie wychowanków placówek opiekuńczo-wychowawczych. Autorzy przedstawili funkcjonowanie domów dziecka w ujęciu koncepcji Instytucji totalnych E. Goffmana (2006), interpretując kategorię *przestrzeń* i harmonogram dnia w badanym domu dziecka.