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The Education of Physically Handicapped Children in Poland

Introduction

The Popular Republic of Poland, which emerged after the first World War and then changed considerably in size and shape at the end of the second world war, has a population of about 25,000,000 and an area of 120,460 square miles, or an average population density of 208 per square mile. The population between the compulsory school-age limits of 7 and 13 years was estimated in 1948-49 as being 3,166,000, of whom 3,033,000 were enrolled in school. One of the major problems faced by this country has been the destruction of resources and the disruption of services caused by the second World War. In addition, economic and social problems accompany the gradual shift from an agricultural economy, two-thirds of the workers still being employed in this area, to a more highly industrialized economy.

Definitions of Disabilities

A commission of the Institute of Special Pedagogy,

which includes the Union of the Blind and the Union of the Deaf, has been set up to gather statistics concerning the number of the blind, the deaf, and the crippled during the general census to take place in 1959. As a working basis for the census-takers, they have agreed upon the following definitions of blindness and deafness:

The Blind: a person who sees nothing or is partially sighted to the extent that he can distinguish light, a window in a room, a pillar beside which he is standing, etc.

The Deaf: a person who hears nothing, or who is so hard of hearing that he is unable to achieve understanding by oral means, and whose hearing thus has no practical significance for his work or other needs.

Incidence and Prevalence of Disabilities

The number of children receiving special care as of _____
was as follows:

Blind (6.86%)	2,100
Deaf (0.13%)	4,500
Partially sighted (figures supplied by the Ministry of Health)	3,500
Hard of hearing	5,000
Orthopedically handicapped	400
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	15,500

Thus, exclusive of the delicate, for whom no figures are available, the emotionally disturbed, and the 70,000 mentally retarded children, there are 15,500 children receiving some form of special educational treatment.

Services for the Handicapped Child

The general policy is opposed to keeping the handicapped child in the regular school, for various reasons such as the large classes in these schools and the impossibility of providing suitable individualized instruction under these conditions. However, in some cases the more capable children who are blind, deaf, or crippled are allowed to attend the upper grades in regular schools.

Similarly there are no special classes for handicapped children in regular schools, since such a practice is considered pedagogically undesirable for both the handicapped and the normal youngsters.

Non-residential or day schools are provided only for mentally retarded children, and then only in the cities. However, residential institutions for children who are mentally retarded, blind, deaf, or maladjusted also accept a certain number of day students. Until recently Warsaw did have a day school for blind children, but this is now being changed to a residential school because of difficulties in transporting the children to and from school.

There are residential schools and institutions for all categories of handicapped children:

Number of Special Schools

Category	Nurseries	Primary School	Vocational Schools	Middle Schools
Blind	2	6	4	0
Partially sighted	0	3	0	0
Deaf	5	17	12	0
Hard of hearing	0	1	0	0
Crippled	3	3	1	0
Chronically ill (delicate)	88	129	1	9
Mentally retarded	4	124	20	0
Morally neglected	0	24	11	0
Totals	102	307	49	9

If we exclude the mentally retarded and "morally neglected", the totals

become 98 nurseries, 159 primary schools, 18 vocational schools, and the same number (9) of middle schools, these last being provided only for the delicate youngster.

Number of Special Institutions

Blind	3
Partially sighted	1
Deaf	19
Hard of hearing	1
Crippled	3
Mentally retarded	60
Morally neglected	44
Total	134

Again, if we exclude the mentally retarded and the morally neglected, the total number of special institutions becomes only 30.

A standardized procedure has been worked out for the selection of deaf children and mentally retarded children for institutions. The Central Selection Center for the Deaf located in Warsaw refers children to institutions on the basis of testing their hearing, determining the amount of residual hearing, and observing their psychic development. The Central Methodological Selection Center of the Institute of Special Pedagogy is similarly responsible for the referral of mentally retarded children to special schools and institutions. Children are referred to special schools for periods of varying length, depending on their individual needs.

While there is no organized program of instruction for the homebound child, instruction has been organized for the hospitalized child in all sanatoria^as, preventoria^as, and health homes as well as in hospitals and pediatric clinics,

depending on the number of children of school age in the center.

Each school and institution is responsible for its own school program as well as its program of after-school activities. Recreational and occupational-therapy activities in the schools are of the following types:

1. Activities such as school assemblies and other commemorative events which include the entire school
2. Group activities, thematic and non-thematic
3. Instructive recreation
4. Individual activities

In addition to such school-sponsored activities, the Scouts conduct programs in the non-residential institutions; they are working out special forms of activities adapted to various types of handicaps.

Summer camps are occasionally available for some categories of handicapped children.

While there has been in recent years a rapid development

of nursery schools for handicapped children, specialized approaches in the nursery-school program for children with various kinds of disability have not yet been formulated.

Specialized equipment and materials are used for the different categories of handicap. For the blind there are materials for reading and writing Braille, special Braille plates for teaching arithmetic, Braille typewriters, and tactile materials for teaching geography and natural sciences. Partially sighted children have special equipment for sharpening their vision and conserving their residual sight. Deaf children have instruments for breathing exercises and sensations of rhythm, while the hard of hearing have hearing aids, megaphones with earphones, and other acoustic apparatus suitable for class use. Crippled children have equipment such as wagons to enable them to move from place to place. Schools often need more equipment, and more modern equipment, although efforts are being made to remedy this situation.

Services for the handicapped child are provided by

physicians, teachers, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, social nurses, and social workers who act as court trustees for juvenile delinquents. Such services are provided in all the residential institutions, schools, rehabilitation centers, and health institutions such as sanatoria, preventoria, health homes, hospitals, and clinics. A system of itinerant speech therapists to serve several schools is now being organized for the speech handicapped.

Statistical records are sent annually by the special schools and institutions to the Government Statistical Board; other reports are sent to the Ministry of Education, on the basis of which the Ministry plans and where possible improves its future program.

Vocational training is available in special vocational schools for the blind and deaf as well as for the mentally retarded and emotionally maladjusted. These are three- or four-year schools for students who have graduated from a

special primary school, although in some instances the primary school has not been completed. In many schools the initial vocational preparation begins in the fourth class; each pupil attends for several months a course dealing with different kinds of occupations, not designed to prepare him for a trade but intended to familiarize him with different techniques, materials, and tools, so that he can make a suitable choice of trade in relation to his own interests, skills, and capacities. There are trades specially designated for each type of disability by the Invalids' Production Council of the Ministry of Labor and Social Care.

In general, the majority of students who complete programs in vocational schools go into general state production establishments, while others work in Invalids' Cooperatives in which artisans can also participate. A few hundred of the blind, deaf, and crippled enter the university after completing a general middle-school course.

Some parent education is conducted by two clinics attached

to the Institute of Special Pedagogy. The prophylactic clinic gives advice on educational problems to parents and teachers; information concerning the child is assembled from an examination by a psychiatrist, and from interviews with his parents and teacher. The Orthophonic Clinic advises parents and teachers regarding the treatment of children with speech handicaps, and its laboratory conducts individual and group corrective exercises. The community effect of this work is widespread, for in addition to the children or young people of school age who come to this clinic and laboratory there are many adults from a variety of occupations, such as workers and farmers from various parts of the country.

The Teachers of the Handicapped Child

Qualification as a special-education teacher can be secured by means of taking a two-year course at the Institute of Special Pedagogy in Warsaw, or by taking correspondence courses for three or four years while working in special schools and institutions, the four-year course leading to a

diploma. Also in 1957 the University of Warsaw established a chair of special pedagogy in its Department of Education, which provides lectures and practical demonstrations in special schools and institutions for all types of disabilities; this work is an integral part of the studies of every teacher on the university level.

At the Institute of Special Pedagogy, which has operated continuously since 1921 except for a six-year interruption caused by the second World War, special training has been a two-year program only since 1955. Entrance examinations are given to qualified primary-school teachers with two years of teaching experience. In addition to general lectures during the first semester, the students familiarize themselves with the overall work of the Institute, and are given a broad survey of the various areas of special education. Field trips provide information concerning maternal and child welfare work in Warsaw and acquaint them with different types of special schools and institutions. The choice of a field

of concentration is not made till the beginning of the second semester; during this semester, students spend one day a week in a particular kind of school or institution, and through informal discussions explore the essential tasks in rehabilitating this type of child. At the same time the students attend lectures in various branches of study and take part in artistic and technical activities which are basic to all areas of specialization.

More highly specialized theoretical and practical work characterizes the second year of training, whether in special schools and institutions of a given type, in the Institute Laboratory, or in its Special Education Museum. Each week each month (eight weeks in all) is devoted to diversified field work, when students travel in groups with their methods instructor throughout Poland to visit various special institutions of their own choosing. They remain in each institution an entire day, engaged in teaching and related activities, until the children go to bed. During this week of field visits, numerous conferences with their methods instructor

and the teachers and director of each institute enable the students to discuss problems and questions that have arisen during their teaching practice.

The required program of studies for training special teachers includes such subjects as anatomy and physiology, the physical development of the child, psychological development, educational psychology, general psychopathology, psychopathology of the child, special education, methods of teaching special groups of the handicapped, psychology of these special groups, history of their education, rehabilitation of the crippled, and many artistic and craft activities such as singing, drawing, handicrafts, physical education, children's literature, school theatre, and story-telling, all such subjects being included in the first year's work. Thus in the second year students, under the guidance of their methods instructor and other lecturers, apply such information and skill in various activities within institutions of a given type.

At the end of the second year's work, the student takes

examinations covering both practical and theoretical studies, and then receives a certificate of graduation and a teaching appointment in a special school. Provided his work is satisfactory, a graduate of the Institute receives his diploma only after writing and publicly defending his thesis, the subject of which was chosen initially in consultation with the Board of Directors following his final examinations.

As of _____, there are 2,300 teachers in special schools, and 884 teachers in special institutions.

The salaries of teachers in special schools compare as follows with salaries for teachers in regular schools:

25% higher for teachers in special primary schools

30% higher for teachers of theoretical subjects in special vocational schools

45% higher for teachers of practical subjects in vocational schools

Special-school teachers in charge of classes receive an additional 30% besides their regular teachers' salary.

The Institute for Special Pedagogy, in addition to training teachers, encourages the raising of qualifications

of employed special teachers by means of various conferences and exhibits, and by publishing a scientific quarterly in special education called "Szkoła Specjalna" (Special Schools).

A further means for stimulating continuing interest in the problems of special education and a scientific approach to their solution, is the maintenance of the Special Education Museum, an information and research center dealing with various administrative and educational problems in the field of special education, and in addition a workshop for students in the Institute whatever their specialty. Also assembled in this museum ~~is~~ a valuable collection of different types of working materials, the creative work of educators in special schools and institutions, educational aids, and various samples of children's work.

Still other means for organizing and conducting scientific research in the field of special education are the consultation clinics and laboratories of the Institute, including the psychological laboratory.

Organization and Administration of Program of Services

Education for handicapped children is not compulsory; medical care and tuition are free, and the cost to parents of a child's maintenance in a special school or institution depends on their income; on the average, parents pay about 20% of the total cost of their child's maintenance. All schools are state-operated, but there are some special types of institutions for groups such as epileptics and cripples operated by voluntary associations and religious orders. Full maintenance is provided in such institutions--food, clothing, and materials necessary for education.

Family allowances are regulated by the act of August 16, 1923, on social care and the act of April 7, 1949, which transferred to the Ministry of Education all activities of the Ministry of Labor and Social Care connected with the special care of children and youth. Schools and institutions for orphans are free, and when orphans complete their school education, they are given a grant for starting out on their

own.

Thus the Ministry of Education is now responsible for the care and rearing of children from three to eighteen years of age; up to the age of three the Ministry of Health is responsible, and over eighteen, the Ministry of Labor and Social Care. The Ministry of Education covers the expenditures for schooling, food, and clothing from its own budgetary funds, and formulates curricula for the different types of special schools.

The provincial Boards of Education are responsible for supervisions of teaching, and directly control the finances of the residential educational institutions, whereas the County Boards are responsible for the finances of the non-residential schools.

The expenses of schools and special institutions are paid from funds provided in the national budget and in regional (provincial and county) budgets. In 1957, a total of 218,000,000 zlotys was spent for special schools.

The voluntary Catholic organization, "Caritas", maintains 72 special institutions, while the Society of Friends of Children organizes consultations, distributes material aid, and concerns itself with the care of handicapped children.

Poland is a member of UNESCO, UNICEF, and the International Bureau of Education.