

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION***Evaluation of the perception of the school psychoeducational team
in building an individualized education process for a student with ASD based
on action research***

The scope of the content of the dissertation has its scope of interpretation in the practical and theoretical area in relation to the education of students on the autism spectrum in the context of Polish education. Due to the fact that from January 1, 2022 the *International Classification of Diseases ICD-11* officially entered into force in countries belonging to the World Health Organization (WHO), in Poland until it was translated into Polish by national medical consultants (November 2023) along with its dissemination in clinical practice (period approx. 2 -3 years) the ICD-10 classification applies. In the ICD-11 classification, Asperger's syndrome, childhood autism and atypical autism have been "absorbed" into the area known as autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

The dichotomous combination of experience resulting from practice and knowledge of the background of theories inherent in the understanding of the autistic spectrum allowed for an analysis combined with critical reflection of the theories of autism causation emerging throughout history, described in the first part of the dissertation. Adopting a practical perspective through the prism of one's own view of the educational and therapeutic reality of students on the autism spectrum created a research opportunity by referring to the actual school situations of a student diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. The school team of teachers and specialists was defined in the title of the dissertation as a psychoeducational team due to the composition and role of the indicated team.

The key point in choosing the place of research and the group participating in the research, taking into account the essence of participation present in educational action research based on the model of the second trend of scientific research, referred to as *Mode -2 Science*, was the school space. Due to the lack of significant scientific studies on the process of evaluating the perception of a school team of teachers and specialists, referred to as a psychoeducational team, in building an individualized educational process for a student with a nosological diagnosis - Asperger's syndrome (AS) in a public school without integration classes, it was a space for learning how people involved in the educational and therapeutic process is perceived by a student with autism spectrum disorder and how this type of perception as a cognitive (perceptual) process influences the organization of individualization of

education. The above-mentioned elements constituted the research assumptions contained in Individual Research Plan, as a statutory requirement for doctoral students studying at doctoral schools. Due to the essence of participatory and educational action research in the *Mode 2-Science* model, the identification of problem areas in the context of participatory action research resulted in a conscious, recognized and purposeful intention of the people participating in the research to change their current practice. In the research situation, it concerned the scope of planning educational activities based on the student's strengths, by identifying his or her abilities and current interests.

Due to the lack of significant scientific studies regarding the process of evaluating the perception of the school psychoeducational team of a student with ASD in building an individualized educational process in mainstream, non-integrated schools, there was an important need and necessity to learn more about the indicated issues based on participatory and educational action research (participatory-educational action research) in the *Mode-2 Science* model, based on the interpretative-transformative paradigm (as opposed to the traditional model of conducting scientific research, understood as *Mode-1 Science*). The importance of the topic of the dissertation is important because it concerns issues that directly affect the quality of implementation of the idea of inclusive education in the area of students on the autism spectrum. The research intention included the prospect of collective recognition by the participants of the research process (in the MIS structure, referred to as respondents) of the possibility of changing the current practice related to the process of planning and organizing the individualization of education for a student with AS, taking into account his or her interests and abilities. The area of research intentions includes the research reconnaissance stage and the second-stage action research cycle of an action-research nature, combined with (for) inspiring participants to creative involvement and understanding, community dialogue in team cooperation present in the space of participatory and educational action research in the *Mode-2 Science* model.

The dissertation consists of three parts, which are divided into thematic chapters and subchapters. It is preceded by an extensive introduction that describes the importance of the topic in Polish education - the process of individualizing the education of a student with autism spectrum disorder above the intellectual norm (gifted student) in a mainstream school. Part I of the dissertation is theoretical considerations on the theories regarding the causes of autism that have evolved throughout history. Chapter 1 discusses in detail scientific, neurodevelopmental theories and their pedagogical implications. It concerns the essence of understanding neurodevelopmental differences in correlation to the positivist paradigm and its connections with the medical model of understanding ASD. The next subchapter contains the characteristics of the autistic syndrome, taking into account gender differences based on the assumptions of Simon Baron-Cohen's empathizing-systematizing theory. The essence of the different cognitive style of people on the autism spectrum according to Simon Baron-Cohen in aspect of two interpretive models - reference to the concept of disability of a student with ASD is a key interpretative space in the next subchapter. Further subchapters from part I concern issues such as: understanding the autistic spectrum continuum in the eclectic model, *Autism*

Spectrum Conditions (ASC) as a different way of perceiving the world in philosophical and educational contexts, discussion of the theory of mind in correlation to complex mentalizing processes in the description of a student with ASD in the process of adapting educational conditions, explaining the essence of spontaneous, insular abilities occurring in the savant syndrome and ontological interpretation of a monotropic thinker on the autism spectrum. Chapter 2 in the first part of the dissertation focuses on an attempt to explain the psychogenic and biomedical autistic spectrum in a dimension defined as between myth and scientific collectivism. The following subsections contain a reference to the psychogenic theory of frigid mothers in the psychoanalytic context and a description of the orthogenic school of Bruno Bettelheim and its contemporary reference to the humanistic paradigm - controversy. The final subchapter discusses the biomedical-alternative theory, which fits into the way of interpreting the causality of autism in correlation with interventional behaviorism in the therapy and education of a student with ASD. Chapter 3 in the first part of the dissertation discusses the concept of neurodiversity as a source of the individuality of students with ASD in the pedagogical discourse, detailed in the next two subchapters as: neurodiversity present in the area of social philosophy and an indication of the multiplicity of behavioral images of autism, taking into account multifinality and equifinality. Chapter 4 concerns the genesis of the nosological diagnosis - Asperger's syndrome, which was included (absorbed) in the autistic spectrum according to the ICD-11 and DSM 5 classification and its correlation to the functional diagnosis in the educational process of a student with special educational needs.

Part II of the dissertation includes four chapters that concern the role of teachers and special educators in school teaching and therapy of students with ASD in a four-dimensional approach. It is understood as multitasking, but not multitasking, of a teacher co-organizing education in a mainstream, non-integrated school, in the process of which an important role is played by the school psychoeducational team, whose role, among other things, concerns the organization of the process of individualization of education for students with ASD (recommendations in the IEP). The evaluation of the perception of the school psychoeducational team of a student with ASD and the description of the structured teaching model as an element of a holistic approach in the education of students with autism spectrum disorder are explained in the next subsection. Chapter six concerns the student with ASD and his presence in formal education (mass school, implementation of the core curriculum). It includes two subchapters that describe the needs of a child/student with ASD in a mainstream school, without integration classes, implementing the idea of inclusive education, and explain the essence of the causes of educational difficulties and failures of a student with autism spectrum disorder. Chapter seven indicates models of building relationships with a student with ASD in the educational and therapeutic process. Its structural elements form three subsections explaining two types of therapeutic models. The first one concerns the bond-based model within the meaning of Attachment Theory, and the second - the model of regulation of emotional states of experienced areas (*Self-Reg.*). The third section describes the role and importance of polyvagal theory in the interpretative context of Look Me in the

Eye. The eighth chapter refers to the considerations and dilemmas of contemporary philosophy - between expert knowledge and common knowledge of the school environment of a child with ASD. It covers two areas of issues, i.e. it explains the essence of the social mental stereotype in building the image of a student with autism spectrum disorder and indicates the importance of the philosophical individual narrative of understanding the language of autism in the area of horizons of meaning in the educational and therapeutic process of a student with ASD.

Part III of the dissertation describes in detail the methodological assumptions of the author's own research, i.e. participatory-educational action research in the Mode 2 Science model (participatory-educational action research M2S, PEAR M2S). It includes eight detailed subchapters divided into individual elements relating to the description of PEAR M2S. The first two subchapters describe paradigmatic and methodological dilemmas in special education and issues regarding paradigmatic control of a personalistic and action nature, included in the theoretical model, with an indication of the essence of its choice. The third subchapter refers to issues related to research paradigmatic grounding. The fourth subchapter organizes the methodological assumptions before research as a statutory requirement for developing an Individual Research Plan in doctoral schools. The fifth and sixth subchapters refer to the questions posed by the respondents and the researcher, the purpose of which is to initiate the process of reflection as a significant element in the process of identifying research problems in the process of community and facilitation. The sixth subchapter lists methods, techniques and research tools, the multitude of which is part of the methodological pluralism that characterizes the PEAR M2S research process. A detailed schedule of the PEAR M2S research process, including such elements as: duration, place, research participants, role of the researcher and respondents, and "critical friend" is provided in the next subchapter. Individual research stages of PEAR M2S, which include components, starting from reconnaissance for action research (reconnaissance and diagnostic phase), through two action and research cycles (*action spirals model*) along with an indication of the selectivity of the methodological elements used from the traditional *Mode 1 model Science*, are found in further subchapters of the third part. Detailed interpretation and presentation of research results in relation to the participatory theoretical and practical model is a key element of the PEAR M2S process in improving practice and creating knowledge. An important element of the research process is the description of research risk and ethical issues important for socio-qualitative research, inherent in the personalistic-humanistic orientation. The conducted PEAR M2S research has shown that teachers and specialist educational and therapeutic practitioners have cognitive and reflective resources to consciously change the current perception of an autistic student, based primarily on diagnostic and medical categories, in favor of thinking about a student with AS in a holistic and subjective dimension. , recognizing the validity of the concept neurodiversity. The initial perception of a student diagnosed with AS by the school team of teachers and specialists was conditioned, among other things, by the teaching experience of subject teachers and the therapeutic experience of school specialists in everyday educational and therapeutic work with autistic students. However, it presented an overly

stereotypical and one-dimensional picture of the school functioning of a student with AS in terms of a generalized interpretation of the experience of working with autistic students. The category of individualization of education was considered as a criterion determined only by the cognitive capabilities of the student with AS. The transformation of the respondents' thinking during the research process in the way of perceiving the student with AS resulted in the creation of "new" meanings for understanding the process of individualization. It included a transition from its colloquial understanding, through personal beliefs, to building the image of the student, based on a strategy of reliable knowledge taking into account the current functioning of the student with AS. The systematic evaluation reflection of the respondents on the understanding of the process of individualization of education for a student with autism spectrum disorder and its conceptualization made it possible to give a new direction to the process defined as action based on work strategies adapted to the student's capabilities, needs and current interests.

The ability to isolate the research problem in the first research and action cycle made the respondents aware of how important it is to self-reflect on the current practice, which until now was only based on statutory requirements regulating the work and tasks of the school team of teachers and specialists. Joint, step-by-step evaluation resulted in responsible actions being taken to identify the abilities of a student diagnosed with AS using pedagogical diagnostic tools for the student's abilities. The development of the Individual Profile of a Student with ASD, as a theoretical construct in the first spiral cycle of action and research of PEAR M2S, resulted in its adaptation to the modification of the IEP, adapted to the current functional diagnosis of an autistic student. It also became the starting point for initiating the second cycle of activities, the essence of which was the fact of recognizable teaching difficulties in working with a gifted student with ASD. The need identified by the team was to develop a program of work with gifted students that would take into account their current needs and capabilities by using the process of individualization of education in the organization, defined in the action cycle as the implementation stage. The developed practical and theoretical models included in the Annex constituted an element of implementation into the current practice of the school team of teachers and specialists.

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