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Review of the Publication:
***Nauczyciele wczesnej edukacji wobec
problemu diagnozowania specyficznych
trudności w uczeniu się***
**[*Early School Education Teachers' Approach
Toward the Problem of School Evaluation
of Specific Difficulties in Learning*]**

Reviewed publication: Anna Szkolak-Stępień, *Nauczyciele wczesnej edukacji wobec problemu diagnozowania specyficznych trudności w uczeniu się [Early School Education Teachers' Approach toward the Problem of School Evaluation of Specific Difficulties in Learning]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego im. KEN, Kraków 2017, ISSN 0239-6025, ISBN 978-83-8084-033-1, Prace Monograficzne 785, DOI 10.24917/9788380840331, pp. 136

The obligation to evaluate difficulties in learning stems from the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport as of April 30th of 2013 on the terms of providing and organising psychological and educational assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions (Journal of Law of 2010 No 228, item 1487). This obligation, imposed by a legislator and not an expert, raises the question of how this evaluation should be conducted. It also forces a reflection of whether the teachers who are responsible for the evaluation of children are appropriately prepared to do so.

It is very important to provide early and proper evaluation for the development of every child in terms of specific difficulties in learning. It gives an opportunity to balance out their educational, and which in turn has an impact on successful achievement at further educational levels.

The responsibility is placed mainly upon the teachers and, in order to conduct a proper evaluation in the first place, teachers have to obtain the appropriate background knowledge and skills. It is necessary for teachers to have knowledge, for example, about normal child development at a certain age, as well as the skills to identify and name any deficiencies if they occur. Furthermore, teachers ought to know which evaluation tools should be used.

Anna Szkolak decided to tackle this problem in the book which is the subject matter of this review. The monograph prepared by Szkolak is dedicated to the evaluation of specific difficulties in learning such as: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthographia and dyscalculia.

This publication is coherent and clear as a whole. The structure of the text is legible and it allows the reader to swiftly gain an overview with regard to its content. The work consists of an introduction, a conclusion and 9 chapters, of which 7 are theoretical and 2 others are empirical. This division is appropriate and fully justified, showing that the author analysed the subject very thoroughly, choosing the most important contents which are functional and justified in a critical and selective way.

The first chapter contains the history of research on developmental dyslexia and dyscalculia all over the world as well as in Poland. Starting with the reflection on historical background of this problem, the author shows that it is not a new issue. Research on learning difficulties goes back for more than a century (the first work about dyslexia was published in 1896) and it is still worth carrying them out despite such a long history. The teachers' readiness to evaluate children's difficulties correctly is still an open question and this is why the research reflection on this subject is justified and can be useful in filling the scientific gap in this area of knowledge.

In the introduction Szkolak decided to answer the following research questions: "how teachers of early school education are prepared to recognize and provide developmental and educational needs which are the effect of specific learning difficulties; what skills teachers have in this field and if they undertake any professional training to improve them; if it is motivating for teachers that it's a governmental obligation to identify such specific learning difficulties? [trans.]".

An additional aim the author acknowledged while writing the book is to give it a simply practical dimension by creating a tool which will be supportive in “teaching practices of teachers [trans.]”.

All of the the goals were fully attained. To fulfil the first claim, the empirical part of the book was used in chapter 8 (author’s own research methodology) and chapter 9 (teachers of early school education toward problems with evaluation of specific learning difficulties in the light of their own research). Empirical research was planned and carried out properly on an appropriate number of subjects, with the usage of methods of work (method of diagnostic survey), research tools and techniques (questionnaire for teachers of early education, interviews with headmasters of primary schools, study of teaching documents and observation registers of researched teachers) suitable for the goals of the book.

Due to the research conducted it was possible to verify the effectiveness and usefulness of the tools used for the evaluation of specific difficulties in learning. According to the teachers questioned, tools like: *Test for aloud reading techniques* [trans.] invented by J. Konopnicki, *Set of reading and writing tests for I-III grades of primary schools* [trans.] by T. Straburzyńska and T. Śliwińska, do not correspond to current standards and norms. Research also proved that it is necessary to make teachers aware of the importance of experimental methods in recognition of abnormality in psychomotor development. The next problem is a teachers’ lack of faith toward the usage of new tools such as: *Risk Scale of Dyslexia* [trans.] or *Risk recognition questionnaire of specific reading and writing difficulties of children who start school in the 1st grade* [trans.] published by M. Bogdanowicz.

To fulfil the last claim, it is crucial to focus attention on information included in chapters 4 (evaluation model of dyslexia [trans.]), 5 (evaluation model od dyscalculia [trans.]) and 6, where the review of methods and tools to early evaluation of specific learning difficulties can be found.

It is worth mentioning that this book has a special value because thanks to it the reader has a chance to improve his or her own knowledge about dyscalculia, that is the impaired ability to learn grade-appropriate mathematics. This problem is little known in Poland and Polish

authors have not yet managed to deal with it in a satisfactory way and this is why the information gathered by A. Szkolak is worth paying attention to, despite the fact that it is strictly regularized.

The author of the book claims that there is a need to modify studies from pre-school and early school education in evaluation and fulfilment of developmental and educational needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties in such way that graduates will not only be able to evaluate children properly but to recognize the risk of occurrence of specific difficulties in learning and make an effort to eliminate those problems as well. Research shows that: "teachers can identify mistakes committed by pupils, however they are not able to point out the reason behind them, nor the type of disorder which the child has. Teachers are apprehensive about the unambiguous identification of dyslexia, dysorthographia, dysgraphia and especially dyscalculia [trans.]" That is why the author highlights the importance of teacher training by taking part in workshops, courses, trainings, post graduate studies, etc.

The review would not be complete without a consideration of its weak points and looking at the theoretical part of work, it would perhaps be more significant if more foreign language sources had been used.

Evaluating Szkolak's work it is important to state that it is interesting, well written and valuable based on the information included. It is very useful for both theorists and practitioners working on this problem and could be interesting for teachers in early school education and pedagogy students of pre-school education. Moreover, it could find a use for all those who would like to find some information and understand the difficulty and importance of the early identification of any risk from a child's dyslexia, dysorthographia, dysgraphia or dyscalculia.

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