

The Image of Children with Intellectual Disabilities: An Analysis Based on Research Conducted in Full-time Care Institutions in Poland¹

Abstract

Practically all of us use stereotypes to describe people with disabilities or impairments. Many social psychological studies have shown that stereotypes often lead to biased judgements about individual group members. The purpose of my research was to identify the social perception of children with intellectual disabilities. In this paper, I describe the social perception of children with intellectual disabilities and the institutions established for care of them in Poland. In spite of the attitudinal change in Poland towards persons with disabilities and the social approval for placing children with intellectual disabilities into full-time care institutions, I argue that doing so still results in discrimination against them.

Introduction

The experiences, observations and thoughts originating from my 12-year professional practice in a full-time guardian-educational centre for children with intellectual disabilities became the source of my reflections on many aspects of such a centre's functioning. My methodical perspective improved my perception of various social phenomena, such as the acceptance of socially integrating the intellectually disabled from guardian institutions.

¹ This paper is based upon a doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Prof. T. Lewowicki, Warsaw University, Poland.