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The social and educational situation of the students from dysfunctional families in the school environment : report on researches

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**THE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SITUATION OF THE STUDENTS
FROM DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
(REPORT ON RESEARCHES)**

The theoretical context of the consideration

The issue of the family understood as “[...] the first, essential and the most important community that is responsible for the human’s first needs”,¹ lies in the scope of the research interest of many scholar disciplines, mainly such as: psychology, sociology, axiology and pedagogy. In all of these above-mentioned disciplines, it is emphasized that a family is the basic area of the influences on the child’s development and functioning, where a child learns the fundamental life activities, shapes its own personality, develops convictions about the world and its values and the rules of life. This is where a child formulates its identity and the patterns of behavior.² The functional and healthy family provides the best conditions for the optimal development and functioning for its every member, especially for a child. But, considering the fact that a family is also an integral part of every society, it is similarly a kind of a mirror that gives the reflections of main problems and tendencies in the social changes, which include, inter alia: haste, superficiality of relations, pauperization and polarization of society and others. These, specified here very generally, tendencies may become the cause of the dysfunction of the family. The dysfunctional family is a very peculiar type of a family and a specific environment for raising and socializing young people. B. Smolińska-Theiss writes about these families as follows: “[...] it is considered in general that these families are families that do not accomplish the socially specified parental role or accomplish it in a way that is not accepted in the society.”³ The dysfunctional family environment has the characteristics of a high degree of the depravation of the family’s members needs and a high level of anxiety and fear. In the dysfunctional family, one can observe tense atmosphere and ambiguity of relations between the members of the family. The rules of the family functioning and the rules of behavior may be unclear, there is a lack of the well-defined positive patterns, and the norms are not specified. This is why the family members have problems with judgment on which attitudes are acceptable, and which are not.

The following work considers the subject of the social functioning of the adolescents from the dysfunctional families in the school area. This issue has a great social importance, because the phenomenon of the dysfunction of a family

¹ Compare: B. Kiereś, *Tylko Rodzina!* (eng. Only a Family!). Servire Veritati, Lublin 2006, p. 11-17 and A. Łuczyński, *Dzieci w rodzinach zastępczych i dysfunkcyjnych* (eng. *Children in foster and dysfunctional families*). KUL (The Catholic University in Lublin). Lublin 2008, p. 21

² See: E. Jarosz, *Diagnoza rodziny w praktyce pedagogicznej – wskazania i możliwości* (eng. *The diagnosis of a family in the pedagogical practice – indications and possibilities*). In: *Problemy Poradnictwa Psychologiczno- Pedagogicznego* (eng. *Problems of the psychological – pedagogical counseling*). 2006, No.1, p. 19-34

³ B. Smolińska-Theiss, *Rodzina dysfunkcyjna* (eng. The dysfunctional family). In: *Encyklopedia XXI wieku Tom V* (eng. *Encyclopedia of 21st century vol. 5*). published by: „Żak”. Warsaw 2006, p. 330

particularly strongly affects on the raising in it children on different developmental stages, including the stage of the adolescence. The term “adolescence” means a phase in the human development that occurs in the times of rapid changes in personality, the times of leaving the role of a child and preparing to the role of an adult. E.B. Hurlock writes that: “[...] the adolescence is a transient period between the childhood and the stage of complete maturity. An individual is completely mature, when he or she takes in the society the position of an adult person in physical, social and economic scope.”⁴ The “adolescence” is the synonym of juvenility and puberty. The criteria that distinguish these two terms are procreative abilities (in puberty) and the ability to earn a living by oneself (in adulthood). These terms are sometimes being used interchangeably in literature. W. Szewczuk, identifies the adolescence with the term “the age of growing-up” and considers that it is a temporary phase “[...] between childhood and youth, which occurs between the age of 11-12 and 17-18, characterizing with the intensified physical and psychological development leading to maturity.”⁵ The process of growing-up is an individually diverse process that is transformed by many factors and ends on achieving such a psychological level that enables taking social roles typical for an adult person. E. Erikson considers the age of growing-up, the age of the adolescence in the aspect of the social development and calls it the phase of identity – the transmission of roles. He emphasizes that this phase, similarly to others that he specifies, has positive as well as negative dimension. The rising of the awareness of one’s own uniqueness is the positive dimension and the inability of taking the defined role in the social space is the negative phenomenon.⁶

Every stage of the human development is characterized by the specific social functioning, which is determined by various outer factors. According to J. Rymaszewska, “[...] relations between an individual and his or her environment are determined by the following notions: social functioning, social adaptation and social abilities and roles. The social functioning is an ambiguous and wide term that embraces many spheres of human life.”⁷ The social functioning of an individual is a complex phenomenon, it is also a kind of competency as well as process, because the way of the social functioning can evolve and depends on many factors. A. Brzezińska writes: “[...] the functioning of human being can be considered as three linked together areas/aspects, i.e. *psyche*, *soma* and *polis* that together determine his or her behavior and are connected in mutual, bilateral relations with outer environment (surroundings) and inner environment (genetic background). (...) In the sphere of *polis*, human as a social being is the subject of

⁴ E.B. Hurlock, *Rozwój młodzieży* (eng. *The development of the adolescences*). PWN. Warsaw 1965, p. 15

⁵ A. Maurer, *Wiek dorastania* (eng. *The age of adolescence*). In: W. Szewczuk (Ed.) *Słownik psychologiczny* (eng. *Psychological dictionary*). published by: Wiedza Powszechna. Warsaw 1985, p. 343

⁶ Compare: K.M. Czarnecki, *Psychologia rozwojowa osobowości i zachowania człowieka dla studentów pedagogiki wyższych szkół zawodowych* (eng. *The developmental psychology of the human personality and behavior for students of pedagogy at vocational colleges*). Published by: HUMANITAS. Sosnowiec 2007

⁷ J. Rymaszewska, *Funkcjonowanie społeczne i zawodowe osób mających zaburzenia psychiczne w Polsce w porównaniu do innych wybranych krajów europejskich* (eng. *The social and occupational functioning of people with psychological disorders in Poland in comparison to other selected European countries*). published by: Medical Academy in Wrocław. Wrocław 2004, p. 18

social expectations and requirements and he or she has to develop skills that will help him or her to satisfy them.”⁸ The social functioning, which “[...] is an element of more complex phenomenon – the social awareness”,⁹ can be specified as the individual’s activities that bring a person closer to gaining the balance between an individual’s own needs and the needs and conditions of surroundings in which he or she operates. They can be described as a level, on which a person functions in its social context, from fundamental social skills to relations with other people from a person’s surrounding.¹⁰ According to I. Obuchowska, the social functioning, considered in the psychological context, lies in “satisfaction of human needs (both common and individual) and in realization of assignments given to it by the society and by the individual itself.”¹¹

The social functioning of adolescents is mainly determined by the proprieties of the emotional and social development proper for this developmental stage. The emotional development in the adolescence period can be characterized by three features: increased intensity, lability and enriching of the emotional content. Emotions of adolescents takes various shades, and the emotionality gives fundamentals for the maturity of feelings. People in the adolescence period have a lower level of the emotional development, but are on a higher cognitive level. Being on the various levels of the development as it happens in the developmental processes is a specific feature of the adolescence. Certain emotional “immaturity” that occurs simultaneously with quite a high level of the cognitive development results in discomfort among adolescents. They are torn by emotions that they do not understand. Emotional looseness of adolescents may be caused by various outer factors for example: unfavorable family relations, limitations that are the result of the excessive parental control, obstacles that make satisfying of one’s desires impossible, social requirements of more mature behavior that in the childhood, necessity of adaptation to new environments and roles, occurring of strong interest in opposite sex, conflicts with surrounding especially with a family.¹²

The family home is a training field, a place where one acquires first social skills and the bond that is created between family members has a great meaning in this process. The way of shaping family interpersonal relations determines attitudes of young people towards other people from outside the family. The feature of the healthy functional family, and simultaneously a characteristic of its functioning, is coherence, conformity and common, harmonious pursuit of the common goal. The functional family realizes all its functions in a way that satisfies its every single member and contributes to their feeling of happiness and satisfaction. P. Szczukiewicz asserts that in the adolescence period “[...] the family relations change considerably, the social needs rise, especially the need of frequent social contacts in their quantitative sense as well as in their quality

⁸ A. Brzezińska, *Spółeczna psychologia rozwoju, tom III* (eng. *The social psychology of the devolpment, vol. 3*). Publisher by: Wydawnictwo Naukowe „SCHOLAR. Warsaw 2007

⁹ J. Rymaszewska, *Funkcjonowanie...*, op. cit., p. 18

¹⁰ Ibidem

¹¹ Quotation from D. Borecka-Biernat, *Rodzinne predykatory agresji fizycznej młodzieży w sytuacjach społecznie trudnych* (eng. *The family pedicators of physical aggression of adolescences in hard social situations*). In: B. Urban (ed.) *Dewiacje wśród młodzieży* (eng. *Deviations of adolescences*). Published by the Jagiellonian University, Cracow 2001, p. 107

¹² Compare: E.B. Hurlock, *Rozwój...*, op. cit.

sense. The authority of parents is reduced.”¹³ The groups of peers, both formal and informal ones, gain on its importance. In the scope of the social development, people in the adolescence period establish relations with larger number of people, than they do in their childhood. These relations are different not only on their quantitative level, but also in their quality. They base on more complicated reliance and roles, the equal relations stop to dominate and young people must learn how to find themselves in the contacts with people who have superiority over them, as well as in contacts with people whose life depends on them.¹⁴ So, the adolescents’ main feature is the gradual independence of authorities, verification of cognitive, emotional and social content, and the ability of understanding of relativity of some rights. The understanding of the conventionality of particular social arrangements and the ability to critic analysis of norms are also shaped, which has an influence on the change of relations with parents. Adolescents have often the feeling that their parents do not concern about their developmental needs, their feelings and changes that took place in them, their interests and friendships. As it comes of parents, they do not always understand the young people’s need for searching for their own environment. They do not accept the fact that the family is not an only point of reference any more.

Unfavorable phenomena, which disturb the family development and functioning, may become a cause of secondary disorders of adolescents in functioning of wider groups. The dysfunctional family insufficiently stimulates the child’s social development, does not supply correct patterns of behavior and does not help in taking particular social roles. The environment of dysfunctional family, especially this with a significant level of dysfunction, forces to some extent the youngest members of the family to take specific roles, such as: the role of a hero, of a scapegoat and many others¹⁵. Furthermore, the dysfunctional family usually does not correct inappropriate attitudes, that adolescents may display. It does not motivate to establishing of new contacts and enriching of interpersonal relations and does not support the adolescents in their aspirations and does not strengthen in them the conviction that the changes that take place in them are desirable. Often, such a family requires from a child to much independence and maturity as for its age, or just opposite it does not let a child to develop and to get into adolescence.

The conducted researches show that there is a significant link between dysfunctional behaviors of an individual and problems of occurring phenomena of dysfunction in a family.¹⁶ This is why the situation of dysfunction can be treated as

¹³ P. Szuszkiewicz, *Rozwój psychospołeczny a tożsamość* (eng. *The psycho-social development and the identity*),. Published by UMCS. Lublin 1998, p. 50

¹⁴ See: A. Hankała, *Zastosowanie wiedzy psychologicznej o rozwoju człowieka w nauczaniu i wychowaniu* (eng. *Application of psychological knowledge about human development in education and raising*). In: B. Harwas-Napierała, J. Trempała (ed.): *Wiedza z psychologii rozwoju człowieka w praktyce społecznej* (eng. *Knowledge about psychology of the human development in the social practice*). Published by: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM. Poznań 2002

¹⁵ For further information on the roles taken by a child in a dysfunctional family and school, see: A. Seweryńska, *Uczeń z rodziny dysfunkcyjnej. Przewodnik dla wychowawców i nauczycieli* (eng. *A student from a dysfunctional family. A Guide for educators and teachers*). Published by: WSiP. Warsaw 2004

¹⁶ See: J. Biała, *Zagrożenia w wychowaniu dziecka we współczesnej rodzinie polskiej* (eng. *Threats in raising a child in the contemporary Polish family*). Published by: Wydawnictwo Akademii Świętokrzyskiej. Kielce 2006, p. 63

an unwanted state, resulting in disorders in the social development and functioning of an adolescent in educational environments other than a family, e.g. in school.

Although the social functioning in the area of school has its own specific dimension, it is very similar to the general social functioning style of an individual. This specific character originates from the fact of establishing relations with teachers, school staff and peers, which are strictly typical for school situations. The determinant of the uniqueness of this type functioning is the fact that in school a young person plays the role of a student. This role is assigned to him or her in advance, and functioning within it is hedged around with strictly specified rules of behaviors and contacts with other people. The role of a student is connected with determined duties. The correct and satisfactory fulfillment of this role is linked with the adolescent's identification with the role of a student and with the assigned to him or her social position. According to E. Jarosz, functioning in the role of a student "[...] means above all involving in relations with other people – teachers, students as well as with impersonal elements of school situations. From the child's side, the character of these relations depend on many factors: features of child's personality, emotional and motivating properties, potential and developmental opportunities, talents and abilities, social skills and needs, but also on the so-called social and cultural background."¹⁷ Proper and being in accordance with the established social norms, satisfying social functioning of a student in the school area is related with acquisition of the following social competencies and attitudes:

- “[...] intellectual-cognitive activity that enables positive realization activities related with didactic process;
- internalization of formal regulations and norms of behaviors preferred in reference to the school educational function;
- establishing of positive social interactions, which have formal, substantial and personal character, with adults and peers;
- ability to functioning in informal peer groups, whose goals, organization rules and norms of behavior often differ from formal norms that are obligatory in school.”¹⁸

Concluding, the functioning in the school environment requires from an adolescent to cope with many duties, different expectations of various groups of people, for example teachers and schoolmates and to display a significant degree of maturity. The style of the social functioning in the school area depends on many factors. One may assume that one of main determiners of the way of the social functioning of adolescents in the school environment is the family, that may have the dysfunctional character.

¹⁷ E. Jarosz, *Wybrane obszary diagnozowania pedagogicznego* (eng. *Selected areas of pedagogical diagnosing*). Published by: University of Silesia. Katowice 2006, p. 66

¹⁸ D. Pstrąg, *Adaptacja uczniów do wymagań szkoły i jej związek z charakterem percepcji środowiska społecznego* (eng. *Students' adaptation to school requirements and its relation with the character of the social environment perception*). In: M. Dudzikowa (ed.): *Nauczyciel i uczeń. Między przemocą a dialogiem. Obszary napięć i typy interakcji* (eng. *Teacher and student. Between Violence and dialogue. Areas of tensions and types of interactions*). Published by: "Impuls". Cracow 1996, p. 204

1. The estimation of the social functioning of the students from dysfunctional families in the school environment- selected research results

In order to estimate the way of social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families in school, researchers conducted a survey among 104 students and 23 teachers in junior high schools in towns: Porąbka and Bielany.¹⁹ The objects of analysis were the survey of pedagogues and other present sources such as: school registers (to check the degree of students' absence including unexcused absence, grades from particular school subjects, descriptive grades from behavior, reproofs and commendations) and documentation of school pedagogue (notes on: the structure of families of particular students, material situation and the climate of a family, possible dysfunctions that the family struggles with, so-called "blue card" – a document that contains information about problematic behavior of a student, its circumstances, causes, type of taken interventions and educational means, and the results from school pointing system of students grading). The researches were conducted in the time period from February to April 2010.

In the conduct of these researches we were searching for answers on the following problems:

- a) What is the number of students from dysfunctional families in the researched junior high school classes?
- b) How does the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families in the role of students appear?
- c) How does the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families in the role of the partners of their teachers appear?
- d) How does the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families in the role of the partners of their peers appear?

The following work presents only selected results of wider created and conducted researches.

On the basis of interviews with school pedagogues, teachers and the analysis of documentation, the number of students from dysfunctional families in each researched class was ascertained. From the gathered data occurs that among 505 students from junior high schools in Porąbka and Bielany, 95 adolescents (i.e. about 18. 1 percent of the surveyed students) come from dysfunctional families. Dysfunction of families occurs more often among boys (60 students, i.e. 11,43 percent) than among girls (36, i.e. 6,67 percent of the inquired). The presented here data show that about one fifth of these junior high schools students come from dysfunctional families. So, it can be stated that the dysfunction of the adolescents' families is certainly not a marginal problem and that it requires deeper researches and analyses.

¹⁹ Researches were conducted by students from the Teachers' Training College and by students from the Technical- humanistic Academy in Bielsko-Biala under the supervision of the author of this text as a part of the subject: "The situation of the children from dysfunctional families on various stages of education". Researches presented in this work were conducted and supplied by Magdalena Oleksy-Zborowska as a part of her MA thesis entitled: "Social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in the school area", written under the supervision of Prof. Ph.D. S. Palka. This issue was also a subject of her BA thesis: "The school situation of children from dysfunctional families", prepared under the supervision of Ph.D. Ewa Kochanowska.

Eventually, only 140 randomly selected students, including 45 adolescents from dysfunctional families were surveyed. The intention of the research was to gain students' from healthy families and from dysfunctional families opinions (to learn about the self-esteem of the students) on the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families in the social environment and its comparative analysis. In order to learn how the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in the school area appears in comparison with students from correctly functioning families, the authors of the research asked the respondents questions enclosed in the survey questionnaire. The respondents gave their opinions by marking answers on five stage axis of continuum.

a) Functioning of students from dysfunctional families in the role of students

On the basis of the analysis of the research results one may notice important difference in the general estimations (and self-esteem) the quality of the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families and those from correctly functioning families. The first group of respondents characterizes with general lower self-esteem. They are also – quite stereotypically – underestimated by teachers. Though, the analysis of the school documentation shows that the way of the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families does not differ much from the way of the social functioning of the students from normally functioning families.

The surveyed teachers estimated the level of adaptation of students from dysfunctional families in the school environment. The gained answers were on the axis of continuum between “rather high” and “very low”. None of the surveyed teachers estimated the level of the adaptation to the school social environment of students from dysfunctional families as “very high”. It is worth mentioning that the majority of respondents (11 people, i.e. 47.83 percent of all surveyed) estimated the level of the students adaptation as “rather low” or “very low”. It is also important to mention that 7 respondents (30.43 percent) pointed “hard to say” answer. It may be an evidence of the fact that teachers do not pay attention to the identification of the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families in the school environment. They do not know how to diagnose the students' family situation. It is hard for them to observe the differences between the way of the social functioning of the students from dysfunctional families and those from correctly functioning in they daily work. At this place it is worth to quote very disturbing statement of one of the teachers (13 years in profession, an graduate from biological studies), she said as follows: “[...] *one should search for information about students in the Local Social Welfare Center, because it is not the role of a teacher to cope with such issues. A teacher has no right or duty to have such information*”.

The estimation of the level of the students adaptation to school conditions made by the students themselves differs considerably from the one that was prepared by the teachers (table no. 1). The students from dysfunctional families estimated their own adaptation in this scope higher than they were estimated by the teachers (average points 3.62). But similarly, their self-esteem is lower than in the case of the children from normally functioning families (3.95). The general estimation of the level of adaptation of students from dysfunctional families to the school environment made by teachers and the self-esteem of students differ

significantly in this issue. This aspect of the social functioning was estimated lower by the teachers (2.65) than by the students from dysfunctional families themselves (3.62).

Table No. 1: Students' self-esteem in the scope of the level of adaptation to the conditions of the school environment

Continuum of estimation	Points	Total	Types of familie					
			Dysfunctional			Correctly functioning		
			Altog ether	Girls	Boys	Altog ether	Girls	Boys
Very good	5	24	6	3	3	13	18	5
Rather good	4	77	24	12	12	34	53	19
midling	3	19	9	2	7	3	10	7
Rather Bad	2	15	4	2	2	5	11	6
Very Bad	1	5	2	0	2	1	3	2
Arythmetic average		3.71	3.62	3.84	3.46	3.95	3.76	3.49

Source: the author's own study

Learning how the social functioning of adolescents from dysfunctional families on the role of a student looks like, the authors of the research studied the issue of the adolescents' motivation for learning, as an element of the role of a student. The surveyed teachers estimated the commitment of students from dysfunctional families in learning below the average (2.61). It is also important to mention that 34.78 percent of the surveyed teachers has no opinion on this issue (8 respondents pointed "sometimes differently". It is about one third of all surveyed. Although the analysis of gained results shows that the teachers' opinions on this issue are diverse, it may be noticed that teachers state that students from dysfunctional families are rather uninterested in learning. 47.83 percent of the surveyed (11 people) maintained that adolescents are "rather not" or "definitely not" interested in learning on the same level as other students.

One- half of the surveyed students, while making self-esteem as it comes of the commitment in learning (table No. 2), declared the ambivalent attitude towards learning. Considerable differences in the self-esteem between students from dysfunctional families (2.60) and those from correctly functioning families (2.61) was not observed.

It is worth to mention that the estimation of the commitment to learning of students form dysfunctional families made by teachers (2.61) does not differ much from the estimation made by the students from dysfunctional families themselves (2.61). Estimating the learning results gained by the students form dysfunctional families, great majority of the teachers (52.17 percent) described them as "rather low". In general, this aspect of the social functioning was estimated as lying below average (2.35) by the majority of teachers. More than one-fourth of the teachers was unable to estimate what grades receive their students, who come from dysfunctional families. They pointed: "hard to decide" option. Students from

dysfunctional families estimates their grades lower (3.09) in contrast to their schoolmates from correctly functioning families (3.36). In the comparison between the self-esteem of the students from dysfunctional families (3.09) and the estimation prepared by the teachers (2.35) one can observe differences. The surveyed teachers estimated the results of the students from dysfunctional families lower than did it the students themselves. It should be emphasized that the analysis of school register aimed to check students real notes, proved that the grades gained by the student from dysfunctional families are very similar to those gained by the students from healthy families. Both groups are dominated by grades higher than satisfactory or satisfactory. This fact confirms the accuracy of the students' self-esteem and points some kind of underestimating of grades of students' from dysfunctional families in the teachers' opinions.

Table No. 2: Students' self-esteem on their commitment to learning

Continuum of estimation	Points	Total	Types of familie					
			Dysfunctional			Correctly functioning		
			Altogether	Girls	Boys	Altogether	Girls	Boys
Yes	5	2	1	0	1	1	1	0
Rather yes	4	17	6	3	3	11	8	3
Sometimes differently	3	70	7	10	7	53	35	18
Rather not	2	26	16	5	11	10	3	7
Not	1	25	5	1	4	20	9	11
The arythmetic average		2.60	2.60	2.79	2.46	2.61	2.80	2.33

Source: The author's own study

The social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families as students was researched by measuring the phenomenon of truancy and by comparing the results with the results of the students from correctly functioning families. Considerable number of the surveyed teachers (43.48 percent) estimated that the students from dysfunctional families play truant "rather often". The students from dysfunctional families are little less unwilling to admit playing truant (1.71) than students from correctly functioning families (1.75). In the eyes of the surveyed teachers students from dysfunctional families play truant more often (3.26) than in the students' own opinion (1.71). The presented data shows that the teachers' opinions and the students' opinion on this issue are much different. Yet, the conducted analysis of the school registers revealed that the frequency of playing truant among students from dysfunctional families is slightly higher than in the case of the students from healthy families. It is also higher than it was declared by the students altogether.

Opinions given by the surveyed teachers on the issue of breaking school rules by the students from dysfunctional families were divided. Though in general, the teachers, while estimating the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in the term of obeying (or disobeying) the school regulations,

described it as “average” (3.26). The estimations oscillated between the answers from “very often” to “very rarely or never”. The students from dysfunctional families estimated that they break school rules more often (2.02) than their schoolmates from correctly functioning families (1.92). Although, while making self estimation they declared disobeying the school rules less often (2.02) than it was indicated in the teachers’ opinions (3.26). The analysis of the school documentation proved that the students from dysfunctional families break the school regulations more often and similarly have lower grades from behavior than the other students. This confirms the tendencies showed in the survey of the teachers.

While summing up the results of the research on the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in the role of students, one may state that the differences between the teachers’ opinions and the self-esteem of students from dysfunctional families are significant. But, those differences are not confirmed by the analysis of the school registers, the school pedagogue’s opinions and the analysis of the documentation of school point grading system. It can be assumed that the teachers’ opinions may be the result of the stereotypes on the issue of the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families and the previous incidental experiences of work with students from dysfunctional families who have problems with acting the role of students.

b) The functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families as partners of teachers

On the question about displaying of verbal aggression toward teachers by students from dysfunctional families, the majority of the teachers declared that the student from dysfunctional families manifest verbal aggression toward them “rather rarely”. Such answers were provided by 10 respondents, which constitutes nearly one- half of the surveyed. It is also interesting that nearly half of the surveyed students, when doing their self-esteem, declared that they manifest verbal aggression toward teachers “rather rarely or never” (“call names, make fun of or gossip about” teachers). Simultaneously, 47 from 140 students (which constitutes about 33.57 percents of all respondents) did not clearly stated how often they display aggression toward teachers.

Table No. 3: Students’ self-esteem on the frequency of displaying verbal aggression toward Teachers

Continuum of estimation	Point	Total	Types of familie					
			Dysfunctional			Correctly functioning		
			Altogether	Girls	Boys	Altogether	Girls	Boys
Very of ten	5	9	3	2	1	6	5	1
Rather often	4	16	5	2	3	11	6	5
Sometimes differently	3	47	15	6	9	32	22	10
Rather rarely	2	35	12	3	9	23	9	14
v.rarely/never	1	33	10	6	4	23	14	9
The arythmetic average		2.52	2.53	2.53	2.54	2.52	2.62	2.36

Source: the author’s own study

It should be also mentioned that 25 students (17.85 percent) declared that they behave aggressive toward teachers “rather often” or “very often”. There was only slight difference in the self-esteem of the students from dysfunctional families (2.53) and the students from healthy families (2.52).

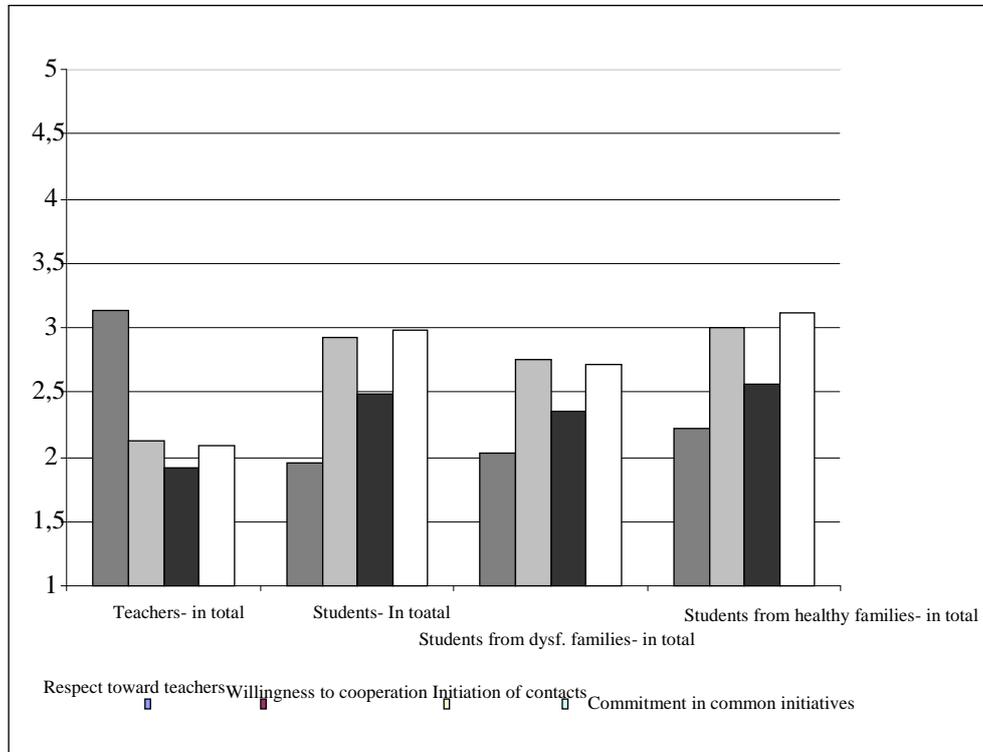
One of the most important social skills are communicating skills. When estimating the frequency of the lack of the ability to communicate with teachers among the students from dysfunctional families, 12 of all teachers (52.17 percent) stated that the students from dysfunctional families are unable to communicate with them “rather often”. In general, the surveyed teachers estimated the lack of the ability to communicate” with them among the students from dysfunctional families on 3.48, which is the value very close to the answer “rather often”. It is interesting that the self-esteem of the adolescents on this issue is rather diverse, the majority of the respondents (80 students, i.e. 57.14 percent) declared that they have problems with communications with teachers “rather rarely” or “never”. Differences were also visible in the self-esteem prepared by the students from dysfunctional families (2.27) and the students from correctly functioning families (2.34). The latter estimate themselves in this aspect lower. The comparison of the students’ self estimation and the teachers’ estimation allows to notice that teachers estimate higher the lack of the ability to communicate with them among the students from dysfunctional families (3.48) than the students themselves (2.27).

The social functioning of students in the role of partners of teachers includes among all such aspects of behavior as: showing respect toward teacher, showing willingness to cooperation, initiating contacts and commitment in common initiatives.

In the teachers’ opinion, students from dysfunctional families show respect toward them more often (3.13) than it was declared by the students themselves (1.95). The difference in their estimations is considerable. It is opposite to the previous tendency in the estimation. In the teachers’ opinion, the students from dysfunctional families came off considerably better that they did in their self-esteem. The situation of estimating of showing willingness to cooperation with them among students from dysfunctional families by the respondents appears to be completely different. The teachers estimated the students from dysfunctional families quite low in this aspect (2.13). Maybe, the teachers do not notice in the students from dysfunctional families valuable partners in social contacts or they do not expect the students to cooperate with them. This assumption has its reflections in the words of one of the interviewed teachers, who said: *“It is hard to speak about partnership with junior high school students, especially with those problematic. Students have their duties, and teachers have their duties. Besides partnership with students is a kind of getting too friendly, and a teacher can not behave like that”*. Whereas, the students declare higher willingness to cooperate with teachers (2.92). It is a higher factor that in the teachers’ opinion but it still oscillates nearly the answer “rather rarely”. One may conclude that the students do not display high interest in cooperation with teacher, and the teachers seem to notice it. Students from dysfunctional families (2.76) show lower willingness to cooperation with teachers than the students from correctly functioning families (3.00). The initiation of contacts by the students from dysfunctional families is estimated low by the surveyed teachers (1.91). However, the students estimate themselves higher (2.49). It is important to emphasize that the adolescents from dysfunctional families

declare lower willingness to initiate contacts with teachers (2.36) than the respondents altogether (2.49) and lower than the students from healthy families (2.56). These results confirm the assumptions presented in the subject literature and may prove the problems of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in initiating social contacts.

Graph No.1: Teachers' estimation vs. Students' self estimation in the scope of the particular aspects of the students' social functioning in the role of partners of teachers.



Source: the author's own study

The data presented above on the graph show that the students from dysfunctional families declare less commitment in the common initiatives with teachers than the students from correctly functioning families. Furthermore, these data indicate both the teachers as well as the students estimate low negative social attitudes of the students from dysfunctional families. Generally, the results oscillate close to the answer "sometimes differently", which does not give clear answer on the question asked in the research.

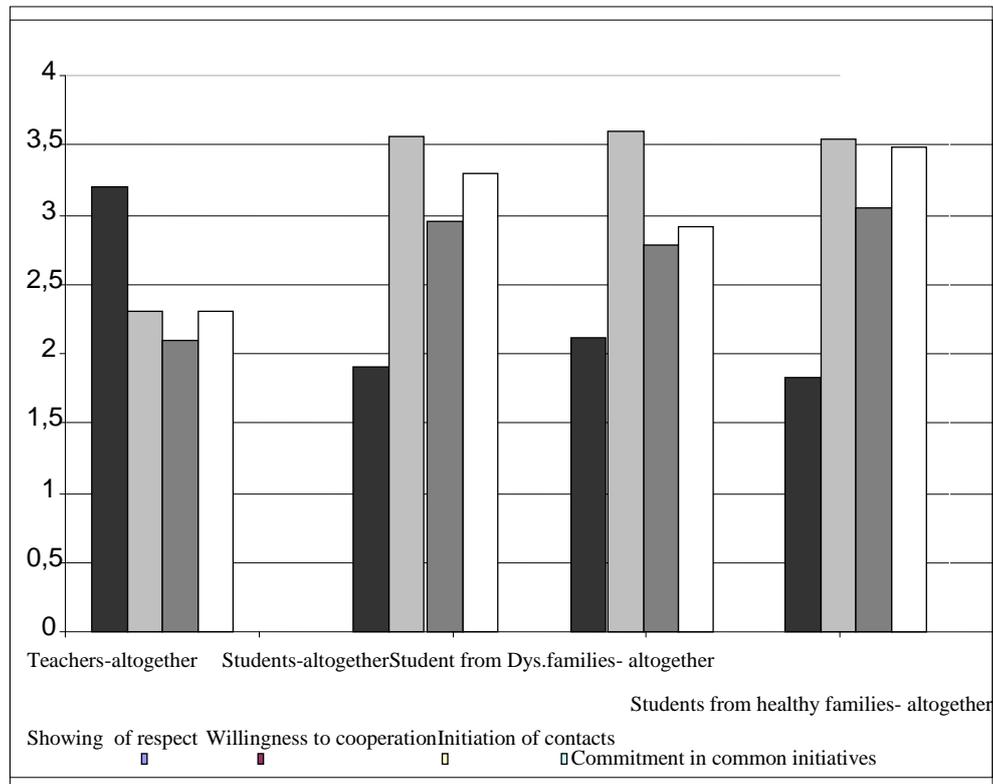
c) Social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families as partners of peers in the school environment

The frequency of the verbal aggression of the students from dysfunctional families toward peers in eyes of teachers was the object of the research. The surveyed teachers altogether estimated the frequency of the verbal aggression of the students from dysfunctional families toward their peers on 3.70., so their

opinions are closer to the answer "rather often". 14 teachers stated that the students from dysfunctional families very often or often display such attitudes. While the students from dysfunctional families declared that they manifest verbal aggression "rather rarely" (2.36). Considerable number of the surveyed teachers (10 people, i.e. 29.4 percent) state that the students from dysfunctional families are "rather not" or "definitely not" liked among their classmates. 8 respondents (34.78 percent) have no specified opinion on this issue. One of the respondents (a woman, 5 years in profession, biological education) gave the following answer: "*students with family problems usually sticks out from the rest of the class, they're confrontational, they often vent their anger on others, which results in the situation that they aren't being liked by their peers. Also, teachers keep them at distance.*" The surveyed students estimated the level of being liked by their schoolmates on 3.59, which shows that they feel that they are being liked by their peers. It refers also to the students from dysfunctional families.

In order to measure the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families as the partners of their peers, the surveyed teachers and students were asked to determine the frequency of the social functioning positive aspects in the social contacts with their peers (graph no.2).

Graph no. 2: Teachers' and students' estimation on the particular aspects of the students' social functioning in the role of the partners of their peers



Source: the author's own study

The data displayed on the graph no.2 present that the respondents' opinions on the particular aspects of the social functioning of adolescents as their peers' partners are varied. It is worth notice that the analysis of these data proves the previously observed tendency that shows that the surveyed teachers usually estimate the adolescents from dysfunctional families lower than do it the adolescents themselves. The general estimation of the frequency of displaying particular attitudes toward peers is as follows:

- a) *respect* (3.20) – which indicates that, according to the teachers, the students from dysfunctional families display respect toward their schoolmates “rather often” . It should be notice that the students' self-estimation is lower than the teachers' estimation. It may be observed in the self- estimation of the students altogether (1.91), as well as in self-estimation of the students from dysfunctional families (2.11) and the self-estimation of the students from healthy families (1.82). It should be mentioned that this is the only aspect of the social functioning of the adolescents that is estimated so low by the surveyed students. Moreover, in this case, the students from dysfunctional families estimated themselves higher in comparison to those from correctly functioning families;
- b) the teachers estimated that the students from dysfunctional families display *the willingness to cooperation with their class-mates* “rather rarely” (2.30). The students from dysfunctional families estimated themselves higher (3.60). Their self-estimation is higher that the self-estimation of the students altogether (3.56) and the students from healthy families (3.55);
- c) the teachers, while estimating *the skill to initiate contacts* of the students from dysfunctional families, stated that those students initiate relations with their peers “rather rarely” (2.10). However, the students altogether estimated the frequency of initiating social contacts with their peers by them as average. The adolescents from dysfunctional families (2.78) estimated themselves lower than the students altogether but higher than their were estimated by the teachers;
- d) the surveyed teachers estimated *the commitment in common initiatives* of students from dysfunctional families on “rather rarely” (2.30). The students from dysfunctional families estimated themselves higher (2.91). Their self-estimation is still lower that the self-estimation on this aspect of the students from correctly functioning families (3.48) and lower than the self-estimation of the students altogether (3.30).

The analysis of presented above data show that the teachers estimated the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in the role of their peers' partners lower that the adolescents themselves. The self-esteem of this group of students was in most cases lower than the self-esteem of their schoolmates from correctly functioning families. Such tendencies in the self-esteem of the adolescents from dysfunctional families can be explained on few ways. Maybe the dysfunction of a family (or the lack of it) does not determine considerably the social relations between family members and does not cause the negative consequences in this scope, or the adolescents do not interpret the family dysfunction as the factor that determines the social functioning of family members toward themselves and toward wider social groups. This situation may be also explained by the fact that the students whose social relation are incorrect take such

state as the norm. The tendency to describing family relations as positive by the students from dysfunctional families may stem from the unwillingness to sharing the information about families with strangers, especially when it happens in the school situation.

Taking into consideration the opinions of the surveyed teachers and students gained during the research, one may state that the teachers, among all factors that determine the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families, attributes a great meaning to the family patterns as the important factor determining the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in the school area. It may be stated that the teachers see the value of a family in shaping the attitudes and social functioning of children and adolescents.

2. Conclusions and postulates for the pedagogical practice

In every school one may find a group of students who come from dysfunctional families. The dysfunction of the family environment may cause various problems in the social functioning of the adolescents in the school environment. This is why teachers should have appropriate competences that enable them to diagnose, with the help of school pedagogues, psychologists and social workers etc, the dysfunctions in a family. Teachers should notice the relationship between the dysfunctions in the family environment and the functioning of the adolescents in the role of students and partners of their teachers and schoolmates. It is also important for the teachers to perceive the importance of school in the stimulation of the social functioning of the students from dysfunctional families, because every dysfunctional family has a high level of the deprivation of the family members' needs. Such families often lack clear positive patterns and the norms are not specified, because of this members of dysfunctional families have difficulties with estimating which attitudes are socially acceptable.

On the basis of the results of the research, the literature analysis and the author's own observation, one may formulate the following conclusions:

- a) In all schools, the great part of students come from dysfunctional families. The dysfunction of the family environment may cause various problem in the social functioning of the adolescents in the school environment;
- b) It seems that the surveyed teachers do not pay enough attention to the students' social functioning. This assumption may be confirmed by the earlier quoted teachers' statements given by them during the interview;
- c) The surveyed teachers estimated the social functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families quite stereotypically. Their statements are sometimes superficial and indicate that those students cope with the aspects of social functioning not as good as the students from healthy families. However, their opinions were not confirmed by the analysis of the school documentation. So, teachers, in their everyday work with the students from dysfunctional families, should base their opinions and work with them on the knowledge on the mechanisms of the dysfunctional families functioning and information about particular students and their family situation.
- d) School staff should pay more attention to the partnership form of the social relations in their school. It would help students to get into adulthood gradually and prepare to play the social roles of adults satisfyingly. It may

also be conducive to provide the feeling of subjectivity, stability and safety among the students. It is especially important in the case of the adolescents from dysfunctional families, among which satisfying of these needs may be disturbed;

- e) Students from dysfunctional families usually estimate their social functioning in the school area lower than their peers from correctly functioning families. This shows that the school should be more involved in developing among their students skills of: effective communication, reliable approach to the duties of the social functioning in the school area, creating trust toward partners of social relations or initiation of contacts;
- f) Teachers often do not see and do not understand their role in the stimulation of the students' social development. One may also assume that they do not treat the school as a place of co-existence with other people;
- g) The contact between the school, more precisely between teachers, school pedagogues and their students' families is very important. Sometimes teachers have very little information on their students' families, sometimes they just do not want to know anything at all. The fact that teachers create their opinions on students without knowing their family environment may lead to stereotypical estimations. If teachers know the students family situation and the difficulties that they struggle with, they are able to match their educational influence to the student's needs and expectations more aptly. Familiarity of students family situation which is connected with regular contact between the school and parents is conducive to establishing of the fruitful cooperation among these two environments. It is also worth to mention that the school as well as the family have similar goals – they want to support adolescents in their development.

The teacher on every stage of education and of every subject should remember that he or she is not only obliged to planning and conducting lessons and other didactic classes (in their aspect of merits, method and organization) appropriately, he or she is simultaneously a class teacher. Regarding to this, the teacher's task is, among others, the thorough diagnosis of the students' family environment and if she or he find any dysfunction in the family, she or he should provide complex and professional help. The knowledge of the class teachers and other teachers on the issue of the dysfunction in the family is conducive to the effective impact of school in the scope of prevention and correcting of insufficiencies, inter alia, in the area of social competences of the students from dysfunctional families.

Streszczenie

W każdej szkole pewną grupę uczniów stanowią ci, którzy pochodzą z rodzin borykających się z różnymi problemami. Mogą one być przyczyną trudności uczniów w funkcjonowaniu społecznym i edukacyjnym w środowisku szkolnym. W tekście przedstawiono wybrane wyniki badań nad funkcjonowaniem adolescentów z rodzin dysfunkcyjnych w roli uczniów, partnerów rówieśników i nauczycieli.

Summary

In every school there is a group of students who come from families that struggle with various problems. These problems can be the cause of the students' difficulties in the social and educational functioning in the school environment. The following text presents the selected results of the research on the functioning of the adolescents from dysfunctional families in the role of students and partners of their peers and teachers.

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