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## Between Parents and Teachers? – A Pilot Study with Directors of Psychological and Pedagogical Counseling Centers on the Educational Transition of Children with Disabilities

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### Abstract

This article describes a pilot study on the inter-system change of educational institutions from the perspective of families with children with disabilities. The theoretical section includes a review of literature on parental involvement, institutional changes, and the support provided by psychological and pedagogical counselling centers. The research problem is identical to the primary problem of the main study: What are the experiences of families of children with disabilities regarding inter-system changes in educational institutions? The aim of the interviews with directors of counselling centers was to identify specific issues, which the author addresses by analyzing the research material based on the categories identified: limited choice, school resistance, support, priorities, emotions, and parental attitudes. In conclusion, the author expands on the significance of the identified specific issues in the context of advanced analyses of the main study.

**Keywords:** family, qualitative research, disability, inclusion, education.

## Introduction

These considerations concern a pilot study on the actions and motivations of parents regarding inter-system (inclusion/integration/segregation) changes of educational institutions for children with disabilities and the cooperation between parents and educational institutions. The study was conducted in May 2023 through interviews with the directors of counseling centers. Following its analysis, the main study commenced, which expanded upon the initial assumptions and is still ongoing. Given the progress of research and analysis in this area, the pilot study conducted with the directors of psychological-pedagogical counseling centers will be described from the perspective of the initial research process assumptions and through the lens of subsequent research stages.

Conducting qualitative research requires the researcher to be open and flexible in their actions, allowing them to examine the issue from various perspectives. In the constructivist paradigm, the reality being studied is constructed transactionally and relationally (Guba & Lincoln, 2009, pp. 283-285). The emerging categories during preliminary analyses led the author to shift from the initially planned single-stage qualitative research based on interviews to simultaneous sequential qualitative research, where subsequent components allow for a multifaceted understanding of the issue (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 9). The sequential nature of the study allowed for increased researcher engagement in the subsequent stage, resulting in a paradigmatic shift—from a constructivist to an activist perspective (Cresswell, 2009, p. 35). The pilot study and the first sequence of research were constructed within the constructivist paradigm. The second sequence of research takes a participatory approach.

The research project, whose pilot phase is the main topic of this article, initially focused on two issues: parental involvement and the change of institutions by children with disabilities. In the literature on the subject, the analysis of the situation of families with children with disabilities over the years reflects a paradigmatic shift in special pedagogy (Krause, 2010). Initially, the focus was mainly on parental crises, social isolation, and coping mechanisms (Twardowski, 1991; Sekułowicz, 2013). In the early 21st century, researchers began to also focus on the positive consequences of experiencing a child's disability by family members, referring to the phenomenon of post-traumatic growth (Baker et al., 2005; Mines, 2015; Byra & Parchomiuk, 2018). In practice, early developmental support, as a consequence of a holistic view of the child and their inseparability from the family, established the process of empowering parents as the optimal way to support the child (Bartóg, 2019; Twardowski, 2016). Enhancing parents' soft skills and their relationship with the child makes them more conscious caregivers, changing their expectations and attitudes in the process of collaboration with the psychological-pedagogical support team. Goodall and Montgomery (2014)

also indicate a change in perspective on parental involvement, creating a model of the parental involvement continuum. The authors describe a shift from parental involvement to parental engagement, which simultaneously represents a transition:

- from involvement in school life to engagement in education;
- from unilateral information transmission to information exchange;
- from complete school agency to shared agency between the school and family.

A parent of a child with a disability who is knowledgeable and competent appears to be a completely new partner for the school. Significant in this perspective can also be the experiences of parents in cooperation with a kindergarten/school assigned to a specific educational system (inclusion/integration/segregation), especially in situations of changing educational institutions. The researcher's interest in the topic of transferring a child between institutions was inspired by B. Gumieny's (2021) studies, which analyzed the situation of transferring students with intellectual disabilities to rehabilitation-educational centers. Conducted according to constructivist grounded theory, these studies revealed the phenomenon of "disabling" students with disabilities. The author also described the phenomenon of resistance among students with disabilities, highlighting their neglected needs. The researcher focused on the situation of students rather than the family and narrowed the study group based on the type of disability and the specific transition pattern (students moving to rehabilitation centers). These studies are inspiring as the situation of changing institutions by a student with disabilities creates a sufficiently broad research field to also be the subject of this research.

## **Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers as the Site of the Pilot Study**

In designing the study on the systemic change of institutions by students with disabilities from the perspective of the experiences of the student's entire family, it was crucial to create comprehensive and multi-dimensional interview guidelines for parents. To avoid omitting any significant issues, a pilot study was first conducted through interviews with the Directors of Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers, which are indicated as places of "contact" or specific bridges between the family of a child with a disability or special educational needs and teachers (Skatbania, 2010). Supporting the student and their parents, as well as teachers in working with the student and their family, is the task of PPPs, as regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of February 1, 2013, on the detailed principles of operation of public psychological-pedagogical counseling centers, including public specialist counseling centers. Counseling centers also play an advisory role in the choice or change of educa-

tional institutions (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 199). By providing parents and teachers with knowledge about the individualization of the child's educational path, counseling center employees can imply parental involvement in their child's educational process at school (Popławska & Sierpińska, 2001, p. 79). The activities of employees can also be interventionist due to difficulties reported by teachers or parents (Korbelak & Lizak, 2017). B. Skałbania (2014, pp. 111–112) describes Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers as a kind of "extension" supporting the school, indicating its sensitivity to changes affecting the school, both systemic and paradigmatic. The author also emphasizes the duality of counseling center actions—both blocking and creating changes, which I interpret as an implication of both the institutionalization of Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers and their orientation toward the welfare of the child and family.

International research authors on counseling emphasize its multi-contextuality. In the perspective of the designed research, three issues seem significant:

1. The meanings attributed to parental actions in the context of supporting development.

The quality of advisory or support actions involving a child with a disability is conditioned by a holistic view of the child and recognizing their inseparability from the family (Mamman, 2007). Recognizing the systemic connections of family members expands the scope of support actions from the student alone to their family system (Ozozu, 2005; Okeke, 2001).

2. The relationship between institutional employees and the student's parents.

A. Sundas et al. (2023), based on studies on parental attitudes towards intellectual disability and its impact on family relationships among parents of children with intellectual disabilities, point to the significance of support provided to the family. The coordination of family actions and emotional support is indicated by the authors as a response to difficulties in positive attitudes towards children with intellectual disabilities resulting from a lack of acceptance of the disability. The researchers' indication of a nurse as the person who should support the family stems from the interventionist nature of their work in the child's home environment. The study's conclusions postulate building a sense of security among supported individuals, which seems challenging in the perspective of institutionalized and formalized counseling center actions.

3. The significance of counseling center employees' actions for the family's situation, decisions, and the process of supporting the child's development.

H. Myers (2005) describes an ethnographic study of Elementary School Counselors operating since 1993 according to the principles of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA 1993; 2003), supporting students with disabilities. The scope of advisory activities has common areas with the actions of Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers employees in Poland but does not include diagnosing and adjudicating, while the area of actions related to sup-

porting the situation of students with disabilities in the classroom is expanded. Counselors deal with: advocacy, planning institutional change, advising parents, referring to specialists, increasing the quality of student functioning in school and peer groups, working in a school interdisciplinary team, consultations for parents and teachers. In the perspective of the considerations, planning institutional change seems significant (although not extensively described in the article), as it significantly expands the practiced recommendation of a suggested institution in Poland. The main conclusion of the study, however, was the need for greater knowledge of counselors regarding the specifics of working with students with disabilities due to the significant diversity of this group in terms of their abilities and needs (Myers, 2005, pp. 442-449).

### **Pilot Study Methodology**

Based on the literature analysis and considering the pilot nature of the designed research, a study was constructed based on a qualitative approach aimed at understanding the process of systemic changes in educational institutions by children with disabilities in the context of their "inseparability" from the family system. The research problem is the same as the main problem of the target studies: What are the experiences of families of children with disabilities in the area of systemic institutional changes? The goal of this study was to identify significant issues in this thematic area and outline specific problems. The research aim was to identify significant family experiences in the situation of a child's institutional change from the perspective of psychological-pedagogical counseling center employees. The selected research method was a partially structured interview. The research sample consisted of the Directors of public Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers. The sample selection was based on availability and willingness to participate in the study, following the principles of convenience sampling (Hogan, Schulkin, Power, & Loft, 2009). An inquiry regarding the study was directed to 25 counseling directors operating in Poland, of whom only two directors from large cities agreed to participate. The study was conducted in May 2023. The process of changing educational institutions by children involves multifaceted approaches, including Comer's process, hierarchical linear models, collaborative inquiry, and principles of systemic change (Saravanabhavan & Johnson, 2001; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1988; Wagner, 1998; Halpern, 2013; Goldspink, 2007).

### **Analysis of the pilot study**

Drawing on the ontology of the constructivist paradigm, the analysis of the research material is grounded in a relativistic approach to the process of decon-

struction, wherein the construction and reconstruction of "reality" are locally contextualized, and meanings are contextually determined. (Guba & Lincoln, 2009, p. 286). Significant for the emergence of categories are both urbanization (the surveyed directors manage counseling centers in Gdańsk and Warsaw), institutionalization (the scope of Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers employees' activities is precisely defined by law), the emphasis on educational inclusion (as a consequence of the ratified UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Journal of Laws of October 25, 2012, item 1169)), and the socio-cultural model of disability. For the purpose of the pilot study, which is to construct specific problems for the main study, it was important not only to identify categories but also to understand the connections and dependencies between them. The connections and correlations between the identified categories are presented in the following diagram.

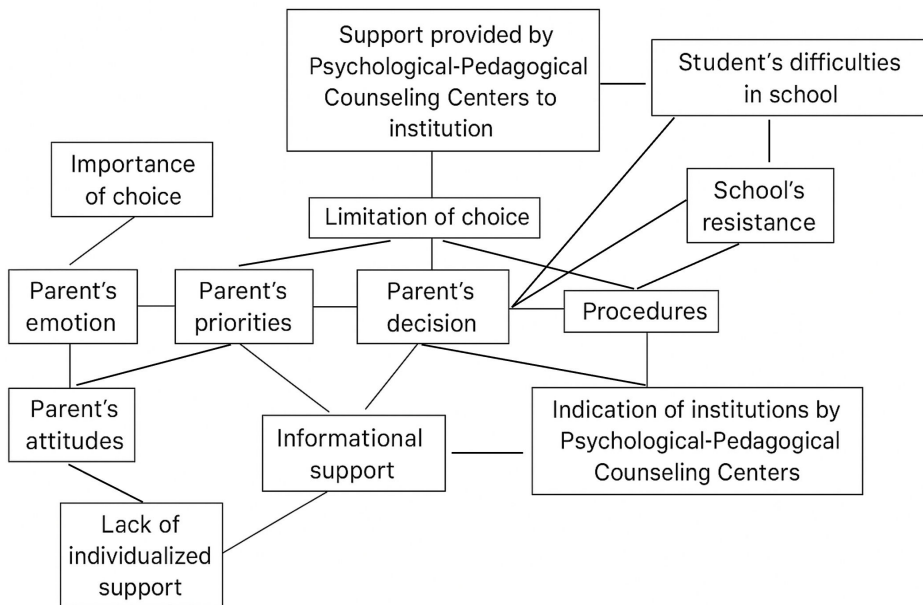


Fig. 1.  
Analytical categories.

Source: own elaboration

The category of **parental decision** is placed at the center of the diagram because it is crucial for the analyzed situation of a child's institutional change from the perspective of their family's experiences. It is a category that directly or indirectly relates to all other categories. **Parental choice** of an institution is legally

guaranteed – resulting from procedures and often preceded by **information support** from a Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers employee, who also indicates the appropriate type of institution. Parents may follow the recommendation of the counseling center, but they are not obliged to. Due to systemic limitations, Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers **support is not individualized** and tailored to the needs of a given family, which determines various **attitudes, emotions, and actions of parents**, and consequently affects their choice. **Parental decision** depends on **parental priorities** (e.g., focus on therapy or social inclusion), which have a multifactorial basis, but key seem to be attitudes toward the child and the quality of acceptance of the disability. **Parental attitudes** and emotions are also associated with **the importance of choice for the parent**, both in terms of their autonomy and responsibility. **Parental decision** is often conditioned by a **limited choice**. According to the law and accepted procedures, only the local school is obliged to accept the child. Other institutions (including special schools) must have a place for the child and may refuse the parent. The obligation to accept a child with special educational needs may cause **resistance from the school**. Negative attitudes toward the student with a disability or the additional tasks arising from these needs may be both a consequence and a cause of the **student's difficulties in school**. Thus, parental decision is often influenced by systemic conditions and implies the student's situation in a systemically conditioned school.

The relationships between the categories will be illustrated by the statements of the respondents in reverse order to the above argument to show the dynamics of factors, processes, and their impact on the parental decision.

The difficulties encountered by the student affect their functioning in the school environment, which can directly influence the parent's decision to change the institution. One of the surveyed directors pointed to social or cognitive issues as key factors in parents' decision-making about changing the institution.

D2: Because either the child is not learning, right? Not acquiring the knowledge we think they should. Or they feel bad because they don't have friends, they don't have peers, right? Generally, if in school... because for me, there are two things in school: first, the child should feel good there, and second, they should acquire some knowledge, right? At their level, right? If one of these things is not met, then it is evident, right? The child either does not learn because it is too easy and they get bored, which sometimes reflects in their behavior, or everything is too difficult for them, which also manifests in somatic or behavioral ways. If the child feels bad, doesn't have friends, is lonely, then it qualifies for a school change.

The same respondent points out the differences in the difficulties faced by students with special educational needs or disabilities at different educational stages. Early education, in this context, allows for less stigmatization or differentiation of students.

D2: Because at the 1-3 stage, theoretically, most classes are with one teacher, children have their classroom, and they also play a lot during breaks. They don't just talk all the time; they also play. There are things that our children can keep up with in peer contact. But then, well, children disperse. The curriculum becomes so difficult and implemented at such a pace that they drop out because of it. They don't have friends, don't have peers. The longest friendships are maintained by children who are well-developed verbally. On the other hand, the curriculum starts, and in the Polish school system, there's no... the Polish school is still at the stage where a child, whether disabled or with a teacher or without a teacher, has to join what the group of healthy, normative children is doing. There's no flexibility in the Polish school at all. We have gotten used to having children with disabilities in school, but for the school to change something so that the child could function, like working in a group, project method, or something like that, or doing experiments, that doesn't happen. Children sit in three rows and work with a book and notebook.

In the second part of the above statement, the issue of the Polish school's lack of adaptation is highlighted (which also strongly resonates in other parts of the interview with the respondent). The lack of individualization or universal design leads to discrimination against students with special educational needs and stigmatizes their difference. None of the interviews addressed the difficulties of students in special schools; however, the actual adaptation of methods and approaches to individual student needs and the optimization of their social functioning also in this system seems an important research area. Especially since the planned (at the time of the pilot study) research group was to include families of students changing institutions inter-systemically – both from mainstream to special schools and from special to inclusion.

Student difficulties in the local school (to which the student is entitled to attend regardless of their functional specifics) cause, according to the first respondent, forced adaptation of the teacher, and according to the second, resistance.

D1: You know, I think there is no longer resistance because the management and teachers are aware that, as I said, the decision belongs to the parent. There are specialists, but the teacher is not always able to work, for example, with a child with autism in a class of 30, right? When the parent exerts some pressure because there are special needs, and the regular teacher, being one person, if there's no support teacher, cannot work exclusively with that child. So, in that sense, I think there are more such problems. There's no resistance; it's just difficult because the child is admitted to the class. However, there are more problems related to direct work with that child.

D2: Recently, I had a situation at the end of last year where I wanted to transfer a girl with Down syndrome to the local school. The school principal told the mother that he has to accept the child because it is his district, and he will accept her, but he doesn't have the conditions, he can't provide, he won't do it, unfortunately, she has to manage on her own. Of course, he will look for an additional teacher, but he won't act because there are no conditions. Of course, he will accept the child because he has to, but the mother called and said they wouldn't go there. He has to accept her. He says he has to. If the mother insists, he will accept her because he has to. They know they have to, but there is no willingness, and no. Not everyone is willing to accept these children. Moreover, schools have limited options to select students for classes, even those with disabili-



ties. Sometimes, there is an integrative class that should have up to five students, but the local authority wants five, and these are difficult children. Adding one more difficult autistic child means there's no possibility. They are simply exhausted. However, these children also need some... We have some general rules, for example, that a child with ADHD or autism cannot be in the same class as a blind child. We have certain... specialists can see which children do not fit together. They cannot be placed together, right? I was once in a class where a child with autism would simply hit a child in a wheelchair. That was the first thing they did upon entering the classroom, right? And it was impossible to explain this to the autistic child. We constantly had to restrain the autistic child, right? The child in the wheelchair would sit and cry, and they also needed to be held. It makes no sense at all.

The above statements from the respondents suggest a reflection on the quality of teachers' "forced" actions and the underlying resistance. Does this resistance represent a fight for the welfare of the students, or is it a manifestation of discrimination against their needs? This also raises the issue of systemic inefficiency, which prevents the creation of appropriate conditions for all students. From this perspective, it seems appropriate to refine the main research problem with the question:

**What are the experiences of families regarding the education of their child in:**

- a. **mainstream schools?**
- b. **integrated schools?**
- c. **special schools?**

The choice of school – whether it is the first or a change – according to the law, depends on the parents, while the employees of the counseling centers perform only advisory functions, as described by the interviewed directors.

D2: In fact, when it comes to students with disabilities, in our counseling center, when issuing a statement where we have to indicate the type of school, we try to choose the most appropriate school for the child, the one that would be the best. However, officially, whatever we write down and whatever we say, the choice belongs to the parent.

D1: We also have the obligation to indicate all possible schools because, in reality, the decision belongs to the parent, right? Even if the child is intellectually disabled, it does not necessarily have to go immediately to a special school because the parent decides.

Procedures outline the scope of actions of Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers employees in recommending the optimal school for the child diagnosed at the counseling center. The lack of decision-making power on the part of the counseling centers diminishes the significance of the informational support provided to parents, even though it is not limited to indicating a school in the statement or opinion.

D2: Sometimes they ask. Sometimes they do ask, right? So, we explain to them what education looks like, for example, in a general access school, in an integrated school, and in a special school. And here, in the city of Gdańsk, we know these schools, so we also advise the parent on schools both in terms of proximity to the place of residence and the

resources that the school has because we also know whether it is more or less open, right? So, we are guided not only by official knowledge but also by subjective knowledge gathered from work experiences. We suggest such a school to the parent.

Finding the optimal school for the student and ensuring a place for the student in it requires additional actions by the PPP employee – their involvement, soft skills, and knowledge of the environment. The systemic limitation of support actions directed at the student's family is evident in the following interview fragment.

B: Is there any process of conversation or psychological support for the parent, or is there no space for that?

D1: There is not always space for that. That means if a parent comes in, then it is clear from the interview, right? What is happening? Then the child is examined. And indeed, if it seems to us that the best situation for the child would be, for example, I don't know, in an integrated school, right? Or in a Youth Sociotherapy Center (MOS), due to various behavioral difficulties, then, of course, we talk to the parent, but it is a conversation presenting all the pros and cons. That is usually the availability of the staff, right?

The respondents did not mention experiences related to emotional support for parents; however, the choice or change of school for a child with special educational needs is very significant for the quality of their functioning and involves great parental responsibility. Therefore, the second detailed research problem was formulated: **What are the possibilities of supporting families in the process of constructing the child's educational path?**

The category of support in making decisions is associated with limiting the choice of school. D2, in the further part of her statement, describes the specifics of such advising at subsequent educational stages: recommending an appropriate kindergarten is mainly based on information about the child provided by the parent; advising on the child's primary school is easier due to knowledge from parents and teachers about the child's experiences in kindergarten; suggesting a school after primary school appears in the respondent's statement as the most difficult due to the limited choice of schools and often already defined needs, capabilities, and interests of the student. The limited choice was mentioned several times in the statements of the interviewed directors.

D2: And sometimes even when we recommend a special school, there are no places in special schools because they are, so to speak, full, colloquially speaking, so the parent, whether they want to or not, goes to the school that we do not recommend, right? Because what we recommend and decide is one issue, and another issue is whether the parent can find a place there.

D1: There is always a place for the child in the district school. However, non-district schools may not accept the child, right? And special schools, if there are no places, may also not accept the child. (...) So, there are situations where the city supports us, and we use their help because there are not so many places.

D2: There are students who, for example, need a small school because they are so auditorily hypersensitive that in large schools, although they are close, it is too loud for them,

too many children, too many classes. The school is too big, right? So, we look further to find a small school. In a small school, there may be no place, right? So, there are such situations, right? Or we don't want them to go to that school because we know the school from such subjective feelings that they are not open, not friendly to disabled children, and at the first slip-up of a disabled child, there will be such a fuss, right? That we no longer direct the child there, right? We say no. Not here. This school looks good, but here, better not. So, we have such thoughts. So, there are many difficulties.

Given the specific needs of children with disabilities, especially those with multiple disabilities, choosing the optimal institution seems very challenging and sometimes impossible. However, the priorities of parents are interesting and important. From the perspective of the surveyed directors, they are mainly focused on supporting the child's development and social inclusion.

D1: I think there are differences [in parents' priorities] caused by, I don't want to say the severity of the disability, but actually the severity of the disability and the problems parents face and their experiences with other institutions. If they didn't get something or the child didn't get certain classes. I think parents of children with special needs like dyslexia are more focused on additional classes with a teacher, but it seems like a lighter issue. On the other hand, the needs of parents of children with spectrum disorders or special school children are greater. They expect more classes, more support for their child.

D2: Parents want the best for their children. Some parents say that if they don't try inclusion or integration, they will regret it. They think, 'I have to try, even if it doesn't work out.' They want their child to be smart, to have a chance in life, to get a job, and not be rejected because they are different. So, they direct their decisions that way. Often, they tell me that they understand my point but want to try elsewhere because they couldn't live with themselves if they didn't give their child a chance. That's why many children start with inclusion, even though we suggest a special school, to give it a try.

In the statements of the respondents, issues related to the functioning or needs of the family system, which is affected by the school (such as its distance and the need to transport the child or the attendance of siblings at the same institution), did not appear. Therefore, it seems important to delve into this issue in the main study by attempting to answer specific problems: **What factors are significant when choosing and changing an institution? What are the needs of the family of a child with a disability attending school?** The second specific research question also connects with the emotions and attitudes of parents in the context of their parenting, acceptance of the child's disability, and experiences in the relationship with the school.

D2: There are also lost parents. There are parents who, when you explain how the education system in Poland works, are very happy. I have a boy who went to X [name of a specific special institution]. When I explained to his mother that there is a special school for children with mild intellectual disabilities, she immediately went there after the meeting and called the next day saying she had secured a place. She didn't know there were such schools. She just went to the local school and knew nothing more. She didn't even know there were special schools. No one told her. Because she's a parent who

needed to be told. The child is in a special institution, moving from integration. He's a very nice boy.

D1: Parental attitudes vary greatly depending on whether some concern of the parent is confirmed in the research or not. Attitudes range from anger to despair, but also full understanding and relief, that finally, they know the child's capabilities and that they can expect support and help in a specific institution.

In the perspective of the analyzed research material, the parental choice of an educational institution for their child is legally guaranteed even in the situation of changing the institution. At the same time, it is systemically limited due to the lack of places in institutions or their adaptation to diverse educational and social needs. The parental decision is often preceded by incomplete support, dependent on the involvement and competencies of psychological and pedagogical counseling centers employees. This support is mainly informational. The parent's decision impacts the student's functioning in the school environment, which also determines the situation of the given class system and the teachers working in it and may involve their resistance. Changing the institution may be guided by the counseling center's suggestion. However, emotions and parental attitudes are also significant. In the context of these dependencies, the parent's action involves great responsibility and can have consequences in various dimensions. Therefore, the question seems important: **What meanings do parents attribute to changing institutions?** In the pilot study, this issue was not directly addressed, but the importance of the ability to choose an educational institution by the parent of a child with intellectual disabilities is evident in one of the statements of the surveyed Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centers directors.

D2: The mother of my student, aged 41, once said when we started that she would choose a special school for her intellectually disabled daughter but would like to feel that she has a choice. Because having that choice makes her feel valued as a parent or valued as a person. Once, there were mandates; you got a special school certificate and that was it for life. But now, you talk and discuss with the parent. So maybe they have that choice.

## Conclusions and implications

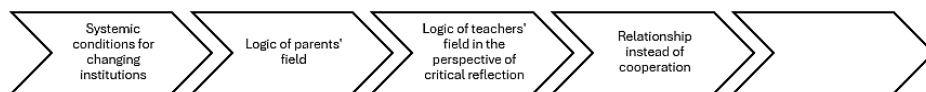
The initial analysis of the pilot study was conducted to refine the first sequence of the research and identify specific issues regarding the experiences of families related to inter-system institutional changes by children with disabilities. At this stage, focusing on the family environment, the researcher did not yet see the need to expand the research field to include the school and understand the teachers' perspective. The re-analysis of the pilot study was carried out during the writing of this article, at the end of the second sequence of the study (focused on teachers' critical reflection on relationships with the parents of students). In this perspective, understanding the meanings attributed to stu-

dent difficulties and the phenomenon of resistance from teachers' perspectives seems significant. Meanwhile, the institutionalization of school actions, which appears to be an inseparable element of the analysis of experiences related to school, already resonates in the statements of the surveyed counseling directors. The identified research problems in the perspective of the two sequences of the main study already conducted seem to have broader significance:

- The research problem concerning the possibilities of supporting parents in choosing an institution is associated with issues of parental awareness and organization, as well as their empowerment in their parenthood (Twardowski, 2016).
- The research problem concerning the family's experiences in mainstream/integrative/special institutions is not only connected to the student's functioning but also their class and the teacher's engagement and comfort in their work. The student's experiences in a given educational institution are linked to the parent's engagement and actions to support the child's development and situation in school.
- The research problem concerning supporting families in the process of constructing the child's educational path in the first sequence of the study concerned expected and experienced support. In the sequence conducted with teachers, it concerns the awareness of the needs of the family in the teaching staff and the willingness, possibilities, and resources that determine supporting parents.
- The research problem concerning significant factors in choosing and changing institutions is related to the competencies and resources of the family and their experiences in relationships with teachers/therapists.
- The research problem concerning the meanings attributed to changing educational institutions is related to the issue of institutional resistance and the teachers' reflectiveness and competencies and their relationships with the parents of students.

In this analytical perspective, it seems necessary to show or signal the subsequent stages of the research process, which are significant for the considerations of an engaged researcher. The described and analyzed pilot study was the beginning of a research process that is still ongoing and is increasingly rich in meanings related to the inter-system change of educational institutions by children with disabilities. The empirical focus on the subject of institutional change: searching, transferring, "pushing out," and "pulling in" allowed for uncovering the topic of relationships between teachers and parents. These relationships depend on the competencies and resources of teachers and parents and seem to respond to difficulties in cooperation, which can be oppressive and imposed. Conducting simultaneous sequential qualitative research allows for constructing subsequent components enabling the understanding of the research field from

another perspective and noticing new dimensions of the phenomenon. The following diagram presents the successive "layers" of the uncovered and revealed phenomena and processes, allowing for an understanding of the process of relationships between parents and teachers.



*Fig. 2.*

Phenomena and processes revealed during subsequent stages of the conducted study.

Source: own collaboration.

The element "Systemic conditions of institutional change" concerns the analyzed pilot study. The institutional change experienced and reported from the perspective of the directors of the institution supporting this process allowed for identifying micro-fields requiring further research exploration: the needs and priorities of parents, systemic limitations of choice, school resistance, the specificity of family and student support.

The analysis of the first stage of the study (which, along with subsequent stages, will be the subject of considerations in a separate publication) is related, among other things, to P. Bourdieu's concept of fields (2001), referring to which we can describe the actions of teachers and parents of children with disabilities as carried out according to certain rules of the game in defense of a given capital. In the perspective of the logic of the parents' field, the differences between inclusive, integrative, or special institutions are commensurate with the differences in the priorities and needs of students with disabilities and their families. In the context of the analyzed material, the success of the student does not have to depend on the type of institution they attend. However, significant is the capital of the parent and the teacher, which has dominant importance in their educational process. The reconstruction of the logic of the parents' field contributed to constructing another research goal – to understand the logic of the teachers' field and then uncover the points of contact between the fields of the studied social groups, understand the rules of the game according to which teachers/parents act, and understand what constitutes capital in the field of practice.

The next sequence of the study marks a methodological shift towards an activist paradigm (Cresswell, 2009, p. 35). Workshops on critical reflection were conducted using an adapted tool constructed by J. Fook (2012) and a collective interview. Emerging categories during preliminary analysis allow for uncovering the oppressive process of cooperation and a shift towards building relationships between parents and teachers. Analytical actions and theoretical searches guide

the conceptualization of further research explorations towards Ubuntu philosophy (Mutanga, 2023). However, the last arrow in the diagram remains empty, awaiting in-depth analyses after the second sequence of studies is completed. The researcher's "journey" from the pilot study presented in this article continues.

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## **Pomiędzy rodzicami a nauczycielami? – o badaniu pilotażowym z dyrektorami poradni psychologiczno-pedagogicznych dotyczących zmiany placówek edukacyjnych przez dzieci z niepełnosprawnością**

### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł opisuje badania pilotażowe w temacie międzysystemowej zmiany placówki przez dziecko z niepełnosprawnością w perspektywie doświadczeń jego rodziny. Część teoretyczna obejmuje dokonany na podstawie analizy literatury tematu opis zagadnień związanych z zaangażowaniem rodzicielskim, zmianami placówek, a także wsparciem udzielanym przez poradnie psychologiczno-pedagogiczne. Problem badawczy jest tożsamy z problemem głównym badań docelowych: Jakie są doświadczenia rodzin dzieci z niepełnosprawnością w obszarze międzysystemowych zmian placówki edukacyjnej? Celem przeprowadzonych wywiadów z dyrektorkami poradni było wyznaczenie problemów szczegółowych, czego autorka dokonuje podczas analizy materiału badawczego, na podstawie wyłoniętych kategorii: ograniczonego wyboru, oporu szkoły, wsparcia, priorytetów, emocji i postaw rodziców. W podsumowaniu autorka rozszerza znaczenie wyłoniętych problemów szczegółowych w kontekście zaawansowanych analiz badania docelowego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rodzina, badania jakościowe, poradnie psychologiczno-pedagogiczne, inkluzja, edukacja.