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REPORT

Event titled: „Pedagogical and Psychological Educatorium” University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

On October 30, 2023, from 9:30am to 3:00pm, the “Pedagogical and Psychological Educatorium” took place at the Open University of the University of Silesia in Katowice. The event aimed to present research findings on discriminatory behaviors and situations in schools in Katowice, as well as to discuss methods for counteracting such phenomena. The research, commissioned by the Department of Education of the Katowice City Hall, was conducted among teachers, male and female students. It focused on diagnosing discrimination based on various characteristics such as race, nationality, physical appearance (including excessive body weight), sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, financial status, developmental needs, and disabilities. The research also aimed to identify the needs for responding to unequal treatment and to assess the training and competency needs of teachers in addressing these issues.

The event began at 9:30am with the official welcome of participants. At 9:45am, Prof. Ewa Jarosz delivered a lecture titled “Children’s Well-being: Can/Should Schools Help Them Be Happy?”, which addressed the role of schools in providing emotional support and ensuring student well-being. At 11:00am, a team consisting of Dr. Dagmara Dobosz, Dr. Hewilia Hetmańczyk, Dr. Marcin Jurczyk, Dr. Maciej Bożek, and Prof. UŚ presented a report titled «Equality, Diversity, and Discrimination», discussing the findings of the research. Following the presentation, participants took a coffee break, offering a chance for reflection and discussion.

After the break, from 11:30am to 1:00pm, the first part of the workshops took place. The workshops covered topics such as counteracting discrimination, supporting war refugee students, working with neurodiverse students (ASD), and alternative methods of education for children and youth. After the first session of workshops, participants had another short break.

The second part of the workshops, held from 1:30pm to 3:00pm, continued to explore important educational topics. During this session, Dr. Sabina Pawlik addressed the issue of democratic coexistence in education with a lecture titled “Who Has a Voice? Education as Democratic Coexistence”. Dr. Karolina Skop led a session on “Working with Students in Crisis Situations – Children from Ukraine in Polish Educational Institutions” discussing the challenges of educating refugee students. Dr. Jolanta Klimczak delivered a lecture titled “Schools as Places for Counteracting Discrimination” focusing on actions that can help combat unequal treatment in schools. The final workshop, led by Dr. Iwona Wendreńska, was on creating environments conducive to learning for students with ASD and was titled “Creating a Learning Environment for Students with ASD”.

The “Pedagogical and Psychological Educatorium” not only provided participants with theoretical knowledge but also offered practical tools for counteracting discrimination in schools, supporting students in difficult situations, and developing skills for working with students with special needs. This event became an important platform for the exchange of experiences and the enhancement of competencies for teachers, educators, and other professionals involved in education.

The result of the research team’s work is a publication titled “Discrimination in School: The Perspective of Students and Teachers”, available in open access at <https://wydawnictwognome.pl/dyskryminacja-w-szkole>

“We present to our readers a publication that is the result of research on phenomena and situations of discrimination, as well as the needs of students and teachers in the context of their occurrence. The research was conducted at the turn of 2022 and 2023, as part of a collaboration between a team of researchers from the University of Silesia in Katowice and the city of Katowice. The study took place in primary and secondary schools in Katowice and followed a praxeological orientation—meaning it was socially engaged research aimed at initiating change and improving the functioning of schools in terms of respecting and promoting social diversity. This diversity also includes the challenges arising from the integration of refugee children into schools due to the armed conflict in Ukraine.”

We inquired about phenomena, behaviors, and instances of discrimination from both teachers and students to obtain the most credible, multi-perspective view of the issue. The research results allowed us to formulate recommendations for actions that promote a desired model of school functioning as an environment for development, with a clear imperative of respecting and supporting diversity. We emphasize the significance and value of such a model, recognizing its importance not only in respecting the dignity and individuality of every young person and creating a safe, supportive environment for their individual development, but also acknowledging its key role in fostering proper civic attitudes and building a strong civil society”.

(An excerpt from the publication, p. 9)

