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Independent. The process of self-empowerment in biographical experiences of former pupils of resocialization institutions

Abstract: The article is devoted to the process of self-empowerment of women who in the past had stayed in social rehabilitation centers. In order to illustrate the subject matter, narrative interviews (together with the proper analytical procedure of F. Schütze) with women who had been in youth educational centers were used. Based on the analysis of the obtained material, the methods of implementing various forms of support within the procedure of the former wards' self-empowerment were reconstructed, as they were revealed in their individual biographical experiences. On the one hand, the procedure of self-empowerment promotes social readaptation, understood as adaptation to active life through social roles. On the other hand, such forms of support as financial aid for continuing education, which does not enable independent living, and appropriate housing conditions in social housing, which locate people in "pathological social space", constitute a peculiar charade of the provided support.

Key words: Procedure of self-empowerment, youth educational centers, social readaptation, socially maladjusted youth.

Introduction

Youth Educational Centers (MOW) are social rehabilitation centers for socially maladjusted minors who need special organization of learning, working methods, upbringing and social rehabilitation. Placing in a youth educational center is the strictest educational measure applied by the court (in accordance with the Act on

Juvenile Delinquency Proceedings – Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 35, item 228 as amended) that may be applied to a minor (Bartkiewicz, Chudnicki, 2015), and is applied if the more lenient measures, i.e. supervision of a guardian, placement in a foster family or medical and educational measures, have proved insufficient to stop the process of demoralization and achieve the desired results (Wolan, 2006). The tasks carried out in these institutions are aimed at eliminating the causes and manifestations of maladjustment and at preparing minors to live in accordance with social and legal standards after leaving the institution (Kaniowska, 2015).

According to M. Konopczyński, proper social adaptation is achieved through three processes: social rehabilitation, readaptation and reintegration (Duda, 2016). The process of institutional rehabilitation should take place in two (interlinked) dimensions. The first dimension is related to the institution itself and its organization, formal and legal procedures and the pedagogical process. In this dimension, particular attention is paid to adjustment and adaptation aspects in the context of the closest social circle. The second dimension concerns the social readaptation process, which aims at enabling the isolated individuals to return to open environment conditions. It is possible through active participation in social, cultural and professional life and such internalization of norms, values, life functions, competences and professional skills that will enable proper (renewed) socialization with the environment after leaving the institution (Konopczyński, 2015).

The process of social readaptation is a measure of the effectiveness of the process of social rehabilitation, and it is expressed in the fulfilment of social roles in the fundamental spheres and planes of human existence and leads to the re-adaptation of an individual to an active and independent life (Ambrozik, 2008). In the literature we can find an opinion that the term readaptation is not adequate for minors, because their adaptation in the basic dimension has not yet completed (they have not taken up life outside their family home and have not become independent from their family) (Stępnia, 2008a). In relation to minors, the process of social readaptation is sometimes defined as a process aimed at preventing social exclusion of minors (Kaniowska, 2012). However, both the fulfilment of specific social roles in independent living and the prevention of social exclusion can be fostered by the forms of support offered under the procedure of self-empowerment.

When the institutional re-socialization measures (resulting from the cessation of the educational measure) within the framework of the procedure of self-empowerment cease, the Youth Educational Center ward (if he or she stayed there for at least one year) has the right to obtain various forms of support enabling him or her to live independently and maturely in integration with the society (Lisius, 2016).

Independence in accordance with the procedure of self-empowerment

According to the dictionary definition, “self-empowerment ... means to become independent, to be able to cope, not to need help”¹. Self-empowerment is also understood as a long-term educational process leading to independent, mature life and social integration (Lisius, 2016).

The procedure of self-empowerment is regulated by the Act on Family Support and Foster Care System of 9 June 2011 (Journal of Laws of 2011, No. 149, item 887, as amended) and the Act on Social Assistance of 12 March 2004 (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 64, item 593, as amended). (Kaniowska, 2012). The executive order to the Act on Social Assistance is the Regulation of the Minister of Social Policy of 3 August 2012 on granting assistance for self-empowerment, continuation of education and management (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 954; Szafrńska, 2016).

Within the framework of the procedure of self-empowerment, a ward of a social rehabilitation center may receive financial benefits for self-empowerment and continuation of education, and is covered by assistance aimed at obtaining appropriate housing conditions (e.g. he or she can move in to a supervised apartment), employment and assistance in kind for management. Such assistance will be granted to a Youth Educational Center ward if he or she undertakes to implement an individual program of self-empowerment (written together with a guardian, who may be a social worker, educator, pedagogue, etc., and approved by the head of a district family support center) and is capable of independent living (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 64, item 593, art. 88, item 1 and subsequent).

Cash and non-cash assistance is offered as part of the self-empowerment procedure.

Cash assistance may include cash aid for self-empowerment, aid for management and cash aid for continuation of education.

Financial assistance for self-empowerment is determined by the length of stay and the type of institution in which the self-empowered person stayed, and depends on the income of the self-empowered person and on discontinuation of receiving money for continuation of education (Dobijański, 2017). The condition for granting this form of assistance is a written declaration of the self-empowered person that the funds received under it will be used to meet the important life needs of the self-empowered person, i.e. improvement of housing conditions; creation of conditions for gainful activity, including improvement of professional

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¹ <https://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/samodzielny;2519049.html> [accessed on 20 September 2017]

qualifications; covering expenses related to education of the self-empowered person (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 954, § 2.3).

Management aid is granted for the purchase of rehabilitation equipment, renovation materials, housing equipment, essential domestic appliances, etc. Management aid may include materials necessary for the renovation and furnishing of the apartment, necessary household appliances, scientific aids, rehabilitation equipment, equipment that can be used to take up employment (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 954, § 6.3; Stawiński, 2011; Dobijański, 2017). It is worth noting that both in the first and second form of assistance, the area of influence is living conditions, education and work, which are conducive to stimulation of positive social functioning of the individual.

Another form of support is financial aid for continuation of education, which is granted to an independent person for the duration of education, until its completion, but not longer than until 25 years of age (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 64, item 593, art. 89 point 3). It amounts to approximately PLN 500 and is granted for the duration of the school/academic year (Dobijański, 2017). It is undoubtedly a very attractive form of support and also a motivating factor (although external) for improving one's education. It is worth mentioning that children and youth directed to social rehabilitation centers are often characterized by school negativity, and lack of readiness and interest in learning (Wolan, 2006). Continuing education after leaving a social rehabilitation center can undoubtedly be regarded as a rehabilitation success, which proves a profound and lasting change (Siemionow, 2015).

Another form of assistance under the self-empowerment procedure is non-cash assistance, which may include assistance in obtaining employment and assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions.

Assistance in obtaining employment is implemented through informing the self-empowered persons about institutions supporting them in seeking employment, cooperation with labor offices, as well as vocational counseling (Stawiński, 2011).

However, as part of assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions, the self-empowered person may:

- live in a supervised apartment for a fixed period of time;
- apply for coverage of all or part of the expenses related to room rental;
- obtain social housing from the resources of the municipality;
- live in a dormitory until completion of education (if he/she has the status of a pupil or student);
- apply for full or partial coverage of expenses related to accommodation if he/she studies at a higher education institution (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 954, § 7.6; Stawiński, 2011).

The forms of support for minors described above take on a specific dimension, as they are supposed to lead to the completion of the primary socialization process (Stępniaak, 2008b) and are an extremely important process ending the ed-

educational and rehabilitation measures that a young person in the center is subject to (Szafrńska, 2016).

It is worth noting that the age at which wards leave social rehabilitation institutions such as a youth educational center, is eighteen years of age. It is a period that marks the beginning of early adulthood (18–20 to 30–35 years) and the procedure of self-empowerment is carried out in the phase of life called emerging adulthood. It is in this phase that such development tasks as choosing a life partner, starting a family, taking up a professional career, searching for similar social groups, living in marriage or bringing up children are most often implemented (Brzezińska et al., 2008). The theoretical assumptions of the self-empowerment procedure are undoubtedly conducive to the implementation of developmental tasks characteristic of this period of life. On the other hand, the forms of assistance provided under this procedure promote the reconstruction of an individual identity of a self-empowered person (by enabling him/her to function in various social roles) and help him/her to achieve life independence and social integration. Thus, this process should also counteract social exclusion.

However, en route to independence and adulthood, the wards may face many difficulties. The literature describes factors that may shatter the process of social rehabilitation or hamper the process of self-empowerment. Among them, the following are mentioned: difficult to define and uncertain future; return to the environment and circles that had shaped the destructive behaviors; instrumental treatment by the group they are returning to; lack of positive social and emotional background; obtaining a hardly useful education; education not in line with interests; difficulties in finding oneself in the labor market and undertaking unattractive and often no-permit jobs; failures in learning or work which lead to a sense of helplessness and senselessness of working on oneself (c.f. Wolan, 2005; Kaniowska, 2012; Motow, 2017).

According to the proposed forms of assistance within the framework of the self-empowerment procedure, a self-empowered person has the possibility to receive funds (cash and non-cash) which, although theoretically favorable to the search for healthy alternatives to threats and numerous difficulties, may undermine the good effects of the social rehabilitation measures (Szafrńska, 2016).

The article attempts to reconstruct the phenomenon of self-empowerment of youth educational center female wards, as it is revealed in the individual experiences of the examined women. Qualitative research was carried out, using the method and technique of F. Schütze's narrative interview with the appropriate analytical procedure (Urbaniak-Zajac, Kos, 2013). The considerations presented in the article are based on a preliminary analysis of interviews conducted with 10 women who in the past had been under institutional supervision (e.g. stayed in a youth educational center), who after leaving the institution were not subject to formal control again (the surveyed persons are treated as entities that have successfully completed the social rehabilitation process). The adopted research

perspective makes it possible to present the reality concerning the forms of assistance received under the procedure of self-empowerment from the point of view of former wards of social rehabilitation centers².

Own research

Undoubtedly, the self-empowerment program is a very important measure enabling the transition of the youth educational center wards to the social environment (Dobijański, 2017).

Cash assistance that is offered to self-empowered people is important for former wards. It is a form of help that often evokes in them a sense of appreciation and gratitude.

They helped me materially, they helped me financially, but I still had a pension from my parents, right? With memories they helped me, they helped me a lot... (N1)

Both the aid for self-empowerment and the aid for management were often referred to as layette by the respondents. The cash form of aid was used primarily for the improvement of housing conditions and the purchase of necessary equipment. Some respondents were very cautious in the management of this form of aid.

I mean, I didn't want to take money right away, so I wrote that I wouldn't take money right away because I would rent a room, so what should I buy for it? I'll use it later. Then I got pregnant and we had this one-room apartment, so I got it from this lady without any problems. This lady got me some very big money, so I bought a washing machine, a fridge, a TV set, a vacuum cleaner, and a lot of such useful things. (N9)

Not for all respondents the money from the "layette" was enough for all basic needs. Some of them bought only the most necessary things in order to somehow furnish the flat they were using:

[...] I got a layette when I left the center, I got it for the necessary things for my apartment, so I bought myself some furniture, I bought some kitchen stuff, chests of drawers and things like that so that, you know, basic things like that I could afford, so that I could furnish it somehow, right? and the most necessary things for this apartment. (N6)

while others were furnishing one of the occupied rooms:

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² The empirical material presented in the article is a fragment of larger research on stigmatization and dealing with being labeled as former wards of social rehabilitation institutions.

When I went to the market the first thing I bought was a wall-unit. I also bought a table and a sofa... I furnished everything all my room. Well, I didn't have enough for the kitchen. (N1)

Sometimes the self-empowerment money would also become a "pass" in the family of origin. Although few respondents returned to their parents, those who returned were often treated by them in an instrumental way (they were perceived through the prism of material and financial benefits associated with their return). This concerned both the aid for self-empowerment:

Unfortunately, I came back, my mom took me under her wing to the house, but I was there only for six months, until the layette. [...] And I took the first one. I know I spent it on my sisters. I bought the younger one a lot of things, and the older one says: Oh, yes? I'm the one who helped you, and you bought the other one more things, right? I know Christmas was sponsored from my money, and then, I don't know. With my mom it's always a grudge about something. (N8)

as well as the aid for management.

I got a second layette some time after that, so I could buy the second one some things, not financially, only things, I bought bookshelves and everything, but there was nowhere to put it, so I sold it to my family for half the price, because it was a condition that first they chose what that they would buy, then it came out that it was for half the price, because it wasn't brand new anymore. (N8)

Returning to a family that has not changed since their child was placed in a social rehabilitation center can increase the sense of harm and is a big test for the work they have done on themselves. Respondents who came from families with many problems did not usually return to them, and those who returned moved out after a short time.

Another form of aid addressed to former wards was cash aid intended for continuation of education. Undoubtedly, the willingness to continue learning after leaving the center can be regarded a success of the social rehabilitation process. One of the narrators reported it that way:

And then, when I left the Center, [...] I went to a clothing technical school. [...] Three years of technical school, I did my Matura exam, after graduation I tried to get to W., to a college, but I didn't get in. (N5)

Respondents receiving this form of assistance often had to look for additional job in order to be able to provide for themselves.

I received a scholarship, five hundred zlotys a month from PCPR (Poviat Center for Family Support). And I had to find a job. [...] Some small work I could do after

school. Sometimes it happened that I had to give up school for one day to go to work, because that's how my schedule was, as otherwise I wouldn't earn too much. But somehow I managed to provide for myself. (N9)

However, for some of the pupils, independent living and continuing education was connected with the necessity to choose between work and further education.

I also had to earn some money, because I had to provide for my child. The scholarship from the Social Welfare was I think 400 zlotys, so what could I do with it? I didn't have any alimony, only alimony from my father. But you have to keep the apartment and you have to feed the child, sometimes buy some medicines. Pay for the kindergarten and finally I just gave up... I stopped going to school. I picked up the papers and said I was giving up. But that was also without any brawl or understatement. I didn't blame anyone because it was my choice to give up because I could stubbornly move forward. And I started looking for a job. (N2)

Those respondents who tried to reconcile work and learning often experienced high physical and mental strain. Night shift work combined with further education often led to abandoning school.

I worked at McDonald's because a few months before I left I got a job, I had looked for a job. [...] Later, when I left the center, I changed it to three quarters, because I wanted to continue my schooling, although I did not succeed. I wanted to go to an extramural school, although, unfortunately, they arranged my schedule in such a way that whenever I had to go to school, I had to go straight out of a night shift, so I couldn't do it. (N6)

Former wards who gave up continuing education also pointed to other motives. Some of them decided to resign and, despite the lack of difficulties with learning, they did not want to continue it.

Yes, so when I left the center, I started going to an evening high school and took up a job. I completed my first year in the high school, but I finished it there. (N7)

Others have lost their motivation and point of further education. This may be due to a lack of support from the immediate environment.

I undertook a cosmetic study, which unfortunately I did not complete, I did not finish the fourth semester, because I got pregnant... We didn't get any help from my family. [...] In the meantime, I was still going to that school, I tried to cope, I guess I didn't want to go to that school anymore, because I think this and the school, it's kind of negative. (N8)

The wards who were receiving benefits, e.g. pension benefits (from a parent), were in a slightly different situation. In their opinion, they were able to acquire

knowledge and obtain attractive (for themselves and their future employers) education in comfortable conditions.

I had a slightly different start, because I had a pension from my father, I had this subsidy to continue my education, so in fact I had the same money as the people with payrolls, so I had it better, I had no problems with finances. Because if I was one of those who leave the center and have only these five hundred zlotys to continue their education, I would also have to go to work, because I would not be able to cope. But I had seven hundred zlotys more through the pension. (N10)

Pursuant to the Act, a self-empowered person is not entitled to financial aid for continuing education if his/her monthly income per person running a household alone exceeds PLN 1200 (Journal of Laws of 2004 r. No. 64, item 593, art. 89, point 5; Dobijański, 2017). It can be concluded from the above that, on the one hand, within the framework of social assistance, self-empowered persons are encouraged to continue their education, but they are not created optimal conditions for this to happen. The amount of PLN 500 does not enable independent living together with continuing education, and combining work and education is a difficult task in such an early period of life. Another form of assistance under the self-empowerment procedure is non-cash assistance, which may include assistance in obtaining employment and assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions. It is worth noting that the basic form of preventive and resocialization activities in relation to youth threatened by maladjustment/socially maladjusted is first of all work. Creative activity and work contribute to the reconstruction of identity and should constitute a basic source of income, which is in line with accepted social norms. (Śliwa, 2013; Motow, 2017)

The respondents, telling about their professional careers, have mentioned problems in finding a job compatible with their education.

Although it was my learned profession... there wasn't any tailoring jobs. [...] I didn't wait, most companies wanted employees with practice, right? And apprenticeships didn't interest me, you have to work first to get the apprenticeship, right? So I caught up where I could. I went to a bar to clean up, to put the stuff on display, to wash the dishes, or to clean houses in general, and I still work like that. (N1)

Despite numerous difficulties, they did not give up and were determined to search for various sources of income. They undertook casual work, which allowed them to earn their own living. Sometimes they used the help offered to them to find work.

I worked anywhere I could. Not in my profession, somewhere casual, somewhere I cleaned, somewhere I helped to have some income and to manage. (N1)

When I left the center, an educator who worked in the center helped me find my first job as a waitress in a pizza place and that's why I had some money to provide for myself. (N9)

Not all respondents experienced difficulties in finding a job. Some of them even did extremely easy in this area. You could even say they lost themselves at work.

I've been working all the time since I left the center. First I went to a camp as a cook. [...] Later I started to work in the patio at (name of a university) as a cook, then I worked at I (name of a shop) as a stove chief. And recently for a very long time I worked in (name of a restaurant) as a cook, I ran a gallery for some time, and also in the meantime in (name of a restaurant) I worked in a pizza place as a pizza maker. And then I moved from (name of a restaurant) to (another place of the same restaurant). (N4)

To a large extent, the professional careers was influenced by the nature of vocational education with which they completed their education in the center. It is important that the education they receive at the school at the center is based on the current market demand and their interests rather than on the vacancies in the school workshops at the vocational school. Of course, today's labor market requires us to be highly flexible and ready for changes in our professional careers. However, vocational education lays some foundations for this career and it is worth including in vocational education those fields which at least forecast the possibility of finding employment after graduation (e.g. car mechanic, cook, etc.).

Another form of assistance addressed to self-empowered persons is assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions. A young person leaving a social rehabilitation center may return to his or her family of origin, but it is often in such returns that the process of social rehabilitation of a ward is undermined. A dysfunctional environment often does not change for the better during the stay of a ward in the institution. The family is looking forward to their child's return, because it is associated with financial gratification, which often results in further disappointment and a sense of harm.

Unfortunately, I came back, my mom took me under her wing to the house, but I was there only for six months, until the layette. I got a layette, I invested some money in them for Christmas, this and that, and later they started to do different things, this and this and that, not going out in the evening, resentment from any reason. (N8)

Although youth educational centers have been imposed additional obligations related to the organization of the educational process by the fact that they should, among other things, organize consultations, workshops, support groups, etc. for parents in order to support them in the proper performance of the upbringing and educational function (Wolan, 2006), families are often not interested in this form of assistance.

Theoretically, I was supposed to go back to my mom, but I didn't. [...] I went to an orphanage, I remember, to the headmaster. I tell her how it looks, that I have no-

where to go, that I won't go back to my mother, because they're drinking there, and then the drinking was so heavy that she wasn't interested in anything anymore. (N10)

As part of the assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions, the legislator provided self-empowered persons with an opportunity to take advantage of a fairly large offer of support.

Some of the wards benefited from the possibility to stay in a dormitory until the end of their schooling. It gave them a sense of security and care.

And then, when I left the Centre, I lived in a dormitory and attended a clothing technical school, because there was a clothing school in the Centre. I don't know if there is any other major now, but then, my first profession was tailor-seamstress, then the Center paid for the dormitory, as if taking further care of me, and provided me with basic hygiene measures. (N5)

Assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions was also provided through moving in to a supervised apartment for a specified period of time. Appropriate housing conditions were also conducive to parentification.

And she offered me a supervised apartment in the orphanage. So I lived there for two years before I got this apartment here, my apartment. I lived for two years in this supervised apartment. And I was starting to manage well, even being a mother to my siblings. Well, my brother was at the center at the time. So I tried to take him on leaves, as an adult I could. (N10)

In most cases, however, the former pupils tried to obtain social housing from the municipality's resources. According to the Act on Protection of Tenants' Rights, Municipality Housing Resource and Amendments to the Civil Code (Journal of Laws of 2001 No. 71, item 733), a social flat is "a flat suitable for living due to its equipment and technical condition, whose room area per member of the tenant's household may not be less than 5 square meters, and in the case of a single-person household – 10 square meters, but such flat may be of a lowered standard" (Journal of Laws of 2001, No. 71, item 733, art. 2, point 1.5). The pupils who obtained such a flat often experienced disappointment because the lowered standard and location of the flat were not in line with their earlier ideas.

They found an apartment for me, although this apartment was, how should I put it, an animal cage. [...] The apartment had no bathroom, no water, no toilet, it had nothing. The toilet was in the backyard, the water was on the third floor, the apartment was on the second floor, there were just four empty walls with one window. Before, I thought it was cool that I would have my own flat. Well, the apartment seemed cool to me, because I was going to have my place, my apartment. (N6)

Sometimes it happened that respondents expected help from their immediate family to maintain good housing conditions. However, the family did not always

want to participate in the help. Thus, despite having their own apartment, the conditions were not entirely adequate.

I mean, it was hard for me. Heating was provided by a wood-fired stove. Coming back to my sister again, my brother-in-law was working in the woods... there were days when it was freezing, I had negative temperatures in my apartment. I slept in a jacket and under a duvet... I asked him but he didn't want for free, I asked him to help me and told him I would pay him somehow in installments, I asked him to get me some wood... They never helped me... Yes, it was hard. The welfare tried to do something, but no... (N1).

It is worth noting the location of social housing. On the one hand, social housing was an alternative for wards to returning to dysfunctional environments, but the location of the flats they received was not very different from where they came from.

I got a flat at S. There was a company similar to the one here (where she lived earlier) at O., right? And since I lived alone with the kid, I let the local scoundrels dominate me. (N2)

There was even a situation, maybe not even like this, but my neighbors next door are drinking and they are fighting very much [...] I had a tough time with them, too... They stole from me... my son had left my daughter's milk much earlier, when she was little, he carried the shopping bags and left them by the door, by the door! Not that it was somewhere else... It was right at the door and the neighbor took it... I started a row. (N1)

It lasted for some two years in total, such coming here every week. And finally some light appeared in the tunnel, because I hadn't got any offers at all. When offers started to emerge they were some total ruins, either with moisture under the ceiling, or paper walls with a drinking den behind such paper wall [...] (N3)

For some wards, the process of applying for social housing is mentioned as a hell and good housing conditions as a clerical mistake.

Everything was just a hell of a thing, coming here to the office. [...] It was a hell of a thing, I was there once a week, I was in the office every week to check off, so that they could meet me. [...] and when you got a good place, it was rather due to a mistake on the part of the officials. In truth you deserved some hovels, five square meters per person, so they admitted this ten-meter room, and I got a really solid apartment, thirty-something meters, two rooms, but it turned out to be a lady's mistake. But once I got the keys and the decision, she couldn't call it off. (N3)

The vision of their place on earth, the expectation that they will be better off when they leave the center, often did not correspond to the real conditions in which they were to live. Substandard living conditions have little to do with ade-

quate housing conditions for young people who have made a decision on starting a family, living together and running a household.

The only thing that I am not satisfied with is, unfortunately, that we do not have our own formal flat, we live in a flat we got from the city. There are no conditions here. We tried to do something in the flat somehow, but we are without water, because we have to go there and we have a bathroom outside. Unfortunately. And we can't afford to rent, because that's over a thousand zlotys... (N8)

an apartment without ventilation, without the possibility of connecting water, gas, anything, is not suitable for living with a child, right? all the more so because, as I told you, there was no water, there was nothing, so going to the toilet with a three-month old child in winter is a great anguish, so we gave up this apartment, which is why I have some problems now. (N6)

However, it is worth being aware that the Act on the protection of tenants' rights... does not determine to what extent the standard of social housing may be "lowered" or whether it must be lowered at all (Przymeński, 2016).

Final thoughts

The process of self-empowerment is undoubtedly a very important period in the lives of people leaving a social rehabilitation center. It makes it possible to keep up with the ever-changing social and economic reality by being able to continue learning, obtain adequate housing conditions or purchase the necessary equipment for their flat. Undoubtedly, the self-empowerment procedure is conducive to proving oneself in various social roles, thus enabling the reconstruction of individual and social identity. By offering start-up support for independent/adult life, living conditions are created for self-empowered people that are similar to those of their peers who do not come from multi-problem families. However, the process of self-empowerment, which takes place during the emerging adulthood, has a very individual character, and scientists indicate (Brzezińska et al., 2008) that paradoxically it is the most lonely period in the life of a young person.

The fact is that former wards have benefited from the support offered to them en route to independent living. In most cases, cash aid was used to purchase equipment and things needed for the flats. This form of support also enjoyed great recognition and responsibility in the reasonable allocation of these funds. Most of the respondents continued their education immediately after leaving the center and benefited from financial aid to continue their education. However, not all of them were persistent in this task. This was usually due to the difficulty of reconciling education and work. It is worth noting that in Poland, young people who study are mostly unemployed (75% of young people aged 15–34 did not work during their education), and the average age of taking up the first job is

about 23 years (Pasternak-Malicka, 2014). Money for learning can undoubtedly be an excellently invested form of aid, provided that the amount offered will enable independent living. Thus, self-empowered persons will not have to make choices between education and work and money for life/supply of basic needs.

The respondents hardly mentioned any assistance in obtaining employment. Their professional careers, largely dependent on their education, had various courses. In this sphere, they showed great activity and described their influence on professional activity. The respondents, whose profession did not give them a chance to find a job, undertook numerous casual jobs “in order to be able to provide for themselves”. Often, however, these were no-permit jobs. It was very easy to find themselves in the labor market for the people whose education was attractive and there was a demand for such a profession/education. It is worth noting that, because professional work (and fulfilling this role) is one of the basic forms of human activity, which affects self-esteem, self-activity and allows to regain the sense of influence and management of one’s own life (Rajewska De Mezer, 2015). By learning a profession in the center, a young person creates certain foundations for a professional career (Motow, 2017). Therefore, it is worthwhile to include in vocational education those fields which at least forecast the possibility of finding employment after graduation.

Assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions is the most controversial form of support. Social and supervised housing offers a good alternative to the often disadvantageous, but necessary for most, return to the family of origin. On the other hand, the standard of social housing and its location once again placed the respondents in the “pathological social space”. In such a situation it is difficult to talk about counteracting social exclusion. Thus, social readaptation, which is supposed to lead to independent living without exclusion and promote fulfillment of social roles, in terms of education and appropriate conditions in social housing, becomes a charade.

The motions put forward are only a signal testifying to the importance of the issue of proper implementation of aid within the framework of the self-empowerment procedure. Individual biographies of the respondents made it possible to observe different ways of implementing the offered forms of support from their point of view. The material presented herein may contribute to social readaptation within the framework of the self-empowerment procedure to be carried out in accordance with the meaning of this concept.

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