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The situation of street children in Poland

Definition and living condition of street children

The phenomenon of vagrant children is one of the most challenging social problems in contemporary Europe. Yet, seeking one comprehensive definition entails a lot of difficulties. Polish street children spend most of their time on the streets. In a majority of the cases, it is the lack of parental attachment and commitment to children that is recognized as the pivotal factor leading to vagrancy. Failures in securing basic needs and providing safety at home are forcing young people to look for its substitutes on the streets. The street has for them a significant meaning; it is their source of knowledge and place where they are involved in a variety of social activities. Consequently, they are brought up and educated on the streets (Kołak, 1997).

Vagrant children are emotionally, psychologically and socially abandoned by parents who fail to secure their basic needs. They come from pathological families. They are socially and educationally neglected. Moreover, they are often abused and exploited by adults or their peers. They need money for living, so they beg, steal or prostitute (Fidelus, 2006). Yet, they are not a homogenous group. Many of them come from well-off families. They have everything in their homes apart from love and care. Their parents are only interested in their job and career, so children look for support and approval among their peers on the street (Olszewska- Baka, 1999).

Research

In pedagogy there are a lot of research about children. However, mostly in them the word of a child from adults` point of view is presented. What would happen if we as adults let children to show their perspective. What would happen if we ask street children about their life, feelings, wonders, beliefs and dreams.

My intention is to examine the situation of the street children with them. Using the concept of documentary method, R. Bohnsack (2004), photo reports, I was preparing the project "My Olsztyn" in my city. I was walking with children and we were doing photos of their places in the city. They showed points where they can hide from adults, problems, life. I would like to present the street child`s world according itself what we can observe on this photos.

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