CHILD-CENTERED EARLY INTERVENTION

Early childhood, as a period of intensive learning and development, is perceived to be the optimal period for Early Intervention (EI), with its main purpose of supporting a child’s functioning. Explicitly, EI is child-oriented. But the question of the quality of orientation is raised in the sense of interpersonal relations and nature of the child-adult interaction. Contemporary social relations (including disability politics and policies) are arranged and regulated by adults, which has a direct impact on the EI programs and the roles of the involved – adults are providers, professionals and “all-knowers”, whereas children are non-professionals, incompetent beings and “support receivers”. This implies child’s social subordination. Even though the social regulation of child’s roles is inevitable, due to the nature and goals of EI, there are the question of a child’s real position in EI – is a child an object or a subject of EI? The subjectivisation presupposes an insight into child’s experience of its immediate surrounding, own social position, purpose of adult behaviour (methods, actions) and possibilities of expressing opinions, attitudes, wishes etc. If there is no such practice, then the child is (implicitly) an object of EI.

Contemporary rehabilitation practice of prevention, compensation and correction, in which the repetition of research methods occurs, is complementary with interpretation about a child’s submissive position, i.e. the child is an object in the process of EI. In fact, EI methods are accepted after scientific research of its outcomes within the population, despite the fact that the individual approach is the main principle of EI. Arguments about child’s best interests and human rights, in the context of EI, can be interpreted in several ways: child’s best interest is defined by adults, and individuality and human rights can be achieved as much as is acceptable by society due to sustaining social order, i.e. the dominant social paradigm. One of main goals of EI (supporting child’s positive experience of interpersonal relation and supporting its autonomy) cannot be achieved by the contemporary rehabilitation practice in which the child is in a passive and submissive position. Thus, the longitudinal and qualitative research of child’s narrative about their own experience and relations on the continuum child (his/her authentic needs) – society (contemporary social practice) is required for the insight into repercussion of EI, instead of testing the hypothesis about effectiveness of a particular rehabilitation method.