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## EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

The fourth number, issued in the English language again, closes the twelfth year of our journal. It includes articles the content variety of which corresponds with the board of editors' intention to create a platform where not only studies from the area of pedagogical research of diverse research designs but also studies from other branches related to pedagogy could be concentrated. The board of editors makes efforts to present compact research studies, or partial outcomes of researches going on, promising quality outcomes framed in a wider interdisciplinary context.

Thus the readers have opportunity to learn about research surveys from the area of integration and inclusion of persons of special needs, contributing to the dissemination of information of characteristic features of inclusive education, analysing and evaluating the contemporary situation of using supportive arrangements. They also focus on the question whether pupils with special educational needs leave the primary school with competencies defined in the Frame Educational Programme for Primary Schools.

The issue of influence of psychosocial aspects of stress is addressed by an analysis of the profile of a university student. It can contribute to the design of preventive programmes for lowering or compensating students' load, and thus it can identify the topics for efficient interventions in university counselling. University students have problems adapting themselves to the new environment, growing up and accepting new roles related to the fulfilment of social expectations.

The research using the method of discursive and comparative analysis is related to the classification of educational objectives in the Czech and Slovak pedagogy. As general objectives of education are norms of social activities it is necessary to regularly update their definitions and frame them in the wide context of the holistic concept of education.

The historical-philosophical relation between the so-called meta-narration and pedagogy is treated in the article asking the questions what has caused the current crisis of confidence in the "great narration of the meaning of existence". And what does this mean to pedagogy? The objective of the contribution is to outline possible constructive answers to the possible change of paradigm from the viewpoint of pedagogy.

The fourth number is closed with Krzysztof Dziurzyński's review of the book *Selected Topics of Social Pedagogy. Environmental and Social Functions* by W. Sroczyński. The book deals with social pedagogy as a discipline of nearly

hundred-year history. Referring to the early book by Halina Radlińska, it represents social pedagogy as a science of mutual relations between the environment and man, conditions of life and development of children and youth, factors which influence their personalities and educational objectives occurring in this context.

Pedagogy as a complex science requires also a complex and holistic approach for its research activities when the examined area seems flexible, plastic and getting close to the practice; the value of the gained knowledge consists in its comprehensiveness. This is the way to avoid a break-up of research issues when in some cases the following synthesis does not provide the real image of the given phenomenon but outcomes extracted from the context of educational reality, it reduces education to a mere technology and leads to the omission of its social dimension. Thus the board of editors' intention is to keep presenting theoretical papers, specialist articles and research studies fulfilling its criteria and ideas.

Board of editors of the e-PEDAGOGIUM journal



# **EDUCATION OF PUPILS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE**

**Dita Finková  
Libuše Ludíková**

## **Abstract**

From today's perspective, the right of persons with disabilities to education is considered as standard in developed countries. Each individual can be considered a unique personality, notwithstanding persons with visual impairment. Based on their uniqueness and individuality, each personality is different with regards to their needs from the perspective of education. For persons with visual impairment, we have to consider the scope of education, opt for adequate approaches, forms, etc. Heftiness of caring for such individual is very high, furthermore the subsequent possibilities for development of such persons with respect to future job possibilities are limited. In the Czech Republic, the issue of education and especially equal approach to education is included within statutory standards. In the Czech Republic, meeting the obligation of practical compliance of legislative changes took place relatively quickly, the issue being supervision, including feedback and whether the established concept, together with the change in curriculum, brought improvement in the quality of training pupils with visual impairment. The main issue is whether pupils with special needs leave primary school with such competencies that correspond to the contents defined in the Framework Educational Programme for Primary Schools. Many years have passed since the concept of educating pupils with special needs was introduced, but no studies identifying the level of readiness in primary education graduates who fall under the category of persons with visual impairment have yet been carried out. Owing to the great scope of the given issue, investigation of given competencies cannot be carried out within a short period of time, we have therefore only focused on certain areas, the results of which we would like to present.

## **Keywords**

Visual impairment, quality of education, output competences, curriculum in education.

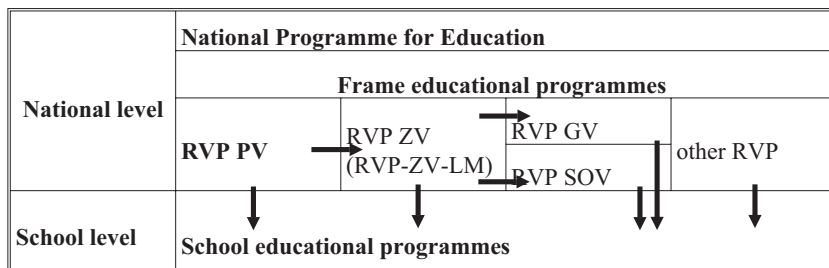
## **1 GROUNDWORK MATERIAL OF THE ISSUE**

In compliance with education of primary school pupils, including pupils with visual impairment, certain important documents need to be followed when conceiving teaching curricula in the Czech Republic. One of the foremost is the

document Frame Educational Programme for Primary Education, which stems from legislative determinations. What needs to be respected is the momentous position of this document within the system of curricular documents. New principles of curricular policy were formulated in the National Programme of Education Development in the Czech Republic (so-called White Paper) and anchored in Act. No. 561/2004 of Coll. of pre-school, primary, secondary, higher professional and other education (school law) for education of pupils between 3 and 19 years. In real terms, curricular documents are created on two levels – the national one and the school-related one.

The national level in the system of curricular documents is represented by *the National Programme of Education and Frame Educational Programmes* (RVP). Initial education as a whole is determined in the National programme for education. Frame of educational programmes then define binding frames of education for individual phases (pre-school, primary and secondary education). The school-related level is characterized by *school education programmes* (ŠVP), based on which the education in individual schools is subsequently carried out (Framework Education Programme for Basic Education, 2007).

**Tab. 1:** System of curricular documents



**RVP PV** – Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education; **RVP ZV** – Framework Educational Programme for Basic (i.e. primary and lower secondary) Education and Framework Education Programme for Basic Education – Annex Specifying the Education of Pupils with Mild Mental Disabilities (**RVP ZV-LMP**); **RVP GV** – Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education (Grammar Schools); **RVP SOV** – Framework of Educational Programmes for Secondary Professional Education. **Other RVP** – Framework of Education Programmes, which are, apart from the above-mentioned, directed by the school law – Framework of Education Programme for Basic Education, Framework of Education Programme for Language Education, or others.

It follows from this document that teachers were given the chance to create their own educational programmes based on certain particular ideas and experience with teaching in the given school. Without a need for a further approval procedure, it is thus possible to form a compact School Educational Programme (ŠVP) for primary education taking into account experience of teachers and

needs of pupils. This way, teachers are not restricted to applying exclusively the traditional curriculum as it has been the case in the past. Namely, a teacher does not describe in the plan which “subject matter” is supposed to be presented but which “skills” the students should have. This gives the teacher the option to skip or reduce certain less important passages, whereas some issues, essential and beneficial in the eyes of the teacher, can be studied in more detail. This process is, naturally, carried out with respect to the documents of the higher level.

In line with the change of the documents, all schools in the Czech Republic were obliged to prepare, till commencement of the 2007/2008 school year, their school educational programme (ŠVP) and to start applying instructions in this document in classes 1 up to 6, effective of 1. 9. 2007.

As far as the principal changes brought about by these documents are concerned, this educational policy, unlike traditional curricula, accentuates “key competencies” and their cohesion with the educational contents as well as application of the acquired skills and knowledge in the real life. RVP formulates the expected level of education for a given phase of the educational process and forms basis for effective and complex application of acquired skills and abilities at the level of key competencies (Framework Education Programme for Basic Education, 2007).

Key competencies are a summary of knowledge, skills, abilities, approaches and values, which play an irreplaceable role for one’s personal development and one’s application as a member of a society. Their selection and concept derive from generally accepted values within the society and from generally shared ideas about which competencies contribute to one’s education, satisfactory and successful life and to strengthening functions as a member of a civil society.

The meaning and objective of education is to equip all pupils with a set of key competencies at a level, which is achievable for them, and thus prepare them for further education and application in the society. Mastering key competencies is a long-term and complex process, which originates in the pre-school education, continues through the primary and secondary education and is gradually accomplished in the course of life. The level of key competencies achievable for pupils at the end of the primary education cannot be regarded as final; the acquired set of skills forms, nevertheless, the basis for the pupil’s life-long learning, entry to life and to working experience. Key competencies do not stand isolated; they intertwine in various ways, fulfil multifunctional roles, have interdisciplinary characters and can be, in all cases, acquired only as a result of a complex educational process. That is why the entire educational contents and all school activities must lead up and contribute to their formation and development.

In the educational content of RVP ZV, *subject matter is understood as an instrument to mastering activity-based expected outputs*, which are gradually interlinked till they create prerequisites for effective and complex application of acquired skills and abilities at the level of key competencies.

At the stage of primary education, among key competencies count the following: *learning competency, competency to solve problems, communicative competency, social and personal competency; civil competencies and work-related competencies* (Framework education programme for basic education, 2007).

Educational content of basic education is in RVP ZV divided into 9 educational spheres, where each of them contains one or more related educational objects, as follows below:

- ▶▶ Language and Linguistic Communication (*Czech language and literature, foreign language*).
- ▶▶ Mathematics and Its Application (*Mathematics and its application*).
- ▶▶ Information and Communication Technologies (*Information and communication technologies*).
- ▶▶ Man and His World (*Man and his world*).
- ▶▶ Man and Society (*History, Civics*).
- ▶▶ Man and Nature (*Physics, Chemistry, Natural science, Geography*).
- ▶▶ Arts and Culture (*Musical education, Arts*).
- ▶▶ Man and Health (*Health education, Physical education*).
- ▶▶ Man and Work (*Man and work*).

Individual educational fields are, in the introduction, defined by *characteristics of educational fields*, which express position and significance of a particular field in the primary education and determine educational contents of individual subjects within the given field. This section also indicates connection between educational contents of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> levels of the primary education. Characteristics are then followed by *Targeted Orientation of the Educational Field*. This part specifies the objective to be achieved by a pupil through the educational contents in order to gradually master key competencies.

*The educational contents of individual educational fields* are formed by expected outputs and subject matter. Within the framework of the 1<sup>st</sup> level, educational contents are further divided into 1<sup>st</sup> period (1<sup>st</sup> up to 3<sup>rd</sup> year) and 2<sup>nd</sup> period (4<sup>th</sup> up to 5<sup>th</sup> year). *Expected outputs* have activity-related character, are practical and applicable in everyday life and can be easily verified. They define assumed capability to apply mastered subject matter in practical situations and in real life. RVP ZV defines expected outputs at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> defines expected outputs at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year (1<sup>st</sup> period) as *approximate* (non-binding) and at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> year (2<sup>nd</sup> period) and the 9<sup>th</sup> year as *binding*.

*Subject matter* is in RVP ZV structured in individual theme groups (topics, activities) and is understood as an instrument to achieve expected outputs. Due to its informative and formative functions subject matter is an essential part of the educational contents. Subject matter, as defined in RVP ZV, is *recommen-*

ded to schools for distribution and further elaboration into individual school years or longer periods of time. At the ŠVP level, subject matter becomes obligatory.

Contents of individual educational branches shall be divided by the school into *particular subjects* and further elaborated or, if need be, accomplished based on pupils' needs, interests, focus and talent so that the entire teaching concept leads to developing key competencies. In the event that the character of the health impairment, in an objective way, inhibits fulfilling any of the expected outputs in RVP ZV, it is possible, in ŠVP, to substitute expected outputs with such outputs, which suit better the educational potential of pupils with health impairment. (Framework Education Programme for Basic Education, 2007).

Within the framework of the research of GAČR (Czech Science Foundation) we focused on an educational field Language and linguistic communication and Mathematics and its application. We aim at dwelling on *Language and Linguistic Communication* in more detail.

## **2 FULFILLING KEY COMPETENCIES THROUGH EDUCATIONAL FIELD “LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION”**

### **2.1 Characteristics of the educational field**

In brief, language classes equip pupils with such knowledge and skills, which allow them to perceive correctly various messages, to understand them, express themselves in an adequate way, and to effectively apply as well as enforce results of their cognition.

### **2.2 Content of the educational field “Language and Linguistic Education”**

Linguistic education is materialized in the following subjects:

- ▶▶ Czech language and literature,
- ▶▶ foreign language,
- ▶▶ another foreign language.

#### ***Educational content of the subject “Czech Language and Literature”***

Content of this educational subject has a complex character and is, for better clarity, divided into three components:

- ▶▶ communication and stylistic education,
- ▶▶ linguistic education,
- ▶▶ literature.

In real classes, however, educational content of individual components is strongly intertwined. In *communication and stylistic education*, pupils learn to perceive and understand various messages, read for understanding, write in a sophisticated way, speak and decide on the basis of read or heard texts of various types relating to most varied situations, analyse the text and critically evaluate its content. In higher classes, they also learn to assess the formal character of a text and its construction. In *linguistic education* pupils acquire knowledge and skills necessary for mastering the literary form of Czech language. They learn to recognize and distinguish other forms of the language. Linguistic education leads pupils to precise and logical thinking, which is a fundamental prerequisite for expressing oneself in a clear, unambiguous and intelligible way.

In the course of developing the necessary knowledge and skills, the pupils' general intellectual faculties are applied and enhanced, such as ability to compare various phenomena, their similarities and differences, sort them out by certain criteria and master generalization. Czech language becomes, from the very beginning of the educational process, not only an instrument to acquiring most information but also a subject to be learnt and examined. In *literature*, pupils get to know, through reading, basic literary forms, learn to recognize their specific features, find out an author's artistic intentions and formulate their own views of the text. They also gain the ability to distinguish between literary fiction and reality. Gradually, they acquire and develop fundamental reader's habits and ability of creative perception, interpretation and reproduction of a literary text. Pupils arrive at such findings and experiences, which can have a strong positive impact on their approach, value hierarchy and which can enrich their spiritual life.

### **2.3 Targeted orientation of the educational field “Language and Linguistic Communication”**

Education in the given field is focused on creating and developing key competencies by motivating a pupil to the following, among others:

- ▶▶ Building a positive relation to the pupil's mother tongue and seeing it as a potential source of developing one's own personal and cultural wealth.
- ▶▶ Perceiving and gradual mastering the language as a rich multiform instrument for acquiring and handing over information, for expressing one's needs and experience and for communicating one's views.
- ▶▶ Mastering common rules for interpersonal communication of a given cultural environment.
- ▶▶ Independent acquiring information from various sources and mastering work with linguistic or literary sources and texts of all sorts of themes.
- ▶▶ Gaining self-confidence for presenting information in public and sophisticated utterance as a tool for self-realisation.

- ▶▶ Individual experiencing verbal work of fiction, sharing reader’s experience, developing a positive relation to literature as well as other types of arts based on artistic texts and developing emotional and aesthetical perception.

### 3 EXAMINATION WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD “LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION”

This examination verified reader’s and linguistic competencies through prepared tasks to be solved. Here, we drew our attention to the following issues:

- ▶▶ Text understanding.
- ▶▶ Understanding a message.
- ▶▶ Analysis and evaluation of the text.

#### 3.1 Examination process

Our examination was carried out in primary schools for visually impaired pupils all over the Czech Republic: in Litovel, Opava, Brno, Plzeň and Prague.

**Tab. 2:** Examination process

Venue	Litovel	Opava	Brno	Plzeň	Praha
Number of students	7	3	7	4	5

Altogether 26 pupils of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes took part in the research examination, carried out in 5 primary schools for visually impaired pupils.

Our research examination was conducted on blind pupils and pupils with impaired vision. Their total number was 26 and they studied the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes. Testing material was always adjusted based on particular requirements from pupils and school (printed in enlarged black font, in Braille font, in electronic format). Principles of visual hygiene were adhered to, including application of special tools, to which the students are accustomed to when reading and working with texts.

### 3.2 Examples of testing tasks for the educational field “Language and Linguistic Communication”

#### 3.2.1 Task – new situation

**Tab. 3:** Task example (new situation)

<b>Instructions: Read the text quietly and reply to the questions below the text.</b>	
Passengers of Lufthansa who, after arriving at their destination, miss their luggage can now use a new on-line service for luggage search at. Following their arrival, passengers inform the lost luggage office at the airport about the case and then they receive a report on luggage loss with a reference number. Using this number and one’s own name, the passenger can check, from home, office or a hotel room, how the search for the luggage proceeds. Inconveniences related to delay or loss of luggage happen to less than 0.4 customers out of 40 million passengers transported by Lufthansa every year. On the top of it, 95 of claimed losses are detected within 5 days.	
<b>Underline a correct answer:</b>	
1.	Passengers of Lufthansa travel by            train – airplane – bus.
2.	Passengers get the reference number        in the plane–at airport – at train station
3.	Problems with luggage occur to approx. 10 000 – 160 000 – 50 000 passengers
4.	Almost all losses are sorted out within    two days – a week – immediately

Prior to solving the task, it was necessary for the pupils to read the text in Czech language and understand the content. Further on, they analysed the content of the text referring to travelling by air with certain airlines and possible relating complications, i.e. inter-disciplinary links were also developed. This task was supposed to motivate the pupil in taking over the role of a passenger and activate communication facilities in a particular situation, which reflects the pupil’s communicational or personal competencies. Applying knowledge with the aim to solve a problem was of utmost significance and allowed us to find out the level of mastering the competencies in order to solve a problem.

**Tab. 4:** Results of the task (new situation)

	No. of pupils with 0 correct answers	No. of pupils with 1 correct answers	No. of pupils with 2 correct answers	No. of pupils with 3 correct answers	No. of pupils with 4 correct answers
<b>Litovel</b>	2			5	
<b>Opava</b>				1	2
<b>Brno</b>	1		1	2	3
<b>Plzeň</b>			1	2	1
<b>Praha</b>			3	1	1



This task allowed maximum of 4 correct answers. The above-stated results indicate how many pupils were successful and tackled the task effectively. Out of the total number of 26 pupils, only 7 pupils answered correctly all questions, 11 pupils made 1 mistake (3 correct answers), 5 pupils made 2 mistakes (2 correct answer) and 3 pupils fail to solve the task completely.

### 3.2.2 Task – well-know texts

**Tab. 5:** Task example (well-known texts)

<b>Instructions:</b> Read the sentences carefully and line them up in a correct order. Enter the corresponding symbols into the frames below the text.				
A They were thinking what to give to Doggie and Moggie or what to make for them.				
B “You know what? We’ll make a cake for the Doggie’s and Moggie’s celebration!”				
C Then they remembered and said:				
D It is the Doggie’s and Moggie’s birthday tomorrow.				
E Children knew it and wanted to surprise Doggie and Moggie.				
1	2	3	4	5
<b>D</b>				

Solving this problem was based on a well-known text by Josef Čapek from the book *Povídání o pejskovi a kočičce* (The Tales of Doggie and Moggie), which is very popular in the Czech Republic among pre-school children. Primarily, it was important to recall the text which is known to pupils. The task was to line up sentences in a correct order (temporary succession of the text). Pupils had to apply analytic as well as synthetic thinking and to write the result into the pre-prepared table where individual answers were coded with letters. The focus was, marginally, on detecting competencies to solve problems and social competencies, here in a form of relationship to animals. Mastering competencies has a long-term character; here we apply and go back to the initial phase of mastering competencies in the pre-school period.

**Tab. 6:** Results of the task (well-known texts)

	<b>Perfect fulfilling of the task (No. of pupils)</b>	<b>Failing the task (No. of pupils)</b>
Litovel	3	4
Opava	2	1
Brno	5	2
Plzeň	4	-
Praha	2	3

The task was fulfilled successfully by 16 pupils out of total 26. A pupil failed the task even if he/she interchanged only two steps out of total five. Here, it might be suitable, in case of introducing a prime quality evaluation tool, to find out how many steps a pupil mistook and where he/she made the first mistake.

### 3.2.1 Task – orientation in a professional text

**Tab. 7:** Example of a task (orientation in a professional text)

<p><b>Instructions:</b> Read carefully the text and answer, in a written form, the questions below.</p>
<p><b>Characteristics:</b> Paracetamol, effective substance of the preparation Paralen 500 tablets counteracts pain and reduces increased body temperature. Tablets Paralen 500 do not aggravate stomach-ache and do not cause emesis. They can be applied by patients with stomach and duodenal ulcers and patient allergic to acetylsalicyl acid.</p>
<p><b>Dosage and method of application:</b> Adults and the youth take 1 – 2 tablets of Paralen 500 several times a day, based on the need, in intervals at least 4 hours. The highest individual dosage are 2 tablets, the highest daily dosage are 8 tablets. Patients with reduced function of kidneys use, after consultancy with their G.P., lower dosage. Children between 6 years (or heavier than 20 kg) and 15 years use 1/2 – 1 tablet 3times a day in intervals at least 6 hours. Tablets Paralen 500 are used while eating, if applied before eating the onset of the effect is faster. Tablets can be cut in half or crushed and should be washed down with a sip of water.</p>
<p><b>Notice:</b> In the event that health troubles (fever, pain) do not recede within 3 days or the difficulties become even worse or unusual reactions occur, consult your G.P. about further application of the preparation.</p>
<p><b>Warning:</b> The preparation may not be applied after the expiry date marked on the packaging. (Source: enclosed pamphlet Paralen ® 500, producer: Zentiva a.s., Praha, Czech republic, date of the latest revision:...).</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When or in which health difficulties is it convenient to apply Paralen?</li> <li>2. How many (at the most) tablets of Paralen can a 16-year old youth take?</li> <li>3. You are running a fever. At home in a first-aid kit you find a box of Paralen there the expiration is stated as 15. 1. 2005. Can you take it?</li> </ol>

When solving this task, it was necessary to read, with utmost attention, a professional text dealing with instructions to application of a medicine and divided into several parts. From the task it is obvious that it is necessary to understand the text, to be able to analyse gathered information and to remember it. It was inquired whether a pupil is able to apply acquired competencies in the field of solving a problem and competencies to study.

**Tab. 8:** Results of the task (orientation in a professional text)

	<b>No. of pupils who failed in all the questions</b>	<b>No. of pupils with 1 correct answer</b>	<b>No. of pupils with 2 correct answers</b>	<b>No. of pupils with 3 correct answers</b>
<b>Litovel</b>			6	1
<b>Opava</b>			3	
<b>Brno</b>			5	2
<b>Plzeň</b>			2	2
<b>Praha</b>	1		3	1

Only 6 pupils answered all three questions correctly and thus succeeded in this task. 19 pupils made 1 mistake and one pupil failed completely in performing the task.

## **CONCLUSION**

At the beginning of the study, we asked whether pupils with special needs leave primary schools equipped with such competencies that would correspond with the allotted content of the Frame educational programme for primary schools. As stated above, many years have passed since introducing a new concept (in order to fulfil regulation of the European Union) of educating pupils with special needs but, up till now, there have not been conducted any research investigating the level of preparedness of primary school graduates with visual impairment. With respect to the vast scope of the issue, examination of the given competencies is impossible to be conducted within a short period of time. On top of it, a control tool (mechanism) providing concrete answers is not determined. The principal issue is whether the introduced concept, together with the change of curriculum, has brought about improving the quality of education of pupils with impaired vision. Results of our research examination, whose parts have been presented herein, rather tend to indicate that the given concept does not meet expectations and objectives in full. Then, are ideas and objectives of the European Union absolutely correct in this respect? From the recent monitoring of pupils at various levels over the Czech Republic it follows that the level of knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils within the Czech Republic gradually tends to become worse and worse. So, where does the problem lie?

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# QUALITY STANDARD IN EDUCATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Dita Finková

## Abstract

In recent years, the importance of education has kept on growing, and there-with also demands for quality of education. It is not only the demands of healthy population that are important, but also demands for the quality of educational process for persons with disabilities, specifically persons with visual impairment. The text is focused on the issue of utilizing “incentive measures” in educational process of pupils with visual impairment. Such incentive measures are considered to be the use of special methods, approaches, forms and means of education, furthermore utilizing assistive and physiotherapeutic equipment, special textbooks and teaching materials, inclusion of subjects from special educational care (e.g. spatial orientation, teaching PC work, speech and language therapy), reduced number of pupils in a class, provision of an assistant teacher as well as other measures. Implementing “incentive measures” directly impacts quality of education provided to these persons. Actual utilization and expedience of “incentive measures” was surveyed in the Czech Republic’s territory at schools for persons with visual impairment. Analysis of the current state and its evaluation, with the option of providing feedback to respective facilities and utilizing the processed information, seemed to be a suitable option. Research was carried out with the assistance of pupils with visual impairment as well as with teachers participating in education.

## Keywords

Quality of education, standards of education, visual impairment, support measures.

## 1 GROUNDWORK DATA ON THE ISSUE

Within the last few decades, the right of people with health impairment to education is an indicator of the level of advancement of a given country. From the general point of view, it is possible to say that every individual is unique, whether we are talking about an individual without impairment or with a handicap. This uniqueness is reflected in one’s particular needs. After considering all the circumstances relating to the scale of possible impairments (either visual

impairment or multiple handicap), it is necessary to select the optimal possibilities for education and the correct approach extended to visually impaired people, both imparted with utmost care. From the point of view of the necessity of individual approach, the issue of education of pupils and students with visual impairment is very demanding.

At present, there exists no precise statistics on the number of people with visual impairment in the Czech Republic or elsewhere in the world. A British organisation (RNIB – Royal National Institute of Blind) has recently mentioned a certain ratio of people with visual impairment in a given society and puts this ratio somewhere between 1.5 – 2 % of the population of a given country. For the Czech Republic, this percentage accounts for up to 150,000 people with some type of visual handicap. We are, however, not able to ascertain with more precision how many of them rank as pupils and students.

Focussing on the field of medicine, we ascertained that, nowadays, physicians are, in the majority of instances, able to save prematurely born babies. These are babies who, as consequence of their premature birth for whatever reasons, weigh only a few hundred grams. There is possible increased risk of occurrence of visual impairment in prematurely born babies. Babies most at risk are those with delivery weight below 1,500 g and born between 22 – 25 weeks of gestation. A high-risk factor in the developed world is, in the first place, the rising age of women in labour, higher number of multiple pregnancies and artificially assisted reproduction.

The demanding nature of looking after such a child is much higher than taking care of an intact child. Additionally, the future options for the child's development and his/her work experience, in relation to the education possibilities, are considerably limited. It is, however, necessary to state one more fact. As stated above, even the present-day prime quality medical care with outstanding diagnostics facilities is unable, in the prenatal stage of a child's development, to uncover pertinent and impending visual impairment which consequently influences the entire life of such an individual. In addition, some types of visual impairment are not evident immediately after birth but the disorder demonstrates itself only in the following developmental stages. An example of such a disorder is the ROP syndrome. From the statistics of new-born babies of the Czech Statistical Institute (ČSÚ) and the National Register of New-born Babies kept at the Institute of Health-care Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (ÚZIS ČR) follow the below-stated data. CHODOUNSKÁ (2010, p. 2) states as follows: *“In 2010, 7.7 % of lively born babies were delivered with low birth weight (below 2,500 g). Higher ratio of children with low birth weight is always noted in girls (8.5 %) than in boys (6.9 %).”*

The issue of education and, especially, the equal right to education is anchored in Act No. 561/2004 of Coll. of pre-school, primary, secondary and higher professional and other education, as amended by later regulations. Another springboard in this respect is a public notice No. 73/2005 Coll. of education of child-

ren, pupils and students with specific education needs and children, and the pupils and students with extraordinary talent, as amended by later regulations. The above-mentioned documents claim that education of pupils with special education needs (this category including, among others, also the learners with visual and combined impairment where one of the impairments is visual) is provided by means of “subsidiary measures”, which differ from or are provided beyond the standard individual pedagogical and organizational measures related to educating learners of the same age in schools, which are not specially established for pupils with health impairment. Under “subsidiary measures” we understand education applying special methods, processes, forms and means, using compensatory rehabilitation and education tools, specially conceived textbooks and didactic materials incorporating the subjects of special-need pedagogical care, the provision of pedagogical and psychological services, the appointing of a teacher assistant, reducing the number of students in a class etc. The above-stated public notice states clearly that a pupil with health impairment is to be, in preference, educated in manner facilitating individual integration into a standard school if it corresponds with his/her needs and abilities, and if it complies with the conditions and possibilities of the given school. This declares obvious preference of integrated education to educating a student in a “special” school. All mentioned factors can also have a significant impact on the quality of education for these pupils and students.

The individual facts mentioned within our text form the basis for selecting the theme of the on-going project PdF\_2012\_009 called “Education of Individuals with Visual Impairment in the Context of Education Quality” within the Student’s grant competition announced by the Palacký University Olomouc. On the general level, the objective of the project is to analyse the current demands on the standards of education quality of people with visual impairment in reference to the legislation of the Czech Republic.

The issue of implementation of subsidiary measures plays a crucial role in the process of education and development, having direct impact on the quality of education of individuals with visual impairment. Real application and usefulness of such measures, as well as the possible complications in the course of their application in the teaching process, have not been examined in any way from the practical point of view so far. An ideal solution in this situation would be an analysis of the existing status with subsequent evaluation, including the provision of feedback to responsible institutions that might put the ascertained information in practice. The key issue here is then to carry out an analysis of the current status in the field of quality of education of pupils and students with visual impairment within the standard “stream” of education as well as within the special-need education in the Czech Republic, using subsidiary measures and focusing on their importance within the process. The integrated type of education of pupils and students with visual impairment would not be thinkable without these measures. Their general purpose is mentioned in Act No. 561/2004 of

Coll. And in a public notice No. 73/2005 of Coll., as amended subsequently. Their practical applicability, helpfulness as well as the possible complications in practice, has, however, not undergone any survey as yet.

Within the project, we also focus our interest on the relation between the quality of education and the consequent views, as well as real implementation of further education with respect to the issue of preparing learners with visual impairment for future professions. It is important to take into account the competencies of graduates that correspond with the allotted contents in the Frame Educational Programme for Primary Schools.

Last but not the least, we also need to pay our attention to the prevention and awareness of the target group with respect to the issue of quality of education, directed both at the students with visual impairment and the respective teachers, school consultants and other personnel involved.

As no comprehensive research of such form has yet been conducted and in the extent focussing on the subsidiary measures within the integrated education in the Czech Republic, our project should, therefore, bring new information and experience, which might be applied when enhancing training programmes for future teachers and special-need teachers or it can serve as an information source for innovations in teaching the learners with specific needs, e.g. in the creation of individual learning plans, in devising school curricular programmes in particular schools, etc.

The principal subjects of the research are individuals with visual impairment attending special schools for visually impaired students as well as pupils from the integrated education. Teachers working with visually impaired students and teaching assistants are also subjected to the research.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

From the methodological point of view, our project is, above all, regarded as quantitative research. The principal methods for this research are a dialogue and a questionnaire. Quantitative methodological approach is considered as a form of data gathering, either through a controlled dialogue or a questionnaire, and their evaluation by the defined criteria. Quantitative research is a method of standardized scientific research describing perceptions by means of variables (signs), which are construed to measure certain allotted features or ratio levels. Subsequent results are processed and interpreted by the help of methods designed for statistical research data processing. One of the most convenient methods of data collection, the most demanding at the same time, is controlled dialogue. In the event of this research, our dialogue is monitored and carried out with a certain objective and purpose. We decided for a semi-controlled interview, which is, most likely, the most frequently applied form of interview as it manages to overcome many disadvantages of a fully uncontrolled as well as strictly con-



trolled interview. The questionnaire method is more convenient in the event of gathering data from a higher number of respondents and represents a research tool for inquiring information on the views of a concrete fact, on value preferences and personal knowledge. A questionnaire is advantageous due to its relative easiness and prompt administration and quantifiable results. In the event of this research, we opt for a semi-standardized questionnaire.

### 3 RESEARCH RESULTS

In this section, we present the partial results of the questionnaire investigation, which was carried out in two primary schools for visually impaired pupils (Brno and Litovel) and focused on subsidiary measures. This investigation may be regarded as a pre-research to be followed with further investigations in other primary schools for the visually impaired and also in pupils with visual impairment integrated within the standard education system.

**Tab. 1:** No. of pupils participating in the conducted investigation

No. of pupils investigated	Brno	Litovel
	22	31

Altogether 53 pupils underwent the research investigation, out of which 31 were from the Primary School for the Visually Impaired in Litovel and 22 pupils from the Primary School for the Visually Impaired in Brno.

**Tab. 2:** Gender classification of pupils

No. of pupils investigated	Brno		Litovel	
	girls	boys	girls	boys
	13	9	16	15

Altogether 24 boys underwent the research investigation, out of which 9 were from the primary school in Brno and 15 boys from the primary school in Litovel. As for girls, altogether 29 girls were investigated, out of which 13 girls were from Brno and 16 girls from Litovel.

**Tab. 3:** Classification of pupils by school years

School year	Brno		Litovel	
	girls	boys	girls	boys
1 <sup>st</sup> year	-	-	1	4
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	-	-	2	1
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	-	-	2	2
4 <sup>th</sup> year	-	-	3	1
5 <sup>th</sup> year	-	-	2	2
6 <sup>th</sup> year	6	2	1	1
7 <sup>th</sup> year	1	5	1	2
8 <sup>th</sup> year	2	1	4	1
9 <sup>th</sup> year	4	1	-	1

Out of the total number of 53 participants, 5 pupils attended the 1<sup>st</sup> year, 3 pupils attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 4 pupils were from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4 pupils from the 4<sup>th</sup> year, 4 pupils from the 5<sup>th</sup> year, 10 pupils from the 6<sup>th</sup> year, 9 pupils from the 7<sup>th</sup> year, 8 pupils from the 8<sup>th</sup> year and 6 pupils from the 9<sup>th</sup> year.

**Tab. 4:** Diagnoses

Diagnosis	Brno (No. of pupils with a given diagnosis)	Litovel (No. of pupils with a given diagnosis)
Hypermetropia	6	16
Myopia	5	3
Blindness	6	3
Disorders of binocular vision	-	8
Macular degeneration	-	1
Glaucoma	5	-

Pupils investigated were requested to state the type of their visual impairment. From the acquired results follows: the questionnaire was answered by 22 pupils (41.5 %) with hypermetropia, 8 pupils (15.09 %) with myopia, 9 pupils (16.98 %) with blindness, 8 pupils (15.09 %) with disorders of binocular vision, 1 pupil (1.88 %) with macular degeneration and 5 pupils (9.43 %) with glaucoma.

**Tab. 5:** Enrolment of pupils in the subjects of special-need pedagogical care

<b>Subjects of special-need pedagogical care</b>	<b>Brno (No. of pupils in a given subject)</b>	<b>Litovel (No. of pupils in a given subject)</b>
Visual stimulation	4	-
Spatial orientation and Braille font	6	2
Remedy of specific learning disabilities	3	5
Speech therapy	4	7
Not applicable	5	17

The table shows that many pupils attending a special school for the visually impaired take part in the subjects of special-need pedagogical care. In Brno, it is 17 out of 22 pupils (77.27 %), in Litovel it is 14 out of 31 pupils (45.16 %). It is thus obvious that these subjects are allocated to particular pupils based on their individual needs and, first of all, based on recommendations stated in their individual education plan.

**Tab. 6a:** Use of special tools in a primary school in Brno

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Picht type- writer</b>	<b>Hand magnifying glass</b>	<b>Camera magnifying glass</b>	<b>Adjust- ments (note pads, work sheets)</b>	<b>Tools for arts</b>	<b>Others</b>
Pupil 1	-	x	-	x	-	x
Pupil 2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 5	x		x	x	x	x
Pupil 6	x	-	-	x	x	x
Pupil 7	-	x	x	x	-	-
Pupil 8	-	x	x	x	x	x
Pupil 9	-	x	x	x	-	-
Pupil 10	x	-	-	x	x	x

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Picht typewriter</b>	<b>Hand magnifying glass</b>	<b>Camera magnifying glass</b>	<b>Adjustments (note pads, work sheets)</b>	<b>Tools for arts</b>	<b>Others</b>
Pupil 11	x	-	-	x	x	x
Pupil 12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 13	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 14	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 15	-	x	x	x	—	x
Pupil 16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 17	-	-	-	x	-	-
Pupil 18	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 19	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 20	x	-	-	-	-	x
Pupil 21	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 22	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Tab. 6b:** Use of special tools in a primary school in Litovel

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Picht typewriter</b>	<b>Hand magnifying glass</b>	<b>Camera magnifying glass</b>	<b>Adjustments (note pads, work sheets)</b>	<b>Tools for arts</b>	<b>Others</b>
Pupil 1	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 2	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 3	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 4	-	-	x	x	-	x
Pupil 5	-	-	x	x	-	x
Pupil 6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 7	x	-	-	x	-	x
Pupil 8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 10	-	-	-	x	-	-
Pupil 11	-	-	x	-	-	-

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Picht typewriter</b>	<b>Hand magnifying glass</b>	<b>Camera magnifying glass</b>	<b>Adjustments (note pads, work sheets)</b>	<b>Tools for arts</b>	<b>Others</b>
Pupil 12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 13	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 14	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 15	-	-	-	x	x	-
Pupil 16	-	-	-	x	x	-
Pupil 17	-	-	-	x	x	-
Pupil 18	-	-	-	x	x	-
Pupil 19	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 20	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 21	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 22	x	-	x	x	x	-
Pupil 23	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 24	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 25	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 26		x	x	x		x
Pupil 27	x			x	x	x
Pupil 28	-	-	x	x	-	-
Pupil 29	-	x	-	x	-	-
Pupil 30	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pupil 31	-	-	x	-	-	-

From tables 4a and 4b follows that pupils with visual impairment have the chance to use special compensatory tools, which allow them to work in a lesson in a standard way, the essential ones being Picht braille typewriter or certain types of magnifying glasses. Text editing, especially its enlargement, the option to use free sheets of paper with adjusted and highlighted lines instead of bound exercise books, adjusted pictures, highlighting markers or texts in Braille font, etc., are an integral part of the teaching for these students. Another category – special tools – includes e.g., special drawing set for the blind or a notebook specific for teaching visually impaired students at primary schools, more and more frequented. These notebooks are usually equipped with special software facilitating sound or enlargement of the entire setting. Some of the students state that they use calculators with voice output or Aria.

**Tab. 7:** Other subsidiary measures applied in teaching

<b>Subsidiary measures in teaching</b>	<b>Brno</b>	<b>Litovel</b>
Inter-active teaching materials	11	13
Audio-records	5	13
Preference for oral testing	12	19

Subsidiary measures applied in the course of teaching by teachers themselves are undoubtedly highly creditable. The most important measure for pupils with visual impairment seems to be the chance to choose oral testing by the majority of teachers over other types of testing. The above results show that the advantages of such an option are availed by 12 out of 22 pupils in Brno and by 19 out of 31 pupils in Litovel. Nowadays, teachers tend to prefer rather written testing as this allows for testing a whole group of pupils in a relatively short period of time. However, this method of testing may not be suitable for pupils with visual impairment. In addition, the time stress combined with visual handicap can cause significant difficulties and thus influence the very result of the test. Further outputs show that interactive teaching materials are also applied in lessons, most frequently the commented and voice presentations, pre-prepared materials for working in pairs or groups as well as audio records and sound material presented through the voice activated notebook.

Our project attempts at bringing a new insight to the issue of education quality for students with visual impairment within the special-need teaching. It is assumed that after completion of the project, its findings will be applied in enhancing theoretical as well as practical preparation of future teachers for working with visually impaired pupils. Further, our ascertained experience can be obviously passed on to other schools, which might, in future, consider enrolling a pupil with this handicap to the education process. Our research thus allows individualizing the current status in the field of education of visually impaired pupils. The outputs of our research examination shall be summarized in a bulletin, which should serve both for institutions providing education to visually impaired students and for universities taking part in the training future special-need teachers focussing on people with visual impairment.

## **CONCLUSION**

The issue of educating students with visual impairment is highly specific and focuses on a wide range of related aspects. In case we target the education quality, then it is necessary to consider the various specifics influencing lesson quality, both in the positive and negative ways. The fact to be taken into account

are as follows: the type of school a pupil attends, whether or not he/she is under the auspices of an education consultancy body, the type of compensatory tools he/she uses in teaching with respect to the handicap, to what extent and how the particular handicap affects his/her work in a lesson, whether or not a teacher assistant is required in a lesson, etc. Each of these factors can influence the quality of education provided, whereas prime quality education is essential for due implementation of the education process, marginally for the teachers but primarily for the students themselves.

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# THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GIFTED CHILDREN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR PARENTS

Eva Machů

## Abstract

The article deals with the problematics of gifted children. It describes the findings of a qualitative research with the aim of describing particular typical manifestations of children's giftedness from the perspective of their parents. The source of data was a group interview with eight parents of gifted children who regularly meet within the Gifted Children Parents Club. The interviews were transcribed and the data gained subsequently elaborated using the cluster analysis. On the basis of similarities between identified units seven semantic categories were created. These categories include particular examples and real stories which illustrate specific manifestations of children's giftedness. The research findings present a practical completion of available lists of gifted children typical characteristics.

## Key words

Gifted child, characteristics of gifted children, manifestations of gifted children, parenthood of a gifted child, qualitative research.

## INTRODUCTION

The topic of gifted children still maintains one of the most prominent positions among today's most actual topics. School conditions for education of gifted children improve, the teachers' qualifications rise, the number of professionals and laypeople, who are aware of the necessity to help these children develop, also rises. It is a multidisciplinary issue, concerning not only professionals such as psychologists, pedagogues and pediatricians, but also laypeople. This topic offers a great amount of unlimited possibilities of research seizing.

Our article focuses on the characteristics and manifestations of gifted children. The topic is very popular and very often described, because it is one of the starting points for the proper diagnostics of giftedness. Lists of gifted children's typical characteristics, which serve as indication for identification of gifted children by parents and teachers, can be more easily found in world literature (e. g. David, Rimm, 1998; Freeman, 1998; Porter, 1999). In Czech literature, we can find characteristics of gifted children and lists of typical manifestations in the works of Hříbková (2005), Fořtík, Fořtíková (2007), Machů (2010) etc.



If we were to present one of the samples of these lists, we would choose e. g. Porter (1999), who names these typical manifestations of gifted children, which the author divides into cognitive area and affective area. Furthermore, this taxonomy may be a suitable starting point for our realized research.

Gifted children's manifestations in the cognitive area:

- They have excellent logical memory; Their learning is quicker and of a better quality; They use advanced thought processes; They can understand abstract concepts better than their peers; They see unusual relations and links; They show good observation skills; They are able to differ even insignificant details; They manifest developed vocabulary; They have many different hobbies; They are able to concentrate in the field of their interests in long terms; They are able to read with comprehension in the preschool age; They have a great knowledge in specific areas of interest.

Gifted children's manifestations in the affective area:

- They are internally motivated, persistent, competitive; They subordinate to authorities unwillingly; They possess a sense of humor; They have a developed sense of moral and justice; They do not like subordinating to rules; They are overly sensitive; They have extraordinary sensory perception; They have high requirements for themselves and other people; They are aware of their own distinction.

Our research deals with manifestations and characteristics of gifted children from the viewpoint of the parents of gifted children. The aim is to find out, which manifestations of giftedness do the parents of gifted children register, and illustrate these manifestations with specific examples and stories. This research employs the methods of qualitative research, as they may help us discover specific examples in a real context.

## **1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research design: qualitative

Type of the research problem: descriptive

Main aim of the research: The aim of the research was to discover and describe specific examples of typical manifestations of giftedness of the children from the viewpoint of their parents.

Research sample – parents of gifted children: Seven mothers of gifted children participated in the research. The research sample was chosen deliberately. We contacted individuals, i. e. mothers, who attend the regular meetings of the Gifted Children Parents Club. The mothers were aged from 29 to 41. The gifted children

were diagnosed with intellectual giftedness in the Psychological and Counseling Center. In this article, a gifted child equals a child with intellectual giftedness. The following figure shows that the age of the gifted children ranges from 6,5 to 14 years. The group of gifted children is significantly heterogeneous in the matter of age. This heterogeneity is not an obstruction for the research, as the parents of the gifted children were questioned not only about contemporary, but also early manifestations of giftedness. Furthermore, the age of the child in question is recognizable from the parent's individual commentary.

Parent:	Gifted child's age, amount of children	School, the gifted child is attending to
Woman, 35	Boy, 10	Eight-year Grammar school
Woman, 37	Girl, 6,5	Common Kindergarten/integration
Woman, age N/A	Girl, 12 + 1 sibling not diagnosed with giftedness	Common Primary school/integration
Woman, 29	Girl, 7	Specialized class for gifted pupils
Woman, 31	Boy, 10	Eight-year Grammar school
Woman, 41	Boy, 14	Eight-year Grammar school
Woman, 41	Boy, 6,5	Specialized Kindergarten for gifted children

Fig. 1 – Basic information about informants

Data sources and data processing: The research was executed as a part of a regular meeting of parents of gifted children, in so called Gifted Children Parents Club. Data was gathered using the group discussion (Miovský, 2006). Semi-structured interview with eight informants was executed during the group discussion. The discussion lasted approximately for an hour. In the beginning, the informants wrote basic information about themselves on cards (see fig. 1) and then they were asked the starting questions, which enabled asking any additional supporting questions. The main, starting questions included:

- How did the giftedness of your children use to manifest and how does it manifest now?
- In your opinion, what are the specifics of gifted children in comparison with their peers?
- What specifics does the parenthood of a gifted child possess?

Group interaction was intentionally not encouraged (in contrast with the methods of focus groups) during the group discussion. The informants' answers during the group discussion led to new issues thematically related with the starting questions.

The acquired interviews were rewritten and consequently processed using the method of clustering (Miovský, 2006). Data were classified into groups (semantic categories) based on the thematic similarities between identified units with consideration about the main aim of the research. Specific identified thematic units leading to the creations of semantic categories are also stated in the research.

## 2 DESCRIPTION OF NEWLY CREATED SEMANTIC CATEGORIES

The following seven categories were identified from the interviews:

### 1. category: Early reading, writing and counting

The identified thematic units leading to the creation of a semantic category: early reading, reading as a hobby, trivial education is not purposeful, family is surprised by the reading ability, early writing, early counting, to teach or not to teach?, giftedness – distinction from peers, establishing relationships.

According to the informants' statements, the manifestations of children's giftedness are connected mainly with the fact that they have reading as a hobby, be it in the passive form of listening, or own active reading. *"He likes it when you read to him, but everything he needs, he looks up on his computer."* Another mother of a preschool child confirms: *"He reads what he needs to, but books, fairytales, that's up to us."* Parents also add that they did not purposefully develop their preschool children's ability to read and consecutively also the ability to write: *"When our daughter was four years old, she started writing. Nobody led her to it. She was really galvanized by this activity."* Another informant talks about the manifestations of this skill: *"As a two-year old, she really astonished everybody at the bus stop, when she started calling out the numbers written on the passing trolleybuses, ... or later, when she was about four, she would read aloud the signs on posters. And mind you, she wasn't purposefully led to this skill."*

The early reading and writing abilities are also connected with emergences of parents' various dilemmas. Let the children write phonetically or teach them grammar? *"We were wondering, if we should let her write phonetically, or start to explain the basic grammar rules, so that she wouldn't have problems in school, where she would have to learn it anew...and then the problem solved itself...she started learning the grammar naturally by herself."* Another problem is connected with the beginning of school attendance: *"They told us she would*

have problems when she goes to school, that she would get bored and she would disturb everybody. But then a psychologist told us we can't hold our daughter back, that the school would have to adapt to our daughter's individuality."

The trivial mastery in the early age is also connected with the problems with peer relationships, when gifted children experience difficulties in finding an adequate communication partner: "He is in a club and they had to draw something, those snails for hand relaxation. He had finished, so he counted his snail and he said: 'I made 35 snails, what about you?' And his friend said: 'I don't know.' 'So count them,' he replied. 'I can't do that.' Vašek was shocked that his friend wasn't able to count his snails, and his friend was shocked that Vašek was able to do that." Another mother contributes another story, but she adds, that it is an experience of her friend, who is also a mother of a gifted child. In this case, the main theme is the early speaking ability. "He would go around the sandbox and asked every child: 'Can you speak? Can you speak? And you, can you speak?'" Another informant claims that the distinction resulting from the early trivial mastery may be the cause of mutual disputes between children. "She was put into a group of preschool children, who were a year older. There she experienced bullying, because they found out she was able to read and write and count."

## 2. category: Sense of humor

Identified thematic units leading to the creation of the semantic category: specific sense of humor, mature sense of humor, punch lines not understood by others.
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According to the parents interviewed, another typical characteristic of gifted children is a specific sense of humor. "It was clear very soon that he has a sense of humor. Like a 'cimirmanologist.' He has that sort of a totally abstract humor." Another mother describes her child's sense of humor with an unusual example: "Our guinea pig died and we were putting off digging of a grave... And Jirka said: "Maybe on Friday." And I said: "Jirka, children are coming for your birthday party on Friday." And he said: "Well, since they will be here..." And she adds: "His humor, that's a joke, an absurd pun, a play on words. Adults don't understand it and nor do children."

The specificity of the sense of humor describes another mother: "It's like she plays around in her mind until she comes up with a pun or a play on words and then she's amused really good." Another informant illustrates this case: "When she was three and a half and she wasn't behaving, we told her the naughty children would be taken away by the devil. Then she was being naughty between the Saint Nicholas Day and the Christmas Eve so her mother says: 'Aren't you afraid that you won't get any presents, since you're so naughty?' And she said: 'I'm not afraid, the naughty children were all taken away by the devil.'"

### 3. category: Competitiveness

Identified thematic units leading to the creation of semantic category: competitiveness, cannot stand losing, competitiveness – problems in the group of children.

Competitiveness is another gifted children's characteristic which was mentioned by the informants. It was stated: *"He is really competitive...he likes competing in everything...be it running up the stairs or a game of Ludo."* Another informant adds: *"...but he really hates losing and he takes it really bad and becomes so upset that he starts acting up. It's an adrenaline rush."*

According to the parents, competitiveness also influences the selection of activities the child wants to pursue. *"She's really competitive. She likes playing tennis, dodgeball, the types of sport where you can win something. She probably wouldn't do aerobics, she wouldn't be motivated to do it."*

Other parents mention the competitiveness and its manifestations in the intentional areas: *"She's still competing even with her friends in the Kindergarten, she has to be the best in absolutely everything."* The parents also realize the competitiveness leads to the gifted child's exclusion from the group of children. *"Our daughter always competes to be the 'Maths king.' She was always the Maths king and she's also won every other trivia challenge, which of course contributed to the exclusion from the group. Sometimes she rather let another child win the competition."*

### 4. category: Insufficient learning habits and deep learning style

Identified thematic units leading to the creation of the semantic category: parents' support of learning, insufficient learning skills, deep learning style.

When answering the question, what the parenthood of a gifted child is like, the interviewees mentioned the need of an extraordinary education, even in the family surroundings: *"...my friends think that when we have a gifted child, we don't have to help them with learning. That's not true. It seems to me, that we have to help them even more."* Another interviewee adds information about learning skills: *"Although our child is gifted, we have to help her with learning. She isn't able to sit still and learn, so she isn't able to manage and plan the learning."* Another informant describes directly the insufficient learning skills of her child and adds a cause which, according to her, may be leading to this problem: *"...she has never learned how to learn, because she didn't need to. Her memory was really good, she was always asking about everything... But the things she has to learn now, such as physics and chemistry, I have to do it with her, or control her, how she studies."*

Concerning the learning style, parents claim that the gifted children prefer deep learning style. *“Learning by heart isn’t a problem for her, but she doesn’t like it. She’s not interested in facts, she cares about the principles. So she’s not interested in history, because that’s just facts, which, according to her, may be distorted. But principles, like Physics, Maths, how things work, that’s really interesting for her.”*

## **5. category: Hobbies and favorite activities**

Identified thematic units leading to the creation of the semantic category: numerous hobbies, intellectual characteristic hobbies, development of hobbies.

According to the interviewed parents, giftedness manifests itself in the fact that the gifted children have numerous hobbies. Parents were asked about the characteristics of their children’s favorite hobbies. *“He prefers natural sciences, such as physics, chemistry. He wants to do medicine research or biochemistry.”* The interviewee presents further activities: *“He’s in a meteorology club, he’s interested in computers...”* Another informant lists other examples: *“She wasn’t interested in dolls. She’s always liked blocks the best, she had to think about them. Later, it was Scrabble and Sudoku. When she watched TV, she liked especially documentaries about nature, travelogues, her favorite cartoons were shows such as Once Upon a Time... Life, Once Upon a Time... The Discoverers.”*

Parents also mentioned that their children’s favorite activities develop according to the situation and current stimuli: *“His hobbies develop. He has some sort of periods, when he for example writes a book, plays with the construction toy Merkur, builds a toy car track on his own, cuts out and makes various paper miniatures of real machines, reads books, thinks up various quizzes... and then he does something else, something he becomes excited about.”* *“If she becomes interested in something, she spends the whole afternoon doing it, every day after returning from school. For example she does all the home assignments. When she comes across the name Vincent Van Gogh and gets interested in him, she explores everything about him...and then she makes an Open Office presentation about him for us.”*

The tendencies to intellectual activities are also evident in the artistic activities the children spend their time with: *“He plays the flute and piano, he tries to compose his own compositions.”* Another informant adds: *“She’s liked drawing since she was a little child. Her artistic abilities weren’t so amazing, regarding the aesthetics. But the attention to details was evident from the drawings. She liked to draw national flags from the world atlas and then she examined the whole family, whether we knew, which flag belongs to which nation.”*

## 6. category: Regular routine and perfectionism

Identified thematic units leading to the creation of the semantic category: liking for a regular routine, logic of creating rules, perfectionism.

Another gifted children's characteristic mentioned by the parents interviewed is the liking for a regular routine and established rules: *"My husband gets our son off to school. They have such a morning routine that everything connects... and they leave the house at 8:10. And once I was standing in for my husband, and I didn't know about the morning routine, it was about 8:07 and said: 'Hey, we should go now.' And Jirka said: 'We're leaving at 8:10, mom!'"* Another informant contributes her story: *"He came back from a school trip which lasted for a few days. He falls asleep late at night, so I gave him a game of mine. When he can't fall asleep he plays this game. And he said: 'Mom, I had to break the rules. When we were supposed to sleep, we could have got out of bed only when we had to go to the bathroom. And I got out of bed to get my game.'"*  Another interviewed parent stated that the established rules must be seen as logical by the children. *"They follow the rules religiously. When there are some established rules, he can't stand somebody breaking them...but not every single rule...I always have to explain to him why it is good to follow the rule."*

Rules are connected with perfectionism and attention to detail, which the parents also mentioned in the interviews: *"My daughter was drawing a picture. I asked her: 'You haven't finished, have you?' 'Yes,' she replied. When I went to see the picture, she still hasn't finished the picture. She was actually right. 'Yes: it's not finished.'"*  Perfectionism is illustrated with other examples: *"I asked him... 'Please, can you bring me the blanket which is in the bedroom, on the chair next to the window?' He replied: 'It was on two chairs, mom!' So he didn't bring it."* One of the informants refers to her friend, also a mother of a gifted child: *"She came to school to the locker room to pick up her first grader and she told him: 'Take your shoes and come.' And she went to wait for him in front of the school. And he came barefoot holding the shoes in his hands."*

## 7. category: Refusal to accept authoritarian leadership

Identified thematic units leading to the creation of the semantic category: refusal of forced authority, need for a logical explanation of everything.

The interviewed parents agreed that authoritarian leadership is not suitable for their children: *"Their favorite teacher went on a maternity leave in the middle of the school year. Then they got a teacher who was really old-fashioned. Downright authoritarian. My daughter refused to go to school. Even her grades got worse at that time."* Another parent adds: *"Since she was a little*



*child, she's been able to recognize who has a natural authority and who doesn't. She obeys and listens to the person that has a natural authority and she refuses to obey the person who forces their authority."* Consecutively, she adds: *"All the adults, whom she met in school, kindergarten, summer camps, they admired her or hated her because of this."* Another informant informs about a different consequence of the authoritarian leadership: *"He doesn't let anyone order him anything. He doesn't like orders... He's willing to take every abstract or invalid order to extremes. When told to greet he greeted everybody we met in the city and jokingly looked at me to see what the consequence would be."*

Consecutively, another informant adds: *"But it doesn't mean that I'm not going to be an authority and he is going to do anything he wants to...it's about explaining my order... I had to explain what was wrong about it and why it was wrong. Then he understood. There has to be a logical explanation. Then the problem goes away and suddenly he has a tendency to sort of apologize and explain himself and he is, like, alright."*

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The aim of the qualitatively oriented research was to discover and describe specific typical examples of manifestation of children's giftedness from the viewpoint of their parents. Data, which were acquired with the help of interviews with gifted children's parents, were subsequently processed using the method of clustering. Seven semantic categories, based on the similarities between the identified units, were created.

The following are the summaries of the individual semantic categories:

- **Early reading, writing and counting:** The ability of early reading, writing and counting is a typical manifestation of the children's giftedness, which was confirmed by the interviewed parents' statements. It was discovered that the parents do not intentionally develop these ability. This ability is also connected with emergences of the parents' various dilemmas, such as: Hold the child back, so it would not be bored in school? Let the child write phonetically or teach the child grammar? The interviewees also realize that the early trivial knowledge may be the cause of mutual disputes between the gifted child and their peers.
- **Sense of humor:** This is another typical characteristic often appearing in lists of manifestations of children's giftedness. The parents illustrate this with various examples. The gifted children's humor is described as specific, very mature and thus hardly understandable by their peers.
- **Competitiveness:** Another typical characteristic appearing in lists of gifted children's manifestations is competitiveness. According to the parents, this



is what greatly motivates the children. Once more, they add that it may be a cause of the child's exclusion from their peer group.

- **Insufficient learning habits and deep learning style:** The interviewees described their children's insufficient learning habits. As James T. Webb (2002) stated: the insufficient learning habits are one of the possible and typical causes of gifted children's problems. The parents who mentioned this manifestation admitted that they regularly help their children with learning. Concerning the learning styles, the gifted children prefer deep learning styles, according to the parents.
- **Hobbies and favorite activities:** According to the parents, gifted children have numerous hobbies which they gladly and actively pursue. The hobbies are of intellectual characteristics. This was also noted by the parents in their children's artistic activities.
- **Regular routine and perfectionism:** This category, in which the parents describe the liking of a regular routine and rule-following, may seem surprising, as it does not usually appear in the lists of gifted children's typical characteristics and manifestations. It is very important to add that a logical reason of the rules must be explained to the children. Rule-following is connected with perfectionism and attention to detail, which were also mentioned in the interviews with the parents.
- **Refusal to accept authoritarian leadership:** According to the parents interviewed, the gifted children refuse to let themselves be subordinated to authoritarian leaders. They add that they do not use libertarian leadership. They claim that every order has to be logically reasoned.

The created semantic categories are a list of gifted children's typical manifestations from the viewpoint of the parents who participated in this research. The results of the research are not to be generalized to the whole population of identified intellectually gifted children.

As the figure below illustrates, the discovered manifestations of gifted children can be separated into cognitive and affective areas. As these areas mutually overlap, the figure indicates whether the specific manifestation relates more to the cognitive or affective area.

### **Gifted children's manifestation:**

- ▶▶ Early reading, writing and counting. *Manifestations in the cognitive area*
  - ▶▶ Sense of humor
  - ▶▶ Insufficient learning habits and deep learning style.
  - ▶▶ Competitiveness.
  - ▶▶ Regular routine and perfectionism.
  - ▶▶ Refusal to accept authoritarian leadership
- ↓
- Manifestations in the affective area*

Fig. 2 – gifted children's manifestations from their parent's point of view

The componential research output may serve as particular practical illustration of existing lists of gifted children's typical manifestations.

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# COOPERATION AS ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF INCLUSION

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## Abstract

We perceive communication, cooperation, application of differentiation and individualization, maximum expectation from pupils and respect among participants of education as characteristic features of inclusive education. In this paper we carry out an qualitative and quantitative analysis of data gained from six selected indicators relating to the cooperation in Czech primary schools, which we perceive as a necessary condition for inclusion. As a research tool we used the Czech version of the questionnaire *Framework for Self-evaluation of Conditions of Education 2007* from which we have selected criteria specifying the characteristics of cooperation that we have analyzed.

## Keywords

Primary education, special educational needs, inclusion, cooperation.

## INTRODUCTION

Education supporting *inclusion* requires stimulating and friendly school environment, mainly based on mutual respect among teaching staff and pupils and an appropriate method of communication among pupils and teachers. At the same time, it aims both at developing of the inner potential of each pupil and at supporting of integration into social environment in a classroom and ensuring a safe climate. To the above mentioned aspects of inclusion we also added a focus on the analysis of obtained data through the research with the following aim: to determine what conditions in education the teachers create for their pupils in primary education from the view of inclusion and how they evaluate these conditions by themselves and verbalize them. The research is a part of the extended research project *Special Needs of Pupils in the Context of the Framework Educational Program for Basic Education*, implemented at the Masaryk University in Brno (the main resolver is prof. PhDr. Marie Vítková, CSc.).

Our main goal was to describe the form of inclusion at primary school not only in a project of inner formal curricula, but especially in its inner form of realization. Emphasis is placed on how the teachers and the other members of school staff perceive and interpret inclusion. We formulated these research questions:

1. How do the teachers evaluate the level of ensuring conditions of an inclusive education in their school? (Quantitative approach)
2. How do the teachers understand the offered indicators of inclusion?
3. What arguments do the teachers choose for understanding of their evaluation? (Qualitative approach)
4. What arguments do the teachers use for improving the situation? (Qualitative approach)

Upon ascertainment results, we defined the next experimental question:

5. What are the characteristic marks of inclusive education?

Given that *cooperation* among the participants of the educational process is considered as one of the features of inclusive education (which cannot be separated from other features characterizing inclusion) we present at the beginning of this paper the overall concept of research, followed by the findings focused on cooperation.

## 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Concepts of *inclusion* and integration are widely discussed issues across many countries and their use is considered according to their meaning.

The current data conception of inclusion in education comes out from many research works, especially external. The researches of inclusive environment in England are connected with Booth (1981), Dyson (1990), Ainscow (1999, 2005), Booth & Ainscow (1998). Especially between external researches it is worth mentioning the studies of Ainscow (2000), which is concentrated on inclusive practice in the UK, Brazil, China, India, Rumania, Spain and Zambia and findings from researches *Teaching and Learning Research Program (TLRP)* in the United Kingdom ([www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)). Emphasis is placed also on the action research by O'Hanlon (2003).

In the Czech Republic the written work titled *Special Needs of Pupils in the Context of the Framework Educational Program for Basic Education* (<http://www.ped.muni.cz/wsedu/index.php?p=vyzkumny-zamer>) notably contributed to the conception of inclusive education of findings from a research intention at the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University in Brno.

While in relation to the student inclusion means to be part of the local community from the beginning, integration means that the aim is to integrate the pupil back into mainstream education, because at some point he/she had been earmarked (Watkins, 2009, p. 81). Inclusion is now understood as a human rights issue that immediately concerns a wider range of learners than those of students with special educational needs (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011).

Some complications are perceptible in the terminology of typology of six different ways of thinking about inclusion (Ainscow, 2006), which influence the educational system of each country. When we talk about inclusion, we mean its wider process of conception. In defining this concept, we perceive it as an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all, while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities and eliminating all forms of discrimination (UNESCO-IBE, 2008; Obiakor, 2012). We combine this concept with another one – the quality of student life (see also the components of quality – the cognitive development of the learner and the role of education in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and/or creative and emotional development in the UNESCO *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (2009).

Also the Czech educational system is on its way to inclusion. The Czech schools have entered the idea of autonomy in the legal, economic and educational areas. All changes have been enshrined in many legislative documents. Educational autonomy was supported by the legal definition of the so-called two-level syllabus. The syllabus at the national level in primary education introduces the *Framework Educational Program for Basic Education* which is compulsory and simultaneously the starting point for the development of school curricula. According to their current conditions, visions and objectives, the schools can be influenced by them. The national curriculum emphasizes learning strategies that support the development of cooperation among pupils and defines cooperation as one of the key competencies.

## 2 RESEARCH – METHODOLOGY

For analyzing the aspects mentioned above we used the quantitative and qualitative approaches. As a fundamental research tool we used the Czech version of the questionnaire *Framework for Self-evaluation of Conditions of Education* (modified version of the British original *Index for Inclusion* – T. Booth & M. Ainscow, 2002) and the qualitative content analysis of the syllabus from eight schools.

Reasons for choosing the questionnaire were to be:

- ▶ To verify usability of the Czech version of the Index for Inclusion from year 2002, on domestication in the framework of the project Inclusive sharing perhaps 20 Czech basic schools.
- ▶ It starts from the access to inclusion like the fundamental access to education (Ainscow, 2006; Arnesen, Alen, & Simonsen, 2009) and includes indices of inclusion that concern culture and school climate, significance of inclusive education and tuition practice.
- ▶ It provides quantitative and qualitative data.

- ▶▶ It leads the criticism to tag arguments on, to add its evaluation on the spectrum and at the same time to tag the authority of inclusion on school. Its using is then in accordance with a procession conception of inclusion.

According to the general quantitative analysis, we obtained information from the seven-point scale (1 – not at all, 7 – absolutely yes) where the criteria of inclusion are evaluated as the best, the worst, and among which are the biggest differences. According to the nature of the questionnaire we obtained a set of arguments for sub-criteria, which justify their ratings and also an idea about how to improve the conditions for inclusion (Kratochvílová, Havel & Filová, 2009). For analysis of arguments we used the method of content analysis.

After this first analysis, we set the inclusion goal: to further analyze the basic characteristics of inclusion at schools, which are necessary for an inclusive environment. Relating to a difference of school environment, it is not easy to define unambiguous principles of inclusion. We came out of wider signs of inclusion (Ainscow, 2006, p. 25) and principles of inclusion (Janebová-Kučerová, 2008, p. 14), from examples of a good practice (Peters, 2004, p. 10) and from basic results of contextual analyses of school arguments and indicators from *Framework for Self-evaluation of Conditions of Education*. We defined five principles of inclusion.

Basic characteristics we defined as follows:

1. **Communication** – the fact how much schools ensure the conditions for inclusive education, it depends on communication among all members of the community to which education relates. It is not just about communication between teachers and pupils, pupils themselves, teachers themselves, but also about the broader communication beyond the school. The level of communication affects mainly the climate of class and school and all the relations with the external environment.
2. **Cooperation** – one of the features of inclusive schools is cooperation at all levels: cooperation among pupils, cooperation among the educational staff, cooperation among the school management and other workers, cooperation with the external environment, especially with professionals who assist during integration of children with special educational needs in the schools and classes. Cooperation with parents is also very important. In the analysis of the conditions of inclusion, we have focused on cooperation among pupils and cooperation among adults who directly influence the education of pupils.
3. **Application of differentiation and individualization in education** – ensures that all pupils can learn optimally and can achieve their maximum despite their differences. The starting point of individualization and differentiation is a diagnostic activity of the teacher in the classroom leading to define the learning objectives (according to individuals). The teacher tries to achieve

these objectives in cooperation with pupils through the educational content at a specific time and with using selected teaching strategies and appropriate evaluation of teaching. A teacher can differentiate education in terms of content, timing, methodology and organization.

4. **Maximum expectation from pupils** – in developing and creating (supporting of all qualities of pupils' life) conception of education, it is necessary that each pupil is perceived as a person and that teachers work with statements in a sensitive way, whom they express their expectations towards a child.
5. **Respect among pupils and school staff** – respect is generally unconditional acceptance of each individual. Acceptance and respect due to the fact that I am, I exist. In inclusive school there is required the respect at all possible levels: pupil – pupil, pupil – teacher, teacher – teacher, teacher – non-teacher, school principal – employee etc. This respect affects the climate of the class, school climate and contributes to the understanding differences among individuals and different groups.

During the next stage of the research we focused on the description of five aspects of inclusion in the schools. For each category mentioned above, as first we chose the criteria selected from all three parts of the questionnaire *Framework for Self-evaluation Conditions of Education* that described them. After this step we carried out a clear quantitative evaluation of individual criteria. Then we commented on the obtained values by examples from a qualitative analysis of teachers' argumentation (more in Kratochvílová, Havel & Filová, 2011).

### 3 RESEARCH SAMPLE

Teachers of primary school attended this research process; finally there were eight elementary schools. It was a deliberate choice in which we focused on equitable representation of rural or urban schools. Although the first phase of original research sample was formed by ten schools, we were not able to retrieve correctly completed materials from two chosen subjects. Positive contrast that was preserved was a balanced representation of elementary urban schools and rural schools. The urban schools are mostly *fully organized*, there are also two *kindergartens* integrated in. The number of students is *from 217 to 649*.

In contrast, there were also three schools that explicitly stated they educate *foreigners* and *children of various ethnicities*, which also brought a wide range of social and cultural background of pupils. The number of *teachers* is between *16 and 41*. Considering the schools with an integrated kindergarten, the number of teachers is also increased due to all the teachers of the kindergarten. Simultaneously, it is noticed that there is *nearly 100 % of the qualified teachers* at schools in Brno (in some cases teachers are still studying).

*Pedagogical enthusiasm* and a wide participation in the actions of *teachers' lifelong education* were also noticed. On the contrary, there were not noticed



any specific activities relating to the readiness of teachers working with pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or with exceptionally gifted pupils.

In accordance to rural schools, there was one fully organized school and three schools were listed among *small schools*. In all the mentioned subjects there were also *kindergartens* integrated in! The number of pupils was between *45 to 165 pupils*. In the view of the social and cultural background of children it dealt with a much more homogenous environment than at contemporary urban schools in general.

The number of *teachers* was quoted between *3 and 13*. It is necessary to add one or two teachers from kindergarten. *Qualification* varies between *90 and 100 %* (and some teachers are still studying further education). Even the rural schools with high activity at events of teachers' *lifelong education* do not focus on specific activities towards working with pupils with SEN or with exceptionally gifted pupils. Some of the observed rural schools are directly involved in the organization and methodological guidance of further education of teachers.

We are aware that – considering the range of the research sample – a generalization of our findings as a description of common situation at primary schools is not possible. In the terms of scope in this paper we present one of the features of inclusive school – *cooperation*.

## FINDINGS

One of the features of inclusive schools is *cooperation* at all levels: cooperation among pupils, cooperation among the educational staff, cooperation among the school management and other workers, cooperation with the external environment, especially with professionals who assist during integration of children with special educational needs into schools and classes. Cooperation with parents is also important. In the analysis of the conditions of inclusion, we have focused on cooperation among pupils and cooperation among adults who directly influence the education of pupils.

### A. Cooperation among the educational staff and other experts

Creating a *school culture and climate supporting the inclusion* is very closely related to a level of professional educational communication. Cooperation is also very closely linked with it. In the broader definition, it is not only the cooperation among the educational staff, but also the cooperation of all the staff and at the same time also the cooperation within the microenvironment of the school. In particular, cooperation with parents, members of the local community and many experts who can contribute to the creation of an inclusive school environment. From the analysis of educational programs at primary schools it was found out, that teachers most often ask for a methodological support of the staff of pedagogical and psychological counseling centres (pedagogic psychological advice centres) and very closely cooperate with special pedagogues.

Three large urban schools have comprehensive school counseling departments. Apart from a school counselor and a special pedagogue they also have a well trained teacher for prevention and one of these schools directly employs a school psychologist. Situation in the functioning of the in one case school counseling centre is illustrated by a special educational centre that provides a comprehensive special educational care directly at school. One school also mentioned all benefits of such a department relating to the integration of different cultural backgrounds, socially disadvantaged pupils and education of *gifted pupils*.

The observed schools occasionally refer to a direct cooperation with the staff from the departments of medicine and social care. A very similar situation is also in the area of help of experts connected to education of gifted pupils. In addition to the above mentioned professional support the starting point for building an inclusive school, is especially cooperation among the educational staff. The talk is about a school principal and a deputy principal for pedagogical activity, teachers (in different functional positions), teacher's assistants (their job is to help teachers with educational activity and communication with pupils and parents, eventually with their community, to support the pupils to adapt to a different school environment, to support the pupils at education and preparation for it, eventually to help pupils with serious disabilities to get to school and school events), pedagogues in a school club and the professional school counseling staff (a special pedagogue, a psychologist, a school counselor, a teacher for prevention).

However, more important is everyday consultation, assistance and cooperation among the teachers and pupils' assistants (if they are in the classroom), cooperation among all the teachers as well as cooperation among the teachers, assistants and professional staff of school counseling departments. Sharing pupils' teaching objectives, finding common strategies of an individual development, exchanging of diagnostic data from the learning process and the best methods of work can help teachers and assistants to find the way to help individuals overcome the difficulties faced by the best possible way.

Relating to the offer, it provided us a complete self-evaluation questionnaire; we selected four criteria for the need of the analysis of the level of cooperation among teachers which include personal aspects and aspects of a process. The personal aspect particularly applies to a desired cooperation among teachers and among teachers and assistants. The aspect of a process presents a global perspective of education, sharing its planning, implementation and evaluation. The chosen criteria are shown in table No. 1.

**Table No. 1:** List of criteria assessing the cooperation at school among educational staff

<i>Number of item</i>	<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Characteristic (Guidance questions)</i>
A 1.3	<b>Employees of school support and help each other</b>	Do the employees act together with respect regardless of their role in school? Does the teaching staff exchange experiences, information and materials between themselves? Are all the teachers and their assistants involved into the planning and evaluation of SEP?
C 1.8	<b>Teachers plan, teach and reflect on their work in partnership</b>	Do the teachers cooperate in planning lessons, preparation of projects and other activities for pupils? Do the teachers sometimes teach in teams (e.g. in pairs, projects, training seminars)? Do the teachers always use team teaching as an opportunity for joint reflection on a pupil's learning? Do the teachers modify their teaching in response to feedback from their colleagues? Do the teachers, who work together, provide the pupils with a good example for their cooperation? Does the teaching staff solve problems together, if there are concerns about the state of a pupil or group?
C 1.10	<b>Are the assistants for pupils with SEN involved in planning the curriculum and its evaluation?</b>	Do the assistants for pupils with SEN try to ensure pupils maximally to be the most independent on their direct support?
C 2.1	<b>Professional and human qualities of each employee are fully known and utilized</b>	Are the teachers encouraged to further development of their knowledge and skills? Do the teachers offer their special skills and knowledge to others? Do the teachers debate the possible origin of a pupil's problems with each other? Do the teachers have the opportunity to learn from practice and experience of their colleagues from other schools? The level of <i>achievement of a specific criterion</i> on a scale is presented in the following table No. 2. Their own interpretation of the arguments is documented by quotations of the participating respondents.

**Table No. 2:** Quantified evaluation of criteria evaluated the cooperation among educational staff

<i>Number of item</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Minimum</i>
<b>A 1.3</b>	<b>Employees of school support and help each other</b>	6.14	6	6	7	4
<b>C 1.8</b>	<b>Teachers plan, teach and reflect on their work in partnership</b>	6.14	7	7	7	4
<b>C 1.10</b>	<b>Teachers and assistants for pupils with SEN encourage and promote active learning of each pupil</b>	5.33	7	7	7	2
<b>C 2.1</b>	<b>Professional and human qualities of each employee are fully known and utilized</b>	6.29	7	7	7	4

### **A 1.3 Employees of the school support and help each other**

The cooperation of teachers is based on two lines: the daily co-existence and respect, professional cooperation. This criterion has a relatively high average value of 6.14, it also has a considerable variance in the range 4 to 7. Smaller rural schools indicate very close cooperation and sharing experiences among all the employees which is also caused by the frequent involvement of the teachers into teaching (especially educational subjects): *Creating a common “database” of ideas, suggestions, information, didactic means, pictures, games etc., accessibility for all the teachers. The educational staff plans the Educational Program and prepare the evaluation (each according to their specialization). In daily contact, they exchange experiences, information, materials. If someone attends a course or seminar, he informs the others of the obtained information*

*they could use in their work. One urban school states that the teachers prepare “example” lessons for each other. Another large urban school quite critically admits the reserves in this area, which they will try to use by the development of teamwork.*

### **C 1.8 Teachers plan, teach and reflect on their work in partnership**

This criterion belongs to the group of criteria with mode 7. Its value is from 4 to 7. Two schools did not present any arguments to its evaluation; other schools cooperate *especially during the project days, school events, organization of the school year, trips, Children’s Day and other events*. The same type of cooperation is also shared by one urban school. This school is self-evaluated critically by degree 4 and it states that the teachers would like to try team teaching in the future. This school also emphasizes a close cooperation with students of the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, who attend their school during their school practice. Team teaching sometimes appears only at one school.

### **C 1.10 Teachers and assistants for pupils with SEN encourage and promote active learning of each pupil**

This indicator was evaluated as the fourth worst in total. The reason was that only three schools could comment on this evaluation due to having an assistant at the time of making the self-evaluation questionnaire. Although two schools were self-evaluated by the highest degree 7, any significant arguments for this evaluation were not provided. The third school was evaluated by degree 2 and wants to get more assistants for pupils with special educational needs in the future.

### **C 2.1 Professional and human qualities of each employee are fully known and utilized**

In this criterion, all the schools were self-evaluated by the relatively high degree 6 or 7. This corresponds to the average of self-evaluation. Only one school chose the evaluation degree 4. In the argumentation for their choice of evaluation of schools, they emphasized that *all the teachers are supported in further education and have the opportunity, after agreement with the school management, to be educated according to their interests (if their education is connected with needs and philosophy of the school)*. Some teachers act as tutors in programs of further education of educational staff. Some schools have a system of mentors and they also meet informally. At all the schools they discuss pupils’ achievements and problems and they transmit their experience and advice how to solve problems. If necessary, they ask teachers from other schools for help. One school would be very pleased to cooperate closely with other schools.

## B. Cooperation among pupils

In each class an important role is played by the fact, to what extent the mutual assistance among pupils and their cooperation is supported. If pupils carry the responsibility for common results, they learn many cooperative skills, including respect to others. They learn to accept their diversity and use their potential for joint activities.

In the monitored schools it is shown that teachers quite differently perceive the fact that every pupil is different, has different talents, interests and needs. They try to use effectively all personal and social specification of individuals to mutual enrichment of all and also to improve the quality of living together. From the answers it is clear that especially teachers of small schools pay a great attention to cooperation among pupils in the classroom and less to division of work and *cooperative learning*. They often teach them to cooperate and help each other.

In the self-evaluation questionnaire two criteria selected to an explicit analysis of the level of cooperation among pupils were included. The first one (A 1.2) refers primarily to the axiological dimension of cooperation among classmates and mutual respect for the achievements of the others. The second criterion (C 1.5) monitors the current level of the use of cooperation and mutual assistance in the educational process. The chosen criteria are clearly presented in the table No. 3.

**Table No. 3:** List of criteria evaluating the cooperation among pupils at school

<i>Number of item</i>	<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Characteristic (Guidance questions)</i>
A 1.2	<b>Pupils help each other</b>	Do the pupils help each other? Do the pupils understand that from various pupils different (maximum) performance could be expected?
C 1.5	<b>Pupils work together during education</b>	Do the pupils perceive an offer and use of assistance from classmates as a common part of the lesson? Are there rules established, how to participate in a discussion, how to listen and how to request closer explanation both from other classmates and from adults? Are the pupils taught how to build joint outcomes from the different contributions of individuals and groups? Do the pupils share the responsibility for help to overcome the problems that some pupils have during lessons? Are the pupils involved in evaluation of quality of teaching? Do the pupils help each other set immediate targets of their education?

The level of *achievement of a specific criterion* on a scale is presented in the following table No. 4. Their own interpretation of the arguments is again documented by quotations of participating respondents.

**Table No. 4:** Quantified evaluation of the criteria evaluated the cooperation among pupils

<i>Number of item</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Minimum</i>
A 1.2	<b>Pupils help each other</b>	5,7	6	6	7	4
C 1.5	<b>Pupils work together during education</b>	5,5	6	5,5	7	4

### **A.1.2 Pupils help each other**

This indicator is one of the lowest evaluated criterions in general. According to the teachers, the pupils help each other, or at least they are encouraged and get enough space. On the other hand, there is no more tolerance for individual performances. Most children understand different performances, but most of them perceive that as an injustice.

According to the filled questionnaires, it is concluded that pupils are encouraged to cooperation and to mutual assistance from the beginning of the school attendance. The pupils usually work in groups in the classroom or in project teaching. The teachers bind the development of mutual help closely to pupils through the form of group work. However, they do not comment any moral profiling of pupils and education of school in general. Only three schools argue they *lead pupils to be able to empathize with the feelings and situations of the others*. On the contrary, most of the schools apply the forms of personal and social education. They try to lead the pupils to clearly understand the principles of individualization in school and society. This imbalance predicts one of the lowest averages between items 5.7 (value from 4 to 7).

Pupils can better understand the diversity of evaluation based on individual options (disabled, socially disadvantaged or specific learning disabilities). *The creation of an uncompetitive environment or free choice of different tasks can also play a very positive role*. In small school classes, there are the optimum conditions for cooperation and mutual help of pupils of different age groups.

### C 1.5 Pupils work together during education

Also this indicator ranks among the worst evaluated. The teachers in the monitored schools are aware to a different degree that the level of cooperation among pupils is closely linked with the development of their social and personal competencies. From their statements it is clear that they try to pay considerable attention to this issue. Their statements in the questionnaire were supported by arguments aimed at cooperation, mutual assistance and respect for rules of communication in joint activities and in their presentation.

The mentioned difference among schools also brings a considerable variance of the minimum and maximum values (from 4 to 7), so it means a relatively low average 5.5. Talking about the undisputed positives, it is clear that in more than *half of the schools the pupils perceive the offer and use of assistance from classmates as a common part of their lesson*. There are clearly set out rules of communication, especially for a group work.

The half of the schools perceives a systematic leading of pupils to mutual evaluation and self-evaluation as an important sign of cooperation. This applies to activities of both individuals and the whole groups. The most systematic process is chosen by one of the schools, which *systematically requires a similar form from all the teachers*. It is emphasized that *the pupils are involved in mutual evaluation of results and the whole lessons*. The mentioned systematization is highlighted by a statement of another school, *where the pupils have been taught the rules of communication in a group since the kindergarten*.

### CONCLUSION

Among the arguments of schools there are substantial differences related to their degree of specificity. We can say, that currently there is a transition among integration and inclusion in the Czech Republic, which a dimorphic inclusion/integration describes the best (Lechta, 2010, p. 34).

Some schools justify their evaluation of the criteria through very specific arguments which demonstrate their real life, which is occasionally missed in some schools. Generally we can say that smaller rural schools indicate very close cooperation and sharing experiences among all the employees, which is also caused by the frequent involvement of teachers into teaching. The large urban schools quite critically admit its reserves in this area. In the future these schools want to get more assistants for their pupils with special educational needs. However, the most important thing is to goad and institutionalize special broad cooperation among the teachers.

According to the teachers, the pupils help each other or at least they are encouraged to do so and get enough space. On the other hand, there is no more tolerance for individual performances. Although most children understand that they are different and various performances can be expected for this reason,



some of them still feel it like an injustice. The task of the teachers is not only to create a safe environment where pupils help each other, but such a learning environment in which results related with diversity are accepted.

We would like to add that during our research close cooperation among participating schools (through mutual visits, observations, exchanging of experience and problem solving) has been developed. All the schools evaluate this fact as a great benefit.

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# PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF STRESS IN CURRENT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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## Abstract

The presented article deals with current issues of contemporary university students in the context of the effects of psychosocial aspects of stress. University students represent a specific population group, which is influenced by multiple stressors associated with the transition from the high school to university environment, problems of adaptation to the new environment associated with the academic load, the transition from adolescence to adulthood associated with accepting new roles, the anticipation of the future associated with fulfillment of the social expectations, etc. The existing research shows that the student population has poorer health than the non-studying population of the same age. Analyzing the profile of a university student appears to be an important aspect that can contribute to the creation of preventive programs to reduce or compensate the burden in the student's population and to identify topics for effective intervention in university counseling.

## Key words

Psychosocial stress, health, personality, university students.

## 1 THE DISTRESS IN CURRENT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Issues of stress and stressful situations are frequent scientific research questions in the realm of psychology. The current state of knowledge and the findings of contemporary scientific literature point to the theoretical and practical need to continue the research into psychological stress – especially the issue of coping with various forms of stress. Recently, there has been growing interest in the health status of university students – especially as they represent a national investment in the future.

From an evolutionary perspective the student is an individual whose age is characterized by reaching maturity in the somatic, mental, emotional and social areas. It is generally indicated that the population between the twentieth and thirtieth year of life is a group with the lowest morbidity and mortality. It should be emphasized that research results which analyze risk factors with regard to the university population, warn that the health status of university students is generally worse than the health status of non-studying population of the same

age. Also, the prevalence of psychological distress is higher among university students than in the working population of the same age (Roberts, Golding, Towell, Weinreb, 1999; Adlaf, Gliksman, Demers, Newton-Taylor, 2001; Dyrbye, Thomas, Shanafelt, 2006).

Provazníková et al. (2002) attempted to analyze the main risk determinants of health in the student population. Results of this research conducted at five different faculties (sample – 410 participants) related to the question about subjective evaluation of their health, point out that although 46 % of students feel healthy and 48 % of students rather healthy, at the same time there is found a number of psychosomatic symptoms. These symptoms are caused by stress and anxiety feelings associated on one hand with problems in some area of life (family, partnership) and often on the other hand with studies at university.

Therefore, in order to be a successful student and cope with the various demands of university life, students should ideally be physically and psychologically healthy. If the burden for university student becomes disproportionately high, a failure in adaptation will occur, which will result in the disruption of at least one of the structures of individual interaction with the environment. Undesirable changes may occur at the level of physical, biological, interpersonal, or socio-cultural.

Factors that affect the health of students are very specific and it is assumed that they are closely associated with being a university student. Thereby, the main stressogenic factors are considered to be academic overload, constant pressure to be successful and competitiveness with classmates. In some countries, we furthermore find evidence of financial constraints and concerns about the future (Lu, 1994; Omigbodun et al., 2006, Lee et al., 2007). But undesired stress affects not only the health of the student, but his academic performance as well (Hamaideh, 2011). In addition to general academic stress, other factors include the effects of sexual relations, the nature of the subject major, the overall duration of the studies, various social adjustment factors, and personality characteristics.

In particular, the issues of the relation among intersexual differences and individual coping strategies show relatively ambiguous conclusions (Stern et al., 1993; Renk, Creasey, 2003). Some comparative studies have consistently reported a higher frequency of psychological distress in women than in men (Hankin, Abramson, 1999; Denon, Prus, Walter, 2004). Based on these findings we may see differences in the perception of stressful situations and, consequently, differences in terms of coping strategy preferences.

## 2 THE PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF STRESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

In scientific literature we can find many studies and notable research that deal with the issue of elevated stress levels amongst university student. Mostly, however, they focus on selected indicators that refer to specific variables. Comprehensive work on this topic is somewhat less prevalent. In domestic scientific literature there is a general lack of current psychological publications of a monographic type related to a more comprehensive concept of the problems of university students. Earlier work has not fully reflected the present picture of this issue (Páříčková, 1987; Grác, 1981). However, there is partial research and studies that address this topic and they give us the basis for a psychological and social profile of current college students and for comparison with our experience and knowledge (Konečný, 1996; Provazníková, Štullerová, Provazník, Hynčica, 1999; Mikšík, 2002; Plichtová, Keresztesová, 2004; Kožený, Tišanská & Höschl, 2004; Menclová, Baštová, 2005; Linhartová, 2008; Šolcová, Kebza, 2009; Plháková, Reiterová, 2010).

Sociological research presents permanent up-to-dateness and the importance of this issue- a focus on the life of university students. As the main subject of the research questions sociologists state an analysis of their social, economic and educational conditions. Especially in conditions of several changes, the offer of educational services is changing, the concept of university education policy is changing and also last but not least there are the social changes (Menclová, Baštová, 2005; Menclová et al., 2003). Certain burden might represent for example a change of career orientation, the student who has already begun the study must solve the issue of the future success on the labor market. The research dealing with the social profil of a university student shows that the student who is studying at typical state university is single, childless, with a mean age of 24 years and lives mainly in dormitories.

Studies related to mainly socio-economic conditions in university studies are conducted by a specialized institution “Centre for the Study of Higher Education”. The results of studies (Menclová et al., 2003; Menclová, Baštová, 2005) for example show the following findings:

- ▶ Social background in families of students partly determines the chosen major and the tendency to studies university. Adolescents from families with university – educated parents (mostly fathers) are the most represented in the most desirable faculties, especially the medical and law faculty (i. e. in 2001, these students made up 58 % of the students studying at the medical school and 64 % of students at the law school).
- ▶ Financial cost of a university education is increasing. University student needs at least 5,600 Czech crowns for transportation, food, books and housing per month, which means that up to two thirds of students must compensate the difference between the contribution from the parents and the real cost by occasional job.

- ▶ The proportion of students living with their parents has a decreasing tendency, research from 2005 indicates that about 27 – 39 % of students remaining in their original home.

The transition from high school to an university environment can cause individuals considerable psychosocial burden. This fact is also confirmed by numerous studies that refer to this transition period as a critical period in the life of the student. The enrollment at university for many students is a significant change in life and work style. Some are also associated with a change of residence and even a change of position in the current family. This transition means that the individual must adapt to a new situation and environment. The aim of this adaptation in a favorable case is a degree of student identification with the school and its culture. Identification is achieved in several forms – as natural identification, selective identification (acceptance of value framework and standards to varying degrees) and calculated identification (study's purpose). Various forms of identification are achieved in a gradual process of adaptation, which starts from the admission process.

Konečný (1996) describes the significant changes that occur with commencing the study in the context of loss and discovery. These changes are specified as:

- ▶ The loss, termination or reduction of certain existing possibilities, which means limited contact with family, environmental change, that is connected with the loss of privacy, material equipment, limited contact with friends or partners and limited hobby activities.
- ▶ The emergence of new demands, claims, conditions which the student must face. They relate mainly to the higher demands on quality of study knowledge, higher demands on independent preparation, processing the knowledge, and higher demands on paying attention during lessons.

In the process of adaptation the first year of study appears to be the most stressful, with all claims, difficulties and problems appear in a short time interval. There are two basic issues, already mentioned need for orientation in the new environment, knowledge claims and responses to them. The second problem is the coexistence with students in dormitories, integration into the society of other students, creating a new social networks and acceptance of the role of colleague student. These aspects are confirmed by (2008) and they still add that students living in dormitories are at greater risk of unwanted stress, adaptation and mental health problems than students who live outside the college. For students whose residence is unchanged, some of these problems do not occur, they experience less change and adaptation for entering the university is more harmonious. Some studies also point to the fact that better socioadaptation to the university environment is affected by financial aspects, so called “higher material well-being” (Batorymbetova, 2008).

In terms of carrying out the academic duties related to the study, the actual exam stress represents an important factor. It consists of a wide range of stressful situations, which a university student is exposed to. The stress associated with various forms of exams can reduce overall performance. At the same time the risk of susceptibility to disease increases, because it reduces the immunological parameters and increases cardiovascular activity (Carreras, Castro, 1998). Thus academic stress affects the overall behavior of university students. In periods of increased stress it leads to worsening of the nutrition quality and physical activity. The overall care of oneself is reduced, there is a drop in good mood and an increase of negative emotions. Also during this period it is found a higher adherence to substance use.

A wide variety of tests and situations associated with the evaluation of performance play a major role in the student's academic career. Therefore, effective management of these situations appears to be crucial for coping with academic demands and maintaining mental health of the student. Most students experience some anxiety during the test period. However, some students experience high anxiety that deteriorates their performance in the test. On average, it is stated that 25 – 30 % of college students reported high levels of test anxiety.

Schuller (1994) points out that the fear factor from the test situation is one of the important manifestations in the school environment. It is a part of important relationships with authority figures at school; it is a problem to control oneself, social relationships and physical sensitivity to environmental factors, where the actual testing takes place. Each test is associated with the concept of potential failure, social risk, and therefore causes the increased excitement, nervousness and stage fright. According to Kondáš (1979, p.179) in the formation of the stage fright there is a contribution of multiple factors. The most important factors are listed:

- ▶▶ Personal assessment of the significance of performance situation.
- ▶▶ Demands of the situation in relation to the possibilities of self-realization.
- ▶▶ The concept of uncertainty and possible failure.
- ▶▶ The threat of failure and mockery.
- ▶▶ Anxiety, emotional lability, nervousness and irritability.

In her study focused on issues of university education Linhartová (2008) refers to surveys from the Faculty of Education in Prague in the years 2000 and 2002, which also deal with psychological characteristics. Their focus was mainly on personality traits. The results characterize a student as more open, more critical, even very critical, with considerable confidence, using assertive behavior, with good language skills and well oriented in information technologies. In opposition to these personality traits there is lesser autonomy and responsibility.

## 2.1 Adolescent, or adult?

From the ontogenetic point of view, a college student is on the verge of two important developmental stages. The individual in this age group is leaving the period of adolescence and entering the period of adulthood, or rather younger adulthood. These developmental aspects bring the individuals in this period into both a positive and a negative confrontation with the reality of life. The period of adolescence must be mentioned because the student coming to university is found at the transition of two developmental periods – adolescence and young adulthood. Adolescence falls within the age range from 16 – 17 to 19 years of age (Binarová, 1999). Kuric (2001) indicates the upper limit of this period between 18 and 21. The main task of adolescence by Kuric (2001) is the preparation for a profession commensurate with individual abilities and mental maturation. The individual has to cope with many life problems, set a life goal and tasks for the preparation of a future occupation. Generally, an adolescent does not often have clear-cut interests, does not know in what field he would like to realize his/her potential and be successful. There may be a conflict of interest and ideas between the adolescent and his/her parents. Social pressure regarding social status, economic independence and success is today much stronger than it was before. Education in general is a factor that plays a role in choosing a partner, family stability and creating a frame of reference for educational reproduction (Cakirpaloglu, Řehan, 2000).

For university students beginning their studies, the period of adolescence is extended and such an individual remains in many respects bound to its primary family, both socially and mainly materially. Slepíčková (2001) estimates that by studying at university the student postpones entry into the adult life of 4 – 6 years. Research has shown that significant and long-term dependence on one's own family is more evident in girls than in boys; there is significantly higher social pressure put on boys' independence (Binarová, 1999). During this period, the individual creates their own values and their own opinions of societal affairs, thereby becoming more independent of parental authority.

They do not have the need to spend so much time with their parents and relationships with peers and establishing new partnerships become more important. An individual gets into a situation where on one side they want to become independent and make decisions for themselves, but on the other hand, are still largely materially dependent on their parents. Many students come to university burdened by the so-called residues of previous life stages, which take on the form of unfulfilled tasks of psychosocial, psychosexual and cognitive development. Admission to university is a difficult period – an inner journey of self-development, combined with finding oneself and answers to questions of who and what I am, what I want, what I can do, and what I can believe in (Hargašová, 1992). This process of forming one's identity is also accompanied by a strong need for inclusion, a sense of community and continuity in relationships and time, the so-called social aspects of identity.



## 2.2 Motivational factors

Among Czech university students in the 80<sup>th</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in terms of motivational factors for selection of the university education there was not yet put the emphasis on financial benefit of this career choice. According to Grac (1981) the typical preferences for motivation were internal motives (79 %) prior to external. This is confirmed by Kohoutek (1998) describing the main elements of motivation, such as needs of personality cultivation, application of individual abilities and interests, and on the third place it was a need to achieve the specialization.

At the present time, the main factors motivating students to enter university are relatively clearly structured (Linhartová, 2008). Primarily it is to obtain education as the possibility for a successful professional career and well-paid work. Accompanying features of these factors are obtaining a university degree and good status in society. The most common problems during the study include lack of finance, combining occasional work and study, complicated commuting and completing exams and obtaining credits.

In terms of factors influencing the dynamics of motivation for learning it can be stated that in the last ten years, although the order of their preferences does not change, but the trend has downward character. Repeated sociological investigations still state the good job and career as the main motivating factor. University degree and position in society also have an irreplaceable role in the motivation to study. Respondents frequently cited the development of education and postponement of practical experience. The most declining motivational factor is the self-interest in the field. Virtually since 1998, the motivational curve (of self-interest) has been quite sharply decreased. Thus, the actual field and its internalization with it in the current students do not appear as a significant motivating factor. The only motivator, that since 1995 has not registered a decrease and as the only one has a relatively stable character in the developmental curve, is the family tradition; the currently there has even been an increase (Menclová, Bašťová, Konrádová, 2003; Menclová, Bašťová, 2005).

In motivational factors Gurova and Dermendjjeva were also engaged (in Linhartová, 2008); they described three categories of university students in terms of different sources of motivation to study. The first group consists of students whose motivation to study is unstable and for the university they decided mainly from external causes, such as pressure of their parents or postponing the entering to employment. The second category are students with a pragmatic orientation, for which obtaining a university degree means higher social prestige or social establishment of useful contacts. The last group consists of students with high positive motivation, who are interested in a profession or field and knowledge means to them a high value.

### **2.3 Personality traits and coping with stress**

Kohoutek (1998) elaborates relatively in details the ways of self-knowledge and self-education among university students and emphasizes that the skill of a student to independently evaluate his focus to the target and his options, put them into a relationship with adequate external conditions and requirements of environment, is of a great importance in shaping the student's own personality. Here, however, much depends on the level of autonomy of set targets, as heteronomous goals after graduation are no longer subjectively important. Social maturity of the personality is characterized by the relationship of the student and his assumptions, potential strengths and weaknesses.

In recent years, growing evidence has accumulated showing that personality is related both to stress and to coping. Initially, there were the two basic personality factors from Eysenck's system – Neuroticism and Extraversion that turned out to be important predictors of stress and coping. Neuroticism predisposes people to experience more distress and negative emotions, whereas persons high in Extraversion are predisposed them to experience positive affects (Boler, Schilling, 1991). Later on, the attention has started to focus on five personality dispositions comprising the “Big Five” traits in the Five Factor Model of personality (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion-Introversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism-Emotional stability) (Farsides, Woodfield, 2003). Several studies found that Conscientiousness is strongly related to coping, especially there is a positive correlation to active problem solving, refraining from passive maladaptive coping, and planning. Vollrath and Torgersen (2000) found in their research focused on university students, that the most favourable profile of stress and coping show persons with combination of low Neuroticism and high Conscientiousness. Whereas students high in Neuroticism and at the same time low in Conscientiousness show high vulnerability to stress and poor coping. The effects of Extraversion is more ambiguous.

### **CONCLUSION**

If we in terms of psychology attempt to summarize the basic characteristics, it is necessary to state that university students represent a specific population group that is exposed to multiple stressors. These stressors are mainly a combination of influences such as transition from the high school to university environment, problems of adaptation to new environments associated with the academic load, the transition from adolescence to adulthood associated with acceptance of new roles, the anticipation of the future associated with fulfillment of social expectations, etc. The variability of psychological factors and different levels of experienced distress can affect a verifiable fact that the overall health of university students is worse than health status of non-studying population in the same age.

For successful termination of university studies while maintaining a reasonable good health, some of the essential factors seem to be the personality structure and dynamics. Personality variables can significantly contribute to the coping with stressful situations, which the college students are exposed to and simultaneously manage the important period of the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Personality traits in terms of stress are reflected in the processes of coping with stress. They decisively affect the evaluation of stressogenic situations and choice of coping strategies, and thus the subsequent psychological processes (e.g. emotions) as well and its neuroendocrine component. Certain personality traits predispose to a particular style of evaluation and management of stress and may be the explanation of different interindividual vulnerability to stress (Bolger, Schilling, 1991; Kebza, Šolcová, 2003). Analyzing the profile of a university student can make an important contribution to the creation of modern prevention programs focused on student's workload and to identification of topics for university counseling.

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# EDUCATIONAL AIMS AS KEY COMPONENTS OF EDUCATION (A METHATEORIES CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN THE EAST EUROPEAN PEDAGOGY)

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## Abstract

Currently, the most important thing for a young person is to be part of “something”, belong to society, be active, competent, keep oneself. The person can set goals to be reached. Education can be one of the goals. Even pedagogy seeks targets to be reached. The general objectives of education represent the norms of social activities. Society determines what should be taught. However, it is not related only to education but also to other scientific disciplines. The article deals with educational goals, their definition, history and development as well as the normative approach – a subject of qualitative research. The research was carried out in the form of discourse analysis and comparative analysis as a method and refers to the classification of educational goals in the Czech and Slovak pedagogy as a result of the analyses. It also introduces taxonomy of educational goals.

## Key words

Educational goal, educational processes, axiological approaches, taxonomic classification, Czech pedagogy, Slovak pedagogy, discourse and comparative analyses.

## INTRODUCTION

People as creative beings find the meaning of their endeavour in aiming towards the future and towards perfection. The meaning of their lives is defined by the goal they want to achieve. To be able to reach that goal, one needs to understand socio-cultural conditions, values, behavioural patterns, human relationships, their rights and obligations, evaluation principles and ideals. The basic normative orientation is obtained in the family, school and educational institutions, in formal and informal groups. A young person needs role models

and ideals to satisfy their needs and desires. They represent pillars and aim towards social values. A sense of values is obtained through education and determination of educational goals in the context of educational process as an integrated and systemic activity leading to formation of moral aspect. It is an anthropological-axiological aspect where educational goals are the key elements. A great number of authors (Bábosik, Pintés) discuss intentionality and determination of goals as a basic category of educating. They see educational goal as a cornerstone of the conception of educational process and determination of its focus and content.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the emphasis is put on developing a fully-fledged and capable personality willing to participate in its life as well the life of others. A fully-fledged personality is characterized by certain features, such as authenticity, creativity, freedom, responsibility, integrity. Therefore it is obvious that we have to look at the goal and its determination, definition, and topicality from different perspectives. The most common and general definition views educational goal as an ideal (cf. Kučerová, 1996, Pintés, 2004, Chudý, 2006). Brezinka (1991, p. 15) describes ideal as a primary activity and a link to the goal. This primary activity is characterized in pedagogical science as a priority category. Kročková (in Gogová, 2004, p.52) sees ideal as an image of a person. This image is a bearer of important values. Educational ideals as general notions about people are influenced by a number of social, historical, philosophical and educational factors. Changes in the society affect these ideals and images. A great variety of social changes has caused a great variety of ideals which are based on real notions but often on unreal ones. Distinction is possible when comparing characteristics such as world view, values or sexual orientation. In every society there are tendencies which lead to creating the foundations of human ideal which then represents the notion about the image of a person. The more elaborate such an image is, the closer it is to be reached. The ideal of education and educating according to normative definitions (Millennium Project, 2000) is a personality which is good (honest, decent), wise (educated and creative), active (independent and hard-working) and happy (well-balanced and healthy). Based on this, human personality is an articulation of value systems and life orientation. The intersection of these axiological systems and orientation can be called life philosophy, ideology or world view. It is a sum of principles, beliefs and opinions which determine personal or social activities. Individual world view stems from target domains of education (cf. Švec, 1995, White Paper, 2001, Millennium, 2000) Brezinka (1996, pp. 17-18) sees world view as a basis of educational goal and human activity.

Among the most important activities necessary for biopsychic development the best defined is the value nature of educational ideal as accepted by the World Conference on Education for All. These life goals are: to survive, to fully realize one's abilities, to live and work in dignity, to participate in society development, to improve the quality of life, to make informed decisions, to continue learning (UNESCO, 1993, p. 78 in Švec, Š., 2001, p. 14).

These ideals represent a model of real life ideals in the process of life-long shaping of human personality – general subject of an input on discourse analyses. Ideals and visions are thought-transformed notions about personality perfection and are the basis for defining general educational goals. General educational goals represent the norms of activity of a particular society transferred to education. Ideals set direction and orientation for other secondary goals: general, individual, concrete. General educational goals are examined by pedagogical teleology which interprets systemization and classification of goals along with tendencies of axiological-normative aspects of goals. It explains criteria and functions of goals, their optimization and incorporation in pedagogical theory and practice. General goals allow us to derive secondary goals – individual goals which determine the direction of educating. When unravelling general and individual goals, it is vital to define the goal on the level of pedagogical teleology and the theory of education.

## **1 SUBJECT OF RESEARCH 1 – NORMATIVE APPROACH AND DEFINITION OF EDUCATIONAL GOALS IN TRADITIONAL CZECH AND SLOVAK PEDAGOGY**

The educational goal and ideal has been presented in global determination. In contemporary Czech and Slovak pedagogy it can be found especially in the areas of philosophy and the theory of education. Both disciplines stem from the philosophical basis, teleology. Etymology describes teleology as a science about a goal as seen in Višňovský (1998, p.127). Janiš, Kraus, Vacek (2008 p. 41) describe pedagogical teleology as a fundamental discipline of the philosophy of education which stems from the purpose of educational goal. This purpose is visible in actual interests and abilities. Kotchy (in Pintes, 2005, p.14) depicts teleology as a science about goals which deals with the most general description of educational goals. In compliance with this definition we define the first and the second part of discourse analysis:

- ▶▶ Analyzing and observing bases of global trends in determination of education.
- ▶▶ Analyzing the function of goal and its context.
- ▶▶ Analyzing the relationship between formulated and accomplished goal.

The most precise definition of pedagogical teleology can be found in Štveřák's *General and Comparative Pedagogy (Obecná a srovnávací pedagogika 1997 pp. 45-46)*. It is here defined as a fundamental discipline of pedagogy which determines educational goals.

Before defining educational goal as a specific category in the context of axiological nature of education, we have to present it as a result of numerous bases: historical, methodological and methodical, political, global, philosophical.



The historical basis of educational goals is closely connected with human evolution and cultural conditioning of the society and education. Educational goals change with periods, nations, philosophy and culture (Jůva and Jůva, 1997, p. 34). The outlined knowledge brought by studying historical pedagogical sources consists of determinants of past educational goals and components of future educational goals. These components carry certain information about the past, values and cultural roots and form a basis for the understanding of new challenges and concepts in future education. Educational goal is not a value-unifying and value-erasing process; on the contrary, it continues and links together thoughts, ideals and concepts.

Axiological analysis helps decipher cultural specifications and educational elements in the process of socialization. From the viewpoint of goals, it is assimilation and highlighting the uniqueness of personality and culture. Methodological and methodical bases of educational goals are perceived as fundamental when outlining general and specific educational goals. Determination of educational goals from the viewpoint of methodology stems from the educational conception of contemporary pedagogy, namely from the theory of education and philosophy of education. Methodical focus of the conception of educational goals is based on the personality criteria of the educated (personality peculiarities, age, etc.) as well as on the nature of educational process and its content (developing goal elements of education). Political bases of educational goals constitute the cornerstone when outlining education as a social (political) process. Since Maria Theresa, educational goals, focus and process have been the key elements of political power. The 21<sup>st</sup> century started a new concept of educational goals in local conditions in the EU context (UNESCO, 1997, Millennium, 2000, The White Paper 2001, RVP, 2004, 561/2004 etc.). The programmes specify the idea and purpose of national programmes in individual countries and general educational goals. In every society there are tendencies leading to a creation of a basic human ideal which represents the image of human perfection (Gogová, Kročková, 2004, p. 53). Global bases of educational goals stem from reflecting contemporary society and life reality. Globalization tendencies are mirrored in the concept of educational process. A number of authors point at the shift in educational conception (e.g. Štrelec, 2005) and at a list of typological problems of the period (e.g. Kudláčová, 2004, 2007, Lorenz, 1973, Skallová, 1993) which endanger the originality of human personality and its value orientation. Other authors (e.g. Rosa 2000) see a positive aspect of globalization in contemporary education and its goals. Philosophical bases are the key elements when outlining, creating and enforcing educational goals. The perfect image of the goal is the cornerstone of the quality of the educational process. Models, ideals and concepts of individual philosophy (world view) vary in values, value system and the understanding of the meaning of life.

Brezinka (2001, p. 209) sees the philosophical basis of educational goal in the decision-making process concerning education in life. The analysis is performed based on inter-value approach in which the intensity and motivation

power towards values is described. According to Brezinka the goal is represented by the outcome of the process which is supported by educational procedures (taken from Brezinka, 1996, p. 35). The category of goal is understood as a result of pedagogical endeavour which – supported by educational procedures – heads toward personality development. Goals can be developed in a “traditional way” (1960s) where education is a versatile, harmonious developing activity, however, these goals are based on the content of education and goal elements. These are not goals meant for the development of each personality but goals emerging from the society and goals which are primarily set by the society in a relevant state of evolution.

Such formulated general educational goal is always specified by the goal elements of education (intellectual education, moral education, aesthetic education, working and polytechnic education, physical education, military education, etc.) which relate only to the content aspect of education which is determined only by the goals of society. In the realization part of education the emphasis is put on one-sided, incomplete approach focused merely on the content aspects and the formative aspect of personality development in all its complexity. Individuality development is neglected or underrated. When discussing educational goals, this traditional approach to the understanding of general goal is often criticised (c. f., Višňovský, 2004, Švec, 2001) and the goal elements scheme is not consistent with the development aspect of personality in contemporary education. A new approach to general educational goals was defined (model of four pillars of Delors’ concept of education).

1. To learn to know nature, cultural and personal naturalness.
2. To learn to act.
3. To learn to evaluate.
4. To learn to make oneself understood and understand others and oneself.

As the above mentioned goal elements are less considered in the educational process it is our duty to provide a brief overview.

The goal to learn to act expresses the ability to learn to change efficiently with the help of practical skills, improve oneself, solve one’s own and other people’s problems. The goal is to teach an individual to cooperate, organize, monitor one’s as well as other people’s activities, reflect one’s and other people’s results, control oneself, take responsibility, restore cultural traditions, help people etc. Learning to act represents acquiring social skills, especially pro-social skills. The taxonomy of roles for pro-social behaviour, which is the highest form of behaviour, has been outlined by R. R. Olivar. Pro-social behaviour is the counterbalance to egoism, selfishness, indifference, hostility. Pro-social behaviour consists of activities leading to mental, social and material support of another human being. It is a kind of behaviour where help is the most common display of behaviour in difficult situations when a person acts according to social-moral values. These mentioned values are not inborn, they must be consciously developed.

The goal to learn to evaluate helps the individual to acquire and use procedures in evaluating things, phenomena, people, ideas based on a pre-defined value orientation. This requires a continual development of social attitudes, empathy, interests and needs with the ability to assign value to things, people, and phenomena. Individual's value orientation should be based on a positive relationship to nature, society, culture, material values and to oneself. It should motivate pupils to new values connected with the issues of contemporary civilization and preservation of a healthy lifestyle. The above mentioned factors condition updating of certain values and value relations of pupils to human life.

The goal to make oneself understood and understand others and oneself is essential for social literacy. Mother tongue, foreign languages and computer language are ways of communicating and their command creates prerequisites for active participation of the pupil in communication and at the same time supports mutual understanding between people, groups, and nations<sup>1</sup>.

## **2 SUBJECT OF RESEARCH 2 – AXIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CONTENT DEFINITION OF SPECIFIC GOALS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES**

In content definition of education there is one significant ethical value status – pro-sociality. It is an important axiological dimension which is manifested in behaviour towards other people in the form of pro-social behaviour. The value-axiological dimension of pro-sociality lies in social and moral values of respect for oneself and others, for dignity, love, friendship, help and altruism. Pro-sociality is also an important moral quality in forming moral identity of pupils. It should be transformed into educational intention of contemporary schooling (content focus), into school value system and value orientation of pupils.

Aesthetic values also play substantial role in educational content. They are spiritual values which positively influence the quality of life, environment, relationships and are vital for preservation and development of culture and the understanding of other cultures. The basic aesthetic value is beauty, which is viewed as a sense of harmony, balance, happiness and joy. People merge with existence in unity with nature, society, people and themselves; they believe in the power of love, goodness and understanding (Kučerová, 1996, p. 130). Beauty has a lot of forms, it is aesthetically valued in material reality, it is expressed in art and outside art, it is an expression of aesthetic value of personal attitude based on emotions. Beauty is present, where there is creative activity to express intrinsic world based on perception, experience and evaluation of beautiful and ugly, noble and low, tragic and comic. These aesthetic categories determine one's relationship to the aesthetic.

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<sup>1</sup> The results of analysis of global trends in determination of education fixed the second subject of discourses analysis – Axiological approaches to content definition of specific goals in the educational processes

In the most comprised and intense form beauty is expressed through art. Art provides by technically perfected means a sense-perceptible demonstration of one's ideological-emotional coping with the world and life and their evaluation (Kučerová, 1996, p. 133). A value nature of art lies in the specific way of knowing reality. Art has a number of functions. The cognition aspect enables pupils to create a relationship to artistic values which forces pupils to act, express and evaluate artistic phenomena. A frequently overestimated aspect of education towards aesthetic values is the cognitive aspect. This is often encountered in aesthetic-educational subjects. If art is understood only as means of cognition, it affects pupils by its form and content. Aesthetic value of art and educational art lies in emotional experience and evaluation of people who reflect art by their aesthetic impressiveness based on emotions. They experience beauty in art as peculiar value reflecting value reality. Education towards art and aesthetic values in educational content enriches pupils not only by knowledge – allowing them to assess aesthetic phenomena – but also by the ability to treat phenomena, people and nature more sensitively. Pupils get higher sense of harmonious relationships in everyday life and beauty becomes a life necessity. Education towards aesthetic values stimulates pupils to aesthetic activities, creativity, originality of thinking and creating emotions and fantasies. Pupils become more open to other cultures and become capable of orientating in mass culture and pseudo-culture. Education towards aesthetic values – towards beauty in everyday life and towards art – depends on general aesthetic education, which is reflected in evaluation attitude – the taste. It teaches pupils to orientate themselves in aesthetics and to be able to critically perceive various aesthetic values.

The understanding of aesthetic values deepens pupils' emotional relations to culture, human creations, phenomena and nature. If pupils accept aesthetic values, they provoke the need to accept aesthetic values when achieving harmony and overcoming obstacles. Aesthetic sensitivity helps pupils eliminate one-sided egocentric and utilitarian approach to culture and other values.

When forming a pupil's new value orientation and preferences of moral, aesthetic values in educational content an important part is played by values connected with environment and development – eco-social values. These are values which emphasize the value priority of nature for human life and human dependency on nature; human impact on all forms of life; keeping human activity within tolerable limits when exploiting resources; protective care of the environment; and rejecting consumerism. The understanding of the above mentioned ecological and environmental connections represents the basis for the development of ecological education and relationships towards the environment and nature. Teachers should help pupils form eco-social orientation based on positive understanding of the changes of the external system which depends on one's intrinsic world. The basis for accepting eco-social values is ecological knowledge which requires the use of rational, technical, ethical and aesthetic facts integrating the given issues into a coherent world view. It is necessary in the educational process to overcome mechanic understanding of the world and

to enable pupils to know environment-related issues from the perspective of different subjects and inter-subject relations. The ecological and environmental concepts of education are creating the following new educational problems transforming on educational goals (Horká, 2000, p. 50).

The above mentioned issues form the foundation of ecological literacy based on which pupils form evaluating relations and active-practical skills for the environment. Eco-social orientation leads to the greater need to satisfy the spiritual dimension in human life; this is one way of improving the humankind-environment relationship and creating harmony. Closely related is the endeavour to find the meaning of life. The content of ecological and environmental education incorporates also the values of health and healthy lifestyle. This type of education should be focused on performing the following roles:

- ▶▶ Holistic understanding of one's personality.
- ▶▶ Understanding of health values, healthy lifestyle, physical activity, nutrition, ecology, prevention etc.
- ▶▶ Basic knowledge of proper regimen, the quality and hygiene of nutrition, health risk factors, hygiene, stress, regeneration, stimulation.
- ▶▶ Basic knowledge of the rational use of free time
- ▶▶ Basic knowledge of primary drug prevention and the health impact of substance abuse.
- ▶▶ Basic knowledge of safe behaviour, life-threatening situations.
- ▶▶ Knowledge and abilities to maintain relationships to nature, people, health (Darák, 2004, p. 150).

School should see its educational function in acquiring knowledge and value orientation focused on the interiorization of values, health principles and healthy lifestyle. The presented roles must be reflected in the newly drafted process of education, educational content – particular content elements, which presumes efficient intervention for forming the life philosophy that health and healthy lifestyle strengthen one's own value and enables bigger cooperation with other environments.

In the end we would like to emphasize that axiological problems become more and more the centre of attention of contemporary education. Without axiological dimension in educational content it is neither impossible to imagine education of pupils, nor draft specific goals. Despite this fact, creating value systems in education is highly questioned. Value systems and value preferences are reduced to what can only be described concretely and used (cf. content and basics of RVP – General Educational Programme<sup>2</sup>). Educational content should or-

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<sup>2</sup> Rámcový vzdělávací program abbreviated RVP – in English can be translated as General Educational Programme, in key competences and cross-section topics and methodical directives available at <http://rvp.cz>.

ganise acquired values into specific taxonomic educational goals and value system which is typical for particular civilization as well as a concrete individual and it should direct pupils to these values. Values give human life a sense of meaning and represent a basis for value orientation of pupils and therefore have been dealt with in more detail although more on the theoretical level.

### **3 RESULTS OF RESEARCH – RESULT OF THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: TAXONOMIC CLASSIFICATION OF GOALS**

Pedagogical conceptions are based on a hierarchic arrangement of cognitive areas presented as cognitive processes. This hierarchic arrangement is called taxonomy. Taxonomy of educational goals expresses a psycho-didactic approach of the teacher to the pupil during learning and educating and assists in the educational process and values development as well as determines goal activities of educational processes.

In the educational process the teacher recognizes general, specific and particular goals. Specific goals are considered inferior. They are expressed at the level of educational institution, in the profile of schools and educational facilities, in school plans or teacher's individual subject.

When defining goals, an emphasis is put on requirements which ensure the development of personal qualities in a particular activity and expected behaviour of pupils. Therefore educational goals must be formulated in a correct, clear, unambiguous and concise way. A very important requirement is adequacy which determines the level of pupils' performance. There must be a possibility to monitor goals in order to allow checking acquired knowledge and the level of changes which might arise. The last requirement is the consistency of goals which expresses the sequence of goals ranging from the lowest up to the highest, from specific to general, from close to distant. New trends, alternative or special programmes require the teacher to specify and formulate goals with regard to specific requirements of these programmes. Educational goals fulfil a number of functions in the educational process. The basic functions are: orientation, motivation, realization and regulation. Other functions are: information, innovation, prognosis and axiology (Kročková, 2004, p. 62). The understanding and classification of goals and their functions is the first theoretical prerequisite to manage educational process and eliminate frequent phenomena such as formalism, subjectivism, randomness, improvisation and one-sidedness.

### **3.1 Results of Research Particular 1: traditional taxonomic classification of goals**

Pedagogical conceptions which present the taxonomy of goal qualities in gradual development of personality on the cognitive level were designed by B. S. Bloom et al. They suggest the following methodical procedures during teaching and class management:

1. Acquiring knowledge and information.
2. The understanding based on intellectual operations which enable pupils to understand, clarify, sort and generalize.
3. Applying acquired and understood knowledge in particular situations; using generalization, theories, laws, rules etc.
4. Teaching – based on intellectual abilities – how to analyze, divide, determine the causes and consequences.
5. Developing abilities to synthesize, generalize, conclude, hypothesize.
6. Developing evaluational thinking based on acquired and accepted criteria; decide, defend, plan and produce (Turek, 2004, p. 45).

### **3.2 Results of Research Particular 2: traditional taxonomic classification of goals**

In a similar manner, authors have tried to construct taxonomies for the development of non-cognitive area – affect and psycho-motoric aspect of a person. This concerns development of goal qualities which are demonstrated in the abilities of being emphatic, being able to react to stimuli and being able to intrinsically process them, take a stance based on accepted and adopted criteria up to the self-realization of a person. The taxonomy of goal development qualities has been conducted by D. R. Krathwohl, H. Daeve, B. Niemierko, B. B. Masia, E. F. Williams, C. Rogers.

The authors have created – based on models – an arrangement and links between psychic functions and processes into certain units. The taxonomy of goal qualities in affective area (on Czech and Slovak pedagogical theory) has been organized hierarchically into five steps:

- ▶▶ Internalization
- ▶▶ Creating terminology
- ▶▶ Evaluation
- ▶▶ Response, reaction
- ▶▶ Acceptance (Zelina, 1996, p. 32).



Taxonomic arrangement in educational work must be developed on all levels of cognitive and non-cognitive development from emotions, feelings, motivation and creating own values to character and moral steadiness and self-updating. This area is extremely subjective, however, it is important for the educated to accept those values which are essential for his/her emotional and social life.

The above mentioned taxonomies in non-cognitive areas are meant to point out that the development of cognitive sphere is not possible without emotions, motivation and values; otherwise this process becomes spontaneous and random. Even though we are aware that taxonomies of goals for educational work include more than we have mentioned, our intention is to prevent neglecting of value-emotional education. It is also important to elevate educational work of teachers, educators, social teachers or teachers' assistants to higher scientific level.

## CONCLUSIONS

The educational goals in Czech and Slovak pedagogy can be found in the areas of philosophy and the theory of education. The core of the matter is teleology, which deals with the most general educational goals. Many experts study and explain this issue from different perspectives. We must be aware of historical background, which is closely related to cultural conditioning of educational goals. Methodological and methodical point of view defines general and specific educational objectives. It is based on the educational conception of contemporary pedagogy, the theory of education, philosophy of education and deals with educational content. The political view of this issue is related to very important person – Maria Theresa, who introduced contemporary school attendance. Currently, there is a new concept of educational goals in the EU context. Global bases of educational goals arise from contemporary society, value system and aspect of globalization. Philosophical bases represent the notion of the educational goal as the core of the educational process. The goal can be structured hierarchically and can be motivation as well. The aim of society is to bring up individuals who are competent, intelligent, and empathetic and who participate in social life. Contemporary society need people who are able to change the job, adapt to new conditions, are flexible, motivated, are able to learn new things and function in everyday life.

The goal in axiological dimension is not only value of self-esteem but especially moral values and pro-social behavior. Pro-sociality should be integrated into school value system and value orientation of pupils. Value system is an important component of human history and development. In the process of forming pupil's value orientation, we must highlight moral, aesthetic values as well as eco-social values. We should maintain the holistic point of view, thus develop aesthetic values and simultaneously support the value priority of nature and protect environment. Schools should permanently support and form value orientation of pupils which is focused on the exteriorization of values, health principles and healthy lifestyle.



Cognitive processes are based on a hierarchic arrangement of cognitive areas called taxonomy. Taxonomy of educational goals refers to a psycho-didactic approach of the teacher to the pupil; it supports the educational process and development of values as well as identifies the objectives of educational processes. The teacher differentiates general, specific and particular goals. The educational goals must be formulated in a correct, concrete and unambiguous way. They should be also controllable. The educational goals set the requirements which ensure the development of personality on the cognitive, affective and psychomotoric level.

The educational goals are essential and significant part of teacher's profession. They facilitate educational processes as well as teacher's career, are innovative, flexible and adaptable. The teacher can set the goals which form pupil's knowledge, skills as well as attitudes. In the condition of present school we should not concentrate only to knowledge but also to moral values and cultivate pro-social behavior of pupils.

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# **PEDAGOGY AND METANARRATIVES: EDUCATING IN THE POSTMODERN SITUATION**

**Jan Hábl**

## **Abstract**

This paper deals with historical-philosophical relationship between the so-called metanarratives and pedagogy, as they consider the typical post-modern crisis of trust. The goal of the paper is to outline possible constructive responses to the paradigm change, from a pedagogical point of view.

## **Keywords**

Pedagogy, didactics, metanarratives, modernity/postmodernity, crisis, education, school, paradigm.

## **INTRODUCTION: METANARRATIVES AND PEDAGOGY**

Much has been spoken and written about the sense of crisis experienced, to a greater or lesser extent, by theoreticians and practitioners of education and training alike.<sup>1</sup> The school – it is said – “stands at the crossroads”, needs to redefine itself, is unable to meet the changing needs and challenges of the times, etc.<sup>2</sup> I believe that this current sense of crisis is not due to the mismanagement, mistakes or failures of professional educators or educational theory, but to fundamental changes in the paradigm of thought in which the school finds itself with the collapse of the so-called modern metanarratives.

The aim of this brief study is to first outline the roots of the crisis experienced in the modern story of its historical-philosophical context. Then, in light of those roots, to show the way in which the past (not only modern) metanarratives protected their pedagogy as a socio-cultural institution – and what the current decline implies. Finally, I will try to suggest possible ways to constructively address the situation in terms of pedagogy.

Metanarratives in every century have ensured the integrity of human community and the meaningfulness of concretely experienced reality. Every culture has come together around a story that was collectively shared, handed down, and passed on for the purpose of teaching the fundamental orientation and identification of the culture to its members. At the same time, all of the individual

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Haškovec, 2004; Spilková, 2004; Skalková, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> In this study I focus primarily on the area of tertiary education, but whatever is said is also valid for school in general.

components, structures, concepts, values and institutions (including pedagogy) gained their legitimacy precisely in relation to the consensually shared story. And that was the case, not only with the modern story of the autonomous progress of *reason*, but also with the pre-modern story of transcendentally embodied salvation history. Likewise, older cultures couldn't do without their great stories which gave meaning to all everyday actions.<sup>3</sup> However the current period, adorned with a host of attributes like 'post-modern', 'reflexively-modern', sur-modern, or late-modern, is different, and new. Among the first to grasp the uniqueness of our time was J. F. Lyotard, when he observed that it's the end of the big story, the ideological whole, and doctrines – that postmodern people don't trust them anymore (comp. 1993). This is what concerns pedagogy and education as such, which finds itself in a historically unprecedented situation because, until now, pedagogy has been inextricably linked with metanarratives. The key question therefore is: What caused the current crisis of confidence in the grand narratives about the meaning of being? And what does it mean for pedagogy?

## 2 THE END OF TRUST IN METANARRATIVES

When the modern story was born the popular Enlightenment philosophers' slogan was: *sapere aude* (dare to know), which then became "People, trust your own intellect!" It was a reaction against the medieval tradition of trust in external authority. The Enlightenment understood itself as the age of the adolescence of humanity: as that great moment in history when humanity finally gathered the courage to liberate itself from the clutches of ignorance. Thus the newly discovered human *ratio* became the instrument of emancipation by which humanity hoped "to uncover, describe and explain the entire natural order of things," (Wright, 2004) and it would come about completely autonomously.

In addition to a belief in the nearly omni-potent power of reason, the scenario of the modern story was also based on a belief in the moral progress of humanity. S. Grenz (1997) expressed it well: "*The modern scientist considers it as axiomatic, that what knowledge discovers is always good. This assumption of the inherent goodness of knowledge made the enlightened view of the world optimistic. It led to the belief that progress is inevitable, that science, together with the power of education, will finally rid us of both our vulnerability to nature and all social slavery.*" Encouraged by developments in the field of science, modern humanity began to believe in advancement in the field of morality. After all, the one who knows "rightly" will also act "rightly", (or will

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<sup>3</sup> This was as true for the oldest semitic cultures as it was for the rest of antiquity. See for example the classic work by Schaeffer, 1980 or Hošek 2010.

he not?). The question of the connection between *scientia* and *conscientia* was itself not new, but the assumption that science and education will be the automatically humanizing factor in the process of refining humanity, got its doctrinal form only in the modern story (comp. Menck, 2001). Modern humanity has believed that progress towards a better future is certain and that is only a matter of time; thanks to the unstoppable expansion of knowledge we will be able to control the natural world, even to “command the wind and rain,”<sup>4</sup> and ultimately achieve the long sought-after paradise on earth.

In the story of the twentieth century, however, modern hope began to slowly disintegrate. It became apparent that even if knowledge does bring to humanity unprecedented technical capabilities, that alone cannot ensure humaneness and moral refinement. It is clearly true that the one who knows, has power, as F. Bacon has already noted.<sup>5</sup> Likewise it is indisputable that it is necessary to be led to knowledge, that is, to be taught. Historical experience has revealed, however, that knowledge and education can be used for evil as well as for good. When we think about the atrocities of the twentieth century in which science actively participated, the assumption of the modern period – that science is automatically humanizing – seems ridiculous and even criminally naive. Today, instead of gratefully indulging in the care of scientists, we rather tend to watch them with increasing suspicion and apprehension. Who knows what kind of abuse their techno-scientific creations could be used for again? (comp. Bauman, 2004). The extraordinary development of technology and science, which offers western society unprecedented power and wealth, has also produced a host of problems which have grown to global proportions and no longer can be managed. The culture of abundance and prosperity contrasts sharply with the reality of poverty for millions of starving, destitute, illiterate and marginalized individuals – and even whole nations – which the “civilized” world cannot help because it has enough problems of its own. In E. Fromm’s way said, despite the techno-scientific saturation humanity is “undernourished.” Its advanced technocracy has generated a series of anti-human phenomena like the objectification of mankind, the alienation of individuals, and the depersonalization of interpersonal relationships. Instead of the longed-for paradise on earth, sociologists point out the reality of the dramatic decline of moral literacy, declining social capital (no-one trusts anyone anymore), threats of global self-destruction, clashes of civilizations, various forms of extremism, etc. Human being is even considered to be an “endangered species” (Sokol, 2002).

Another problem of the modern metanarrative that contributed to its decline, was its tendency towards totalitarianism, that is, to act with an exclusive interpretation of reality and the use of power as a tool. M. Foucault described it well

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<sup>4</sup> This was a popular slogan of the protagonists of the communist regime who believed it is just a matter of time when science will enable us to control the nature.

<sup>5</sup> The idea that *scientia potentia est*, Bacon repeated more than once in his period of revolutionary reflections. See for example Bacon’s *Nové organon* (1974), pp. 89, 186.

when he noted how the modern scientific discourse has been used as a means of all-pervasive dominance and surveillance (2000). The form of monarchist totalitarianism may change, but the essence remains the same. Many a totalitarian atrocity was thus legitimized under the auspices of the grand narratives – whether by the colonialists in the West<sup>6</sup> or the communists in the East.<sup>7</sup>

The result is that all the simple patterns and reference points on which the modern world was solidly constructed and which facilitated the choosing of life strategies, have been shattered. The next generation, weaned on postmodern milk, no longer perceives reality as a cohesive and coherent whole in which it is possible to find systematic meaning and logic, but rather as a confusion of random and changing events. Truth is an empty concept that means whatever anyone wants it to mean. Objective knowledge is irrelevant. Law and justice have been left at the mercy of the demon of interpretation. And where future prospects are concerned, the post-modern generation does not believe that any scientific, business or economic, let alone political, solution exists that would ensure a better existence than what their parents had. The progress of mankind has been, for the post-modern individual, utterly lost in romantic illusions. Especially in the Eastern Europe setting, where for decades the great truths were bent, twisted and stretched to the utmost, and noble ideas were vulgarized by lower interests, and where one ideological grand narrative after another appeared without ever bringing the promised paradise, it strengthened in almost everyone the conditioned reflex of automatic distrust. We would rather disappoint in advance than ourselves be disappointed again. What are the implications of this change in the intellectual climate for education and the school?

### 3 PEDAGOGY WITHOUT METANARRATIVES

The school has had an irreplaceable role within the modern paradigm, as the key means of sharing the meta-stories. All the teaching tools, knowledge, facts, skills and values that it had at its disposal, which it grew, developed and passed on, had their significance directly in the process of implementing the modern

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<sup>6</sup> In this context A. Finkelkraut nicely captures the link between the concepts of colonization and civilization when he says that to civilize, for the modern westerner means, “to make one’s current conditions the example, to make a universal gift of one’s own habits, to make one’s own values the absolute criteria for assessment, and to consider the European lord and master of nature as the most interesting being in creation. ... Because Europe typified progress to other human societies, colonization seemed to be the fastest and noblest means for bringing the stragglers onto the track of civilization. The calling of industrialized nations seemed to be: to accelerate the path of non-Europeans towards education and welfare. It was necessary, precisely for the good of primitive nations, to swallow up their differences – that is, their backwardness – in Western universality” (1993, p. 42).

<sup>7</sup> The specific consequences of the totalitarian discourse are intimately known by everyone who lived under the communist regime, which also possessed a great story about class struggle and which – many still remember – should have led to the eschatological promise of paradise on earth.

agenda. And the ultimate goal of all educational efforts was said to be to “prepare individuals for life” – which, deconstructed with post-modern hermeneutics, means to mold them to be able to accept and play well their socially determined role in the modern scenario. That it often also included more or less latent indoctrination, follows from the very nature of the story. But the fact remains that it was very functional indoctrination. For centuries it effectively produced and strengthened an almost religious belief in progress. In addition to the overarching metanarratives, the academy belonged to “sacred” things, for it was the key place in which the values of social integration were developed and used. The dignity of the teachers’ robes, then, consisted in the inheritance of historical continuity, inasmuch as the modern school, however demarcated it was from the pre-modern school, nevertheless continued in the same tradition. It was that of a persistent and deliberate search for, preservation and transmission of truths which in their diversity were folded into one great unified whole – as indicated in the very notion of *uni-versity*.

With the end of confidence in the metanarratives the school also came to the end of its most valuable asset. Figuratively speaking, it lost its soul. In losing the great story the school also lost the means by which its formative-educational role in society could be legitimized. The post-modern “client” does not expect great, objective (world)views, definitive statements or binding morals from the school, let alone some kind of educational “machine tooling” in the name of universal truth. All he or she wants is the practical usefulness of the educational products. Do not educate me, just give me the facts, skills and competencies and I will make use of them the way I want. I need to be usable (in the marketplace).<sup>8</sup>

The school has been thus reduced to the position of servant or assistant to the individual’s self-determination and self-assertion in the market-place. In the postmodern climate the school has become the depository, or – not to be pejorative – supermarket, where consumers come to make an eclectic selection from a wide variety of more or less key products which fit his immediate needs. The school has become a place where two worlds of thought meet, mingle and intersect. The school is modern, but its clientele are postmodern. Inasmuch as it is a creation of another period, it appears to the postmodern student as foreign, authoritarian, intolerant, non-user-friendly and even user-hostile. Out of this has come the feeling of crisis in pedagogy.<sup>9</sup>

But that is still not the end of the story. In addition to the loss of its educational-formative legitimacy the modern school has to face a further challenge. A new player has entered the game, one who very willingly took over the space once occupied by the lost metanarratives: mass media. Many sociologists speak

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<sup>8</sup> The “client” in this context is primarily a college student, but via his/her parents it could also be an elementary school student.

<sup>9</sup> R. Palouš accurately identifies the current state when discussing, for example, “post-education time” (2007).



about the current social order as one of “media-crazy,” in which Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” no longer applies, but rather “I am in media, therefore I am.”<sup>10</sup> There have emerged quite different rules of the game. The most valuable commodity of the media is the public’s attention. And the immediate harvest of that is popularity. Whoever enters the media game must adhere to its rules, and that by no means favours the intellectual activity which, in the past, brought the school its majesty. Long-term efforts to form character, the cultivation of qualitative values and the careful inspection of truth – all these are activities that the media finds too slow and tedious. They are not really suitable for taking place under the gaze of the public, and thus are unlikely to gain, let alone keep, the public interest. But of course when the media takes over the vacancy left by the metanarratives, educators are forced to compete with celebrities, perverts, terrorists, bank robbers, pandemics, virtual realities and other media products. And they have no chance of winning that game.

With little exaggeration, the current situation of the school stripped of its metanarratives can be compared to a theatre without a play: the scenery has been arranged, the audience is in place, the actors are ready. But there is no play. It is not that the artists have nothing to perform or to say. On the contrary. Drama abounds in a plethora of words, rejoinders, costumes and sets – but there is no plot, no point. Many of the artists try to give their best efforts (despite the amateurish salary in the eastern part of Europe). One lectures with enthusiasm, a second adds nimble somersaults to capture the audience, yet another livens his/her entrance with colorful costumes and still others run around among the spectators in an attempt to draw them into the action. But the bored audience does not respond. It has been supersaturated with incomparably more attractive entertainment. Moreover, without a story the play makes little sense. Somehow, though, they hang on until the end. After all, the admission was free (that will change soon even in Czech Republic).

The school responds to the post-metanarrative situation basically in two ways. The first is to accept the new rules of the game, which in practice means that it conforms to the market criteria. It measures its social usefulness by the market demand for its products. It fights for its own space on the crowded shelves of the market, and its quality is determined only by the success of its sales. What was once perceived as a threat, is now taken by many of the current dignitaries in education as an attractive opportunity. The school – like every other industry – has allowed itself to become a commercial commodity, a profit-making business. Thus has the ability of the school to stand in the competition and satisfy the demands of the market become, once and for all, directly proportional to the influx of money into the education sector. The one who cannot sell, cannot stay in the game.

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<sup>10</sup> See the classic bestseller by N. Postman *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

The second response goes in the opposite direction. Rather than taking the offense, they choose to go on the defense.<sup>11</sup> To prevent loss in the battle with media the academy retreats to a fortress of social irrelevance. The tall ivory towers, utterly remote from the wider public, offer a safe, self-sufficient, self-nourishing, even “incestuous” – in the words of Z. Bauman – environment for the production and consumption of publicly irrelevant products. The non-marketability of such products is, to be sure, a certain handicap, but relatively bearable inasmuch as it is at least partially offset by grant moonlighting. And the feeling of frustration that many educators experience in the face of post-educational reality, can be effectively compensated for by scientific hyperactivity or the building of pseudo-prestige.<sup>12</sup>

Both strategies, each in their own way, represent a surrendering of the traditional role that the school played in the previous periods. In the first case the school accepts an inferior, service position in the hierarchy that is determined by educationally heterogeneous market forces. In the latter case, the school puts up with cultural and social insignificance, to which it has been condemned by the same unquestioned market principles. The shift from modernity to postmodernity thus represents for education a move from the frying pan to the fire. If the great old stories suffered from a tendency to totalitarian dictates, the new narrative-free story of the market with its media maid do not offer the educator anything better.

#### **4 CONCLUSION: PEDAGOGY FOR AND AGAINST POSTMODERNITY**

Does there exist yet another path for current education and the school? A more hopeful alternative? I think it does, but it is not easy. The goal of this study is not to present a ready-made educational theory, but rather to suggest the direction, possibility, or starting point for a pedagogy that could adequately respond to the postmodern situation. Whatever the pedagogical approach looks like, I believe that, in order for it to be functional, it will have to include the following features:

- a) Repentance. That is, a turning or conversion away from the thinking that understands pedagogy as a practical instrument of power – whether old or new, collectivist or individualistic, market or non-market. The point is to acknowledge the sin of assuming the neutrality of the metanarratives. Both modernism and postmodernism vehemently (and often rightly) condemned the great

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<sup>11</sup>Perhaps needless to say, this approach usually covers those fields which are inherently difficult to market, such as the humanities.

<sup>12</sup>The epithet “pseudo” is not directed at the quality or professionalism of the impact, but rather against publication efforts which are often motivated by market-economic factors – that is, factors which are inauthentic from the perspective of the traditional mission of the school. In other words, the critical question is, “Am I publishing with “impact” *because* I have prestige, or *in order* to have prestige?”

doctrines of previous eras, but without reflecting on the framework of their own metanarratives.<sup>13</sup> Penitential pedagogy will know its doctrines, pre-conceptions and frames of thought – it will openly acknowledge them, examine their authenticity and dialogically reach out to others. Only thus will it be able to avoid the so dreaded indoctrination as an unwanted tool of power.

- b) The fortitude to resist the temptation to idolize pseudo-educational substitutes and remain faithful to its original educational calling – this is what will educate, lead and pull humanity out away from everything inhuman.<sup>14</sup> Educational authoritarianism in various totalitarian forms has been and always will be, dehumanizing; but for education to simply resign itself to it (usually in the name of broad-minded freedom) is not a solution. It would be the equivalent of throwing the baby out with the bath water. Courageous pedagogy will, in the midst of and yet despite the postmodern jungle, look for new, non-dogmatic but responsible paths for education. Paths that is, which can enable a person to prepare for survival in an environment where the criteria for survival is changing faster than survival itself, where there is no coherent system of values, and where the ambivalence and inconsistency of diverse opinions, ideas, frameworks, interests, and truth blend into one great polyphony, or cacophony, which allows an infinite number of interpretations – and where, therefore, it is not possible to predict which expertise or skill will be desirable tomorrow. But courageous pedagogy will go even further. It will not strive merely for survival in this environment, but also for overcoming, exceeding, transcending and reclamation. For if the environment has an anti-educating or corrupting tendency it is precisely responsible education which sets a person back on the path – however much that does not win immediate applause.
- c) The last metaphor is faith. Faith which leads to (not only) pedagogically meaningful behaviour. The subject of faith is difficult to grasp and yet is not irrational, because all human behaviour intuitively resists non-sense. Faith does not stand alone, but needs to be applied to instances where it guarantees meaningfulness. And so does pedagogy, as a product of human activity. Exactly contrary to postmodernity which, although it frees humanity from the imposition of totalitarian ideas and beliefs, nevertheless leaves one hungry for an authentic sense of being – pedagogical faith becomes one's greatest asset and competency. This is not simple pedagogical optimism, but an attitude that is humble, honest and constantly looking for a fixed point, fundamental assumption or foundation on which to build a pedagogical house. In narrative terminology, it is a belief that, despite the ruins of postmodern deconstruction, strives to reconstruct the story by which an educator's "narrative" would be made meaningful, effective and hopeful.

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<sup>13</sup>The postmodern "story" of the disintegration of the meta-stories is itself also a kind of meta-story.

<sup>14</sup>Compare with Palouš's exposition of the notion of "educatio" (1991, p. 63ff).

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# SELECTED TOPICS OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY BY WOJCIECH SROCZYŃSKI

**Krzysztof Dziurzyński**

SROCZYŃSKI, W. *Wybrane zagadnienia pedagogiki społecznej. Funkcja środowiskowa i socjalna*. Siedlce : Akademia Podlaska, 2011. 267 pp. ISBN 978-83-7051-630-7.

The book subject to this review concerns pedagogy – the discipline of almost 100-year history. In her early publications Halina Radlińska saw social pedagogy as the science interested in mutual relations between environment and man, conditions of life and development of children and youth, factors which affect their personality and educational goals which appear in this context. This definition is definitely a very broad one. But still it perfectly describes the areas of theoretical and research interests of scientists who deal with said topics.

The book per se is composed of three parts and four chapters. The first part “Introduction to Social Pedagogy as a Science” is of two chapters which discuss genesis of environmental pedagogy progress and its theoretical-methodological status. The second part describes environmental pedagogy while its main chapter deals with social pedagogy as a theory of the educational environment. Part three concerns educational function of social work. Title of the chapter included in this part reads: Social Pedagogy Versus Social Work. And all is supplemented by a rich bibliography.

In the first chapter the author deals with genesis and progress of the social pedagogy. Even after so many years from the birth of social pedagogy it is difficult to state one concrete date or person who could be recognized as the precursor or originator of this discipline of science. It can be said unquestionably that beginnings of pedagogy date back to the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are many fathers and mothers of this discipline. Mentioned among them are: Emil Durkheim, Ferdinand Toennis, Florian Znaniecki, Mary Richmond or Helena Radlińska. Draws attention to the fact that coming into being of this new branch of pedagogy was preceded by the social, educational and cultural activities of its originators. That was the case with both Mary Richmond and Helena Radlińska. Analyzing the historical context of the progress of this pedagogical discipline the author refers to the present days, varying conditions and different problems social pedagogy struggles with nowadays.

The second chapter deals with the problems of theoretical and methodological grounds of social pedagogy. Evaluates subject matter of the research, goals and tasks, structure and character, and research methodology and methods. The author follows the footsteps of Helena Radlińska to accept that the subject matter of the research is the interest in the mutual relation between an individual and the environment, effects of the conditions of existence and cultural circles on in different stages of development. Characterizing further the social pedagogy the author quotes positions of Radziewicz-Winnicki, Kamiński, Kawula and Wroczynski. To Winiarski, Olubiński and Marynowicz-Hetko. Concluding his pondering he draws attention to the non-uniformity. What brings said positions together is the agreement concerning concepts which constitute this science: education, socialization, environment. The author presents the paradigms of social pedagogy in context of the selected theories. This was not easy to write which is evidenced by the multitude of the stated theoretical-methodological positions or references to sources. I respect the author for the pains he took to explain such basic matters like theoretical-methodological grounds of this science. Absorption this chapter requires of the reader not just patience but first of all a fairly good knowledge of both pedagogy and methodology of sciences, substantial mental discipline and methodological culture. In my opinion this is the chapter that sets up the complete work of the author. It constitutes a firm foundation for everything that is discussed in the chapters which follow.

Chapter three presents problems of the educational environment. The social environment all formal and informal institutions where a man lives, educates himself, learns, works and activates himself. It is not far from there to the environmental pedagogy. And perhaps we should say pedagogy of places. Environment is not construed here as ecosystem. Environment is everything which surrounds a man, in which he participates of its free will or is forced to participate, where the process of his education takes place. Characterizes “typical” educational environments: family and peer group. This chapter is closed by afterthoughts on local community – something bigger and going beyond the personal circle of a man. According to Wojciech Sroczyński’s concept the local environment is an important cognitive category. It is composed of the geographical, cultural, social and economic elements. The task of a social educator in in this area is at one side learning of the surrounding of local community and at the other side establishment of a pedagogical activit team in such environment, including proposals concerning forms of activities which constitute the educational environment.

Chapter four of the reviewed work is titled: “Pedagogy Versus Social Work”. It is meant to indicate the characteristic features of social pedagogy, enabling its being distinguished from the social work. Presents function of social pedagogy in shaping of social work theory. Characterizing the contemporary dimension of the social work the author discusses education path of social workers.

First he describes genesis and tradition of social work that dates back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Of the social work as a professional activity is linked to industrialization and urbanization in large areas of Europe and North America. Mary Richmond is seen as the leading world-scale representative of social work. The leading circles in this province were the University of Chicago and the Faculty of Sociology there. Without that institution it would be difficult to imagine establishment and progress of social work as a conscious, directed and planned educational-teaching-caring activity. In Poland social work was pioneered by Helena Radlińska who was referred to in this review.

Next in the book the author delivers a systematized lecture on the social work system in Poland, then to social worker, legal and professional status, and system of education. Until recently the work in the social work area allowed just for educators, psychologist, sociologists and social political scientists. This year the higher education studies were launched to social workers according to the standards. Some colleges launched the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree studies of the social worker branch. All this evidences the tremendous importance that in the continuously changing social reality, soaked with the elements of uncertainty, risk and ambiguity, is attached to the competently and professionally prepared social workers. Presents his proposal concerning teaching process.

This work is one of his rich scientific achievements, the work that deals with this topic. It is not see a scientist who is so consistent and faithful to his interests. The book subject to review raises many issues but many of them are just signaled. Asks many questions but many of them require of the readers their searching for answers on their own. The book is a kind of summary of the scientific path so far. I wrote “a kind of summary” but still I think that the term *Prolegomena to summary* would fit better here. Leaves many issues for a final determination. But this the keynote of this book. A good dissertation leaves two afterthoughts in a reader. The first one – why it is not me who authored the book? The second, and more progressive one, is – what can I add myself to what I read. How can I contribute to the quest for answers to the asked questions? These afterthoughts were left in me reading of Wojciech Sroczyński’s work. And I coped well – by writing this review – but the other one required of me a lot of humility and openness, and still more diligence and patience.

What contributes to an even higher value of this publication is the rich source base that covers not only the *strict* pedagogical works but also sociological, philosophical and psychological ones. One can see there also many data taken from studies the author conducted himself or in research teams.

The reviewed book is written in a swift, interesting language that far from the pedagogical slang. This does not mean that the author uses simplifications or oversimplifies the discussed matters. This means that being an outstanding expert in these problems he consciously and reliably leads us, the readers, through the meanders of pedagogical knowledge using proper words.

Concluding I would like to recommend the reviewed work as an obligatory reading material for all those who are interested in the pedagogical problems, conduct research and deliver lectures on teaching pedagogical studies. When read this book will undoubtedly enrich their view of this academic discipline and their practical activities in the academic circles. I do hope it will also enforce asking question and independent (or team) search for the questions.

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