

Current situation of small schools in the Czech Republic and abroad

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Resume:

The topic I would like to deal with in my dissertation are small schools – their current situation in the Czech Republic as compared to foreign concepts (analogues of our small schools abroad) – namely with respect to innovation in education consisting in teaching mixed age classes, which these schools employ. Innovation is understood as something that has existed earlier and is being rediscovered now, and from this perspective, small schools, or teaching in mixed age classes, are an interesting pedagogical alternative.

To understand these propositions we need to clarify the term small school. Small schools are schools at which pupils of different forms within the first four years of elementary education are taught together in joined classes. These are usually based in the country. (According to Průcha)

In the first part of the dissertation, I would like to deal with small schools from the point of view of history, and show that the existence of small school as the oldest form of elementary education has a long tradition. Such schools have survived up to the present and although they have not forgotten their traditions, they did not remain schools of the national revival, but became living organisms responding to the changing world.

The questionnaire based survey, which we performed among region representatives and mayors of towns with small schools, has shown that both these groups of respondents were aware of the fact that small schools are not only a mere part of the educational system but represent a cultural and social centre of its locality as well. Particularly mayors state that both pupils and teachers contribute their activities to the improvement of life in the village. The very fact that a village maintains its own schools contributes positively to the identity of its inhabitants.

In order for small schools to be able to keep fulfilling its demanding function, it is necessary that future teachers are better prepared particularly in pedagogical and psychological disciplines.

There are indications that within the preparation of teachers of the first five years, there is only very limited time devoted to the way of teaching at small schools (e.g. as little as 4 hours in the syllabus for primary pedagogy studies according to the survey).

As I already mentioned in the introduction, small school will be dealt with also as an alternative or innovation in education and I want to compare small schools with their counterparts abroad. I will be interested in the numbers of such schools and their participation in educating as well as their pedagogical efficiency, for which I want to use the theoretical historical and comparative methods, as my aim is to follow the development and compare the issue along the timeline and within the historical context.

Basic points:

- the importance of small schools in the historical perspective
- small schools as an alternative in education

- requirements on teachers at a small school (their preparation)
- survey: by means of a questionnaire based survey to ascertain whether small schools provide education comparable to that of fully organized schools