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The Preparedness of Pupils in Primary School Education to Use Reading as a Tool of Knowledge

Abstract: The article presents problems with reader literacy within the context of communication competence. It focuses in detail on the processes of reading comprehension and reading intentions in the selected group of school-aged pupils of various kinds of primary school education. Scientific, pedagogical, special educational and psychological knowledge are supplemented by an interpretation of results of current research findings. Comparative analysis procedure was used to assess an educational progress in pupils of 3rd classes in the selected areas of literacy. The strengths and weaknesses of the educational reality related to the curricular postulates were described. Based on the results of the research the authors submitted proposals and measures for the special educational theory and practice at a general, legislative and curriculum level.

Keywords: pivotal jurisdiction, literacy, communications jurisdiction, reader's literacy, pupil in primary level, pupil with light mental disability, pupil with average intelligence, socially disadvantaged pupil, processes of understanding, reader's intentions.

Introduction

The current ongoing transformations in the Czech education system affect all stages of education and in certain aspects represent a radical reconstruction of ingrained and previously generally positively assessed concepts and their objectives. Confronted with the problems of the current socio-political, postmodern societies marked by secularization, the Czech school system has been crying out for the necessary changes for several years. There is no generalized consensus among the pedagogical, public and political representation. We can encounter disagreement in opinions even among experts of the same specialization. We do not want our article to deal analytically or otherwise with the argumentative diction of already legislatively defined processes which have adjusted the conditions of entry, progress or outcome of the education trajectories of heterogeneously designed groups, or with a matter of individual or individualized education. We intentionally aim at primary school education and the key priorities of the expected changes in the educational reality. These are anticipated by the current national strategic document entitled Strategy of Educational Policy in the Czech Republic by 2020, which puts emphasis on the following three areas in education:

1. Improving the quality of teaching, pedagogical skills of teachers and effective management of the education system. The achievement of expected changes must be preceded by innovation of framework educational programs, modifications to undergraduate teacher training and further education for teachers about transformational change, completing the career system and standard of the teaching profession, the rational equipping of schools with the necessary learning resources and others.

2. Personality development of the educated pupils, equipping them with positive human and civic attitudes. This process assumes the availability and throughput of all levels of education for all social groups, support of participation in early intervention and early stages of pre-school education, especially for children and pupils with the need for support

measures and for their parents, preventing the failure of pupils in learning through competence development for teachers and cooperation between schools and functional consultancy services, creating space for an inclusive, stimulating and motivating environment for learning throughout life and others.

3. Preparing for a job is, beside other things, subject to increasing the availability and quality of pre-school education, improving the quality of primary school education, promoting vocational schools, adequate development of a network of schools and educational facilities for the long-term employability of graduates in society, on the labor market and others.

These areas of school practice are currently subject to the processes of defining and designing the final, and for the educational terrain specific, binding form. They concurrently affect the phenomenon of inclusive education and its quality, determine social equality and social justice, and thereby shift the interpretation of the issues of equal opportunities in education (see Kaleja, M. 2015 Kaleja, M., Zezulková, E. et al. 2015 Zezulková, E. 2015).

Equality of educational opportunities as a research topic

Combined education, equal education and social justice in education are terms which the pedagogical public quite often associates with the concept of inclusive education. In combined education we meet a heterogeneous class, where the heterogeneity can be approached variably, from different perspectives (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, special educational needs, degree of support and others). The term *equal education* is supposed to refer to the equality in opportunity of the pupils in question, with an emphasis on explicit consideration of disadvantaged input conditions in which pupils begin their educational careers. Equality in opportunity in this case cannot be measured by mathematical principles, nor can it be associated with positive discrimination. Equality in opportunity requires the consideration of the individual characteristics of pupils in comparison

with other pupils of non-target groups with a clearly defined objective, and that is personality development of the educated pupils and equipping them with positive human and civic attitudes. By the recently frequently used term "inclusive education" we put all the pupils into one group, thus creating a combined education of heterogeneous groups of pupils. We do not want to put emphasis on the differences between them, though we take into account their handicap or their special educational needs in order to determine the degree of support in their educational path and set optimal supportive internal and external mechanisms along the lines of social justice. Inclusive trends in education include a wide variety of strategies, activities and processes which are trying to implement justice at the level of quality, pragmatic and optimally designed education of pupils with special educational needs. However, general education pupils are not neglected. In contrast, all inclusive educational practices implemented in the class must serve all, being beneficial to all. Segregation, marginalization or any procedures having the character of exclusion, are eliminated (cf. Hájková V., Strnadová, I. 2010, Pipeková, J., Vítková, M. et al. 2014, Adamus, P. 2015, Bartoňová, B., Vítková, M., Vrubel, M. 2014. Lechta, V. 2010, Krupová, I. 2010 and others). The interior (subjectively perceived) and qualified external (objectively measurable) preparedness of teachers and the school environment for the education of pupils of differently heterogeneously composed groups is undoubtedly becoming a prerequisite for the prevention of exclusion mechanisms in the school environment (see more Kaleja, M. 2015).

The amendment to the Education Act (82/2015 Coll.) and the expected implementing of other regulations are bringing several expected changes for the support of inclusive education. Special educational needs (hereinafter referred to as SEN), representing certain specifics in the educational path of the persons concerned defined by the relevant legislative documents[1], are defined more closely here. The bond to the fulfillment

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[1] Act no. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational and other education, as amended, the Constitution of the Czech Republic (Act no. 1/1993 Coll.) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (Act No.2/1993).

of educational opportunities and claims, for equal rights to education through the application/implementation of support measures taking into account state of health, cultural environment and individual wellbeing, are emphasized above all. The amendment to the Education Act continues to use the term special educational needs, but leaves the earlier exhaustive categorization of children, pupils and students with SEN by *disability*, *health disadvantage, social disadvantage*. The special educational needs of the individuals concerned will be saturated with supporting measures, which means the necessary adjustments in education and educational services being in accordance with the state of health, cultural, environmental or other living conditions of the child, pupil or student. A vertical view with five levels of support defined has now been added to the horizontal classification of special educational needs. The degree of support is categorically associated with organizational, pedagogical and financial aspects of integrative, or more precisely, inclusive processes. Combining the use of various degrees of support may be indicated by counseling centers, depending on the extent of special needs of the individual. Perception of children and pupils with SEN is thus getting closer to the fulfillment of *the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*[2], which defines *disability as a concept which is developing and which results from the interaction between persons with impairments and barriers in attitudes and in the environment hindering them in their full and effective participation in society with others on an equal basis.*

A similar perspective can be applied to the disadvantages associated with different cultural, social, physical, or otherwise adversely determining environments, whose impact concerns the living conditions and which subsequently have a significant impact on the educational path of individuals.

These (sometimes closely, sometimes more widely defined) questions are dealt with in our long-term research. In the years 2014–2015

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[2] Notification of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the conclusion of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, no. 10/2010 Coll.i.c. The contents of the Convention, see: <http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/10774/umluva_CJ_rev.pdf>.

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(15 months), we implemented a national research project called *Socio-logical Monitoring of Educational Inputs and Outcomes of Children and Pupils, Including Children and Pupils with Special Educational Needs in the Czech Republic*. It had features of sociological monitoring of educational indicators in the education of children and pupils, including children and pupils with special educational needs in all regions of the Czech Republic, except for the capital city of Prague. More specifically, it was a comparative analysis, taking into account the educational progress of pupils of three target groups (pupils with mild mental disabilities, pupils with intelligence in the border zone, socially disadvantaged pupils) in their own educational trajectory, where the educational progress was observed in the area of reading literacy. The research also focused on identifying additional educational indicators, e.g. attitudinal constructs of the teaching staff of target group pupils, interpersonal relations in the school environment, the overall school climate – in order to define the criteria for evaluating the quality of inclusive schools.

The individual results of all of the research lines were subject to the proper strict critical procedures of methodological diction processes of selected research orientation and their publication was in the following publications:

- KALEJA, M., ZEZULKOVÁ, E. a kol. *Etnografie školy jako edukační realita současnosti*. Opava: Centrum empirických výzkumů FVP SU, 2015. ISBN 978-80-7510-167-9.
- KALEJA, M. *(Ne)připravený pedagog a žák z prostředí sociální exkluze*. Opava: Centrum empirických výzkumů FVP SU, 2015. ISBN 978-80-7510-191-4.
- ZEZULKOVÁ, E. *Vybrané faktory komunikační kompetence žáků v primárním vzdělávání*. Opava: Centrum empirických výzkumů FVP SU, 2015. ISBN 978-80-7510-189-1.
- KALEJA, M., ZEZULKOVÁ, E. *Sociologická analýza zaměřená na porovnání dosažených výsledků žáků se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami v různých typech škol. Závěrečná zpráva klíčové aktivity 1*. Opava: Centrum empirických výzkumů FVP SU, 2015. ISBN 978–80–7510–159-4.

Communication skills as a predictor of competence for (lifelong) learning

The level of socialization in the broadest sense is influenced by a number of factors, of which the educational skills and controlling competencies necessary for career opportunities belong to the essential attributes of involvement in what is happening in society. Education must be seen as a single interconnected unit, enabling diverse and numerous transitions between education and employment. Key competencies form the basis for the acquisition of skills in different ways and at any time in the course of life. The focus on lifelong learning is the basic conceptual change in the approach to education (Lifelong Learning Strategy of the Czech Republic, 2007). The primary task of the school is to prepare pupils for job opportunities and the natural involvement in the lifelong learning process during compulsory education. The correlation between the level of key competencies, the economy and the labor market plays an important role (cf. OECD 2000 Veteška, J., Tureckiová, M. 2008 and others). The strategy of the educational policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 therefore justifiably puts emphasis on increasing the availability and quality of pre-school education, quality improvement of primary school education, promoting vocational schools, the development of a network of schools and educational facilities for the long-term employability of graduates in society and on the labor market.

Key competencies include the abilities, skills, attitudes, values and other personality characteristics which allow one person to act adequately and effectively in various work and life situations. Changing the style of teaching in schools should also contribute to supporting their development, as competencies are based on activities, not only knowledge. It is necessary to pay increased attention to this issue and to adapt the education system to conditions in the real world of work. It is necessary to start with an informed choice of occupation in children.

As a matter of fact, it is necessary for all individuals to be ready and willing to learn. In this context, we meet with the assertion that skills and knowledge acquired at school are not as valuable as the ability and

willingness to learn. National curriculum documents (framework educational programs) respect the new educational strategies emphasizing core competencies, their interconnection with the educational content and application of acquired knowledge and skills in real life. Based on the concept of lifelong learning, they formulate the expected level of education stipulated for all graduates of the various stages of education and at the same time support the educational autonomy of schools and teachers' professional responsibilities for the results of education. The development of key competencies is thus becoming accessible to the general population in lifelong learning (cf. Belz, H., Siegrist, M., 2001, Hansen Čechová, B. 2009, Veteška J., Tureckiová, M. 2008, Zezulková, E. 2014 and others).

The Czech Republic has been participating in international comparative research of school education for almost twenty years and the presented results of the research are often the only source of relevant information on various aspects of the functioning of the education system in the Czech environment[3]. With regard to domestic and international research results that show the ever deepening differences in pupil achievement at upper primary school and at secondary school level, justifiably, we must ask what level of expected outcomes of key competencies declared by the national curriculum documents pupils of different types of schools achieve in primary school education (cf. Matějů, P., Straková, J. et al., 2006 Straková, J. 2009, Janík T. 2013 and others). We cannot ignore the fact that the process of education in compulsory education is based on the expected outcomes of the key competencies of pre-school education. It is therefore desirable to pay increased attention to research activities at the basal level of our education system. Domestic research and evaluation activities in the field of primary school education pupils of different types of schools in relation to the content of education in the cur-

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[3] The complete design of the international research, which in addition to tests of knowledge and skills also uses questionnaires evaluating a number of additional data, allows the interpretation of the results achieved by Czech pupils in a broader context. The integration of various research surveys into long-term cycles, which can monitor the development of the results in time, is also significant (Janik, T. 2013).

riculum are less frequent, however, presented results give us a warning signal not only about the school failure of these pupils, but also predict specific difficulties in their professional orientation and other areas of social life (cf. Zezulková, E. 2011, Zezulková, E. 2014 Kaleja, M. 2014, Bartoňová, M. 2005, Šotolová, E. 2011, GAC 2009 and others).

In primary school education, emphasis is placed on the development of versatile, effective and open communication, developing the communication skills of pupils, which have, in relation to learning, priority status.

The ability to master the spoken and written form of language is related to the development of cognitive processes which are a reflection of the quality of knowledge about the world, a prerequisite for understanding the environment and development of competence towards learning. Expected outcomes of the competence towards learning at the end of primary school education are:

- ability to organize and manage one's own learning,
- willingness to pursue lifelong learning,
- searching, sorting and further using information effectively,
- combining knowledge from different educational areas,
- linking things and phenomena in context based on understanding,
- drawing conclusions for the future,
- assessing one's own progress, planning and predicting possible obstacles and others.

Weaknesses in communication skills may be reflected negatively in learning the basics, in competencies towards learning and relation to lifelong learning and they also have a social significance. A child who has not mastered communication skills at the expected level, is often evaluated worse not only in the school environment (i.e. school failure), but also in the wider area. An important prerequisite for success at school is school maturity and school preparedness, therefore it is necessary to mention other aspects here. If children are admitted to school unprepared or immature, it can induce negative reactions in them because they cannot cope with classes as a result of the immaturity of some important

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bodily and mental functions or lack of necessary social experience. Other connections that intertwine and then attach themselves to the beginning of the educational trajectories are factors of the functional and intentional nature of the social environment of the child which determine the actual input and at the same time the course of education. In a certain way, and in many cases, as shown by our earlier research experience, they limit all processes of lifelong learning.

Children are then subject to requirements that lead to their overloading. Increased fatigue, exhaustion, increased sickness and other problems may occur. There is a high risk of school failure, which many pupils have experienced as traumatic. Children may develop the so-called 'unsuccessful child syndrome' with a wide range of school phobia symptoms, e.g. eating disorders, behavioral disorders (negativism, increased aggression, etc.) and other psychosomatic symptoms. These factors may adversely affect the formation of self-image and self-esteem of the child. Special emphasis is therefore rightly put on the fact that schools are entered by children who are prepared for schooling and inclusion in the group of their classmates in intellectual, emotional, social, occupational and physical area. After 1990 the Czech education has been undergoing major changes, which among other things also affects the composition of the pupil groups. Problems with school preparedness are increasing e.g. in pupils from minority groups, asylum seekers' children, pupils with intelligence in the border zone, pupils with disabilities and others. Unfortunately, some pupils do not meet the requirements for school preparedness even after (sometimes repeated) school attendance postponement. In terms of the promotion of inclusive education, all these changes are welcome, and are therefore logically also supported by legislation. We are aware that education in the Czech Republic will become an open system only when it respects the diversity of pupils, balancing the sociocultural differences between them and creating optimal educational conditions for maximum personal development of each pupil (Spilková, V. 2001). We must therefore accept the fact that as a result of the gradual and natural transformation of society there is at the same time more of the risk factors that may (or may not) have a negative impact on the school success of the pupil, e.g.:

- state of health of the child (chronically and long-term ill children, children with disabilities), which critically objectively determines processes of education,
- reduced level of mental abilities (mental processes progress in the normal way and lagging behind of development of cognitive abilities occurs for reasons other than brain damage, e.g. the impact of deprivation, negative factors affecting the socialization processes),
- sociocultural differences pertaining to a different mother tongue,
- physically spatial and socially excluded environments, whose typical feature are usually negatively oriented life strategies affecting the quality of life, institutionalization due to institutional and protective education,
- objectively or subjectively bound, possibly mixed, family background dysfunctionality,
- dysfunctionality in social relations, in any form of social environment of the child, and others (cf. Bednářová, J., Šmardová, V. 2010, Pipeková, J. 1998, Novotná, M., Kremličková, M. 1997 and others).

Selected eligibility for communication skills

Language, communication and pre-reading skills of the pupil are justifiably important measures of school preparedness. The basic components of language (formal and content-related) in compulsory education are strongly supported by teaching reading, and this is a feedback response. In scientific literature, reading is characterized as a type of speech activity, possibly as an act of communication, and it can be assumed that the quality of speech and reading literacy significantly affects the process of lifelong learning.

Speech literacy

The basic condition for language and speech acquisition is on the one hand the ability to differentiate sounds of speech and on the other

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hand the skill to grade motions of the complex articulation system elements in the finest way so that the produced sound reaches the form of intelligible speech. In the background of these two mechanisms, which simultaneously represent necessary internal conditions for the acquisition of speech, is the *differentiation ability of the brain*, especially in the field of hearing and motor skills. Gradually, the child acquires verbal experiences across linguistic levels (phonetic-phonological, morphological and syntactic, lexical-semantic and pragmatic) and adopts verbal and non-verbal means of communication (Sovák, M. 1989 Kulišťák, P. 2003 Nelešovská, A., 2005, Belz, H. Siegrist, M. 2011 and others).

The ability of inter-modality, i.e. the ability of linking content from one sensory area to the contents from other sensory areas (e.g. linking sound to a visual image), and making links between different sensory perceptions is a prerequisite for mastering spoken forms of speech. Specific competencies mingled with receptive and expressive component of speech and expressed in its spoken form (the level and scope of vocabulary, understanding semantic relationships in sentences and complex sentences, ability to capture the correct sentence syntax and its structure using different parts of speech, their declensions and conjugations, understanding the sound structure of words, articulation and acoustic performance of sounds, the ability to request information, to express relationships, knowledge, opinions, the ability to keep the topic of conversation, adequate exchange of roles of speaker and listener and others), in our view, overlap with the concept of **speech literacy**. Language and speech control forms the basis for learning read and written form of speech, speech literacy is therefore the initial competence for the reading literacy and competence towards learning.

Reading literacy

Reading literacy as a form of communication is a part of linguistic competence. It requires an understanding of knowledge about reading and readership and their application, and it cannot be developed without pupils' internal motivation and positive attitudes, neither can it be applied without mastering specific reading skills and general social and

cognitive skills. There is also the actual content of reading and reader-ship, which, due to its diversity, creates demand for different ways of read-ing especially when combined with the purpose of specific reading (cf. Hartla P., Hartlové, H. 2000, Vášová, L, Černá, M. 1986, Fabiánková, B., Havel, J., Novotná, M., 1999, Průcha, J., Walterová, E., Mareš, J. and others).

"Reading literacy is a complex of knowledge and the skills of the indi-vidual, enabling him/her to deal with written texts commonly found in every-day life (e.g. a railway timetable, an automatic washing machine manual, an editorial in the newspaper etc.). These are not only reading skills, i.e. being able to read texts and understand them, but also the skills to find and process information contained in the text, reproducing the text content and others" (Průcha, J., Walterová, E. Mareš, J. 1995: 40).

In the international PIRLS (2001) research, reading literacy is defined as *the ability to understand written language forms required by society and/or valued by individuals, and to use these forms. Young readers can de-rive meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in read-ership, and for pleasure*[4].

In the report on the international PISA research the initial definition of reading literacy is broadened further, by processes of thinking about content[5]: *"Reading literacy is defined as one's ability to understand written text, think about it and use it to achieve one's own goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate actively in society'* (Straková, J. 2002: 10). Jana Doležalová (2014) evaluates this definition, emphasizing thinking when working with text and expecting ability to work with dif-ferent types of texts and genres, positively in relation to the traditionally approached literacy.

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[4] The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is organized by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement IEA. In the Czech Republic the study is organized by the National Coordination Centre, which operates under the Czech School Inspection.

[5] The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is considered the largest and most important international research into the measurement of learning outcomes, which is currently taking place in the world. The research is one of the ac-tivities of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

She also believes that the characteristics of reading, in which the authors emphasize the inter-modality and blending partial capacities of linguistic competence (knowledge of graphic characters of words, i.e. letters to individual sounds, the skill to convert them promptly in the spoken language, create adequate ideas about the content of the material read, thinking about it, forming attitudes towards the content of the material read and others) already overlap with the term of reading literacy.

The definition of reading literacy includes the constructive nature of reading (understanding and using written language required by society) and its functional nature (serving as a tool of knowledge, enabling functioning in society, the development of individuals and society). Thus, reading literacy is not just reading comprehension, but the functional use of written information for its own purposes. It also allows for the active role of the reader in understanding and further work with the text. The well-established term of reading literacy is supposed to differentiate between new quality of reading and the traditional understanding of reading as a fundamental skill. Reading is the basis for subsequent work with text information, i.e. the initial activity of reading literacy and competence towards learning (Doležalová, J. 2014).

Teachers in primary schools will encounter in their daily practice not only pupils undergoing development of partial skills of speech and reading literacy naturally and without any apparent deviations from the norm but also with those where there are deficiencies of varying scope. In some pupils it is only an extended period of physiological problems, however, in others the development of expected skills not only differs from the norm but also uses different means, or a combination of various factors mentioned above.

The Research of Preparedness of Pupils of Primary School Education to USE Reading as a Means of Gaining Knowledge

For the research investigation according to the assignment of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports with the help of comparative

analysis we set the aim of the research to evaluate whether there was achieved an educational progress in pupils of 3rd year of different types of schools in the monitored areas of literacy in the period of 2nd half of the school year. And further on the basis of in-depth comparative analysis to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the educational reality in the context of curricular postulates. The 3rd year was chosen because it represents an important milestone in the development of the child as a reader because it is focused on the beginnings of a functional usage of grammar skills, i.e. the acquisition and automatization of the skill to read and write with understanding. We expect that pupils from the 3rd year could start using the reading as a means of gaining knowledge, in what is referred to as stataric reading. The results of the learning of pupils are based on managing the reading skills. There exist hypotheses that pupils at the end of the 3rd year who are not sufficiently competent readers and who are also behind in writing, can have more significant gaps in the results of learning. The basic set of the national research (except the capital Prague) was formed by pupils of the 3rd year of primary schools, the selective subset then by the pupils of 4 target groups: pupils with mild mental disability[6], pupils with intellect in the border zone, pupils with social disadvantages and pupils of intact population[7]. On the basis of another criterion defined by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports the research investigation had to reckon on the minimum of 1 000 involved pupils. Within the scope of the 1st grade of the primary school education is the educational content divided into: 1st period (1st–3rd year) and 2nd period (4th–5th year). The Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education identifies the expected outcomes at the end of the 3rd year (1st period) as indicative (not binding) and at the end of 5th year (2nd period) as binding. Therefore, information about how the pupils can read in the 1st period can be the basis for possible update of educational

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[6] The pupils are educated according to the annex of Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education specifying the education of pupils with mild mental disability.

[7] The pupils are educated according to the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education.

content within the 2nd period of primary school education (within the innovation process of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education). The research subject was formed by two aspects of literacy:

- the processes of understanding (*Focus on explicitly stated information and its seeking, Deduction of direct conclusions, Interpretation and integration of thoughts and information, Examination and evaluation of content, language and text elements*) and
- the reader's intentions (*Reading for literary experience, Reading to acquire and gain information*).

These processes in real reader's situations are always applied in mutual relations and are based on the context in which the pupils live and learn. In the target focus of the research investigation both these aspects were evaluated separately as well as in mutual interaction. The outline of the research is based on the analysis of methodology of international research of literacy PIRLS done in years 2001–2011[8]. The proprietary methodology and means used for the research were on the basis of the analysis of pilot tests in pupils with mild mental disability modified with respects to their educational-psychological characteristics. Both lines for verifying the reliability and validity of test materials brought several key observations. It was necessary to take them into consideration and to integrate them prior the administration (e.g. the length of the text, font size, formulation of text questions, etc.). The methodology of testing was then adjusted in time allotment for the test and in evaluation of the answers. The length of the test was not limited by time so that during testing the pupils the teachers could use the method reflecting specific needs of the pupils with mild mental disability, which they apply in their daily teaching practice.

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[8] Source: Modified translation of the publication Framework and Specifications for PIRLS Assessment 2001 issued by international centre of the research PIRLS at Boston College in 2000), the Institute for Information on Education, 2002. Available on: <http://www.csicr.cz/getattachment/cz/O-nas/Mezinarodni-setreni-archiv/PIRLS/PIRLS-2001/Publikace-Koncepce-hodnoceni-PIRLS-2011.pdf>.

In order to evaluate the level of chosen processes of understanding and the reader's intention (low level, middle level, high level) the questions were classified on the basis of the methodology of international research of reading literacy PIRLS. The results were calculated from the perspective of achieved score for an individual pupil according to given criteria and in the context of expected outcome of curricular documents[9].

Interpretation of Key Findings and Basic Recommendation for Practice

The main research questions were differentiated into partial research questions whose formulation was then organized and its phrasing is compact with research areas of reading competence of pupils:

- *VO1) What level is achieved by the pupils of 3rd year of chosen target groups at the end of the observed period in the process of understanding Focus on explicitly stated information and its searching?*
  - In the observed process the pupils of chosen target groups mostly achieve the understanding of a middle level.

- *VO2) What level is achieved by pupils of 3rd year of chosen target groups at the end of the observed period in the process of understanding Deduction of direct conclusion?*
  - In the observed process the pupils with intelligence in the border zone mostly achieve understanding of a low level.
  - In the observed process the pupils with mild mental disability, the pupils with social disadvantage and pupils of intact population mostly achieve the understanding of a middle level.

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[9] The Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education and the annex of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education Specifying the Education of Pupils with Mild Mental Disability.

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- *VO3) What level is achieved by pupils of 3rd year of chosen target groups at the end of observed period in the process of understanding Interpretation and integration of thoughts and information?*
  - In the observed process the pupils of chosen target group mostly achieve the understanding of a middle level.

- *VO4) What level is achieved by pupils of 3rd year of chosen target groups at the end of the observed period in the process of understanding Studying and evaluating the content, language and elements of the text?*
  - In the observed process the pupils with the intelligence in the border zone and pupils with social disadvantage mostly achieve understanding of a middle level.
  - In the observed process the same number of pupils with mild mental disability mostly achieve understanding of a middle and a high level.
  - In the observed process the pupils of intact population mostly achieve understanding of a high level.

- *VO5) What level is achieved by pupils of 3rd year of chosen target groups at the end of the observed period in reader's intention Reading for literary experience?*
  - In the observed reader's intention the pupils with intelligence in the border zone, pupils with social disadvantage and pupils with mild mental disability mostly achieve a middle level.
  - In the observed reader's intention the pupils of intact population mostly achieve a high level.

- *VO6) What level is achieved by pupils of 3rd year of chosen target groups at the end of the observed period in reader's intention Gaining and using information?*
  - In the observed reader's intention the pupils with intelligence in the border zone mostly achieve a low level.

   – In the observed reader's intention the pupils with mild mental disability, pupils with social disadvantage and pupils of intact population mostly achieve a middle level.

- *VO7) Did any statistically significant educational progress happen in pupils of 3^(rd) year of the target groups in observed areas of reader's competence in the observed period (2^(nd) half of the 3^(rd) year)?*
  - In the observed period statistically significant educational progress in the area of reading literacy was confirmed in pupils with mild mental disability (educated according to the annex of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education Specifying the Education of Pupils with Mild Mental Disability) and in pupils of intact population (educated according to the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education).
  - In the observed period, statistically significant educational progress in the area of reading literacy was not confirmed in pupils with intelligence in the border zone and pupils with social disadvantage (educated according to the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education).

Mastering basal reading literacy requires from pupils demanding activity of thinking, conditioned by concentration and significant effort to overcome obstacles associated with understanding. Therefore, preparedness of pupils in the first period of primary education to use reading as a means of gaining knowledge needs lots of patience from the adults, at the right time and in useful form. The key environment for the development of a child from his / her birth to the moment when he / she starts school is the family. The function of a school in the broadest sense is to deliberately and in an integrated way induce in pupils all forms of communication[10], as well as thinking and to ensure equal educational condition with respect to bio – mental – social disposition of

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[10] Speaking, listening, reading and writing.

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pupils. The results of the research investigation signal deficits in selected areas of reading literacy especially in pupils who achieve a low or middle level and in pupils in whom the statistically significant educational progress in the observed period was not confirmed. In these pupils the insufficiencies in the level of functional reading literacy can be expected and we can consider them risky from the perspective of school success. Therefore, it often depends on the teacher who matters and the quality of his / her personality and his / her professional competences, whether the period of primary education will be effectively used for the preparedness of pupils to use reading as a means of gaining knowledge.

Final recommendations

Based on the analysis of the results of the research on reading literacy and other key findings in the context of long-term thematically related research activities among the target groups of pupils (see Zezulková, E. 2007, 2011, 2013, 2015) we would like to refer to the spare capacity of the educational reality of internal and external origin, whose utilization can positively influence the risk of pupils' school failure in primary school education. The proposed measures also correspond to the currently anticipated changes declared in the 2020 Strategy, particularly in the areas of improving the quality of teaching, pedagogical skills of teachers and effective management of the education system.

The results of the survey point to a demonstrable occurrence of low and intermediate level in monitored areas of reading literacy (comprehension processes and reading intentions) in pupils with intelligence in the border zone, socially disadvantaged pupils and pupils with mild mental disabilities in primary school education. At the same time they call attention to a lack of educational progress in pupils with intelligence in the border zone and socially disadvantaged pupils, educated according to the Framework educational program for basic education. A higher risk of school failure can be assumed in these pupils.

The teachers must adjust their work, based on knowledge of the curriculum, to the expected pupils' competence development and educational conditions to the educational-psychological dimensions of the at-risk pupils. The specific individual needs of the at-risk pupils in the context of school failure emerging from the weak internal qualities (properties) include:

- different anatomical and physiological bases for the formation and development of reading skills (mental and sensory functions),
- slower, or limited creating differentiation contingent connections in all analyzers influencing the creation and quality of intermodal connections[11],
- delayed, alternatively limited speech development in all language levels,
- weakening of volitional qualities, interests, imagination, concentration and motivation for reading,
- less experience related to the development of reading literacy and influencing attitudes to reading,
- weakening of the ability to understand spoken and written form of language and others.

Based on the evaluation of the course and learning outcomes, the teacher systematically reflects a planning process, the teaching itself and its impact on pupils in order to improve their work and thus increase the effectiveness of the pupil's learning. The teacher must individualize teaching with regard to the above dispositions, capacities, needs and interests of individual pupils through acquired competencies:

- use a wide range of teaching forms and methods that encourage active and cooperative learning,

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[11] the ability of linking content from one sensory area to the contents from other sensory areas (e.g. linking a sound to the graphic symbol of the letter), and making links between different sensory perceptions.

- enable pupils to acquire internal motivation for acquiring the desired skills and lead them to being accountable for the course and the results of their own learning,
- affect the learning environment in the classroom and encourage a social climate based on mutual respect and cooperation, that is by applying supportive methods and techniques.

By individualization of teaching it is possible to support significantly the weakened internal qualities (properties) in pupils with the risk of school failure and thus affect the development in the areas of:

- spoken and written forms of speech (speech literacy),
- understanding written and spoken form of speech (reading literacy),
- awareness of the requirements of reasonable difficulty, competence towards learning,
- ability to organize and manage their own learning (search, sort and effectively use information, combine knowledge from different educational areas, based on comprehension putting things and phenomena in context),
- relation to lifelong learning (draw conclusions for the future, assess their own progress, plan and predict possible obstacles) and others.

In order to use the period of primary school education for encouraging the preparedness of pupils to use reading as a tool of knowledge effectively, we propose the concrete measures to optimize the educational conditions in selected target areas of the 2020 Strategy:

a) In the area of innovation of framework educational programs:
- to define the term *reading literacy* among educational goals,
- to diversify the expected outcomes of reading skills in the context of developmental stages and specific characteristics of pupils,
- not to restrict the development of reading skills only to the "reading subjects", to promote the use of other subjects to support the functionality of reading,

- to facilitate setting of different lengths of lessons,
- develop a methodology for the systematic development of reading literacy in primary school education.

b) To put emphasis on increasing teachers' competence in the area of undergraduate teacher training and further teacher education:

- to develop pupils' reading literacy, deliberately and in an integrated form promote all forms of communication,
- to apply the principles of differentiation and individualization of the educational process when organizing activities and determining the content, forms and methods,
- to adapt and modify the educational content of basic education for children with a risk of school failure so as to achieve consistency between educational requirements and real capabilities of these pupils,
- to implement support measures for the education of the pupils,
- to apply an individual approach and work with an assistant teacher in the classroom.

c) In the area of managing the education system:

- to create personal and material conditions for inclusive education.
- to anchor the status of a special needs teacher in the statutory instruments and implementing regulations of the Ministry of Education as a valid member of the school's counseling team[12].
- to create conditions for the introduction of speech therapy with a direct link to the educational process in schools with an emphasis on pre-primary and primary education in order to positively influence the development of speech literacy, prereading skills and reading literacy[13].

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[12] A special needs teacher must be competent enough to provide special educational intervention, including counseling services to children and pupils at risk of school failure, their teachers and legal guardians.

[13] The starting platform is represented by *the Methodical recommendation ref 14712 / 2009-61 to secure speech therapy in schools.*

- to strengthen the efficiency of cooperation between educational psychologists and school counseling centres (EPs, SCCs).
- to strengthen the partnership of teachers and parents in the education process, to engage parents in teamwork and motivation of pupils to education.
- to incorporate subjects of special educational care appropriate to the needs of pupils.
- to ensure teaching the subjects of special educational care by professionals who will apply the principles of individualization and differentiation of education.
- to establish a clear system of support measures for pupils at risk of school failure.
- to create a concept of preventive and corrective measures for speech and reading literacy development in pre-primary and primary school education.

Summary

Family influence has a crucial effect on children from their birth to school entry in terms of acquiring speech literacy (verbal and pre-reading experience). The mission of the school is to provide pupils with the conditions for the consolidation of the acquired competencies and communication skills and to further extend their knowledge by reading literacy in order for them to cope with its functional level. The need for optimal stimulation of communication skills in school is reinforced in the pupils, who we consider to be at risk in relation to school success. The school, in comparison with the family, is in a more difficult situation. Whether or not the period of compulsory education for the development of key competencies including the competence towards lifelong learning will be used effectively depends on the teacher and the quality of his/her personal and professional competencies. Developing speech and reading literacy skills requires a lot of patience on the part of adults, moreover, at the right time and in a useful form. Both processes expect from pupils a demanding level

of active thinking, conditioned by concentration and considerable effort to overcome obstacles associated with understanding. We cannot expect more advanced mental processes in a conversation related to a certain topic, book or text from a child with a lack of verbal experience or weakened speech and reading appetence (is unable to express himself/herself by spoken language, has not acquired pre-reading skills or a positive attitude to reading etc.). The mission of the school is to deliberately and in an integrated way promote all forms of communication (speaking, listening, reading and writing) as well as thinking and creating an environment of "*the kingdom of speech*" for pupils. It is one of the ways to assure equality of educational opportunities of pupils. If the school is able to develop the expected communication skills in pupils, it fulfills one of its key tasks, which is to equip pupils with the necessary skills for lifelong learning. The level of communication skills (speech and reading literacy) is also a critical determinant of educational and social integration, while the cultivation of a child at the level of primary school education plays an essential role in the system of lifelong learning.

Equal educational opportunities assume the creation of optimal conditions for each pupil in all phases of the educational process (at the admission to education, in the course of education and at its completion) with using the principles of internal differentiation of education and individualization of teaching respecting the capacities, abilities and needs of each child, pupil and student.

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