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Editorial

Nowadays, in an era of globalization, information, a demanding labor market, mobility and other dynamic phenomena, according to the educational trends and standards of learning, the synergy of all educational environments is a very important issue. This synergy means more than just cooperation. School institutions, parents, local authorities and other members of the upbringing process provide learners with values and independent learning. One of the most important seems to be the family. Moreover, being an independent person is one of the most important issues in European countries, and all over the world, including well-developed countries, as the USA. In the 20th century the European Commission established some modern, actual and significant competences of the learners that were intended to foster competent workers, good citizens and happy persons. These competences are connected to special qualities such as: being flexible, responsible, creative and being independent. This is why educational politicians, educators and other important people that work with younger learners should provide them with the suitable educational environment where they are able to shape such qualities.

The authors of the volume *The Synergy of Educational Environments* raise many different but very significant subjects that are connected to independent learning. Some of them describe laws affecting school organization as their general topic and especially the rules that regulate the pre-school and elementary levels of education. Others focus their attention on some other issues such as the cooperation of all the subjects of education, such as teachers, parents and learners. Others show other influences, especially the media and the family, on the development of younger learners.

The first article is written by Andrzej Michał de Tchorzewski and is entitled: *Educational Reform – Etiology, Types, Rules*. In his article, he depicts the phenomena of educational reforms as the basic elements of

pedagogical process. This consists of the etiology and historical dimension of educational reforms. A very important part of the paper is that it shows the factors that determine the whole process of the reforms – from their establishment to their implementation. The author emphasizes the impact of the reforms on the quality of education, both from the cognitive and social dimensions, globally in terms of societies and locally in communities. The author's deep understanding of this issue opens up an interesting discussion and consideration of the topic of this volume.

The second author, Radmila Burkovičová, in her paper: *Impacts of the Amendment to the Regulation of Pre-primary Education on the Practical Domain in the Czech Republi* , also focuses on the topic of the reforms, but the topic is narrower, concerning the specific educational law regulations only in the country of the author. At the beginning of the paper, the author characterizes some important definitions connected to the topic and shows the legal situation of pre-school education in the Czech Republic. Then, the author depicts the obligations of the parents, the teachers, the principles and the towns in the organization of preschools and the obligation of the learners at that level. Afterwards, she concludes with the benefits of the current amendment to the law.

The second and the third articles adopt a comparative perspective which is very popular nowadays. The first author, Rosalina Engels-Kritidis, in *Preschool Education and Kindergarten Teachers' Training in Bulgaria and Slovakia,* presents the current situation of preschool education both in Bulgaria and Slovakia, showing some similarities and differences between them. She focuses on the preparation of prospective teachers at that level in both countries. These three articles scratch in some way the situation of educational law, especially of early education in some European countries.

Moreover, Natalia Andriichuk's paper, *Special Education vs Inclusive Education in the Synergy of Educational Environments,* depicts the importance of the idea of inclusion that is recognized by the author as the modern approach providing all students with a suitable environment of education. The author has analyzed the scientific approaches towards special and inclusive education and makes some comparative characteristics of three types of schools: special school, school with integrated

study and the inclusive school. This comparison is interesting and somewhat innovative in the literature of the subject.

Anna Skoczek, in the article *Role of Media in Upbringing Children in Pre-school Age*, also focuses on a crucial issue, namely the influence of the media of the education of pre-schoolers. These three articles all concentrate on the unique social and political "background" to the education of younger learners.

Another important area of the learning of the younger learners is the family. It also determines whether they will be independent learners or they will need constant help and guidance in this process. Ewa Dziewońska, in the paper *Growing up in a Family as a Time of Identity Formation,* presents an extensive examination of the identification of the characteristics of the formation of adolescents in the social context of a family. The formation is an under-described and underestimated phenomena which is also very interesting and holistic. Moreover, Anna Śniegulska, in the paper called: *Responsible Parenthood as a Foundation of the Child's Success in Education,* stays with the theme of the importance of the family in the development of younger learners. Both authors claim that the role of parents cannot be overestimated in the formation of young people. They can give their children the opportunity to be independent adults. Both articles are worth reading not only by parents but also by other people.

Another topic that is presented by the authors of this volume is cooperation. It seems to be one of the most important issues in the modern debate about pre-school and elementary education in Europe. There are some countries that have already organized it very well, such as the UK. In Poland, we are still acquiring the fundamental principles and trying to implement them. Unfortunately, we do not have the proper tradition of the cooperation of the subject of the upbringing and teaching processes in Poland. Another important topic that is connected to cooperation in this volume is the teaching of foreign languages and their correlation with other educational areas in a changing world.

Cooperation and languages are also addressed in this volume, with the paper written by Olga Yevgenivna Misechko called: *Multiple Impact of*

International Cooperation in Language Education of Children in Ukraine after 1991, and by Arianna Kitzinger, called: *Changing Lives, Changing Languages: Societal Impact on Language Teaching.* They propose a new, modern dimension in language teaching and also the importance of national languages. Stanisława Katarzyna Nazaruk, in her paper: *Popularization of English Language Learning in Primary Schools in Poland,* concentrates on language importance and making English more popular in Poland at the elementary level.

All these articles result in a volume on children's learning independence in preschool and elementary school which is very unique and interesting, with all of them worth reading by academics and non-professionals alike. The fact that the authors come from different European countries shows both the global situation of policy and the influences of the media and the family, as well as some details from the reality of their countries. They also demonstrate a deep understanding of the issues, reflective thinking and in-depth knowledge. This volume should be of particular interest for educational policy makers, pedagogues and sociologists. It may also be engaging reading matter for parents and students of pedagogy.

The volume also contains a review of publication *Zabawa, O uczeniu się, zaufaniu i życiu pełnym entuzjazmu* [*Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm]* written by Aneta Kamińska.

Aneta Kamińska

Articles

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Educational Reform – Etiology, Types, Rules

Abstract: The subject of the article is the phenomenon of educational reforms. This phenomenon is one of the basic elements of pedagogical processes. In each historical period, all the educational reforms have their etiology and are characterized by specific consequences or the partial or total lack of them. The aim of the research on the above issue is to establish the general reasons for their conducting, to describe and explain the factors determining their process, making a typology of educational reforms and the rules for their implementation. All of these elements can significantly determine their quality. It is known that this affects the effectiveness of school teaching and educational process. The school as an educational institution fulfills a social function having in mind the increase of the level of consciousness and pedagogical culture of each local environment, regional and national community and state.

The basic methods that have been applied in the research were: the historical-comparative method and progressive method. The first enabled to implement the synthetic generalizations depicting mainly the etiology of educational reforms. The second method, in turn, was used to propose a typology of educational reforms and the formulation of the rules for their implementation. The research of these issues and the findings of them can be used for an in-depth reflection and discussion on the searching for the conditions that optimize the processes of educational reforms and their effects.

Keywords: educational reform, educational reform etiology, types of educational reform, the principles of educational reform, the authors-reformers, implementers

Introduction

Reform of education is defined as a legally sanctioned, radical change in the whole school system or its selected segments. Its aim is to improve the existing state of affairs in the field of education, which is an essential part of social reality. Reform of education is also understood as a process of its practical implementation into the daily rhythm of work of particular types of schools. Each educational reform aims at the optimisation of pedagogical processes in their broadest sense. Therefore, the main task of educational reforms is to improve the basic functions of the educational system such as didactic functions (cognitive, innovative, creative), educational functions (model-making, axiological, integrative) and care functions (help, information, supervisory). It is not always possible to articulate in the same way all these functions in practice while reforming school education, as many external and internal factors and conditions come into play.

Comprehensive educational reforms most often take the form of top-down recommendations under a prescribed scheme with specific targets assigned. The control over their implementation in the country is performed by the central authorities of the state administration. In practice, reforms of smaller range and reach are also applied. They concern organizational patterns relating to specific types of schools, or defined areas (a region, district, city, etc.). Both in the former and the latter case, the reform initiative belongs to the state or local administration. There is also a third type of reforms with more limited range. These are conducted by specific schools and concern some modifications in the organizational work of a given school: teaching methods, education or cooperation with the local community. They are supervised to some extent by educational authorities and persons responsible for the functioning of particular educational institutions. However, they do not affect the fundamental changes in the whole school system. It can, therefore, be said that school reform can be born in state centers or in individual schools (Smołalski 2009).

Ever since humanity appreciated the need for teaching and learning, especially since the institutions involved in this activity, that is schools,

started functioning, the need to improve their own work has not been foreign to them. This work has been optimized, and this process still continues through educational reforms which have included the organization of schools, curricula, teacher training methods, educational directions, and strategies[1].

The origin of educational reforms

Roman education took the form of reformed Greek education. In the Middle Ages, educational reforms were conducted by philosophers and the clergy subordinated to monarchs and popes. In the Renaissance, they became a factor which was to change the existing social order and also the political and economic one. Education was reformed by the Protestants: Luther (1483–1546), Philip Melanchton (1497–1560) – reforms of the universities in Tübingen, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Konigsberg, Marburg; Jan Sturm (1507–1589) – reforms of secondary schools; and many other religious leaders did so as well. In Poland, educational reform was called for by Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski (1503–1572). Also well-known are the reforms by Catholic bishops: Charles Borromeo (1538–1584) and Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius (1504–1578). J.A. Komeński (1592–1679) reformed schools by introducing the classroom type of teaching. Religious orders dealing with the teaching of male youth (Jesuits, Piarists) reformed their own schools and curricula, taking into account the educational needs of various social classes. During the Enlightenment period, the reforms by J.F. Herbart (1776–1841), S. Konarski (1700–1773), but also the one by the Commission of National Education (1773–1794), including the famous reform of the Krakow Academy, conducted by Hugo Kołłątaj (1750–1812) were well known. When Poland regained independence in 1918, reform of schools began as there was the need to unify educational structures

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[1]　In the following parts of the present article I refer to the publication: Tchorzewski de A.M. (2002), *Uwarunkowania i kreatorzy reform edukacyjnych*, Edukacja Badania Innowacje, nr 1 (77), p. 5–15

after the Prussian, Russian and Austrian partitions. The school reform of the 1930s was based on the Educational Law of 11.03.1932. It concerned primary education (different for rural and urban schools), development of post-primary schools (4-year gymnasiums and 2-year high schools), vocational schools, transformation of teacher colleges into pedagogical high schools, changes in higher education institutions (it was the minister who appointed and dissolved University Chairs, faculties, and research institutes; rectors received broader prerogatives).

After World War II, education in Poland was reformed many times (1947, 1964). The last reform of 2001 introduced a new organization in the system of education and changes in curricula; it also concerned the ways of teacher promotion.

Another reform of education has been announced for 2017. According to the law adopted by the Polish parliament in December 2016, the school system consists of two-level education of children and youth from 6/7 to 18/19 years of age at 8-grade primary school and 4-grade high schools or occupational schools, which will be the technical and vocational schools. Currently, work is being done on the core curricula and adequate school textbooks are being prepared. The reform is expected to be implemented from 1st September 2017. It has led to many disputes between the educational authorities and the public. The ministry of education imposes certain conditions on its implementation, and a certain part of the society, especially the parents of the youngest pupils, oppose the reform, anticipating bad consequences stemming from the prolonged primary and secondary education. And although the last reform of education in Poland carried out in 2001 did not meet all the goals set at the time, it has, in the course of time, brought some evident results, making the results of the teaching clear. Polish pupils, especially from junior high schools, showed higher and higher level of knowledge and skills in comparison with their peers from various European countries and even in the world.

The origin of reform initiatives is multifaceted: taking care of man, society, the state, and the nation. However, they were also accompanied by motives of psychological, ambitional and personal nature that have always had a deeper political foundation. It has been well known for centuries

that state education serves the authorities as far as shaping the awareness of the younger generation is concerned and strengthens their position as well.

The results of reforms are generally less effective than the expected predictions and they may bring – apart from good results – also bad ones, or no results at all. The increasing level of pedagogical culture and educational awareness of society are often the sources of disputes between the initiators of educational reforms and those who are subject to educational processes. These are teachers, parents and pupils/students.

We can say that a tendency to reform is an attribute of modern education, which often transforms itself into something that can be called 'reformomania'.

Etiology of Contemporary Educational Reforms

The etiology of educational reforms should be understood here as a set of causes which lead to their emergence and becoming legitimate. Taking into consideration the existing knowledge of educational reforms and the predictions, strategies, and development trends of the contemporary world, we can describe the reasons of educational reforms by the use of such categories as a crisis, transformations, integration and globalization.

Crisis, understood here very broadly, and at the same time regarded as a necessary turning point or breakthrough in various fields and dimensions of social life, forces changes in the educational system, which constitute the basis for the prepared and then introduced reform. Crisis, especially a general one "…that has overtaken the modern world everywhere and in almost every sphere of life manifests itself – according to H. Arendt – differently in each country, involving different areas and taking on different forms" (Arendt, 1994). It is obvious that any crisis that results in changes, whether it will be a crisis of ideological-political, economic-social, welfare-social, or any other nature, provokes a crisis situation, and becomes visible in the field of education, forcing or at least leading towards

changes not only of its objectives and content, forms and teaching meth-
ods, assumptions concerning the teachers' professional preparation, but
also in educational structures, systems and institutions.

The crisis as the (proto-)cause of educational reforms arises also from
a perspective, different from the traditional one, concerning the place
and role of a teacher and school in the changing world. I mean the view
of the teachers themselves who, under the influence of various expecta-
tions and demands by environmental factors as well as the latest aca-
demic achievements including the dynamic development of the science
of education, make changes in the definition of their own professional
identity. The modern teacher is becoming increasingly aware that school
is/is becoming more and more of an institution which should be placed
"… between the private domain of home and the world, in order to en-
able (a growing up child – A.M. de Tchorzewski) the transition from fam-
ily to the world. Going to school is not a requirement of the family, but of
the state, that is, of the public world, and therefore – according to the
above-mentioned H. Arendt – in relation to a child, the school represents,
in a sense, a world, even though in reality it is not yet so" (Arendt, 1994).
Hence, the need to reform school grows out of the necessity of teach-
ing students of what the world is like, and not imposing the art of life
on them.

The world in which we live is mobile by nature, which results, among
others, in its constant transformation, which should also be treated as one
of the reasons for educational reforms. Being one of the main segments
of education, the school is rooted in the past, in tradition, and therefore
it undergoes transformational processes extremely slowly or even with
some resistance. The processes which are much faster are manistested in
many other areas of life. However, they are forced to use the 'product' of
the school, namely a graduate, often insufficiently prepared to meet the
challenges brought by various sectors of the economy, by public and pri-
vate domains, oriented towards the continuous transformation of what
serves people's needs and their development effectively.

The aim of transformation is to change everything that can and
should contribute to optimisation of the quality of living conditions.

Hence the education in which, according to Jacques Delors, the author of the Report for the UNESCO International Commission for Education for the 21st century, there is a hidden treasure, can be reformed thanks to the perception and use of the experiences of transformation processes it undergoes itself.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there are no areas of life and activity which would not be subject to rapid transformation processes. This applies both to individuals, local communities, and the international community. Political, institutional, economic, social and even religious systems undergo a transformation. Transformations in these areas force changes, while their pace depends on the transformation of education itself. It is education which, under the influence of the ongoing alterations external to it, simultaneously is subject to the laws of the internal transformation. The inevitability of transformation processes encompassed in human life and activities is a factor conditioning educational reforms. The legitimacy of the transformation of educational systems stems from the need to obtain, or come close towards, a 'balance' between all areas covered by transformation processes.

Being one of many causes of educational reform, the transformation does not present ready-made solutions in this regard. It only raises awareness of the need to make such changes in the school and extra-school educational systems that will enable to take steps to increase the general level of human knowledge that will, in turn, enable Man to be better prepared to live in dynamically changing conditions, structures and systems of the modern world which is becoming increasingly dependent on the accelerated scientific and academic progress. In addition to its beneficial effects, it is perceived as a kind of threat by humanity.

One of the ways to counteract any threat is integration which, apart from crisis and transformation, can be regarded as one of the causes of educational reforms. Integration as a certain trend to merge, unite, combine, or adapt different elements is aimed at their aggregation aiming to create a system whose nature is a communitarian character marked by the similarity of the challenges faced by its subjects. Integration processes cover many different areas of life, from economic, political, military, to

socio-cultural. They are based on a specific system of values, developed and accepted by the parties involved.

This pattern also applies to educational reforms. They are, to some extent, forced from the outside by decision-makers of integration processes, especially on the scale concerning the communities larger than the local ones. They are aware that integration, in almost all areas, is possible to carry out and dependent on the necessary changes that must be made within the existing and binding educational systems.

The main idea of the educational reform caused by the integration processes today is 'European education' taking into account the diversity of cultures and traditions of particular countries and nations living on the Old Continent. The essence of modern 'European education' is the reference to the values created through the merger of the ancient worldview with the Christian vision of human life and the achievements of modern science. Authentic Europeanness means opening up to a dialogue with other cultures of the world, tolerance, respect for human rights, and co-operation of each with everyone within the framework of freedom and democracy.

The educational reform led by the integration processes in the European dimension must aim at the strengthening of a sense of European identity in the young generation, free from the burdens resulting from the division after World War II into Eastern and Western Europe; it must be built on a sense of belonging to the European Community. Hence, the educational reform perceived through the prism of integration must take into account, within the framework of the properly defined aims and objectives, the relevant curriculum content concerning the history and common European cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the reality in Europe at the beginning of the third millennium and at the same time the 21st century is complicated and "… the idea of European integration sounds far from tranquil optimism" (Suchodolski, 1993)' This was expressed by Bogdan Suchodolski who, talking more than 10 years ago about the dangers of European integration, stated that. "Powerful forces of internal development (of Europe – A.M. de Tchorzewski) are constantly revealing new dangers and disappointments, new areas of conflict" (Suchodolski, 1993). The

author perceived the growing tendencies for separatism and independence as the most dangerous of these, which are becoming visible with increasing intensity and seem to be capable of transforming the map of Europe, reconstructing the systems of government and state borders. We can also add to these the growing signs of fanaticism, nationalism, xenophobia or even chauvinism.

In the face of European integration, these phenomena pose challenges to educational processes, within which complex moral problems play a substantial role. The need for educational reform in the context of European integration stems from the necessity to read anew the symbolic values belonging to European culture and tradition, which have become more visible in modern times. These first of all include Freedom, Equality, Fraternity, and also Justice, Peace, Tolerance, Sovereignty, Responsibility, Cooperation and many more. Thus, it can be said that in this case, the educational reform must serve the purpose of forming a human being capable of creating the conditions for international co-operation and coexistence within a community belonging not only to the political and economic European Union but also to the Europe which is united culturally and has been morally rebuilt.

Education, being one of the most important factors in the development of individuals, societies and the world, faces a new phenomenon that emerged in the 1980s and began to be talked about in the 1990s, namely globalization. It is about the phenomena (from both the economic, political and cultural spheres) which are related to the whole world and possess a universal character. The mother of globalization is the technological, communication, telecommunication and Internet revolution, which has brought about de-territorialisation and contributed to the emergence of a global, borderless economic market in which businesses can be carried out throughout the whole world without leaving the office. This has not limited the possibility of the creation of huge transnational corporations (e.g. General Motors), whose income is greater than that of many states. The disintegration of the 'old' political system in Europe caused the United States of America to become the leading global power, playing the most important role in the development of all

the latest technologies. As a result, America still plays a dominant role in the world, which in turn also results in the Americanisation of almost all areas of everyday life.

It also has an impact on educational institutions, including schools, which not only teach English, install computers and the Internet, but whose students and teachers go to McDonalds, pubs, wear jeans, listen to Madonna, eat popcorn, read Playboy or Hustler. All these and similar phenomena and behaviors, in fact, carry mass consumption patterns and create the phenomenon of the mass consumer which is trying to impose a vision of the world.

It must be remembered, however, that globalization does not lead to uniformity, that is unification of human life, action and behavior to a uniform character of norms. Z. Bauman is right in saying that in its deepest meaning the concept of globalization conveys an unspecified, capricious and autonomous nature of the world and its affairs, the absence of a center, the lack of the operator's desktop or the directors of the board. Globalization is another name for the Jowitt's new disorder of the world (Bauman, 2000). Education cannot remain indifferent to globalization processes, and moreover, globalization forces the need for changes in the educational system, especially in the sphere of socialization and education. Education which until now has been understood as the process of the preservation and diffusion of the current shape of social life, liberating the possibilities and adaptation skills to the unpredictable changes in the unspecified future, must undergo reorientation, through which a man will be able to seek inner harmony and independence in a world marked by chaos, in a world of trash, and the primitivism of mass culture, and, more importantly, in a world of deregulation, a completely free market and total privatization, in which the rich will become even richer and the poor even poorer, a world in which national governments and parliaments will become less and less important, in which globalism may replace any local initiative or activity.

And though globalization, as a phenomenon, denies the theory of the balance of powers and will be a growing phenomenon that the world cannot escape, it brings some hope for the solution of some global prob-

lems. This was mentioned by the representatives of the richest countries at a conference in Genoa already in July 2001.

Thus, the task of education is to show to every human being all that is brought about by globalization, about which Z. Bauman says is what is happening to us all (Bauman, 2000).

Education reformed because of globalization is an education which will increasingly show the global effects of 'anonymous' forces acting in an unconventional and unpredictable way in order to warn men against getting lost by losing their own identity, their own ME, their own potentiality in a constant process of becoming oneself. It can be said that it is globalization that is a source of the justification of lifelong learning.

Creators of educational reform

The creators of educational reforms can be divided into two categories, namely creators – AUTHORS and creators – REALIZERS. This division, however, does not have to be characterized by any dichotomy.

Creators – authors, that is originators, inspirers, or initiators of educational reforms are usually politicians (presidents, prime ministers, members of parliament, activists of various political hues) representing various ideological orientations, representatives of the broader economic world, who perceive in education the factor of favorable change in the sphere of material services, consumption or entrepreneurship. We should not forget or lessen the role of the representatives of the academic community, especially the representatives of social sciences and the humanities who, together with experts and futurologists, put forward hypotheses about future trends in consumption, mass culture, economic development or risks, as well as the opportunities and barriers of modern civilization.

The world changing under the influence of crises, transformations (alterations), integration (unification, adjustment), globalization (the problems common to all the inhabitants of the Earth) forces the elites to perceive the role of education as a potentially protective factor in an increasingly complex world, a world often incomprehensible for a single

human; a factor which may protect what determines the value of the world itself as the living space of man and the value of man himself. Education is treated as a collective good that should be used as an international partnership center. Thanks to education, the gap between rich and poor countries, between industrialized countries and developing countries in a 'global village' can be gradually reduced. Its primary task, according to various assumptions of general educational policy, will be to reduce the disparities between continents, regions, states or countries, as well as between local communities in terms of access to school and out-of-school education, general education and vocational training. Such an approach may not only contribute to the elimination of qualitative differences in various educational systems but should also help to create new opportunities for people destined to use information society technologies. Those who may be considered as creators-authors of educational reforms are aware of this.

In turn, creators-realizers of educational reforms include the local community, that is teachers and parents, as well as local and public authorities. It depends on them and it is up to them to undertake, materialize and implement educational reforms. Each of these groups, in its specific way, is involved in the realization of educational reforms. Jacques Delors, in his well-known *Report*, says that "attempts to influence educational reforms from the above or from the outside have failed (…)", while the process of their implementation may be successful "…thanks to the participation of local communities, parents, and teachers. Their engagement was supported by constant dialogue and help from the outside in various forms – financial, technical and professional. This is why the primary role of the local community in the implementation of the reform strategy is obvious" (Delors, 1998).

Another important statement by the President of the International Commission for Education for the 21st century, J. Delors, worth mentioning here is that, "participation of local communities in the assessment of needs through dialogue with public authorities and interested social circles is the first essential step which extends the access to education and enables it to be improved. Continuation of the dialogue through the

media, social debates, education and preparation of parents and teachers at school raises awareness, increases the ability to identify problems and favours grassroot initiatives, as local communities become increasingly responsible for their own development, learn to appreciate the role of education as a means which serves to achieve social goals and leads to the desired improvement of the quality of life" (Delors, 1998).

The dialogue between creators-realizers of educational reforms should be perceived as a means of decentralization of the responsibility for their implementation. The role of the teachers themselves is a special one, as they are the direct executors of the tasks resulting from the assumptions of the reforms. This is not only about their didactic preparation, but above all about a better understanding of the outside world, which penetrates schools that for centuries have been 'closed' institutions, specific enclaves, or ghettos, amidst the changing reality. A teacher who consciously and actively participates in educational reform (a creator-realizer) functions at school where the outside world penetrates more and more fully through new means of information and communication, and young people taught in different educational segments (from elementary school to university) are no longer, as it used to be, strongly influenced by family, churches, religious associations or social movements, but more than ever they are guided by information that cannot be identified with sound knowledge.

Public and local authorities, as creators-realizers of educational reforms, participate in them through the choice of the option for changes in education that will provide the communities with the best possible solution for their educational aspirations and will ensure that they are prepared for ever-changing living conditions of a man in a world full of contradictions, chaos, risks of being torn, in which time and space shrink and the flow of information and communication cannot be stopped.

Undoubtedly, it is not an easy task, but one which is possible to be at least partially accomplished if the elite of public and local authorities themselves understand well the meaning and importance of education for the future that is difficult to determine.

Types of educational reforms

Both the complex causes and creators of educational reforms, and especially their role in the process of educational change, enable us to present a typology of reforms. The basis for the creation of the typology may be the criterion of change, as this is the essence and sense of each reform, including educational reform.

Change as the primary category for the analysis of all pedagogical processes is widely used in the science of education, thanks to which we can better understand the laws and mechanisms governing these processes to achieve the established objectives.

Typology as a logical and methodological tool is successfully applied in the process of research on educational reforms. An example here may be the proposal by M. Camoy and H. Levin, who constructed a taxonomy of educational reforms based on the criterion of the range and nature of the introduced changes. This enabled four types of reforms to be singled out, namely: (1) microtechnical reforms, (2) macrotechnical reforms, (3) micropolitical reforms, (4) macro-political reforms (Carnoy, Levin, 1976).

The approach to the typology of educational reforms which I propose is by no means a novelty. It is merely an attempt to organize knowledge about the properties and characteristics of educational reforms. The analysis of the various processes of educational reform enables to distinguish the following types:

(1) *Adaptational reforms:* they include small changes in the existing educational systems, especially in the structures and arrangements of institutions which carry out education. These changes concern the issues that enable one to adapt to the present requirements, that is to update what is associated with the changes necessary in the organization of the educational process, including institution management, teaching content, methods and techniques of working with pupils, etc. They are intended to adapt to the changes that have occurred in the environment outside of the school, a part of which is a particular educational institution. Examples of adaptational reforms in education in Poland may be

the election of the headmaster for a term, the way of financing educational institutions, the introduction of new content into curricula such as religious education, health and sexual education, regional education, "educational paths", as well as the introduction of new techniques or teaching technologies (e.g. computer and multimedia).

Adaptational reform is intended, among other things, to correct, improve or give a new dimension to some aspect of the educational process so that it can keep up with the changes that occur in other social processes.

(2) *Radical reforms:* they take into consideration fundamental changes in various systems, structures, or educational institutions and concern their essential functioning. As a rule, they are uncompromising, resolute, definitive, irreversible; after their implementation, they are not subject to a discussion which may lead to their weakening or alteration. Before the final decision to implement their purposefulness, anticipated effects or economic and social costs are the subject of discussion carried out publicly and/or in the circles of experts familiar with the problem.

This type of reform comes at the time of organizational and structural changes in education, creating its new segments (e.g. elementary, junior, high school, undergraduate, academic), systems (e.g. public, non-public) or institutions (e.g. general education, pro-professional, vocational). Radical changes are introduced in the range and level of professional education, including teacher education, etc.

Radical reforms are closely connected with the legislative and administrative powers, including the external management and control over educational systems and processes.

(3) *Partial reforms:* a type of reform that is very limited in the education areas, and their implementation depends on the will and decision of the local government (for example, the location of school facilities, the funding of their educational or other activity), management of a given educational institution (school board, pedagogical council), parents' council, or even the pupils/students themselves. All these units form

a given local community and have specific rights to carry out partial reforms at the level and within the scope of their rights granted by the legislator. In this way, the community expresses, among others, its responsibility for the local educational process. The subject of partial reform may be student codes, student assessment system, school/educational institution regulations. They concern concrete educational entities and may undergo more frequent changes under the pressure of the local community units interested in them. It must be added that they also have a pragmatic, subjective dimension, but are sometimes also biased.

(4) *Holistic Reforms:* they are generally carried out very rarely, because of the complexity of their nature and the fact that they encompass the whole national education system, some larger area (province or district), or possibly the type of education (in a particular segment, for example, universities, post-elementary or post-high school education). They are carried out in stages, and the costs associated with them are much higher than the costs of adaptational or radical reform, not to mention the partial reform. So, generally, they are undertaken by rich or at least affluent countries/states belonging to them, such as Japan, England, Canada, the United States, Australia or New Zealand.

Generally speaking, holistic reforms are carried out in periods of political change, as education should play a stabilizing role in the effects of the changes taking place within a given socio-economic system.

A change of every social order according to a specific concept is based on holistic reforms which, by nature, also include education. They are generally revolutionary par excellence, and it is difficult to find in them successful and effective educational reforms (examples may be here the creation of a new educational system during the October Revolution in Russia and the first years of the existence of Soviet Russia).

The typology of educational reforms presented here enables an alternative approach to the studied object. According to its nature and characteristics, it does not explicitly define that one or another educational reform belongs exclusively to a given type. The dominance of some

features of a specific educational reform entitles it to be recognized as a type-specific reform, which does not exclude the same reform from being studied through the prism of other types. Thanks to the typology – treated as a specific research tool – the properties and mechanisms that characterize specific educational reforms can be more clearly described and explained, and also other reforms can be postulated on the basis of this approach.

Principles of implementation of educational reforms

If we treat the notion of a principle as a complex directive guiding a specific procedure, in the case of considerations concerning the implementation of educational reforms we can talk about the principles of (1) reality, (2) complementarity, (3) acceptance, and (4) reliability.

The principle of reality points to three characteristics of the procedure in the process of the implementation of educational reforms, namely: authenticity, pragmatism, prognosticity. In other words: every educational reform must involve a real, not an imaginary educational area, so it cannot be an ostensible or pretended activity; it must undergo objective assessment on the basis of which its creators take into account specific opportunities and take steps to ensure its effectiveness; finally, it must take into consideration the most likely, predictable directions of expected changes as well as their pace, structure, and extent.

The principle of complementarity is a directive that guides the activity relating to the implementation of educational reforms, which makes their creators aware that educational reforms are complementary to those carried out, or to be carried out, in other areas of social reality. It can be said that educational reform is not implemented for itself. Most often creators-authors (politicians) initiate educational reforms driven by economic considerations. The labor market requires that men acquire increasingly new abilities based on skills connected with the rapid communication and information.

It should also be remembered that every educational reform is a 'complementary' instrument by which problems of a social and political nature are resolved.

The principle of acceptance refers to such activities related to educational reform which have the consent to be implemented expressed by all participants. The realization of educational reforms depends on the ability to correlate the proposals they bring with the universally recognized social values. The creators-authors of the reforms must win the favor of creators-realizers of the reforms and the permission of all their participants. The principle of acceptance refers to the consent of the subjects that participate in the reforms directly, and also indirectly, or other systems, or educational institutions. This requires mutual respect for differences of views and the achievement of a similar position on specific issues, in particular the essential ones, which may have an effect on the quality of the implemented reforms.

The principle of reliability directs the creators to such activities related to the implementation of the educational reform which reaffirm its meaning and importance, guarantee the achievement of the expected results in the near or long term, and the effects are authentic, not dubious and possess a relatively constant character. The reliability of the reformist efforts is reflected in a fair, honest, impartial and objective process of the implementation of changes in the educational field. It concerns both the creators-authors and creators-realizers on various levels, ranges, and types of educational reform.

Summary

The presented attempt to look at the determinants of educational reforms was intended to present the issues known to date in a different way. It seems that educational reforms, as a particular phenomenon, occurring with great frequency in the last decades of the past century and at the same time the past millennium, have become common in everyday

social life. Today we can talk about them as an indispensable element of any change taking place in the world, characterized by an unbelievable pace of change in all areas caused by the unprecedented development of communication, information, and technology in a world set on success, which is accompanied by the expectations and disappointments of its inhabitants.

According to OECD data, 450 educational reforms were conducted in as many as 32 member countries in the last decade alone. Only 10% of them are monitored and evaluated by international institutions. Hence, it can be concluded that we do not know much about their course and consequences, especially the long-term ones. Nothing is known, either, about their cancellation or modification.

It is worth remembering, however, that under the term of *educational reform*, we always mean certain evident changes that relate to the system, content, and organization of the educational system or only to its selected segments. The reform of education has its causes in the socio-political and economic transformations of the country in which it is conducted. Its aim is to adapt the school system to the changing external conditions, especially the political and social, but also the economic ones. Politicians generally aim at educational reforms in order to strengthen their position through educational reform in the public consciousness. Meanwhile, the changes in political options which occur in their specific cycles, usually lasting a few years, do not correspond with the cycles of educational reforms that are generally longer than the duration of a particular political group. It is also worth remembering that the lack of agreement between the political authorities and students' parents about the direction and implementation of educational reforms is not conducive to the reforms. The effectiveness of educational reforms is not determined by single, rapid decisions, but rather by substantive negotiations between the parties. Such an attitude should be a daily practice, especially in democratic states abiding by the rule of law.

Both the reformers-politicians and reformers-realizers should take pedagogical progress into consideration, which depends on the development of pedagogical sciences, the science of education and educational

sciences, as well as various fields and disciplines that support them. The effectiveness of educational reforms is determined by the level of pedagogical culture and the educational awareness of those who are the main subjects of the educational process, especially parents and their offspring. Hence, each educational reform should be preceded by long-term prognoses and preparations that will constitute the foundations for the decisions made within their implementation process. Such preparations should also include a broad social discussion about the need for the reform and the legitimacy of its introduction. The condition for the success of educational reform is the profound conviction that it needs to be introduced, which is derived from the analysis of reform projects in all the necessary areas that determine its effectiveness. These may include the issues of the school system, curricula, the preparation of competent teachers and appropriate accommodation base. Only the fulfillment of these conditions can be the basis for taking decisions on the implementation of educational reform by those responsible for the level and state of the education of the society.

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Impacts of the Amendment to the Regulation of Pre-primary Education on the Practical Domain in the Czech Republic

Abstract: The Amendment to the Education Act introduced compulsory preschool education for children from the age of 5 and an obligation for parents to register their child for such compulsory education. From the perspective of kindergarten teachers, it has raised a number of unanswered questions connected with their work, primarily as a consequence of the enacted option of individual education for five-year-old children. In addition, the amendment stipulates new requirements for school management and administrations in Czech cities and towns.

Keywords: Preschool-aged child, kindergarten, preschool, pre-primary school, teacher, compulsory preschool education, child's legal guardian, principal, city, town.

Introduction

A status equal to other educational levels of the lifelong education system of an individual has been acquired by preschool education step by step. Nursery teachers in history systematically strived for legislative anchoring of preschool education in the education system. The content of education in this age was seen by the society a less demanding than education content in older age (Opravilová, 2016, p. 11). However, the

prominent Czech pedagogue V. Příhoda claimed already in 1940s that "pedagogical consideration of a preschool child is no less complex than consideration of education and upbringing of older pupils" (Příhoda, 1947, p. 20). The society's view on preschool education, its purpose, need and objectives has been developing.

Since 1989, for the first time in history, several objectives of preschool education were defined in the *National Education Development Programme* (the *White Book*) (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2001). The greatest emphasis was laid on the intention to provide legal right to preschool education, not only to unlimited nursery care, to all children in the preschool age. The general aim of preschool education support was maximum development of talents and diverse skills of children in their preschool age and their motivation to active knowledge gathering. As the awareness of the critical relevance of the preschool period in development of every individual grew, the Czech society wished increased quality of preschool education and contribution to more factors to it. For that purpose the nursery became a type of school through legislative efforts in 2004. The document declared even further objectives for the area of preschool education. The reality of the mid second decade of 21st century documented, though that the objectives in the area of preschool education were only partially fulfilled.

Increased access and quality of preschool education became a preferred social and pedagogic theme again in the period 2015–2020. The main talking point within the educational community that specialises in educating preschool-aged children is currently the Amendment to Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on preschool, primary, secondary and higher vocational and other education, i.e. the Education Act, as well as the related legislative documents. The discussion also concerns other key legal regulations and secondary legislation currently in force, amending and significantly affecting the educational practice.

The situation and the development of the individual components of the educational system in several basic areas is influenced by society: defining the expected changes as development objectives and objects to which the objectives relate; the actors as the change implementers; the

methods of the change implementation and the means to be used for achievement of the change. Amendments of existing legislation represent one of the significant means for the achievement of change.

Legislative and Document Amendments

The term amendment refers to a legal regulation, which amends or adds, or renews, another legal regulation. The Czech term "novela" is derived from Novellae, a collection of ordinances of Emperor Justinian I. from 534–569, which was incorporated into the corpus of the Roman law Corpus iuris civilis as an addendum (Kincl, Urfus, Křejpek, 1995, p. 50). The process of amending, repealing a certain part of the current, or of adding new provisions to a former legal regulation is referred to as the amendment process. The rules applying to this process are contained in the legislative rules of the Government.

Where a draft or an amendment to a legal regulation may have implications for any legal relationships established before the amendment process, the implications must be regulated via transitional provisions. The transitional provisions must unequivocally determine the existing legal relationships and the extent to which the original legal regulation will apply to them after the effective date of its amendment. They may not directly or indirectly amend any other legal regulations. If a legal regulation that has not yet taken legal effect is about to be amended, the effective date of the amendment may not occur before the effective date of the amended act.

The amendment process also refers to so-called amendment acts, i.e. acts that amend certain acts in connection with the adoption of another act, where the effective date of the act which the amendment act follows upon, is postponed, and, at the same time, the effective date of the amendment act must be postponed as well. V. Knapp concludes on this matter that "an amendment, although tied in terms of its content, to the legal regulation being amended, constitutes a separate legal regulation. It has its own validity and its own effects. However, on its effective date, its content

becomes the content of the amended legal regulation. The amendment is incorporated into the initial legal regulation. After the amendment, the legal regulation applies as amended …" (1995, p. 114).

Legislative amendments in the school environment are based on the assumption that the changes and their impact will be positive in the area of education and will be positively accepted by all actors in the affected parts of the system of education.

Methodology

The purpose of the research was to explore the difference between the current and the previous version of the act on education in the preschool area of education and how and in what the preschool education changes affect the stakeholders. The basic method of data acquisition was content analysis of texts and subsequent comparison of results. The analysis affected certain predefined themes of the previous version of the act and its current amendment. The results of the currently required changes that were found are put in the context of their assumed impact within the Czech education and socio-political framework with regard to the child on which the required changes are focused.

The sequence of the research questions was targeted onto a single analysed object, the preschool education, with linear monitoring of the relevant factors.

The chosen analytical method may be expressed in detail by the following research questions:

- Which aspects of the education act amendment concerning preschool education are seen as positive and progressive in relation to preschool child education?
- What requirements, of what nature and for whom, follow from the education act amendment?
- Are the required changes related to parental responsibility for their preschool child and how?

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- What is the relation of the required changes to the liabilities of nursery teachers?
- How are the required changes related to the school management by its headmaster?
- What requirements do the required changes place on municipal councils?
- Are there any identifiable clear benefits of the current amendment of the education act in relation to preschool education?

Results

The amendment to the Education Act has brought certain changes to the lives of preschool-aged children, their parents and to the pre-primary school teacher profession[2] and school managements; also it has laid down certain requirements for the administrations of Czech towns and cities.

Obligations related to preschool-aged children
First of all, the amendment has imposed the **pre-school education obligation on the children it applies to**. A child must comply with this obligation in one of the specified ways, which include attending a *kindergarten*[3] within the child's area of residence; attending another kindergarten, e.g. one with an alternative educational programme; attending preparatory classes for primary school; attending preparatory classes for special primary school; attending foreign schools within the territory of the Czech Republic; or completing *individual education* without attending a kindergarten. However, even if a child is educated individually by their parents, i.e., at home, they will have a guaranteed kindergarten place in

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[2] This term refers to the entire pre-primary school, i.e. kindergarten and preschool together, as a single preschool education institution.

[3] This refers to the last year before children enrol in primary education (Průcha, 2016, p. 166).

case their individual tuition must be terminated. It should be noted that the Amendment introduces compulsory education, not compulsory kindergarten attendance.

The preschool education obligation **applies to an explicitly specified group of children**. It applies to children who are Czech nationals; children who are nationals of another EU member State; children who reside in the territory of the Czech Republic for more than 90 days; children who are authorised to reside in the territory of the Czech Republic either permanently, or temporarily for more than 90 days; children who are subject to proceedings for granting international protection. It does not apply to children with profound mental disabilities.

With effect as of 1 September 2017, preschool education is compulsory for children **during a certain period of their lives**, namely during the academic year that follows after they turn five. In addition, enrolment in preschool education is introduced during a certain period of the academic year, namely from 2 to 16 May of each year. On this basis, early childhood education becomes free of charge during the period it is compulsory.

Compulsory preschool education has become the basic postulate which the teaching reality springs from in the social environment, in the pedagogical theory, in research and institutional clinical component of preparatory education in the university subjects of Teaching and Preschool Pedagogy at all pedagogical faculties of the Czech Republic.

Responsibility of the parents and legal guardians of a child

Under the concept of preschool education, the parents or legal guardians of a child are obligated to enrol the child in preschool education during the specified period for enrolment in preschool education, in the calendar year, during which preschool education becomes compulsory of the child, even if the parents or legal guardians subsequently choose to educate the child individually.

The parents may also choose a different kindergarten than that situated in their area of residence, although their child is not entitled to a guaranteed kindergarten place in any other than their own area of

residence. The principal shall accept the child if there are any free places in their kindergarten.

The parents must provide the reasons for any absence of their child from the compulsory preschool education at the latest within 3 days of being requested to do so by the principal.

If the parents fail to enrol their child in compulsory preschool education after the child turns 5 and if they neglect the child's education at this age, they commit an offence. The offence is punishable by a fine of up to CZK 5,000. With effect as of 1 September of this year, the offence is formulated under the amendment to the Education Act.

Obligations of pre-primary school teachers

"The aim of the compulsory last year of preschool education is to improve the children's preparedness for school attendance in order to allow them to get used to being around other children and, later, to better adapt to the school environment and the obligations they will have to assume once they start school" (Prudíková, 2016, p. 6).

For professionals specialising in preschool education, this prompts certain questions:

If the aim is defined as follow: … "to allow them to get used to being around other children and, later, to better adapt to the school environment and obligations," how can this aim be accomplished using individual tuition? Before the Education Act was amended, it was claimed that the last year before enrolling in primary education would be compulsory especially in order to allow for children with a disadvantaged sociocultural background to attend kindergarten so that they could be sufficiently prepared for compulsory education. This is also reflected in the aim defined by D. Prudíková (see above). Some other questions may be raised as well: For example, if the parents of a child announce that their child will be educated individually and they neglect the education, how will we be able to find it out in time? Or, if they announce their intention to educate their child individually and then enrol the child in a children's group or other private facility not listed in the register of schools. The Amendment

to the Act specifies that if the parents or legal guardians pursue individual education of their child, the local kindergarten shall verify the extent to which the child has achieved the results expected in individual areas, or recommend the next steps to be taken with regard to the child's education. The dates or frequency of these verifications have not been set. Finding out that a child is not prepared for school during the verification process at the end of the school year is too late. Is the verification a one-off process or are there going to be several verifications during the school year? On what dates? And what measures are in place to ensure the parents and their child attend the verification?

The aim of evaluating the results of individual education should be to oversee, and—where necessary—for an experienced professional to provide any support and assistance to the parents who have decided to educate their child individually.

Since it may not be clear to the parents as to what they should prepare their child for during the individual education, who will be charged with the obligation to present the preschool education curriculum to the parents? Who is going to assume the responsibility for delivering the next steps to be taken in the child's individual education with regard to the results eventually achieved by the child? What is going to be the content of the verification considering that the curriculum is a general document? And what level is going to be regarded as acceptable?

So, preschool education is compulsory, and the target category under the current educational system consists of the key competences defined under the Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education (hereinafter referred to as the "RVP PV"). For each competence, a level is defined, which is broadly regarded as achievable in relation to the competence concerned. It has been stated that framework educational programmes "define the expected levels of education specified for all those who pass through the individual stages of education" (RVP PV, 2016, p. 5). In addition: achieving the so-called expected results "is not compulsory for a child" (RVP PV, 2016, p. 16). Therefore, we ask the following questions: What are the results that we are going to require that the children achieve after passing through compulsory education; what are we going to require

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that they remember; what are we going to require that they understand? What part of the expected level is sufficient in compulsory education respecting the child's individuality? Are all of the expected results expressed, or only some of them? Which are they? How many of the expected results do the children have to achieve in order to be regarded as prepared for school considering that the aim is to "improve their preparedness"? Pre-primary school practitioners also have questions to ask: Considering that children do not have ID cards, how will we know the parents have brought the child who is supposed to undergo the "verification"?

As part of her work, the teacher monitors the process of the children acquiring specific competences both with regard to the class as a whole and to individual children, proceeding in such a way that the children get as much out of the process as possible (RVP PV, 2016, p. 17). As defined by the RVP PV, specific aims express "what the teacher should" (RVP PV, 2016, p. 16) monitor and encourage in the child. In other words, the obligation imposed upon the teacher is not expressed in unequivocal terms, and such benevolence is not justified in any way.

The result of the "verification" is not an evaluation document that would have any further implications for the child. The verification should show the child's parents and the verifying teachers the current developmental level of the child, highlighting any areas in which the child should and could use assistance. And so, the teachers are left to spin in a circle, so to speak. We are back to the questions listed above.

Obligations of the school principal

School principals are responsible for the course of preschool education in accordance with the RVP PV. It is their obligation to preferentially accept children permanently residing within the kindergarten's school district. If any places are left, they may accept a child from another district.

They may ask the founder to increase the number of pre-primary school places by up to 4 children, apply with the founder for an exemption from the specified maximum number of children. Sadly, teachers are

automatically expected to work with larger crowds of children. The view of the teacher who is bound to work with an increased number of children several hours a day is generally not considered.

School regulations lay down the conditions for excusing children from compulsory preschool education and require that their absence from kindergarten be justified.

They also set the dates for enrolment in pre-primary education and specify their place, as agreed with the founder. The enrolment date is publicly announced in a manner common within the local community. The date and place of enrolment applies both to five-year-old children who must be obligatorily enrolled by their parents, and younger children whom their parents intend to enrol in preschool[4].

Parents may opt for a different pre-primary school than that within the child's area of residence. The principal of the local pre-primary school, however, is not responsible for securing a place for the child in the other pre-primary school.

A principal who decides to postpone a child's school attendance is charged to inform the parents or legal guardians of the child regarding the obligation to ensure the child's pre-school education and of the possible ways of meeting the obligation.

Requirements for cities and towns

As regards the requirement for pre-school education, adequate conditions need to be created to allow for the obligation to be met. Because most parents are expected to want their child to meet the pre-school education obligation by attending a kindergarten, cities and towns must secure a sufficient number of places in their kindergartens. The issue of a sufficient number of places is connected with school districts. Municipalities must issue a generally binding decree to assign to the pre-primary school founded by them a district, from the territory of which

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[4]   In documentation related to the educational policy and research, this term is used to refer to an educational institution for children aged 4 to 5 (Průcha, 2016, p. 166).

children will enrol in the pre-primary school. In this way each child will have a place in the pre-primary school they are assigned to. Pre-primary school districts must be identical with districts territorially defined in the context of compulsory primary school attendance. Each pre-primary school will preferentially accept children who permanently reside within a given area and meet the required age requirement for complying with the compulsory pre-school attendance obligation, if the child's legal guardians opt for attendance. A forest pre-primary school may not be a district pre-primary school. Private pre-primary schools are not assigned to areas of residence, and, by inference, they are not subject to the obligation to preferentially accept children permanently residing within their school district.

In the following years, the age of the children, at which they may be preferentially accepted to enrol in pre-primary schools is determined. With effect from 1 September 2017, children who reach at least the age of four before the start of the school year should be preferentially accepted by public pre-primary schools within the area of residence; with effect from 1 September 2018, children who reach at least the age of three at the beginning of the school year, shall be preferentially accepted; and with effect from 1 September 2020 children who, at the beginning of the school year, reach at least the age of 2 will be preferentially accepted. A child will have a place secured at their local pre-primary school even if their **individual education** had to be **terminated**.

Cities and towns must further submit to the pre-primary school concerned, sufficiently in advance before the date of enrolment in compulsory preschool education, a list of children who are entitled to a place in the district of the pre-primary school; provide the material conditions necessary for preschool education; monitor the demographic evolution within their territory and provide for the required capacities of pre-primary schools sufficiently in advance. In order to prevent, on the other hand, principals from being excessively pressured to accept children beyond the set threshold, pre-primary schools may only accept children not residing in their areas of residence during the year if they have any vacancies.

Under the amendment to the Education Act, children, whose inclusion in preparatory classes may remove their developmental drawbacks, and who have had their compulsory school attendance postponement authorised, may attend preparatory classes for primary and special primary education. The postponement of compulsory school attendance now becomes a necessary pre-requisite to the inclusion of the child in the preparatory class. This was not the case in the past. Preschool-aged children also used to be included in preparatory classes, especially those whose parents had a socioculturally disadvantaged background, who expected their children would start getting used to the school environment already at that age. They also expected simpler organisation of their children's school attendance—preschool-aged children usually attended classes with their older, school-aged siblings.

Benefits of the current amendment to the Education Act

- Defining districts for pre-primary schools will contribute to improving the current situation where a number of families are unable to place their child at a pre-primary school. Thanks to gradually allowing the inclusion of younger – four-year-old, three-year-old, two-year-old—children, their parents will be able to better organise their family and professional lives.
- Compulsory pre-school education will introduce children from socioculturally disadvantaged communities to an environment that would otherwise be probably denied to them, and we hope it will evoke desirable processes connected with compulsory education within each child's personality. Overall, it will contribute to increasing the quality of life of each child during this period of their lives.
- There will be a change in the financing of educational work which will create a fairer environment at pre-primary schools. The actual educational work will be paid. An implementing decree lays down the following:

- maximum intensity of the direct educational contribution financed from the public budget,
- rules regarding fixed pay components per 1 full-time educational worker,
- rules regarding variable pay components per 1 full-time educational worker,
- authorised coefficients reflecting the fullness of classes and the proportion of children with special educational needs.
- Non-educational work will be financed as provided for under the rules regarding pre-primary schools and classes.

The rules will be centrally specified by the Ministry of Education and they will replace the much criticised system currently in force, under which the nationwide rules are only used to calculate the funds earmarked to specific regions, which subsequently enact their own rules, based on which they distribute the funds to individual pre-primary schools. The system then leads to differences in funding schools and educational establishments in individual regions.

- In its section on *Caring for the health and safety of children*, the amendment now specifies that only pre-primary school teachers may accept or hand over children, not an educational worker as was the case before that.
- In terms of primary education, the dates of enrolment for compulsory school attendance are very important. The enrolment period is set to 1 to 30 March. Until now, the dates were left at the schools' discretion.
- Rules on the postponement of compulsory school education have also been amended. Under the new regulation, the parents or legal guardians of a child must apply for postponement of compulsory school attendance already at the time of their registration for compulsory school attendance, i.e. during April. Not by 31 May of the year of the child's enrolment, as has been the case so far.

Conclusion

The amendment to the Education Act brings changes to Czech society in several areas - social, economic and public. A number of the changes have already given rise to questions both in terms of educational theory and the practical domain. And it seems the amendment has specifically prompted questions with regard to the work of teachers of all preschool-aged children. Until we know the specific level the children must attain on completing their compulsory preschool education and to what extent, it will be impossible to formulate and determine indicators and criteria for the process of verifying school preparedness of children subject to individual education. It is also impossible to prepare reliable feedback to the responsible parents who choose the individual tuition for their child and pre-primary school teachers do not have any guidelines for their work either. Czech preschool theory and practice is bound to face tough challenges in the near future.

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Preschool Education and Kindergarten Teacher Training in Bulgaria and Slovakia

Abstract: While reviewing the modern theoretical framework of Bulgarian preschool education and some significant reforms in preschool education in Slovakia, the current paper presents the contemporary situation of preschool education in Bulgaria and Slovakia and considers some points of convergence between them, as well as some differences. Since having a university education for future kindergarten teachers influences their future pedagogical interaction with children, the university level preparation of future kindergarten teachers is also detailed. Some aspects of the in-service training of Bulgarian and Slovak kindergarten teachers have also been described.

Keywords: preschool education; modern theoretical framework of Bulgarian preschool education; significant reforms in Slovakia; Bulgarian State educational requirements/standards; Bulgarian educational preschool program systems; Slovak State educational program (ISCED 0); kindergarten teachers' initial and in-service training

Introduction

Bulgarians and Slovaks share a lot of similarities, mainly because of their common Slavic origin and the corresponding resemblance of their languages, as well as the relatively similar recent history of the two nations, both being part of the former Eastern European bloc.

While reviewing the modern theoretical framework of Bulgarian preschool education and some significant reforms in preschool education in Slovakia, the current paper presents the contemporary situation of preschool education in Bulgaria and Slovakia and considers some converging points between them, but some differences as well. Since having a university education for future kindergarten teachers is influencing their future pedagogical interaction with children, the university level preparation of future kindergarten teachers is also detailed.

Transition through the 1990's: the modern theoretical framework of Bulgarian preschool education

Since 1989, the economic, political and socio-cultural transformations have had an impact on educational development. New models of education were required in compliance with the professional structure of society and the needs of its development. Research was needed for optimization and mobility of Bulgarian education, in order to facilitate its effective integration into European structures (Engels-Kritidis, 2012; 2016).

Bulgarian preschool education is built on strong and constantly developing foundations. According to Roussinova & Angelov (2008, p. 11), the main goal during the transition stage was to educate a new generation that would be able to flourish in civil society and in the conditions of European integration, based on the quality of the Bulgarian educational system. According to the same source, several other changes during the 1990's have also had an impact on education, for example:

- Demographic development (negative population growth, birth-rate reduction and population aging, population increase in the

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capital and large cities, reduction of kindergartens and primary schools in small towns and villages, etc.);

- Reflux in the teacher profession due to low salaries and high number of children in big cities, as well as unemployment in small towns and villages;
- Export of young pedagogical personnel abroad, where they can grow in experience due to the high professional competencies and skills attained in Bulgarian universities;
- Tendencies of emigration among the young population.

The educational goals have to be reconsidered in both global and specific, national operational aspects. The global goals include humanization of society, integration processes for achieving positive pedagogical practices in European countries and their constructive reconsideration in local conditions (Roussinova & Angelov, 2008, p. 11).

There are two preschool educational programs, developed during the 1990's, which have laid the foundation of modern theoretical framework of preschool education in Bulgaria: "Educational Program for Children Aged 2–7 Years" (Roussinova et al., 1993), developed by the scientific group of the Department of Preschool Education of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"; and "Children's Kindergarten Activities" (Vitanova et al., 1993). Both programs promote the pedagogical situation as the main form of interaction, with the child at the center of it, guaranteeing an active role for children in a subject-subjective partnership collaboration with the teacher. According to Roussinova et al. (1993, p. 11), pedagogical situations should ensure interaction on equal terms, discretion as far as the pedagogical strategy is concerned, differentiation and individuality of the interactions, as well as variety in the educational content. Each pedagogical situation must be realized in accordance with the defined educational goals, the individual characteristics of children and the competence of the whole group, while taking into account the prospect of further development. One of the key moments in the theoretical framework of Bulgarian preschool education (present in both Roussinova et al., 1993 and Vitanova et al., 1993, in slightly differing terminology) is the separation of

pedagogical situations into two main categories: *planned* and *spontaneous situations.* Planned situations are designed and structured by the teacher in a system, in accordance with the level of the group under their care. Spontaneous situations demonstrate the individual level of the child in the group. In these pedagogical situations, children's personal experience is being expressed more freely, stimulated by a certain need during a particular life situation for each individual child. The teacher's role is to find the proper approach for transforming that life situation into a pedagogical one, taking into account the moment when the child's need is manifested. More often, these spontaneous situations are initiated by the child, but they could also be provoked and stimulated by the teacher through proper material and social means.

The program by Roussinova et al. (1993) has been designed to focus on the needs of children's development; it is therefore structured in compliance with the three formulated types of goals of the pedagogical interaction: goals of cognitive development; goals of dissemination of practical experience; goals of stimulation of individual emotional experiences. All these goals build one upon the other and are realized in the three main stages of pedagogical interaction: perception; experiment; expression. In addition to the teachers, parents have also been given an important role in the pedagogical interaction.

The Bulgarian modern theoretical framework in preschool education defined in the 1990's is based on the ideas of the significance and preciousness of childhood, the stimulating functions of the material and intellectual surroundings, the encouragement of children's activities, the synchronization of educational activities and interaction; the importance of preschool education as a fundamental component of the educational system, the integration of the national educational experience with universal educational practices (Roussinova et al., 1993).

Significant reforms and tendencies in preschool education in Slovakia

In Slovakia there have also been significant reforms realized in the educational system, which have influenced preschool institutions (see Humajová, Pupala, 2008).

The most important reform was brought in the Education Law in 2008 (no. 245/2008) in which the status of kindergartens was changed with their involvement into the school system. According to Kosová (2009, p. 23), Slovakia has realized the importance of preschool education for the most emotional stage of life development of the human being, which cannot be neglected by leaving the child in the care of social institutions. On the contrary, it is important to offer intentional educational stimuli for every human being. Thus, continuity with higher levels of education was underlined and accepted. The developing, educational and also preventive and compensational functions of kindergartens have definitely become dominant over their social tasks. This also meant that all international, global and social changes related to the school system will affect it more than it was in the past.

In connection with the consequences of globalization and international trends in education, the understanding of the school and its functions generally, including functions of kindergartens, has changed. Currently, there is an emphasis on the model of learning in the school and kindergarten. Its first condition is some kind of autonomy, which enables the creation of one's own program for developing the school or kindergarten.

School is considered as a service for the child and takes the task of interactive and integrational institution in the education of children (Walterová, 2001). Kindergartens in Slovakia are trying to fulfil the four main functions of the modern kindergarten, which have been defined by Kosová (2009):

- *Qualification function* (learning to know) - it qualifies children for the next level of study, provides methodical tools for lifelong

learning; it also intermediates the acquisition of learning and working techniques. Within this function there is a special compensation role (much more than in other levels of schools) for various individual insufficiencies and also the prevention of future learning disorders, as well as ensuring the equality between learning possibilities of children;

- *Integrative function* (learning to act) – prepares pupils for active personal and public life, thus it is necessary to involve children in kindergartens in activities on behalf of the whole class, school, village or children from other countries, continents or poorer communities;
- *Social function* (learning to live together) – secures the secondary socialization in kindergartens and preparation of children for lives with peers and in the society. In contrast with higher school levels, this function also has the special task of protecting the child against negative social influences and violence. Kindergartens should create an atmosphere of trust and prevention against asocial behavior;
- *Personal function* (learning to be) – support for individuality of a pupil and his/her diversified self-expression, but what is the most difficult in kindergartens, leading a child to self-control and self-commanding, for example first planning and self-assessment.

The character of preprimary education in Slovakia is influenced by two main (and contrary) approaches to education:

- *The classic approach,* which is influenced by the behavioral paradigm.
- *The innovative approach*, which is currently preferred by experts in the university education of future kindergartens teachers and is influenced by the socio-constructive paradigm. The innovative approach is mainly followed by academics at university, but still not actively applied in public Slovak kindergartens.

In the first approach, the child is only a static object of education that learns mostly by memorizing. On the other hand, in the second approach, the child is an active participant in education. In the context of socio-constructivist education, the process of education in kindergartens is focused on a kind of specific human operation (mutual social communication exchange), which connects teacher, learning subject and the whole learning group into a dynamic relationship, which works as a specific framework (context) for learning and teaching (Kostrub, 2008). Within interpersonal interaction and transaction, the social cannot be divided from the cognitive, which is also seen in socio-cognitive conflict as an important component for realizing socially and culturally determined conceptual change. These socio-cognitive conflicts are also a natural part of education. In this kind of education, they are intentionally created by teachers and other subjects of education opportunities, when the learner has the possibility for his/her own individual or group experiments, co-operation, common participation, collaboration within construction of compatible understanding of meanings, acquisition of own operational and expressive understanding and thus learning of acceptance of others (Kostrub, 2008). Naturally, there is an effort to realize this socio-constructivist approach in real school educational programs (e.g. www.materskaskolakoliskova.estranky.sk, etc.).

Bulgaria: preschool education according to the law on preschool and school education (2015), State educational standards (2016) and alternative educational program systems

During the period 2000–2015, the State Requirements for preschool education were issued, following the content of Decree № 4 for Preschool Upbringing and Preparation (2000), prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science, with further additions published in 2005, which all subsequent educational program systems were required to comply with. These requirements defined the preschool curricula (age 3–7) which include attainable *knowledge, skills,* and *attitudes* classified in several

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educational directions, each of which was further divided into educational kernels, as follows:

- Bulgarian Language and Literature;
- Mathematics;
- Social Environment;
- Natural Environment;
- Fine Arts;
- Sport Activity;
- Music;
- Constructional, Technical and Everyday Essential Activities;
- Play and Game culture.

In addition to the State requirements, a specially-developed program for the compulsory preparatory group/class for school (ages 6–7) was created in 2003 (currently, two years before school are compulsory for attendance – ages 6–7 and 5–6).

The significant place of preschool education in the whole educational system in Bulgaria is confirmed once again in the title and the content of the new law on preschool and school education (2015), where preschool education has its own place, on an equal footing with school education (Engels-Kritidis, 2016). In this regard, the development of new State requirements (this time called "standards") for preschool education (2016) was launched by a commission of established university teachers, kindergarten directors, teachers and other experts appointed by the Ministry of Education and Science. The new State standards were approved and published on 3rd June 2016 (Decree № 5 for Preschool Education, 2016). Compared to the old State Requirements in Decree № 4 (2000/2005), the main changes are related to restructuring and reorganization of some of the educational areas. While Social Environment and Natural Environment in the old requirements were two separate areas, in Decree № 5 for Preschool Education (2016) they have been united under the common area named "The World Around Us". Also, "Play and Game culture" was dropped as an educational area, but at the same time the key role of play and

games has been underlined several times throughout the text of the new Requirements. Therefore, in the new Decree № 5 (2016), we have the following areas:

- Bulgarian Language and Literature;
- Mathematics;
- The World Around Us;
- Fine Arts;
- Sport activity;
- Music;
- Constructional activities and technologies.

One of the most important changes (a negative rather than positive one, according to many opinions, including this author's) is that, for the first time, standards have been defined for each age sub-group (for 3–4, 4–5, 5–6, 6–7 year-olds), for each educational area. There were also changes in the content of the different kernels in certain areas. In the new State Educational Standards (Decree № 5 for Preschool Education, 2016) the duration of one organized activity with children (as mentioned, the main form of organized pedagogical interaction in kindergartens is called a "pedagogical situation") is defined as follows: "as per the judgement of the teacher, 15 to 20 minutes for 3–4 and 4–5 year olds, and 20 to 30 minutes for 5–6 and 6–7 year olds". In different age subgroups, teachers organize different numbers of "pedagogical situations" weekly – between 11 and 17 at minimum, according to the same Decree № 5 (2016). The new Requirements have been accepted with objections to various elements in them.

In compliance with the old State educational requirements (2000/2005) and, conceptually at least, in a way based on the two aforementioned educational programs (Roussinova et al. 1993; Vitanova et al. 1993), as well as the program for the preparation of a school group/class (2003), more than ten educational program systems have been developed; they are currently being updated according to the new Decree №5 for Preschool Education (2016). Nowadays, Bulgarian kindergartens use

program systems like: "Hand by Hand" (2003); "Molivko" (2003), "I am in the kindergarten" (2007); "Friends" (2008), "Fairy Tale Footpaths" (2008), "АБВ ☺ games", (2013); "Vikkie and Nikkie" (2014), etc. These program systems, approved by the Ministry, usually consist of teacher's books, children's books and various educational materials (cardboards, posters, stickers, multimedia and on-line electronic resources, etc.), developed according mainly to the age specifics in the four preschool age groups and often aimed separately at each of the nine educational fields. These systems have been developed by groups of authors (university lecturers, kindergarten teachers and experts) and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. They suggest specific schemes of pedagogical ideas for practice, planned on a weekly and monthly basis. These "program systems", each from its own point of view, aim at adding detail to the specific goals of pedagogical interaction in the four different age groups (3–4; 4–5; 5–6; 6–7 years).

Slovakia: preschool education according to the State educational program (ISCED 0)

As part of the aforementioned school reform in Slovakia, a new conceptual framework for preprimary education has been created. A new educational, two-level model was initiated. It is founded on two levels of education: first, the education realized on the basis of the State Educational Program (ISCED 0; Guziová et al., 2008), which, on the second level, provides the opportunity for every kindergarten to create its own original educational program (see the law on education no. 245/2008).

The State Educational Program for pre-primary education is called "Child and the world" and it is based on the international standards for preprimary education (ISCED 0). According to the authors (Guziová et al., 2008, p. 3), it aims at "reaching the optimal perceptual-motoric, cognitive and emotional-cognitive level as basis for preparedness for school education and for life in the society. The starting point is the uniqueness of each child, active learning and incorporation into the group and collective team".

"Achievement of this goal assumes favourable educational school climate focusing on the development of creativity, where learning is realized by games instead of memory learning (memorizing). The emotional experience of a child is also important" (Guziová et al., 2008, p. 5).

The State Educational Program for kindergartens "Child and the world" also defines a profile of a preprimary education graduate, who should be able to have these competences (or their basics, at least): 1. Psycho-motoric competences; 2. Personal (intrapersonal) competences and principles of self-awareness; 3. Social (interpersonal) competences; 4. Communication competences; 5. Cognitive competences, including: a. basics for problem solving, b. basics for critical thinking, and c. basics for creative thinking; 6. Learning competences; 7. Informational competences. This program expresses educational standards for preprimary education in Slovakia (Guziová, 2008, p. 15–26). It contains what level a child should reach at the end of preprimary age (age 6 or 7 years), when starting primary education; however, it does not include any specific evaluation/diagnosis.

The State Educational Program "Child and the world" is divided into themes, but not into educational fields. There are four themes: 1. *I am* (content focused on social, spiritual, physical, emotional life of a child); 2. *Culture* (content focused on the world of things, world of games, world of art); 3. *Human race* (focused on family, other people, human race); 4. *Nature* (focused on the Earth and space). These thematic fields should diffuse and complement each other, while integrating during the whole educational process. The program also involves sectional topics (environmental education, traffic education, protection of human beings and their health, education for a healthy lifestyle, education for creativity, medial education, work with information, etc.) which can also diffuse in all thematic fields.

Children attend the kindergarten for 1–3 or even for 4 years. Usually, classes include three age groups: 1–3, 4–5, and 5–6. However, in the State Program there are no specific curricula for single age groups.

In the framework of this new "two level" conceptual framework for pre-primary education, the State Educational Program "Child and the World" (Guziová, et al., 2008) is a starting point for teachers for creating

their specific school curriculum/program. This becomes a basic document for the separate schools, which enables them to realize education.

In each school program set up by a kindergarten, it is necessary to follow the requirements and objectives declared in the State Education Program (Guziová et al., 2008). At the same time, while developing the School Education Programs, schools are allowed to consider whether the teachers will extend their target requirements beyond the framework set by the State Education Program. Percentages are not strictly determined for the kindergartens, as it is intended by creating of the basic school programs, but it is recommended in the Guide for the formation of a State Education Program (Hajdúková, 2008), so that the basis of 70–80% is formed of the State Educational Program and 20–30% is beyond the framework of basic target requirements.

The quality of educational programs of specific schools is guaranteed by the State School Inspection controls (see the Law on education no. 245/2008, §7 and the Law no. 596/2003, § 13). In our opinion, as well as that of the entire group of academic experts, they are insufficient, since it is only the school inspectorate that monitors the program controls without the approval of experts-academics.

The insufficient control of specific educational programs through the state school inspection is not the only object of criticism by academics in this new "two-level" conceptual framework for pre-primary education. According to experts (Zápotočná, Petrová, 2010; Pupala, Kaščák, 2012), another problem is the actual initial State educational program "Child and the World" (Guziová et al., 2008) itself. The grouping on the basis of thematic areas and not on the basis of educational areas is criticized as non-conceptual. Furthermore, the program is criticized for insufficient specification of educational standards, as well as the absence of specific evaluation (diagnosis of achieved knowledge and skills of children). For these reasons, it is very difficult for teachers to arrange their own school educational program on the basis of the State Educational Program.

The handbook for preparation of school educational programs for kindergartens (Hajdukova, 2008) does not help them either, as it is too general for teachers. Also, there is no universal textbook for preschool ed-

ucation available, although it would be necessary. Teachers can choose from a broad selection of didactic tools, various textbooks, workbooks, even including e-programs (for example, the newest one is the interactive program Kindergartens via game 2015). This selection also includes a number of quality literature items.

In Slovakia, the situation is that many of the individual school programs are of a high quality, but there are also some that are not so good. The quality of school programs depends on the education and qualification of individual teachers who are involved in the creation of their own school program/curriculum.

Some good quality teachers, who apply innovative methods in developing their programs, have criticized the initial State Educational Program "Child and the World" (Guziová et al., 2008). The criticism of both teachers and experts – academics has been an incentive for the development of a new, innovative State Educational Program.

This alternative / innovative State Educational Program was created by experts (Pupala et. al., 2014). It should be approved in 2017. In contrast to the issues presented above, the educational standards in the new program are more specific and evaluation questions are added. Another difference is that the content of pre-primary education is not divided into 4 themes, but rather into 7 educational fields: 1. Language and communication; 2. Mathematic and work with information; 3. Human being and nature; 4. Human being and society; 5. Human being and the world of work; 6. Art and culture; 7. Health and movement. The goal of authors is to ensure a more effective preprimary education and thus enable a better continuity between preprimary and primary education.

The fields in Pupala et al. (2014) are not so much thematic but more look like educational areas which are predecessors in a way of the subjects at school – similar like educational areas in Bulgaria. In Valášková (2011; 2012) it is claimed that experience has shown that teachers cannot work with thematic areas since "it is difficult to integrate something which they do not understand"; primarily, teachers must learn to distinguish the different components of the educational field, then they can learn according to themes.

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In conclusion, it is very important once again to note that the situation in Slovakia is similar to that in Bulgaria, that some changes in the framework of the state requirements are about to happen.

Initial education and the in-service training of Bulgarian kindergarten teachers

In Bulgaria, the professional qualification for the "preschool teacher" is currently obtained in specialized faculties at universities after four years of vocational training (Bachelor degree) and one year of full-time training in a Master's program. Students who have completed undergraduate programs in other humanitarian disciplines are also given the opportunity to take an extended two-year Master's program in order to acquire the qualification for working as a preschool teacher. Furthermore, three-year training for a PhD degree in preschool education is available.

The teaching positions in preschool education are usually held by personnel who have completed the traditional degree of *Preschool Pedagogy,* as well as one of the relatively new degrees of *Preschool Pedagogy with Foreign Language* and *Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy.* The first of the new degrees reflects the current need for qualified preschool teachers who, in addition to the mainstream pedagogical work, are specially tutored for early foreign language teaching in one of several languages: English, German, French, Russian, Spanish, or Italian. The basic premise of the second degree, the "hybrid" specialization in *Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy,* is the idea of facilitating the transition of children from kindergarten to elementary school by providing teaching professionals with a broad spectrum of competence, who are well-acquainted with the specifics of working with both preschool and primary school ages.

The university training ends with written state exams. Students of Preschool Pedagogy with Foreign Language are additionally tested on the respective foreign language, while the students of the hybrid Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy specialization are tested in a state exam on a pooled questionnaire.

For the practical training of students in a real educational environment, universities have contractual agreements with specially-selected nurseries, kindergartens and teachers. The practical training of teaching skills starts from as early as the first semester and ends with a practical state exam. Students gradually move from observation and analysis of teaching situations to independently performing their own situations in real pedagogical conditions.

According to the Bulgarian national system for in-service training, all Bulgarian teachers (including preschool teachers) can develop their qualifications in a five-level qualification scale. The first two levels involve education on contextual and technological innovation, as well as sharing of the teachers' individual experiences and pedagogical practices, while the latter three levels focus on activities related to the practical application of innovations and the creation and practical testing of individual innovative practices. The highest professional qualification level also allows for dissemination of innovations introduced by the teacher through publications (Kusheva et al., 2006).

The main providers of continuing professional development across the country are university departments of information and in-service training of teachers; National Institute for Education and Qualification in the Educational System; some pedagogical faculties; educational inspectorates; non-governmental organizations; foundations, and other public and private providers at national, regional and local level (Engels-Kritidis, 2016).

In the new Law of Preschool and School Education (2015), there is a separate Section 4, titled "Career development of pedagogical specialists", in which the career development is defined as "the process of improving competences via successive posting in teaching or educational positions or via acquisition of educational levels in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of education" (Art. 227). The same article defines teaching levels – teacher, senior teacher, and headteacher – applicable for children's teachers as well. As foundations of career development of pedagogical specialists, the text mentions teaching service, acquired qualification credits, acquired professional qualification level, as well as results

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of performance appraisals; a larger number of qualification credits and a higher professional qualification level are bases for a faster career development of pedagogical specialists, regardless of their years of service. Participation in specific forms of CPD is formally recognized in terms of career advancement. The requirements and the procedure for acquiring teaching levels are defined by the state educational standard for the status and development of teachers, headmasters and other pedagogical specialists, which is currently in development (Engels-Kritidis, 2016).

Initial education and in-service training of Slovak kindergarten teachers

A kindergarten teacher in Slovakia is currently required to have finished secondary education (Regulation of Ministry of Education No. 437/2009). The particular qualifications for kindergarten teachers can be obtained after studying at an Academy of Pedagogy and Social Sciences. Additionally, there is the possibility of a two-year secondary education follow up study, in which any person who has finished secondary school education can be enrolled. The study at the secondary school with a follow up two-year secondary study ends with a school leaving examination. This type of education is also highly criticized by experts as being unsatisfactory.

That is the reason why students who have finished secondary education at Academies of Pedagogy and Social Sciences usually continue their studies at Faculties of Education (Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Prešov, Banská Bystrica, Ružomberok and Komárno), where they become acquainted with current trends in pre-primary education which ends in a Bachelor´s degree.

They can also achieve a higher qualification after two years of further study (a Master´s degree), which is provided by some of these faculties (e.g. Banská Bystrica).

The complete study (Bachelor´s followed by Master´s degree) ends with state exams. Part of the study is also devoted to practical education in selected kindergartens. Selected preschool establishments cooperat-

ing with faculties of education enable students to participate in training. Initially the students follow the teaching process and analyze it with the particular teacher afterwards, later on they teach themselves and after the lesson the teacher provides them with feedback. The teachers are experienced professionals from chosen kindergartens and, at the same time, they are university teachers responsible for practical training. The concept of practical training in Slovakia is similar to the concept in Bulgaria.

Furthermore, it is possible to continue in a three-year study and obtain a PhD degree in the field of Education at some faculties of education.

In their professional careers, teachers are expected to add to their qualifications after graduation**.** For this purpose, lifetime learning is provided within various projects – accredited programs (e.g. www. mpc-edu.sk). Some of these accredited programs are in high demand, for example, the innovative programs like *Management in kindergarten, Innovation in didactics for pre-primary teachers* or so-called update programs *Digital Technologies in kindergartens, Reform of content in the kindergarten* etc. Apart from these there is also a demand to teach children a foreign language even in kindergartens – the option is usually English. To meet this demand, teachers can increase their qualifications by means of a two-year course of study at a public language school. They end this with a state language exam.

In line with the Ministry of Education Regulation No. 445/2009 *On lifetime learning, credits and attestation of educational and scholarly employees* and according to the *Law No. 317/2009* the teachers receive credits and increase their qualifications after the first and second attestation exam. The first attestation is focused on the application of the creative experience of an employee and solving scholarly – methodological problems connected with educational activities. Only educational employees, university graduates who have obtained at least a Bachelor´s degree, can apply for this attestation exam. The second attestation is focused on the presentation of significant innovation and creative skills concerning methodological problems and educational activities. It can be acquired only by an educational employee who has already obtained the first attestation and obtained at least a Master's degree.

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Conclusion

Built upon a solid historical and theoretical basis and encompassing the overall transformation of social life in the country, Bulgarian preschool education matches the standards for education in developed European countries. The child and its needs are firmly established as the core focus of contemporary preschool pedagogy; in this respect, the continuing education of preschool teachers accentuates training that allows educators to adapt to the constantly-changing educational needs of children. The situation in contemporary Slovak preschool education is a similar one.

Additionally, both countries are continuously modernizing and innovating their programs. Both Bulgarian and Slovak educational systems incorporate a desire for harmonization with the pedagogical requirements adopted by various European and international forums, but at the same time they are constantly looking for the means and forms which will allow for the preservation and promotion of national traditions in education.

A fundamental difference between the Slovak and Bulgarian education system is in the required qualification of teachers of preschool education. In Bulgaria a teacher has to obtain a university degree (at least Bachelor´s Degree), while in Slovakia a secondary education is a sufficient qualification; university education (Bachelor's, Master's Degree) is currently not required for a teacher to teach in a kindergarten. Consequently, the quality of educational activities in Slovak kindergartens is different. In this respect, Slovak academics are endeavoring to change the legislation so that teachers in kindergarten should have at least a university education of the first degree (Bachelor).

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Special Education vs Inclusive Education in the Synergy of Educational Environments

Abstract: Inclusive education in Ukraine can be considered a modern approach to both general and special education. For providing the best conditions for obtaining a proper education for every student, irrespective of their social status, gender, colour of skin, state of health, etc. it is essential to provide a professional environment, support and assistance at schools for those who need it, as well as creating a healthy educational environment in the students' group. The problem is accomplished by the fact that not all students with special educational needs are recommended or able to visit public schools because of the extent of their condition. Therefore, the role of special education in this regard should not be ignored. The article aims to analyse global scientific approaches to special and inclusive education and to provide an outline of the comparative characteristics of three types of schools: special school, school with integrated study and inclusive school which is of great importance for the development of inclusive education in Ukraine.

Keywords: special education, inclusive education, educational environments, special school, school with integrated study, inclusive school.

Introduction

Inclusive education is gaining increasing popularity in modern pedagogical science and takes a notable place in the reforming of the general education system in different countries.

For the last few decades, special and inclusive education as pedagogical phenomena have been in a state of constant comparison or even opposition. The contradiction which is hidden in the name of the article can illustrate what is going on now in Western Europe, in Ukraine in particular, where the implementation of inclusive education is taking place. Instead of the cooperation of these two educational spheres, a vivid opposition can be observed. Therefore, the presented article is aimed at finding out how the problems of inclusive and special education are studied by British and American scientists and how these studies can help Ukraine in the implementation of inclusive education. Thus, the aim of the article is to make a comparative description of inclusive and special education systems presented in international scientific literature.

Current issues on inclusive education

American scientists analyse the American experience in implementing inclusive education in the general education process from three points of view – the conceptual, the historical and the pragmatic. Conceptually, the precise definition of inclusive education is still under debate among scientists at the level of the specification of the term. It can be studied as a process of involving children with special educational needs in working in a general education environment as well as the transformation of the philosophy, values and practices of the general education system considering the needs of special children. However, the basic concept of inclusive education still includes not only the presence of children with disabilities in school but also their participation in educational programs alongside other members of the education process (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, Christensen, 2006).

Inclusive education is a phenomenon that concerns all children involved in the study process. It is aimed at the transformation of the school culture and intends to increase the presence of not only the socially excluded and disadvantaged (outsiders) but all its members in the education process; to intensify the adoption process of these students to the community by the teachers and other "normal" students; involve all students in the classroom and extracurricular activities of the group, and as a result to achieve socialization as a positive result of this work (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughn, Shaw 2000).

The American researchers Alfredo J. Artilez, Nancy Harris-Murri and Dalia Rostenberg pay attention to both the history and theory of special education in the analysis of the concept of inclusive education. In terms of the historical aspect, it is clear that special education has become a common alternative to general education for people with disabilities. Special educational institutions are divided according to nosological groups. According to each group, there is a curriculum adapted to the capabilities of students depending on the condition. This aims to develop disabled children's social and practical skills needed to survive in adulthood. Historically, students with disabilities were excluded from the process of obtaining a complete general education according to a unified curriculum as well as being deprived of communication with their peers. This led to the segregation of people with special needs and subsequently to the professional division of labour. However, foreign scientists who conducted a comparative study among students in special schools and inclusive classrooms argue that pupils with special educational needs who studied according to segregative educational programs, were different from the success of their peers who had the opportunity to attend comprehensive school (Artiles, Harris-Murri, Rostenberg 2006).

Another group includes children with weak health deviations but who are forced to study at special educational institutions. These children are deprived of the opportunity to communicate with their peers and consequently of the normal functioning in the society. In this context, inclusive education is a tool that can destroy this division. It is unsurprising that experts in the field of special education and its direct participants

are actively involved in the implementation of inclusive education in the general education process.

Two more phenomena that deserve attention in the context of the study of inclusive education are globalization and multiculturalism. Globalization involves inclination to changes in social, political, economic and public life due to the exchange of capital, information and communication technologies as well as mobility of population, culture and management systems (Lipsky, Gartner, 1996). This leads to the rise of multiculturalism in a number of countries with a high rate of immigration. It should be noted that many students whose families have emigrated retain extremely close ties to their national culture and, as a result, this leads to complications in the new communication society, an unwillingness to learn the language of the country where they live and, consequently, difficulties in learning. Inclusive education cannot ignore the demographic demands of the modern world. So, apart from children who have disabilities, it is necessary to distinguish those who are immigrants, and therefore often do not speak the language of instruction at their schools at a sufficient level for learning. This is another category of children that provides implementation of inclusive education.

From a pragmatic point of view, the reform of the general education system and popularization of inclusive education as an indispensable component of comprehensive schools helps develop teacher's professional competences, reinterpret the main goal of the comprehensive school, review and improve the curriculum, create the conditions for professional development of teachers, and most importantly, obtain positive learning outcomes from each participant in the education process, regardless of their state of health or social status (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, Christensen, 2006).

The American researchers Dorothy Kerzner Lipsky and Alan Gartner argue that contemporary scholars, NGOs and parents of disabled children are faced with two problems: to prove that inclusion is necessary for children with special educational needs as an alternative to special education and illustrate practical ways of the implementation of inclusive education in the general education process. Evidence of the existence of this type of

education, as a rule, is links to ethical norms, human rights, the right of all children to good education, banning discrimination on any grounds etc. Most experts agree that the legality of such an ambitious project as inclusive education is based primarily on the principles and ideas of social justice (Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughn, Shaw 2000).

Another problem raises real and precise questions: "How does it work?", "How should one make it work?". The answer can be: real changes that should be included into the content of the school education; forms and methods of teaching; training of skilled personnel to work in an inclusive environment; equipment of school facilities with necessary devices. Thus, it should be a new school, namely the school where the children will be involved in three major aspects of school life: the school culture, through which children form a set of human virtues and values; the curriculum, the content of which is prior learning experiences offered to students comprehension; the local community, that is those relations that they want to create (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, Christensen, 2006).

First and foremost, the goal of inclusive education, as noted in the works of Ann Pirie and George Hed, is to educate a completely full member of the society by involving all participants in the education process to the whole-school activities. However, the expression "completely full" regarding children with special needs is quite bizarre. It is clear that a teacher cannot expect a child with impaired locomotion to be a member of the school football team, and should not require the introverted child make a speech to a large audience. The idea is that equality should not be constant, but it must depend on the circumstances where a child appears, on the physical abilities of the child and, most importantly, on the desire of the child to become a participant in an event (Howe, 1996).

As previously noted, despite the fact that special educational institutions performed a segregative function, in the United States they were the only alternative for children with disabilities to receive the education necessary for existence in the adult world until the 1990's. An intermediate stage of social development between segregation and integration was the inclusion of special children in a general education process. In the late 20th century, the terms "integration" and "inclusion" were

synonymous in the scientific studies of American researchers. They were defined as the process of learning different categories of students in a student group. Regardless of the fact that special children were prepared to adapt to the group, the readiness of the community for the adoption of these children was not taken into account. The positive effects of integrated education were undeniable: peers communicated and learnt in a team; despite the slow progress in teaching children with special educational needs, the social competence of all students, according to the testimony of parents, evolved quite effectively; they felt the increase in self-esteem, peers treated them as equal team members and they developed their social skills; watching the children who studied in integrated groups, parents and teachers concluded that physical disabilities do not affect their personal relationships but, on the contrary, healthy children became kinder, more restrained, more caring.

Analysing the typology of concepts "inclusion", "integration" and "segregation" suggested by Ann Pirie and George Hed in 2007 (Howe, 1996), the difference between these concepts is obvious: inclusive study integrates every child into the environment that is ready to accept human differences and when creating the inclusive school it is important to take into consideration differences which are typical for every model of study. There are two models of disability: medical and social. The background of a medical model is an extent of a disease and while providing educational services the emphasis is made on the state of a child's health and its adoption to life in the society with this condition. In the social model, the emphasis is made on the person itself and on its role in the society and, first of all, on keeping to its rights and freedoms.

The main characteristics of the three types of schools

To understand the difference between the three models (special school, school with integrated study, inclusive school) let us make a general characteristic of schools for children with special needs (Table 1).

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Table 1. Comparative characteristics of special, inclusive and integrated models of schools for children with special educational needs.

Special school	School with integrated study	Inclusive school
Main aim – educational service	Main aim – taking into consideration needs of the disabled	Main aim – realization of the right for a good education
Medical model of disability as a base of a school program creation	Preserving a medical model of disability during the organization of learning	Setting of a social model of disability
Precise classification of children to schools by the category of disease	Adaptation of a child with special educational needs to study at school	Adaptation of school to work with special children
Providing special conditions of study	Providing equal conditions of study for children with special educational needs	Providing necessary psychological support and assistance for all pupils
Emphasis on the importance of a special environment for disabled children	Emphasis on the individual approach to children with special educational needs	Emphasis on the individual approach to all children
Classification of *differences*	The ability to manage *differences*	The recognition of *diversity* as a valuable component of the society
Focusing on the individual	Focusing on the system	Unification of the system
Emphasis on resources needed for learning	Emphasis on the process of learning	Emphasis on the result of learning
Creation of separate adoptive learning programs	Obligatory implementation of a typical curriculum	Focus on the content of study and creation of an appropriate curriculum
Attracting professionals from different fields to work with children with special needs	Involvement of professionals from inclusive education to work in groups where there are children with special educational needs	Involvement of professionals from inclusive education and parents in partnership, development of relations "parents-inclusive school"
Providing the opportunity to achieve general education for children with special educational needs	Improving the quality of a general education for children with special educational needs	Focusing on school effectiveness and improving the learning conditions

While analysing this comparative characteristics of the three types of schools, it is clear that special and inclusive schools differ extremely in the aims of teaching, approaches to teaching, attitude to the students and intended outcome. Yet it doesn't mean that both of them cannot exist in the educational discourse. The term "child with special educational needs" means that the student, while studying, can have difficulties with some or all school work; difficulties with reading, writing, number work

or understanding information; difficulties in expressing themselves or understanding what others are saying; difficulty in making friends or relating to adults; difficulty in behaving properly in school; difficulty in organising themselves; some kind of sensory or physical need which may affect the learning process. But the main point here is the extent of the physical or mental problem. And if the child cannot fit into the community because of the serious health problems, there should be another option – special education that is specialized and features specially designed instruction to cover the unique learning strengths and needs of students with disabilities. The first aim of special education is to teach the skills and knowledge a child needs to become as independent as possible. Special education programs focus on academic subjects and also include therapy and other related services to help a child overcome difficulties in all areas of development.

As for the school with integrated study, it is slowly being replaced by inclusive schools and in this very case it should be referred as the evolution of both general education and public schools.

Referring to the issue of social justice, the name of Kenneth Howe (University of Colorado) must be mentioned. He stated that children with special educational needs should take part in a school public life together with other members of the group, without hiding their differences and without a feeling of inferiority (handicap). The aim is not to highlight a special compensation in the form of studying at special school until they achieve the level of "normality", but rather to denormalize the way of making regulations and principles and leaving the space for people with differences (Dyson, Howes, Roberts 2002). The way to achieve social justice for people with special educational needs may be in promoting an inclusive education model and its use in comprehensive schools.

Conclusions

Today there are three systems of education available for Ukrainian school children: general education, special education and inclusive edu-

cation which is still being implemented in the secondary schools. In this context, the studies of American and British scientists in the sphere of inclusive education are of great importance for Ukraine due to the lack of access to international educational theories in this field. Such studies would be useful for creating Ukraine's own model of inclusive education which would combine the elements of special education introduced in comprehensive schools.

So, the analysis of the studies made by progressive American and British scholars allows us come to the following conclusions: one of the most important values for a modern citizen is freedom of choice. This means that every person, as well as any child, should have the chance to choose the way of getting education. Specialists in the special educational sphere have created and worked out a large number of forms, methods and teaching techniques for different groups of children with special educational needs. This heritage is valuable and useful in terms of inclusive education as well. Inclusive education cannot be conducted without the participation of professional specialists from different fields of pedagogy, psychology and rehabilitation. As for the families which have children with special educational needs, they should have the right to choose the school for their child, taking into consideration the medical factors and psychological characteristics of the child. The task of administrators, teachers of comprehensive schools and representatives of the departments of education and local government is to provide citizens with the opportunity to obtain a general education which is of high quality.

Taking into account everything previously noted, it is important to underline that the best model of school for Ukraine would be an integrated one which would combine the traditions of both general and special education. The decision as for the distribution children with special educational needs into the general educational environment should be made on the basis of the parents and children's choice as well as on the medical recommendations.

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The Role of the Media in Upbringing Children of Pre-school Age

Abstract: This article contributes to the discussion related to the role of mass media in educating and upbringing children of pre-school age. Man today is best described as *homo mediorum*, who more or less depends on digital media. Those behaviors and other media related addictions are being transmitted to children from almost the very first day of their lives. What are the consequences of this? Unfortunately, most of them are negative. Research shows there are difficulties with language acquisition, selective attention, correct development of cognitive functions and it may even lower the intelligence level. Summarizing, it is clear that electronic media do not support education. What about upbringing? Mass media generate difficulties in interpersonal relations, lead to aggression, lack of empathy and addictions. The conclusion? It is impossible to withdraw mass media from children's lives but let us try to reduce their influence in the lives of the youngest children.

Key words: Electronic media, language acquisition delay, selective attention, cognitive functions, empathy, aggression, addictions.

Introduction

Technological innovations change the world of the media and, at the same time, affect the life of the modern generation - especially children and youth. A lot of children use interactive media in their daily activities and, based on them, organize their activities, acquire habits of unlimited use. The most dangerous are the media that rely mainly on images and sound. The presence of these types of devices in the lives of young children, aged 0–5 years, is a threat to their rapidly developing brains, and may result in the future in various types of deficits in the cognitive, emotional or social sphere. Unfortunately, it can affect adversely the development and physical functioning of children. The purpose of the article is to draw parents' attention to the risks that may be associated with uncontrolled and inappropriate use of new media by young children.

Children in the media world

The pre-school age is extremely important for young children and how they develop further in the future. During this time, the foundation is laid for a number of the functions and abilities of a child. Not only do these functions and abilities play a vital role in future successes and possible setbacks in the child's learning but they also influence how children function in social situations. The human brain can often be influenced by a variety of factors as well as its structures which are responsible for social interactions (e.g. amygdala). The brain itself and its structures need correct stimulation. Nowadays, children are provided with this kind of stimulation by being exposed to unrestricted digital and mass media access. New technologies are often easily accessible in the majority of households as well as upbringing institutions such as nursery schools. This leads to something called "bedroom culture". This term describes situations in which children spend most of the time in their rooms using digital media. Research show two different strands. The first strand outlines positive outcomes based on media access. The second strand points

out possible dangers for the child's development considering negative outcomes of content watched and the length of time spent in front of the TV (Robert, Foehr, 2004).

J. Chwaszcz (2005) specifies the different ways in which mass media exert their influence. They are as follows:

1. Suggesting behavior patterns where natural desire to copy different ways of behaving is used in terms of following and copying the way of looking or behaving presented on the screen.
2. Applying meanings which are based on linking particular events to emotions. If the events and emotions do not follow each other quickly, they may lead to lack of experiencing and reflecting in a correct way.
3. Training based on repetition of living through emotions released by mass media programs. If those kind of emotions are often repeated and lived through, it may lead to desensitization which basically relates to emotional indifference.
4. Deliberate use of fun in order to increase mass media forecast as well as to encourage the highest possible number of watchers.
5. Provocative situations based on arranging circumstances which require a recipient to independently solve problems as well as to initiate its own activity. It needs to be said that TV programs hardly ever encourage recipients to solve problems independently, they rather promote the lack of independence.

Mass media influence recipients by means of the content they provide. There are three options that best specify intentions related to the meanings that mass media promote. The first of those opinions intends to say that mass media very closely reflects the reality. The second opinion suggests that the reality is presented more attractively in order to achieve eye catching outcomes. It makes information provided by mass media unclear and it does not truly reflect on the situation in reality. The third opinion can be described as a critical one in terms of its approach to mass media and the meanings they provide audiences with. Regarding the

third opinion, mass media are seen as a source of viewing pathological situations which are provided to a significant number of recipients.[5]

Forwarding and spreading views, opinions, behavioral patterns through mass media is filled with particular features such as temporariness, variability, quickness in satisfying curiosity, easiness in reception and emotions excitation. Considering those factors, the recipient (it specially relates to little children as the rational part of their brain is still in the developmental stage) is unable to start running features which allow understanding, arranging, rating and valuing the flow of information. The above situation forces the recipient not to take any intellectual analysis and reflection as well as critical thinking in relation to the information flow received.

Excessive and irrational mass media usage may cause mass media addiction. Regarding this aspect, J. Chwaszcz (2005) believes this circumstance has a psychological basis and its outcomes can affect all areas of human functioning. Peer groups are considered to be at high risk. Excessive mass media usage may be generated by boredom, the lack of parental involvement, less attractive play activities as well as over extended play availability and unrestricted toy access. It also involves extremely high expectations set for children and finally wrong and misleading adult role model patterns in relation to mass media usage. Furthermore, in relation to children it also needs to be pointed out that children often lack logical thinking abilities and they find it difficult to distinguish between truth and fiction and they frequently lack experience. The lack of experience contributes to vulnerability of children in terms of negative mass media

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  [5] Rational brain - It is the most developed part of a brain also known as the frontal lobes or neocortex. From the point of view of evolution it is the youngest part which takes up to 85% of brain. This part of the brain enfolds the old brains of mammals. The neocortex is a part of the brain that sensitive emotional upbringing has a positive effect on. Functions of this part of the brain include:
  1. creativeness and imagination
  2. problem solving
  3. comprehension and ability to reflect
  4. self-awareness
  5. kindness, empathy and care.

influence. This is why it is necessary to provide appropriate circumstances for a child's development which should mainly take place amongst family members.

Children need care and attention from those ones who are the closest to them (they do not need it from TV screens or computers) and those people have a significant impact on the child's emotional development, building on and shaping self-esteem as well as a wide variety of skills and abilities such as interacting with others and managing stress. This ascertainment is crucially important nowadays where "mass media and hypermedia have a huge influence on all people regardless of age, education, nationality, religion or outlook" (Gajda,2007). Based on the results of the analysis carried out, there may be more negative consequences, especially in areas linked to human existence as well as the functioning of little children. There are a few somatic disorders that can be specified e.g. posture and spine defects, nervous and metabolic system problems and problems with allergies. The research that included little children who spend a lot of time in front of a TV screen or computer shows a proportional dependence between the time spent in front of TV or computer screen and possible language development delay.

It has been revealed that even educational programs such as *Sesame Street* may delay language acquisition if they are being watched by young children who are still going through the phase of language acquisition (Brzozowska, Sikorska 2016). It is important that an adult who has an emotional relationship with the child helps acquiring language by applying interaction while watching TV (explaining, naming, accompanying) which helps lowering language developmental delays. If the child watches TV alone there is no room for *common attention zone* significantly needed for language development. Furthermore, no mimics, gesture, body language relating to referent or event misleads a recipient. The recipient gets easily discouraged from remembering as well as thinking and the broadcasted program becomes blurred and somehow mesmerizes the recipient.

Children stimulated by TV and computer games would also show problems with selective attention which basically means that they will

have problems with their ability to choose and invest their energy in one stimulus only (Brzozowska, Sikorska, 2016). Not all of the programs correlate with a deficit of selective attention in relation to children. Programs with quick action and scenes of violence or classified as entertainment programs may lead to deficits of attention. M. Spitzer (2016) referred to research findings conducted on a group of children aged 4 and 6 years old. The research clearly proved that watching movies containing quick actions and set in fantasy world leads to concentration disorders. Furthermore, the research findings have also proved that similar negative outcomes arise after watching educational movies with quick action. Additionally, there was no similar outcomes in educational programs in which speed and content were deliberately tailored to the perceptional needs of a child. Risks related to deficits of selective attention seem to be considerably serious (the more TV is watched before the age of 3, the more possible it is that the children will face problems related to maintaining attention at the age of 7. Each hour of screen time increased up to 90% of possible further risks related to maintaining attention) (Spitzer, 2016). These frightening findings are not that surprising when we refer to the knowledge of the development of a child's brain. Not fully formed brain structures exposed to constant mass media influence learn how to function in a pathological way. This can be seen in a lack of persistence in task completion, moving from one activity to another without completing any of them as well as chaotic, uncontrolled and excessive activity.

The harmful influence of mass media has also been proven in terms of the child's cognition as well as its school achievements. There are some frightening reports that talk about a close link between watching TV (especially before the age of 3) and lowering test scores which measure intellectual capabilities. Additionally, it is extremely difficult for children to learn from TV. Additionally, it is far more difficult if not impossible to learn from TV in comparison to natural situations taking place in the child's natural and closest environment. Why? It closely relates to not fully formed perceptional and cognitive structures that are typical for a little child.

Taking into account the syncretism and subjectivism common for pre-school age children, it is important to remember that the correct

perception of TV programs (or from different sources) are significantly difficult for a young child. The lack of cause and effect thinking which children usually develop at age of 6 or 7 may also have a significant effect on how a movie and its message is received and understood. Pre-school children who find it difficult to understand and to interpret symbolic content of the movie often focus on very basic first hand observations (Nowakowski, 2000). This situation, if often repeated, may lead a child to adapt a habitual and thoughtless watching habit. This may also put at risk their still developing psyche as well as the morality of a child. They may become deformed as a final effect of it. The above findings are frightening considering the fact that mass media have had a massive influence on children as well as parents. It changes their daily routines, often destroying the structure of regular daily tasks and commitments by involving whole families in watching TV for long periods of time (Izdebska, 1996).

J. Izdebska (2000) highlights that non-selective and excessive watching of TV by children significantly contributes to:

6. intellectual laziness;
7. lack of sensitivity in terms of suffering and difficult situation of others;
8. experiencing emotional problems such as fear or excessive excitability;
9. expressing aggression and antisocial behavior;
10. susceptibility to disease;
11. interference in communication which links to unilateral screen experience;
12. deformation of imagination and creative actions;
13. impairment of speech;
14. shaping and consolidating of photographic and two-dimensional way of pictorial screen reality;
15. shaping susceptibility for suggestions and credulity;
16. fabricating fictional needs;
17. sense of loneliness (Izdebska, 2000).

Concluding: excessive and non-selective watching TV is harmful for children and results in many negative consequences affecting their

appropriate process of development. Furthermore, TV and mass media, if wisely and rationally used, may play a significant role for family up-bringing environment in areas such as:

18. the child's education and development;
19. expanding parental knowledge in psychological, pedagogical and medical aspects;
20. stimulating parents to take actions in upbringing, caring, educating as well as cultural aspects;
21. supporting integration processes taking place while collectively watching TV;
22. equalizing and compensating shortages of family environment.

It is important to remember that parents have a very important role to play while accompanying their children in a journey through the colorful and magical world of TV programs and computer games. The child's contact with mass media based on rational, controlled, astute and prudent parental control may also have advantage such as:

23. enriching the child's knowledge on social, historical, cultural topics as well as science and topics related to art;
24. developing imagination, observation and memory;
25. enriching vocabulary and concepts;
26. arousing interests;
27. stimulating children to take on new activities or actions in intellectual, cultural and social dimensions (Izdebska, 2000).

A. Andrzejewska (2006) claims that TV programs may significantly support the development of a child's knowledge of the surrounding reality and in this matter supporting family in its educational and upbringing role. To make it happen, it is important to properly, selectively and rationally approach the matter that relates to TV programs watched by children.

Voices of the children and their parents – the results of the research

The research conducted in 2012 by a company called AVG Technologies on a large population of children (2,200 mothers of children aged two to five years old), was intended to answer the questions of what children were able and liked to do. The research findings provided sad but predictable information. It turned out that the great majority of five year-olds were able to use smartphones or control a computer mouse rather than swim or to tie their shoe laces. Furthermore, it was revealed that only a few children were able to put cereal into a bowl and pour some milk on top of it. Did anything change within the past few years since the research was carried out? To answer this question, researchers conducted another survey on a population of 100 children attending one of the nurseries in Krakow (Olszówka, 2015). The kids were asked about their preferences in terms of spending free time. The questions were structured to obtain fairly objective answers. Each child answered individually, in a separate room. These questions were supplemented by questions contained in surveys addressed to their parents.

The research findings point out that 99% of surveyed children like watching TV and they do it on a daily basis. It turned out that the level of viewing (and the child's watching preferences) is influenced by the fact of having an access to a TV set. In many families, there is more than one TV not having to say that there are smartphones and tablets accessible for every member of the family.

The results of the research carried out on the population of 100 preschool children in one of the kindergartens in Krakow coincide with the results included in the "Nobody's Children Foundation" report. The data shows that:

- 64% of children aged from 6 months to 6.5 years use mobile devices, (out of which 25% on a daily basis)
- 26% of children have their own mobile device
- 79% of children watch movies and 62% play on a smartphone or tablet

- 63% of children had played with a smartphone or tablet without a specific purpose
- 69% of parents provide mobile devices to children when they need to have some time off. 49% of parents use this as a kind of reward for the child.

Similar data can be found in the world's latest reports on the preferences of children spending their free time. Children, despite declarations of attachment to their parents and willingness to spend time with them, when asked how they prefer to spend their free time, they answer:
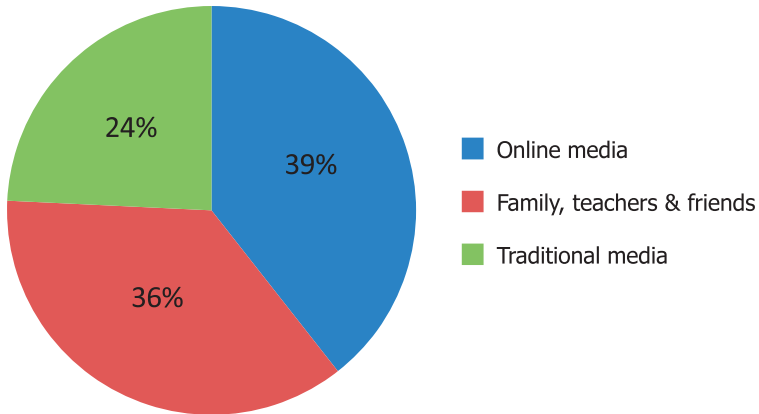
**How children receive and perceive the news. Web source:
www.comonsense.org/research**

Silent killer (mass and digital media access) in a child's room leads to addictions such as; irritability, crying and sleep difficulties. These are the less severe outcomes. The real problems come to light when first and the most important role is played by aggression and enormous socializing problems. For example, children become reluctant to show empathy, do not interact with peers and ignore adult recommendations. Some of them are unable to fall asleep without a smartphone / tablet held in their hands or having a TV or computer on.

There is nothing new brought by research analysis which relates to children who "start" entering the virtual world. Children normally start their journey with a TV set (at first as passive viewers) at the age of one. The highest numbers of children were involved in watching TV at the age of two. Glaring TV or computer screens, quick changes of colors and images naturally attract even a baby's attention. It may happen that an unformed and immature nervous system of a baby may be negatively affected by becoming hyperactive. It may also be wondered if parents of mentioned children have sufficient knowledge about brain development and how it can be affected by such an early TV and digital media initiation. Furthermore, it is important to notice that the younger the child is and exposed to TV or computer screen, the higher possibility that its brain will not develop properly! It may also happen that monotonous and repeated activities such as looking at the screen or sliding a finger on a screen, will lead to some parts of the brain not being developed enough or not being developed at all, which is fundamental for correct future functioning.

The data presented in the latest reports are alarming. They indicate that already very small children, not even preschoolers, reach for mobile devices. Moreover, as they grow up, the tendency to use these devices increases even further.

Children using from mobile devices available at home
by age category, %.

Age category	Percentage
children one year old and two years old (n=315)	43%
children three years old and four years old (n=334)	62%
children five years old and six years old (n=362)	84%
total (N=1101)	64%
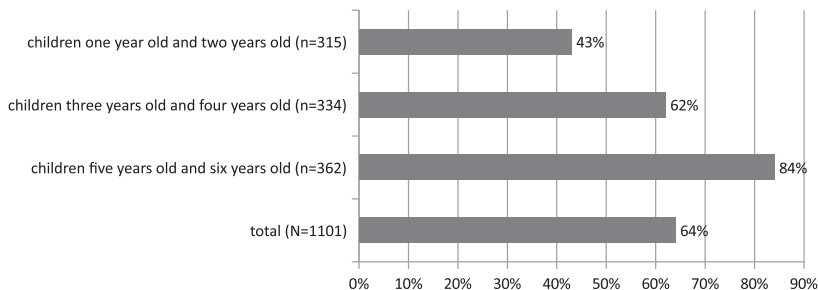
(Web source 1)

It is exceptionally important to pay attention to the fact how much time is spent by a child in front of a TV screen. Children at this age have a natural need of movement and should run, climb, jump, learn how to fall safely as well as maintain the balance as riding the bike and coordinate their movements when they swim. These activities get children ready to learn to write, read and to overcome failure. What about spending time passively in front of a TV screen? It leads to rapid fatigue, apathy, the lack of coordination and reluctance to learn anything. Research findings in this field calm the situation down a bit: most of the surveyed children spend one to two hours per day in front of a TV screen. Only some of the parents (5% in total) declared that they had exceeded the mentioned time limit. They admitted letting their children spend over three hours in front of a TV screen on a daily basis. The author's research is also confirmed by the results of nationwide surveys, included in the previous report (Web source 2). The average time devoted to the media during the day is spent on:

- playing games on the console – 1 hour 11 minutes
- watching movies on your smartphone / tablet – 1 hour
- searching for content on the Internet – 52 minutes
- browsing websites – 50 minutes
- playing games on a smartphone / tablet or using other mobile applications – 49 minutes
- playing with a smartphone / tablet without a specific purpose – 38 minutes.

In light of the conducted research, the amount of time during the day that parents allow their children to spend watching TV is alarming. The highest number of children watch TV in the evenings and major part of surveyed children begin watching TV shortly after they left nursery and arrived at home. Nearly half of surveyed parents admitted that their children mainly watch TV during meal times and in the mornings before leaving for nursery. Professionals who focus on mass media issues do not recommend for children to watch TV in the evenings as the emotions that are

being generated by TV programs do not help falling asleep and disturb further resting at night time. Furthermore, mass media professionals recommend watching TV before midday as the best possible time for young viewers. They also recommend prohibiting children from watching TV during meal times. Children do not focus on eating and do not take an active part in meal consumption. Additionally, watching TV during meal times significantly affect bonding and building family relationships and in this matter adults often fail to be good role models. Children being irritated by the fact that parents were more absorbed by a gadget during a meal time (mobile phone) rather than them […] did everything they could to attract attention. One of the boys tried to turn his mum's face so she could look at him rather than a screen. A father of three boys did not react as they were singing and when they behaved in a silly way. When they started behaving too loud he shouted to make them quite (Romanowska, Lis, 2015).

The question arises as to why do parents accompany children in their contact with the media? Averaged data shows that in about 50% of situations this is the case. The parent demonstrates, participates or exercises some form of supervision over the child's activity. The remaining 50% of children becomes independent in this matter very early on. Another question arises; why do parents have excessive confidence in the choices of a young child, his preferences, and allow leaving him alone with an electronic device and uncontrolled use of the media? Every fifth parent admits that he lets the child use the devices to eat a meal. Nearly 15% of parents use mobile devices to make it easier for children to fall asleep.

It is extremely important that children who access TV programs watch content that is suitable for them and adjusted to their perceptional capabilities, emotional development as well as development of thinking. This is why it is so important to choose the right TV channels and programs that meet the above expectations. Based on parental feedback, it turns out that slightly less than half of children of pre-school age (46%) have their favorite programs and 54% of young viewers do not show any preferences in this matter. Following on the above subject the *Mini Mini* was chosen as the most favorite TV station. From the programs offered, children most often choose fairy tales and animations. There are also

some children who follow science and musical programs (they can positively stimulate the child's development if they are adequately chosen to match the perceptional capabilities of young viewers and it is accompanied by the wise and supporting presence of an adult).

Based on movie channels and different types of programs mentioned by parents and children from the Krakow kindergarten, it can be concluded that adults are interested in and control what their children watch on TV. Parents who are involved in what their loved ones watch fulfil the need of overlooking, controlling as well as participating and taking part in receiving the content of programs addressed to their children. Additionally, it is very adverse if a child is left to watch TV on its own. Children, due to their developmental restrictions, are often unable to correctly receive media content which may significantly affect their psyche and morality which still are at a developmental stage. Parents who allow their pre-school age children to watch TV or use tablets on their own must be aware of the fact that it will significantly affect their child's social abilities. Moral and ethical values of their child may be dangerously modified as TV programs often do not promote positive values and attitudes that would be worth following. A distorted view of reality formed in child's mind and influenced by mass media can become the only source of understanding the surrounding reality unless this view is adjusted by adults. Concluding, adults should be aware of the fact that children should not watch TV on their own.

An important element that plays a vital role in a child's access to the world of mass media culture is how the time as well as watched contents are controlled in their family environment. Parents who were asked about applying particular rules related to mass media accession declared doing so with their children. Most of the surveyed parents (66%) answered that they set particular rules within the home environment. However, a large group of questioned parents (34%) answered negatively, explaining that they do not set the rules in their home environment. This has a negative impact on children who need help from adults in developing an understanding as to how mass media should be used. Are parents aware of their role as well as the importance of rules they set for their

child's development? This question was answered by parents who explained their knowledge on safe access and usage of mass media.

Nearly all parents (96%) declared they had sound knowledge on how to safely access mass and digital media. Only 4% of parents assessed their knowledge as insufficient. Regarding the mentioned data, it is clear that nearly all surveyed adults are interested in using mass media and consider themselves literate in how to safely use and access TV, computer, tablet or other digital devices. Furthermore, parents were able to name different sources they use to gain their knowledge on mass media effects on their children. The first source of knowledge parents mentioned were articles from different magazines and newspapers (65%). Surveyed adults also referred to professional literature as well as courses and workshops or other forms of training.

A few practical tips

The author presents some advice for parents who declare a willingness to expand their knowledge on how the media may affect their child's development but does not provide any information as to how and where they find relevant information. The author has listed a few practical steps to follow, based on the research conducted by Kaiser Foundation (Web source 3).

1. Do not let your child's interpersonal relations with others to be distorted.

Close relationships with parents and siblings; games, conversations, naming the world, establishing and tightening relationships will have an effect on the future emotional relationships between the child and other people. If the parents devote a lot of time to their child, it is very likely that their contact with the environment will be appropriate. One must be aware that a child's nervous system, exposed to electronic devices from early childhood, develops incorrectly. The consequences are the lack of concentration and incorrect perception of the world around them.

As a result, the child develops another perception of the world, has diffi-culties with establishing proper interpersonal relations. The "plastic" car-icature world of games does not match the real one.

2. Do not let your child to become an addict.

Clicking only once children are able to get what they want. This is why they instantly get used to using mobiles and tablets and, unlike adults, children may find it really difficult to take control over the addic-tion. "New technologies attract people because the virtual world allows us to try new things. It is difficult to resist the temptation to use electronic equipment, because it will never put a limit to meet the needs" (Small, Vorgan, 2009).

3. There will be fewer reasons to cry.

The child attached to the equipment, using it unlimitedly, gets angry when we take the gadget away from him. The weakness of a parent who capitulates under such pressure just to calm down a fussing child, leads to nowhere. Such actions bring a solution to the problem only for a mo-ment, but they will not teach the child to control the emotions. If the elec-tronic devices become a form of medicine to keep children calm, how will they learn to control their emotions? The normal way to make a young child calm is to make sure the child knows we are with them. We may also give the child a cuddle, say something good about them or turn her or his attention away from the problem and offer to play together.

4. Your child will sleep better.

It has been scientifically proven that using electronic devices in the afternoons have a negative influence on how children sleep at night and how they feel the next day. Over 50% of parents do not supervise the time of using electronic devices by their children. 75% of children have the possibility to use TV and computers in their rooms. 75% of children aged 9 and 10 cannot sleep well because their thoughts shift to games, movies, cartoons, etc. This has a huge impact on concentration and learn-ing outcomes.

5. Your child's interest in education will increase.

Limited access to electronic devices will make your child bored. If someone is bored for too long, then it naturally leads to creative thinking! Some children will start thinking about games they can play while others will get involved in reading books. Most importantly, the mind will be encouraged to do some thinking. Additionally, the more the mind gets stimulated, the more flexible it becomes. It may lead to the situation in which the mind will independently "demand more" information.

6. Your child will become more sociable.

Children experiencing direct contact learn to feel fully relaxed in presence of other people.

A healthy relationship is based on frequent and direct contact with other people. It is necessary to get to know someone e.g. their body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, mood changes and the way to express emotions in order to be able to have a relationship with them. It can be noticed that modern video equipment is not able to develop a child's creative imagination. Teachers of young children complain that many of them have to learn symbolic fun. A few years ago, it was a symptom that occurred only in mentally and emotionally disturbed youth (Large M, 2006).

7. Your child will have better fitness.

The time spent with electronic devices is static. A child looking at the digital screen in a seating position can last for hours. Scientific research proves that children who have restricted access to tablets, mobile phones and computers tend to become overweight less.

8. Selfless kindness of your child will last longer.

The later children come across violent behaviors, the better. Most game scenarios for electronic devices are based on violence. Children who play those games will be less sensitive to cruelty and consider violence as a successful way of solving problems.

9. There is nothing more important than the calmness of your child.

Sometimes a large flow of information may irritate even an adult. Let us try to imagine what effect it can have on children, considering the fact that their nervous system is far less resistant. Social media brings with themselves a lot of bad examples and may cause children a lot of stress. Media reports that are saturated with violence can cause child aggression. Young children are increasingly exposed to the increasing occurrence of physical and sexual violence in today's media. For example, the computer game *Grand Theft Auto 5*, as well as many movies and TV shows, present explicit sexual acts, murders, rapes, torture and mutilation. Omnipresent violence in the media was considered as a threat to public health due to the causal impact on increased aggression in children (Web source 4).

Summary

Today's generation of young people is called "iGen" – it is a shortcut from "iGeneration"; the first generation that does not know the world without "i": iPhone, iPod, iPad. Although the previous generation was said to be addicted to the network, the current one that was born after 1995 does not know any other life than with constant access to the web. The era of the smartphone has meant that the number of acquaintances in the real world has decreased drastically, interpersonal bonds crumble, the quality of conversation and the sentences used in it decreases as well. People tend to make significantly less eye contact during conversation. In return, they are staring at the screen, sending short information, reading insignificant news, their life is full of stillness and stagnation. They obtain superficial knowledge that is temporary and useless. They make virtual contacts – numerous, but very impermanent. They lack friendship, commitment, their own opinions and thoughts. With our actions we lead children to such schemes. Do we want such a future for them?

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Growing up in a Family as a Time of Identity Formation

Abstract: The article presents the problem of the identity formation of an adolescent, in the context of the most socially significant reference group – the family. Adolescence is a time for searching for answers to many questions about the sense of life, goals, values, priorities. The individual identity formation process is a unique developmental opportunity, but at the same time a difficult period for those growing up, as well as their family. The article discusses the main directional changes which accompany identity formation and presents the social context of this process. It is a parental task to create a safe space of living together for their growing children, where there are common beliefs about values, ideals and life priorities. The article especially highlights the meaning of spiritual and world-view questions, which – as a basis of parents' lives - give directions to their children's pursuit of answers to the basic questions accompanying identity formation.

Keywords: growing up, identity formation, teenager in a family

Introduction

Adolescence is an inevitable time in every human's life and usually connected to considerable turmoil, crises and a lack of balance. At the same time, it is a developmental phase leading towards the development of psychological order (harmony) and, as a consequence, to achieving goals related to autonomy, understood as an element of human subjectivity.

The autonomy shaping process begins in the last phase of childhood, when a child gradually achieves emotional independence from their parents. At this stage of life, a young person is often treated like a child, but, at the same time, in many situations he/she experiences adult freedom or demands. Resisting being dependent on a parent, a child increasingly stands up to or rebels against parental demands and bans. The child willingly criticizes all of the previous consequences and resists the imposition of power, which had influenced his or her life until now.

Adolescence is a time of the formation of one's identity, defining the sense and goals for further life. The process of shaping an autonomic identity takes involvement and effort on the part of a teenager as well as the people around him, including, first of all, the immediate family. How can one provide an adolescent with proper support in a process which can be a developmental opportunity, but also a difficult period for a teenager as well as his or her parents?

Directions of Change Connected to a Teenager's Identity Formation Process

The literature on the subject often points to a collision of two visions of the world. Differences between the visions of parents and the adolescents are a consequence of the level of emotional and social maturity, intellectual abilities as well previous personal experiences. Perception and assimilation of social change concerning values, norms, law, attitudes, civilizational achievements can lead to conflict within a family. The parental vision of the world has already been significantly verified with their adult experience, while a teenager is still searching and experimenting. An adolescent is open to novelty, it is easier for him or her to be open to new experiences, by which he or she is often more capable of adjusting to social changes in today's world (Gurba, 2013, p. 210–214).

At this moment it is worth recalling the most important directions of change connected to the process of identity formation. The teenager makes their first efforts to obtain answers to such questions as: Who am I? Who do

I want to be and what am I capable of? What do I want my life to be directed by? How do I want to be perceived by others? Which values are important to me? About what can I make decisions and what can I influence?

These kinds of questions include various fields of the functioning of young people: personal, social, cultural. The sense of one's own individuality is enhanced, an adolescent also gradually gains new competencies, which allow him or her to fulfill social needs. Teenagers get involved in activities which allow them to strive for success and good outcomes.

Discovering one's own identity is related to various experiences from previous developmental stages, but it is during adolescence that a young person's experiences intensify greatly. They also gradually become generalized, ordered, becoming a base of an organizing self-consciousness of a teenager (Obuchowska, 1996, p. 104).

Classic concepts describing the core of the creation of individual identity are based on Erik Erikson's approach, who considered forming a unique, independent Self in adolescence as a basic task and dilemma of this developmental stage. The identity formation process can be disturbed by chaos connected to the many different social roles in which a teenager functions. Thus, for example, the sense of one's own Self in the role of a student is created by internally comparing one's personal achievement with the teenager's dream ideal, as well as with comparing his achievements with those of their co-students.

Erikson treated adolescence as a moratorium between childhood and adulthood. In this developmental stage, the young person has to create an identity characterized by three traits: coherence, consistence and mutuality between one's self-perception and the way he or she is perceived by others (Erikson, 2004).

Contemporary theories of identity formation during adolescence usually recall a description of identity status by J. Marcia, based on Ericson's concept. Marcia assumes that the identity formation process is accompanied by a crisis related to the young person making new decisions, choices, owning values and getting involved in new roles, ideologies and goals. This process can have the form of a violent crisis or be milder and more gradual.

Four of Marcia's identity statuses are: identity achievement, moratorium, identity foreclosure, identity diffusion. To achieve a full identity, an adolescent has to analyze one's goals and values and to achieve stable involvement (Bee, 2008, p. 369).

M. Berzonsky's contemporary identity processing style model referred to Erikson's concept. Berzonsky assumes that identity formation is caused by conscious, intentional factors, but also some indirect ones. Speculations on identity formation are about the question: "Who am I as a person living in the present reality?". Not only predispositions, possibilities, abilities and competencies, but also the processes which indirectly influence identity formation are important. They include: mimicking and modeling parents and peers, school education, trainings and instructions, automatically internalized cultural message, experiences recorded from very early childhood. Different views of identity style in this author's conception assume the relative presence of collective, social and personal content. Informational style is to a large extend based on the personal attributes of Me, such as standards, goals and values directed to the self. In the normative style there is a prevalence of collective aspects of identity related to family, religion, nationality; and in the diffuse-avoidant style, there is a predominance of social attributes such as: reputation, popularity, making impression on others (Oleszkowicz, Senejko, 2013, p. 147).

Discussing Erikson's and Havighurst's attitude, E. Gurba points to seven developmental tasks during adolescence related to identity formation. She sees a direct link to the pursuit of the answer to the question: "Who am I?" in specific tasks:

- forming male or female sex
- accepting one's appearance and body control
- developing value system important for everyday choices
- reaching emotional independence from parents and other adults
- creating new, more mature relationships with peers of both sexes
- preparing to marriage and life in a family
- getting ready for a career and achieving financial independence (Gurba, 2013 p. 173).

Disturbance during the identity formation process can lead to the diffusion of roles, feeling disoriented, uncertainty about who one really is and, as a result, to withdrawal and isolation. I. Obuchowska highlights that adolescents who remain in opposition to society's proposal to get involved and define themselves often begin behaviors and roles which are not socially accepted. This negativistic approach of teenagers is often referred to as a negative identity, characterized by feelings of alienation and depersonalization, disorganization and internal emptiness. This kind of identity, derived from a rebellion against socially accepted values and roles, can often be accompanied by some criminal behavior on the part of adolescents, as well as manifested itself in the form of rejecting canons of correct behavior, appearance etc. Rebellious identity can be a kind of mask, a game, which serves as a way of radical, expressive distinction, attracting attention especially in an immediate environment of family and peers (Obuchowska, 1996, p. 105–109).

The Teenager in a Family and Peer Group

The need to include the social context of identity formation process turns our attention to important reference groups of an adolescent. This role is primarily fulfilled by the family and the peer group.

For a teenager during early adolescence, a peer group becomes the most important reference group, which allows them to create their own value and build a framework of identity. Belonging to a specific group means accepting a particular style of being and functioning accepted by the group members. Strong bonds are created, a young person begins to feel supported and included and gains a source of self-acceptance (Smykowski, 2012; Rutkowska, 2002). Contact with peers allows adolescents to create their image and build self-confidence. Comparison to peers allows them to formulate opinions on one's looks, which unfortunately often leads adolescents to experiencing discontent and frustration. Changes related to physical development are often a source of many problems and disruptions in the area of forming a physical identity (Gurba, 2013, p. 173–177).

Belonging to a peer group increasingly takes the form of contact through social media. It allows one to pass on information very quickly, share thoughts and opinions, gives an (often illusory) sense of belonging, bonding and solidarity with a group. However, it is worth remembering that the forming of an individual identity takes reflection and self-analysis, especially in the area of motivating actions which enhance personal growth.

This is where a need for real, authentic social bonds and educational actions towards teenager arises, especially those provided by the family. A teenager builds their self-worth based on the acceptance of meaningful persons, and in this developmental stage this is mainly their peers. Research shows that adolescents spend four times more time talking to their peers than to adults and it is among peers that social competencies and behaviors are developed. It doesn't mean, however, that the adult world – the one of parents and caregivers – stops counting at all (Zimbardo, Johnson, McCann, 2010, p. 228).

The end of childhood and then an early stage of adolescence starts a gradual process of emotional independence from parents. Some of the typical teenage behaviors in this period include: questioning norms and rules that were present until now in the family, criticizing parents, searching for models outside of the family home. These behaviors are related to an adolescent's search for his or her own way to autonomy (Scabini, Manzi, 2012).

Developmental tasks also include those leading to being independent from one's parents. It is important to increase the teenagers' role in their independent decisions, while at the same time sustaining the parents' right to control those areas of life in which personal experience has a special meaning.

One can often hear about the decreasing meaning of parental authority in teenagers' eyes. Research outcomes point to some regularities in this area. Although this separation process assumes the necessity of loosening the bonds between teenagers and their parents and widening social relationships, it is the influence of the relationship with parents that still plays a very important role in adolescents' functioning. Parents, by

their belonging to a certain social class, usually indirectly influence the choice of a peer group which their child joins, as well as their choice of a specific educational path. Research also shows that teenagers apply the model of their functioning with parents to their relationships within a peer group. Peaceful peer-to-peer relationships usually coexist with warm, supportive and accepting relations between teenagers and their parents (Oleszkowicz, Senejko, 2009, p. 162–163).

A distinction between parental and peers' authority in areas important to young people becomes noticeable. Parents' authority and opinions count when it comes to politics, money spending, and personal problems. Peers are important when a teenager's problems are about clothing, spending time, looks, conflicts with friends. Teenagers are willing to talk to their parents about plans for the future, political views, but rather reluctantly about their feelings towards other people, especially the intimate sides of social relations (Grzankowska, 2002; Łapińska, Żebrowska, 1975).

Adolescence is a time for searching for one's own sense of life and understanding problems and moral dilemmas, including those connected to one's world-view. Young people experience religiousness in its internal feeling. The shaping of the world-view and value system are among the most important development tasks of adolescence and are crucial for one's concept of their own adult life. World-view convictions allow adolescents to identify with the world of values, and the value hierarchy is shaped by various factors.

The emerging identity is also, or even most of all, in its moral aspect an authentic feeling of being a good, worthwhile person. It is important to emphasize the influence of meaningful adults, most of all parents, who in their life and actions commit to the values they cherish.

Each family has its own specific educational sensitivity, which depends on parental personality traits, their attitudes, value system, intellectual, moral and communicational competencies. Other important factors are economic conditions, the way they share obligations, the participation of grandparents and other family members in family's everyday life.

We live in a world which places considerable pressure on us, our families, but especially on our children, a pressure connected to the cult of

material achievement, common competition, beauty standards, slim figure, consumptive lifestyle. Some parents become uncritically influenced, others try to limit the pressure of fashion trends and some media on how to effectively and immediately solve all life and family issues.

In each family raising teenagers there are conflicts between parents and children. Adolescence is characterized by higher frequency and intensity of conflicts within a family than during childhood. They are more frequent in a youngster's interactions with a mother than with a father, which is probably caused by more frequent contacts and the higher level of involvement of mothers in teenagers' behavior. Some direct causes of conflicts are: an expressive protest of a young man against too much involvement of parents in most of areas of his life, using demands and forbidding, criticizing a teenager from a level of parental authority (Gurba, 2013, p. 221–242).

Sources of conflict are divided into three groups:

- Intergenerational conflict, where two different visions of the world collide and the parental vision has already been verified in their adult lives, while the teenager's vision, although often times closer to the contemporary circumstances – is mainly hypothetical. Intergenerational conflict can relate to different attitudes to political, social issues, customs, world-view, value system, degree of identification with one's own generation, lifestyle.
- Conflict about developmental changes during adolescence. Stronger conflicts are characteristic, especially in early adolescence, and address such developmental changes as:

  – higher level of egocentrism of teenagers,
  – excessive criticism and unrealistic vision of the world caused by developmental change in the cognitive area,
  – emotional lability,
  – lack of tolerance and radicalism,
  – teenge tendencies to analyze caused by increased awareness and cognitive abilities,

- increasing tendency to take risky behaviors, which is often a defense against deterioration of one's until now self-perception,
- widening social relations, searching for models and authorities outside family,
- conformism in accepting peer group models,
- being more interested in relationships with peers and cutting on relations with parents.

- Conflicts connected to individual traits of a teenager (e.g. needs, personality traits, temperament, expectations etc.) (Oleszkowicz, Senejko, 2009, p. 163–165; Bakiera, 2009).

Based on her own research, E. Gurba notices that Polish youths, analogically to their Western counterparts, usually get into conflicts with parents in situations connected with:

- activities towards house and cohabitants cleaning, helping around the house, everyday obligations etc.),
- everyday rituals (time of going to sleep, using TV, internet, way of dressing etc.),
- teenagers' autonomy (going out on their own, time to come back, choice of friends etc.),
- school obligations (doing homework, bad school grades),
- interests (such as spending free time).

Among the causes of boys' conflicts with parents, which are much more frequent than those of girls, are:

- socially unacceptable behaviors,
- school obligations and interests,
- world-view.

Girls, on the other hand, are much more often involved in conflicts about issues concerning school obligations and everyday rituals. Risky

behaviors of teenagers are not indicated as the most frequent conflict areas. It is explained not by the lack of difference between parent's and teenager's point of view but rather by hiding the risky behaviors away from parents and an illusory feeling of parental control over an adolescent. Lack of conflict in this area can also indicate a disturbing fact that risky behaviors are a kind of taboo among teenagers and their parents (Gurba, 2013. p. 210–214).

One should remember that a protest or even a rebellion against parents is usually one of the normative behaviors of adolescence. It is usually a distinctive sign of loosening the until now strong bonds with parents and it serves to help gain independence (Rostowski, 2005). Rebellious behaviors of a teenager can be an important opportunity for parents to recognize the meaningful problems and dilemmas of their child. That is how teenagers may inform us about the way they perceive the surrounding world, other people, their value system etc. In this perspective, information on their child's needs and expectancies become important and can enhance lowering tensions and conflicts between them and their parents.

Research shows that teenagers expect their parents to be consequential and to leave them with moderate freedom. It is important to formulate clear and concrete parental expectations towards children, to explain parent's opinions and grounds, while also stressing their trust in children. Parents should clearly formulate and set boundaries which a teenager is not allowed to cross (Wrzesień, 2005; Bakiera, 2008).

It is also important that parents follow their child's development, which should be shown in a greater degree of flexibility in terms of relations with a teenager, the ability to adjust to changing needs and abilities of an adolescent. These changes should include expectancies and demands from a teenager, ways of communication and cooperation. Among the models of relationships with a teenager which enhance closeness and at the same time are not limiting, but create safety and satisfaction and as a result are a chance to foster the authentic autonomy of a teenager, are ones characterized by:

- authentic, emotional bond between parents and children, expressed in gestures, words, empathic behaviors, as well as perceiving oneself as an important and meaningful person for the whole family,
- learning about mutual needs, expectancies, problems and concerns with full openness and trust,
- readiness to act in the area of learning each other's opinions, attitudes and interests and to involve in dialogue,
- mutual readiness and willingness to get to know the problems and concerns and giving each other support and help in difficult situations,
- respecting each other's right to have separate opinions, plans, having another perspective in perceiving surrounding reality and to respect intimate living space,
- readiness to cooperate while solving conflicts together and to cooperate for the whole family's best interest (Oleszkowicz, Senejko, 2009, p. 177–180).

One should remember there are conflicts and crisis in every family. It is then worth appealing to the authentic resources and power of a family, which are often hidden under a layer of fears, habits, difficulties with revealing one's feelings and emotions.

Misunderstandings and often serious conflicts happen in all families. Parents often then seek support and advice. It is important to remember that there are no instant, universal recipes to solve every problem in every family. A family is an individual, unique system, a specific quality and value. When it comes to children, it is the parents who are usually the best experts. They are the ones to decide what is important to themselves and their children. What kind of values do they want them to gain? What is the most important to them? Is the effectiveness in achieving goals the most important factor? Or is it the social competencies it takes? Or perhaps good manners and being well-behaved?

Let us not assess parental decisions about raising their children and remember that they are an individual outcome of a critical confrontation

of one's value system, hopes and dreams with fears, concerns and parental caring.

Parents can sometimes look for support during more difficult times while raising a child, also a teenager. It often happens that adolescents become involved in risky behaviors which can lead to negative consequences about physical and mental health. A teenager often doesn't notice a connection between his or her actions and dangerous consequences, especially those delayed in time.

C. Climati discusses the problem of the taking of risky actions by teenage peer groups. There is a disturbing fact of a lowering level of influence of educational environment versus the negative influence of the mass media, which praise the counterculture of risk. Fears and feeling lost, which are characteristic for adolescence, are multiplied by unrealistic and doubtful models of looks and lifestyle promoted by mass media. Climati discusses the possibilities of protecting young people from extremities, risks, ambiguity and unrealism. Three forms of actions towards young people are proposed and they are called: the culture of moderation, culture of involvement, culture of holiness.

- Culture of moderation encourages reasonability and respecting one's body, creates attitude of happiness derived from the fact of being unique and the only one. Young people often surrender to the pressure of mass media by creating a cult of possessions and consumption. Willingness to follow other's example often turns into unhealthy competition about material goods. Teenagers want to get desired objects in their will to mimic others, and the will to avoid economic discrimination. Climati stresses the necessity to raise children and youth in a way that allows them to appreciate and discover little things, joys and values of everyday life.
- Culture of involvement encourages responsibility, a willingness to sacrifice. Increasingly often, mass media offer an anti-model of values and attitudes, which propagates a false message about the possibility of being successful in life without the necessity to learn and work hard. Let us remember that diffusing passive attitudes,

an anti-culture of non-involvement, has an extremely negative impact on many aspects of our lives. Telling young people that the only thing important in life is being smart, but not putting in any effort or working hard brings anti-motivation into the areas of education, learning, developing talents and interests. A culture of involvement also reminds us that love brings sense to human existence, although it often needs sacrificing something for the ones we love.

- Culture of holiness assumes encouraging youth to get interested in spirituality by turning towards what is normal, casual and beautiful in its simplicity. Spiritual values sanctify young people's free time. It is looking for authentic joy in learning and work, but also in resting and entertainment, in a way which is not threatening to young people. A culture of holiness doesn't mean isolation from the world, on the contrary, it encourages full participation in life. It stresses the meaning of prayer and turning to the models of holiness which show a way to act right (Climati, 2007, p. 149–163).

It is important to support parents in their individual educational approach, whose aim is to deepen their understanding of themselves as well as of their children, focusing on the most important issues related to internal values and emotional depth, which characterize family relations.

In this place it is worth recalling Pope Francis' words to youth in Brzegi near Krakow during the evening vigil. The Pope highlighted the necessity to live a life which leaves behind a trace. He warned about attitudes paralyzing human behavior and named first of all fear and indolence, which causes a feeling that in our world, our town and communities, there is no more place for growing, dreaming, creating. The Pope warned about confusing happiness with easiness and comfort. The illusion of a happy life understood as vegetation on a cozy couch is a way to a paralyzing attitude, which takes autonomy and freedom away from a human being. From here comes the pope's appeal to youth: "To follow Jesus, you must have some courage, to switch your couch to a pair of shoes, which shall

allow you to walk the paths you have never dreamed about and not even thought of." And he told the young people who had gathered to listen to him: "Today's world wants you to be the active participants of history. Because life is always beautiful when we want to live it to its fullest, when we want to leave a trace. The history demands from us to defend our dignity and not to allow others to decide about our future. No, it is us, who are to decide" (Pope Francis' speech to youth during World Youth Day, Brzegi 30.07.2016).

Conclusions

As many psychological and pedagogical studies but also everyday experiences show, a happy child and a later self-dependent, fully mature, responsible young person is usually raised in a family which fulfills their needs. These are families in which parents and their child are bonded with love, connected with a warm-hearted, indivisible coexistence and selfless care. A close relationship with parents enhances safety, self-trust, ability to love, diligence and gives a moral compass to a child. The one who experienced limitless love will also be able to have basic trust in others and to give love.

The values internalized by a child are also most of all dependent on parents. Moral and spiritual ideals are given not only by moralizing words, but most of all are based on decent rules, mutual contact and the functioning of a family in which a child achieves the moral grounding necessary to be able to live a sensible and socially responsible life.

It is a parental task to create a safe environment to live together with their child, where common beliefs on life priorities are of paramount importance. Parents teach us about what is important in life, what is true and beautiful and what is secondary. Also, the spiritual and world-view questions on which parent's lives are based, should be the basis on which a child is raised. It is important that parents help their children to gain convictions about the sense of life and inevitability of moral obligations (Brezinka, 2007, p. 226–227).

The closeness between parents and children enables interpersonal communication, in which important and unique experiences and feelings are present. It is worth remembering that children learn first of all through example, cooperation and shared responsibility.

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The Synergy of Educational Environments
ARTICLES

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Responsible Parenthood as the Foundation of a Child's Success in Education

Abstract: This paper is an attempt to look at parenthood in the context of supporting the child in the educational process. It emphasizes the idea that educational success and further achievement and well-being of the child largely depend on the manner and quality of educational role performed by parents. Other important factors include parents' social and professional status, financial situation as well as parental awareness and responsibility.

The results of survey research used in this work show that the students of Rzeszów University Teaching Faculty see a considerable need for parental involvement in the teaching process of their offspring, which results mainly from a faulty school system.

The findings of the research are useful for teaching practice. Firstly, it seems that nowadays there is a need to look for new solutions that would make school and teachers closer to the real needs and capabilities of children and their parents. On the other hand, there is also a growing need for intensified educational activity directed to parents and potential parents aimed primarily at developing responsible parenting attitudes.

Keywords: parenthood, parental responsibility, parental involvement, education, educational success, school.

Introduction

The successful education of any child is largely dependent on the method and quality of the parenting role. This role should be understood as an aspect of family educational function whose fulfilment depends on a range of social, economic and cultural conditions affecting the family and the environment in which it operates. In the context of successful socio-educational start of the child, the key configuration of family conditions seems to be the one that ensures enhanced opportunities for the development of siblings through making such perspectives that enable the utmost psychophysical, intellectual, social and cultural development of the younger generation. What matters in this respect is the parents' professional status, education level, tradition of cultural and educational advancement, prosperity (Kawula, 1999, p. 281), and parental awareness (Kawula, 2000, p. 185). Special importance is attributed to high-quality parenthood resulting mainly from parental responsibility. This type of responsibility affects parents' conduct towards the child, which is oriented towards the latter's well-being.

Joanna M. Michalak points out that parental responsibility is the parent's response to the child's well-being, where the parent takes responsibility for everything that lies within the scope of their possibilities. Moreover, parental responsibility is related to all aspects of offspring life. It should be emphasized here that parents are responsible "for" the child, including the course of their development and meeting emotional needs, but also "for" themselves. At the same time, parents are responsible for what they have done and what they are like, because the latter affects their own future as well as the future of their children (Michalak, 2003, p. 22–24).

Responsible parenthood is about care responsibilities, upbringing and continuous concern about the child's development. This is also about creating such conditions for the child, from the very moment of birth, that enable independent existence, development of valuable orientations to life and ambitions. In the aspect that is of interest to us here, responsible motherhood or fatherhood involves promoting the child's

motivation to learn, developing interests and educational aspirations as well as the parent's engagement and participation in the educational process.

Methodology of research

The scope of the problems as outlined above was dealt with by means of an empirical approach, whereby I tried to determine how the students of Rzeszów University Teaching Faculty, as future teachers, perceive parents as promoters of the educational success of their children.

My research procedure combined a survey and a questionnaire technique. All the respondents were asked to provide reasonably detailed comments while answering open-ended questions, because I believed that non-standard opinions of the respondents were worth analysing in the context of the problems that are the subject of my interest. While analysing the feedback that I received, I made some generalizations as to their content. Occasionally, I also quoted several opinions. When asking questions about the parental role in the child's education, I did not specify the age of the offspring so as not to limit the respondents' feedback. The vast majority of the opinions were about primary school education with only 3 answers related to parental roles in the education of older children.

The research material that was obtained allowed for four major questions to be answered:

- how do respondents see the need for parental involvement in the child's school education?
- what is the reason for the active participation of the parent in the child's education?
- what is the essence of adequate parental involvement in the child's education?
- what circumstances prejudge the priority role of the parent in the child's education?

The research involved a total of 60 students in the field of Teaching (majoring in preschool and primary/early school education, childcare education and media education) and Family Studies. There were 56 students of Teaching (93,3%) and 4 students of Family Studies (6,7%). 25 respondents (41,6%) were undergraduate /first cycle students, while 35 of them (58,4%) were doing graduate courses. As regards sex, there were 59 women and only one man.

Analysis and interpretation of research results

On the basis of the results it may be said that the absolute majority of the subjects (54 people - 90%) pointed to the need for parental involvement in the child's education. This involvement is considered by the students as fundamental for the child's educational success and as a factor in the child's adaptation to school conditions and atmosphere as well as a condition of developing interest in learning, forging ambitions, aspirations and motivation to study. Two persons (3,33%) were of the opinion that this active engagement of parents is also necessary at the level of secondary school due to the fact that "young people are often unable to solve their school problems on their own," "need to be directed, and parents often have to assist in finding private lessons."

Table 1. The need for parental involvement in the child's education

Is it necessary for parents to get involved in their child's education?	Number of respondents N=60	%
Definitely necessary: the key for the child's educational success	54	90,00
Necessary but not as much as it is generally believed	2	3,33
It is hard to say	1	1,66
Unnecessary, it stops the child being independent	3	5,00
Definitely unnecessary	–	–

Source – own calculations

There were also opposite opinions. 3 people claimed that many parents make the mistake of "replacing the child" or "doing exercises **instead of** the child", "becoming overprotective", and even "dictating text assignments to the child" or "assisting with the easiest mathematical problems or solving them instead of the child." Another problem is private lessons which are already sought at the level of primary school and, to some extent, "release all responsibility from the child and in fact teach passivity."

According to the students who participated in the research, parental involvement in the child's education is a necessity that results from:

1. The child's personal features; in this respect the subjects emphasised the fact that at the stage of primary education every child needs assistance from their parents, because at the beginning of school education ("especially when starting at the age of 6") the child is not introduced and used to systematic work and may forget about new duties. It is the role of parents to "make sure that the child does homework," "remind the child about school duties," "review communication notebook every day," "regularly review notebooks and assignments," "develop the habit of systematic work," "make the child realize that studying precedes pleasures," "talk to the teacher frequently"; it is also parents' share "to make the child realize that studying is hard work, which is not really understood as such by the young child" and during further stages of education "to eliminate or diminish negative peer pressure that forces the fashion of not studying."

2. Preconditions of school education; in this context the students pointed to the fact that in its present shape, school does not carry out its functions and tasks correctly. It is predetermined by a number of reasons, among which the respondents mentioned the very organisation of teaching process, where the transmission model still prevails, school work organization, performance quality of specific teachers which, in their opinion, is the outcome of professional commitment, responsibility, empathy and competency to develop relationships and bonds with pupils/students

and their parents. Generalized opinions of the respondents are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Sources of the necessity of parental involvement in the child's education

Sources	Number of respondents N=60	%
Child's personal qualities resulting from age	12	20,00
Too high requirements imposed by the teacher that the child cannot meet	53	88,33
Overloaded and difficult curriculum	52	86,66
Teacher's negligence of pupils/students who have learning problems	50	83,33
Big classes which prevent the teacher from regular measuring of learning progress and individual approach to pupils/students	46	76,66
Quick pace of lessons that makes it impossible for many children to follow	34	56,66
Strict teachers that raise fear	29	48,33
Crowded schools that make the child feel anonymous	25	41,66
Demanding attitude of teachers expecting all responsibility to be taken by parents	17	28,33
No educational and childcare tasks being carried out by tutors and teachers	12	20,00

Source – own calculations

It is worth mentioning here a few opinions presented by the respondents:

- "The teacher expects from the parent that the child will be able to do everything before going to school";
- "Parental role in the child's education is the following: if the parent did not support the child, they would not manage at school";
- "School education is not enough. There must be the parent who will motivate the child and assist in studying"
- "If the parent does not get involved in the child's learning, the latter will fall behind with work, because the teacher will not notice anything";

- "Parents are made to spent time doing tasks which should be completed at school. Especially in primary school children are given assignments that they do not understand";
- "Because they are concerned about their child's education, parents take responsibility for education, because school curriculum is too extensive and covered inappropriately, thus the child is not able to learn things independently";
- "The child has to learn things at home which should be explained at school";
- "Even the smartest students face learning problems, because teachers do not give interesting presentations. (…) School kills ambition in pupils/students, so it is parents who must persuade their child that it is worth to learn";
- "The teacher often solves easy tasks at school and those difficult ones are assigned as homework. That is why parents have to help, although it should not be like that";
- "Teachers use parents to explain things to the child";
- "The child is not able to do extensive tasks independently. Parents have to help because they are made to do it";
- "Teachers do not consider the fact that young children are not able to sit still for a few hours and do work at home. I think that if it was not for parents, most children would give up education very quickly, which is unfortunate";
- "The role of parents is the fundamental one, because school just does not fulfil its tasks".

To sum up, if the parent wants to foster the child's educational success, they must undertake a series of activities aimed at promoting the development of the child's abilities. As one of the respondents said, "if parents are convinced that school will make something to bring about their child's success, they are wrong (…) they must show more interest and arrange for extra classes on their own."

The respondents also noted that once the parent takes over the role of a home educator, it inevitably affects the parent-child relationship. This

influence may be a positive one when bonds become tighter and the parent is "looked up to as an authority," or negative, when "the teacher demands but the parent, who is not a teacher and has no idea how to teach, forces the child to study at home. What follows is yelling, which in fact discourages effective work and prevents closeness."

The respondents believed that parental participation in the child's education is a complex and multi-faceted problem. On the one hand, it is unacceptable to allow for the situation where parental involvement eliminates or weakens commitment expected from the child, but on the other hand, the child may not be left alone and deprived of due help and support at the beginning of their school career.

Finding the so called golden mean is a hard task for many people. Nowadays, parents have very high educational aspirations with respect to their children, which means that they want their offspring to achieve better and higher quality education than their own (Szlendak, 2010, p. 236). They also yield to some social pressure which accompanies the trend of training and teaching children from an early age. As a result, very young children are sent to foreign language classes or other educational activities. Parents, who want success, good marks and victories at contests or competitions for their children, direct their behaviour, which results in children losing self-confidence (Ochojska, 2013, p. 91). In this context, Kornelia Hübscher describes a didactically-oriented parental strategy. It is present in people who carry out some well-thought out and planned activities targeted at professional success in the future life. The effect of parental strategy is expected as the child who is valuable, i.e. has the type of knowledge and skills that are necessary for work (Hübscher, 2013, s. 154–155). On the other hand, the parent who demands top marks may replace the child in school duties, which affects the latter's activity, spontaneity, creativity, but worst of all, undermines the belief that no educational success is possible without hard work, effort, but also failures.

The following answers presented in table 3 were provided to the question about the essence of correct and responsible parental involvement in the child's education.

Table 3. Core ingredients of responsible parental involvement in the child's education

Responsible parental involvement	Number of respondents N=60	%
Assistance in doing homework	58	96,66
Supervising homework being done	53	96,66
Emotional support to the child facing school problems	51	85,00
Parental involvement and participation in class and school life	45	75,00
If necessary, arranging assistance (private lessons, extra/compensatory classes at school, psychological assistance)	44	73,33
Real interest of the child in learning; invoking curiosity and eagerness to learn	40	66,66
Cooperation with teachers on a partnership basis	34	56,66
Making sure the child has attractive and suitable school aids (encyclopaedias, computer software, stationery)	33	55,00
Encouraging the child to read books and making sure school list books are read	28	46,66
Showing unconditional acceptance and meeting emotional needs of the child	23	38,33
Showing content and satisfaction with the child's success	22	36,66
Enrolment of the child in extra-curriculum activities (language camps, activity clubs)	19	31,66
Making and enforcing demands in compliance with teachers' demands	18	30,00
Stimulating intellectual development by frequent talks for the child and organization of education-oriented free time	18	30,00
Introducing to and teaching systematic hard work	17	28,33
Encouraging the child to take part in school competitions and subject contests	15	25,00

Source: own research. When analysing the respondents' answers to open-ended questions, some generalization of their content was made. Hence the decimals do not total 100.

On another analysis of the conditions and circumstances that prejudge the priority of parental role in the child's education, the respondents referred to a number of means which, they believed, may be used to exert some influence on the child. The means mentioned are presented in table 4.

**Table 4. What determines the priorities of the parental role
in the child's education?**

Parents play a key role because	Number of respondents N=60	%
They can approach the child individually	34	56,66
They can offer attractive rewards for success	21	35,00
Constitute an authority	18	30,00
Teach values, give love and safety	17	28,33
May build up the child's responsibility daily	14	23,33
Know their child's intellectual and emotional potential	12	20,00
Know their child's interests and preferences	13	21,66
Can regularly measure progress	11	18,33
Can watch their child every day, in usual situations, and modify educational activity accordingly	10	16,66
Can be counsellor	10	16,66
By showing interest, can promote the child to make effort better that the teacher	9	15,00
May assist in the choice of further career	4	6,66

Source: own calculations

Research conclusions and final observations

Parenthood, which is about fulfilling the role of mother and father, is the source of quality developmental changes which occur both in parents and children. It is also connected with different forms of parental activity and solving numerous emotional, social, religious, peer or school problems (Izdebska, 2015, p. 109). As regards the last aspect, parental responsibility and involvement may determine educational success and future life of the child. The results of research may be recapitulated in four points:

- The respondents agree that there is a tremendous need for parental involvement in the education process of their offspring;
- Parental involvement in education is a necessity that results mainly from a faulty school system. These problems are exemplified by high demands incompatible with the child's needs, overloaded curricula, and insufficient teacher's attention being given to students with school problems;
- An essential part of responsible parental involvement in the child's education is primarily their assistance in doing homework and ensuring that homework is done systematically as well as providing emotional support to the child when the latter has problems; parental involvement in education cannot lead to children being limited or replaced in their activities;
- The importance of parental role in the child's education is determined by a number of conditions, such as the possibility of individual approach to the child, rewarding success, and the fact that the parent is an authority to the child, a meaningful person who teaches values, gives love and safety.

As presented, the research is not the basis for broader generalization of the results. Its objective was to depict major problems perceived by the students of the teaching as far as the role of parents in the child's education is concerned. However, the results that have been obtained highlighted some issues and problems that need to be discussed.

Namely, the research indicates that nowadays there is a need to look for new solutions that would make school and teachers closer to the real needs of children and their parents. As the Swiss experience shows, the school oriented on the child as a person, enhances the student's awareness of being valuable as a human being. By promoting individualism in school environment, the student is encouraged to self-study, build self-confidence, „develop conscience, the feeling of freedom, responsibility, and it is school which helps the students to develop their own emotions and deal with them, fosters independent thinking, expressing emotions and communication." In this way, the school contributes to the child's

integral development understood as emotional, spiritual and psy-chophysical growth in accordance with natural laws and social life re-quirements (Izdebska, 2015, pp. 36–37).

At the same time, the research results are a prerequisite for under-taking educational activities targeted at parents, whose basic objective should be preparation for valuable and committed parenthood. When making references to the category mentioned in the topic, i.e. responsi-bility, it must be emphasized that shaping awareness skills in parents and building competencies that could contribute to the child's educational success, are both of utmost importance. It is vital here that parents have knowledge of their child, understand the idea of upbringing and can stim-ulate cognitive activity and educational ambitions in their child, under-stand that parent-teacher contacts do matter and their own parenting skills should be constantly upgraded. This will enable to select a correct educational strategy for the child (Hübscher, 2013, p. 141), combining in-volvement, dialogue with the child, cooperation with the teacher, assis-tance and support within a broadly understood conception of parental responsibility.

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Multiple Impact of International Cooperation in the Language Education of Children in Ukraine after 1991

Abstract: The article analyses the issue of international partnerships in plurilingual language education as a prerequisite for creating common grounds for productive communication in a pan-European area, of which Ukraine is a part. In this context, the past and present day practices in teaching and learning foreign languages in Ukraine have been described. The historical retrospection in the regular practice of language school education in the 19th–20th centuries proves that, although plurilingualism was a constant trend of the individual existence of a multilingual and multicultural setting of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, it has never really been valued as a factor of personal, academic or professional development of an individual and the society as a whole. The new social and individual perspectives that opened up in Ukraine after independence in August 1991 inspired the demand for real-life communicative skills in foreign languages. The key intention of the paper is to show how significantly foreign language education has been facilitated by the initiation of active cooperation with Western educational and cultural institutions. The narration ends with conclusions that stress the necessity of reciprocal efforts on the part of Ukraine and her partners in order to obtain a synergetic effect of their collaboration.

Key words: language education, foreign languages, multilingual setting, plurilingualism, intercultural competence, international partnership.

Introduction

From a global social perspective, efficient language education is perceived today as a valuable tool of facilitating communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to support their mutual understanding and cooperation in creating a friendly social environment to live in.

The ability to communicate efficiently in a multilingual setting and for intercultural understanding has become a key competence of the 21st century. It frames both the content and the form of contemporary language education.

In a modern multilingual world, for communication to work, it is important to promote individual plurilingualism as an individual person's skill and experience through creating possibilities for the learning of other languages. As many authors emphasize (Little, 2007; Figueras, 2012; Hulstijn, 2014), the idea of diversifying and intensifying language learning has become the overall aim of the present Council of Europe language policy. Moreover, it is relevant not only for the member-states of the European Union but in a pan-European context, too.

This idea builds on the assumption of the synergetic correlation of languages that form a person's language repertoire. It is stressed in the conceptual policy-mediating document of the Council of Europe "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (CEFR) that an individual with a plurilingual repertoire "does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). It means that in situations of communication with speakers of other languages, a person should be able to use different parts of their communicative competence to deliver his/her message effectively to a particular interlocutor. He/she is supposed to employ the whole of their linguistic equipment, and to use different communicative strategies: switching from one language to another, appealing to words from a common international store, simplifying the language,

paraphrasing what s/he wants to say, "foreignising" words from their first language, using mime, gesture or facial expression, etc.

Thus, the outcome of language education is no longer seen in today's world as simply achieving a mastery in one or two, or even more languages, each kept in isolation. Instead, the synergetic cumulative effect of a plurilingual frame of mind of the speaker acquainted with more than one language and culture leads to the appearance of new attitudes, skills, abilities. Most of them form the language learner's intercultural competence (Byram, 1997):

- cognitive attitudes, such as interest in discovering other languages and cultures, readiness to explore one's native language and culture, willingness to compare communicative and cultural practices in one's own and in other countries;
- different communicative strategies enabling a person to achieve mutual understanding in a cross-cultural interaction;
- ability to use transferable skills in language learning to make another language acquisition easier;
- interpreting skills that would allow a person to elicit significance and connotations in another language discourse;
- skills to identify similar and different features in the processes of verbal and non-verbal interaction in one's own and other languages;
- ability of critical thinking and evaluation of practices, products, behaviour patterns in one's own and other cultures and countries.

Since Europe is a multilingual and multicultural area, it faces a challenge of maintaining linguistic diversity together with creating common grounds for productive communication. "European communicative integration" has become the key-concept of the development of a civil society in Europe (Breidbach, 2003). It determines language education policies throughout the European continent. It presupposes an appreciation of plurilingualism, both as an individual competence and as a social value. An additional motivating factor appears to be learning other languages

in order to be able to participate in a European personal, public, occupational communicative exchange. Learning languages becomes a person's life-long possibility. Achieving competence in several languages (at whatever level it may be) is recognized as an intrinsic component of personal and professional development.

Some authors (Guilherme 2002; Breidbach 2003; Byram 2008) regard plurilingual language education and the choice of the languages as a political action. One of the arguments is that competence in foreign languages gives people who inhabit the European continent the "opportunity and ability to participate in public discourse on the questions of a future Europe" (Breidbach, 2003, p.7). The position taken by the Council of Europe on plurilingual language awareness and education also has a number of political undercurrents (Council of Europe, 2007). It deals with the acceptance of other people's languages as a human right, openness to other communities and cultures, attitudes to minority languages, acceptable balance between the national language and other linguistic varieties, recognition of multilingualism as a state trend, ability of different languages users to interact in all aspects of their lives and live together in democratic citizenship, etc. The integration of the aims of modern language education and citizenship/political education results in appearance of the concept of intercultural citizenship as "the basis for dialogue among groups of different languages and cultures within and across nation-state boundaries" (Byram, 2011, p. 10).

The point made here is that teaching and learning other languages has nowadays become a central educational and social objective that calls for special attention of all those involved in it.

Historical retrospection of the language education of children in Ukraine

A point of departure in this paper for an historical retrospection into the regular practice of teaching foreign languages to schoolchildren in the former Russian empire (which Ukraine was a part of) coincides with

the very beginning of the nineteenth century. In the newly-opened gymnasiums – 4-year general educational institutions of secondary level for boys preparing them to enter a university – foreign languages (Latin, German and French) constituted an extensive part of the curriculum in terms of volume and educational value. Without a knowledge of these languages, future university students would not be able to listen to and understand lectures in academic subjects delivered by professors invited from abroad. The new curriculum (1828) increased the period of schooling to 7 years and introduced the study of the Greek language, which together with Latin was proclaimed as one of the main means of education. Starting with the fourth year of study, gymnasiums were divided into streams: so-called "classical" (with one or two classical languages and two or one modern language correspondingly) and "real" (without classical languages but with obligatory study of two modern languages). The classics (Latin and Greek) were referred to as the major subjects (alongside mathematics) – the most reliable foundation of learning and the best way to raise and strengthen the moral virtues of young men. The learning of Latin started from the first form, and of Greek – from the fourth form. Both languages occupied 34% of the curriculum hours in the period of the 4th–7th forms. Intensive reading and translation of pieces from the literature and history of antiquity, beginning with legends and fables and then moving to more complicated texts of the most famous authors, provided the learners with cultural values of the ancient world, as well as historical and geographical knowledge. Of the two modern languages, German was taught since the first year of studying, French – from the fourth, the amount of academic hours for these languages in the 4th–7th forms being equal to 24%.

The new school regulations of the year 1864 introduced the policy of dualism into the school system by dividing all the gymnasiums into classical and real, mostly depending on the languages studied in them. The classical syllabus of gymnasiums reproduced the previous correlation of classical and modern languages, changes touched only the beginning year of studying this or that language. From their first day at school at the age of ten or eleven, boys started to learn four languages – Latin and

one or two modern languages, Greek appeared in the third. The ratio of academic hours for foreign languages grew to 42% of the whole amount of the classical gymnasium curriculum. In real gymnasiums, only modern languages (French and German) were taught, both starting in the first year of schooling and comprising 25% of the real gymnasium curriculum. The prestige of the classical languages was raised so high that only leavers of the classical gymnasiums were granted the right to enter university. The study of modern languages in real gymnasiums was linked with the concept of preparation for life and was the basis for the direct inclusion of their leavers in practice or for further professional education.

From this time onwards, the emphasis on classics as the fundamental component of good and prestigious education as well as decent preparation for reliable citizenship was only growing. Their role exceeded even the role of the Russian language because the initial skills in Latin and the knowledge of Latin grammar were considered fundamental for studying other foreign languages. The so-called "school counter-reform" of 1871 stated that special care should be taken to ensure the greatest possible success in teaching ancient languages as the main subject of the gymnasium through which students mostly developed and matured for independent study of science. A revealing fact is that the number of school hours for learning Russian was much less than the time allotted for the study of any of the classical languages: 24 weekly hours for the whole school course of Russian as compared to 49 hours of Latin and 36 hours of Greek. The prioritised status of ancient languages in school education was confirmed, in addition to the relevant curriculum, also by a gradually growing tradition of appointing teachers of Latin and Greek to the most authoritative and influential positions of school directors, supervisors and mentors.

The worst side of it was that learning classics ceased to introduce pupils to the world of cultural achievements of antiquity. Instead, they were required to study grammar by heart and used to get bogged down in endless translations from Greek into Latin and back again. The educational idea behind it was to provide learners' brains with good exercise. No practical use besides translations and question-and-answer sets was

presupposed. Plurilingualism of this kind did not bring many positive results. In fact, very few children succeeded in this ordeal and, more often, they became demotivated to study languages and hated them.

A little light began to emerge at the end of the tunnel in the late 19th – early 20th century, when the rapid development of industries, production technologies, business and trade opened new perspectives in practical use of foreign languages. A drastic change occurred in the hierarchy of foreign languages in the school curriculum in favour of modern languages and their practical use. The Ministry of Education of the Russian Empire was forced to recognize the excessive overload of the system of classical education with ancient languages and incorrect methodology of their teaching because of what the goals of classical education were not achieved, despite the considerable number of academic hours. The Greek language was excluded from the curriculum, and in the teaching of Latin, grammar exercises gave way to reading and commenting on literary pieces. The introduction of direct methods in the teaching of modern languages made them more focused on oral use and more culturally oriented. Although learning languages for communication and use in the world outside education was not realized, the mechanism of treating foreign languages as a key to other worlds and cultures, not ancient as previously but modern, was reactivated. The demand for languages for commerce called for the introduction of the English language into curriculums of some types of schools, particularly gymnasiums for girls (which started to open in 1856) and commercial schools (which started to grow in 1890s).

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd and the following period of the struggle for independence in ethnically non-Russian parts of the Empire resulted in the creation of the Soviet state and radical educational paradigm shift. The Soviet government has set its efforts to building a mass labor school, which had to be radically different from the old pre-revolutionary school. Gymnasiums as a form of educational institution were closed. The attitude towards language education changed completely. The centuries-old tradition of learning and using foreign languages turned these languages in the eyes of the poorer people into

a sign of belonging to the privileged strata of the society. That is why when state power passed into the hands of the proletariat and the peasantry, the classical languages were absolutely excluded from the school curriculum, and modern languages ceased to be a compulsory academic subject.

For a short time period (1923–1938) the priority in the linguistic education of schoolchildren was given to the many languages of national minorities in the territory of the Soviet state. For the political reason of winning the sympathy and support of national minorities, the Soviet authorities declared the so-called "policy of indigenization" to assist the development of the cultures and languages of all nationalities inhabiting the country. In line with this policy, schools teaching national languages and using them as the language of instruction began to open. The use of languages of big and small ethnic minorities in formal and informal communication, newspapers and radio broadcasting, literature and art, cultural and sports events was promoted. In fact, multilingualism was proclaimed the state policy and individual plurilingualism had possibilities to develop. In Ukraine, for example, speaking three languages – Ukrainian, Russian and the language of some minority – was quite natural; all three languages were taught at schools. A more detailed look at the real implementation of this policy is not so bright, however. It was carried out very formally, sometimes with ostentatious exaggeration, without proper provision of educational materials and without taking into account the real prospects of using national languages in further professional education and activities. However, such a situation did not last long. In April 1938 the Communist Party of Bolsheviks adopted a resolution "On the reorganization of schools in Ukraine", in which schools with instruction in the languages of national minorities were defined as "plantation" of "bourgeois-nationalist influence on children" and their operation was considered "unnecessary and harmful" (Yefimenko, 2001). Pupils were transferred to schools with Ukrainian and Russian languages of instruction. The work on the reorganization of national schools in Ukraine and other republics of the USSR was carried out hastily and was planned to end by August 1938.

Meanwhile, some changes were happening in the sphere of modern languages education in the Soviet state. They were forced by the project to industrialise the country and make use of the western technical achievements. The need for people with knowledge of foreign languages and communicative skills in oral speech and reading technical literature was growing. It became necessary to change the public attitude to foreign languages, to strengthen their authority and position in the entire system of public education, to attract young people to the study of foreign languages. The whole-country campaign under the slogan "Foreign languages – to the masses" was launched in 1927. It started with different forms of teaching languages to adults and reached the level of school education in 1932 when the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party "On educational programs in primary and secondary schools" was adopted through which a foreign language was assigned again to the list of compulsory educational subjects.

The typical features of the next period of the foreign language school education in the Soviet Union were its closed character, absolute absence of exposure and possibilities to use the languages for communication with native speakers of these languages, receptive and reproductive mode of teaching languages, denial of the necessity to teach oral communication, isolation from authentic teaching materials, rejection of the necessity to teach the target languages cultures for ideological reasons. Teaching other cultures was replaced by patriotic and politics-focused texts about the Soviet realia, Communist Party leaders and policy, advantages and values of the Soviet lifestyle. The constant shortage of teachers and self-isolation of the country from the outer world led to the fact that a broad mass study of foreign languages was hampered.

The conclusions made after World War II proved that the system of studying foreign languages in the Soviet Union required major changes. Some absolutely new measures were taken in 1947: the network of pedagogical institutions for training foreign language teachers has been expanded; Spanish language teaching has been introduced; the role of English has increased; the following ratio of languages studied in urban schools has been established: 45% of schools with English language

training, 25% with German, 20% – French, 10% – Spanish. For the first time, schools opened with the teaching of a number of subjects in foreign languages. By the end of the 1950s, the culture-study materials about the countries of the target languages has gradually started to return into the languages syllabus.

In the 1960s–1970s, the social order for the practical skills of using foreign languages increased together with the growing of international contacts. Measures were taken to create favorable conditions for the development of oral speech. For instance, school classes with more than 25 pupils began to be divided into two groups for the study of a foreign language. Domestic complexes of educational and audio-visual aids with intention to teach communicative skills began to be created. It was planned to create a unified system for teaching foreign languages from kindergarten to post-universities language courses.

The 1980's are well-known for the heated debate over the future prospects of learning foreign languages at school in connection with the general aspiration of the public to democratize and humanize society. However, the Soviet system continued to develop in conditions of confrontation of the group of socialist countries with the rest of the world and almost inaccessible contacts of the Soviet citizens with representatives of other countries and cultures.

The second half of the 80's was an era of so-called "perestroika" marked by great expectations. Foreign languages became academic subjects which were in demand in society. However, although the linguistic repertoire of the Soviet schoolchildren included several languages – Russian as a state language of international communication; the national language of the Soviet republic; one foreign language (English, German, French or Spanish) – the communicative function of the language for interchange with representatives of other countries was carried out in Russian. The Soviet people took it for granted that in case they happened to meet a foreigner inside or outside their country, it would be enough to talk to him in Russian to be understood. Moreover, there were real grounds for such an argument, as soon as Russian was taught at schools in all the countries belonging to the "socialist camp".

To conclude the historical overview of the languages education on the territory of the former Soviet Union, it is necessary to stress that although plurilingualism has been a constant trend of the individual existence in this multilingual and multicultural country, it has never been really valued as a factor of personal, academic or professional development of an individual and the society as a whole.

Synergetic results of international cooperation in language education in Ukraine after 1991

As the reforms and the transition to market economies began in Ukraine after gaining independence in August 1991, political, cultural, trading and other relationships began to develop on face-to-face basis, resulting in a boom in travel abroad for study, work and leisure, closer communication with the world of business, commerce, finance, public administration, etc. Exercising a release from the constraints of the past communist regime, Ukraine started to establish contacts with cultural organizations and funds abroad. All of these inspired the demand for foreign languages communicative skills.

Besides, in the situation of making a choice among the means of communication with the world, the decision was in favour of foreign laguages. The previous role of Russian as a major language of international interchange was rejected to a greater degree because of the negative association of this language with the Soviet past and the artificially enforced domination of the language over native languages of other ethnic groups in the USSR. Thus, other world languages, particularly English, were welcomed as a counterbalance for the former negative experience with the Russian language.

Learning foreign languages in Ukraine was significantly facilitated by the initiation of active cooperation with Western educational and cultural institutions in the field of target language education. Different forms of collaboration were launched: opening of language resource centres; introduction of authentic language textbooks and instruction materials;

initiation of language courses and summer language camps; promotion of information on the best teaching methods; exchange of secondary school and university students and language teachers; training programmes and internships; establishment of teacher-to-teacher links, etc.

The biggest of the organizations that have developed close partnership in Ukraine should be mentioned.

The first *British Council* office opened in Kyiv in 1992 as a result of the state agreement between the United Kingdom and Ukraine on cultural, educational and scientific co-operation. In 1993–1995 the British Council opened English Language Resource Centres in Lviv, Odessa, Kharkiv and Donetsk (in this order), offering access to the latest collections of books, videos and audio materials from the UK and to new communicative approaches of teaching English language. The first partnership relations with local educational institutions (schools and universities), and with younger audiences (pre-school kids) were developed by bringing experts in education and language teaching from the UK to them and by giving a possibility of professional internships in the British universities. Gradually, the British Council increased the audiences of English language teachers and students to the whole of Ukraine, by offering them access to English language methodology seminars, workshops, language learning and teaching materials, conferences and round tables. They provided language courses and exams services to wider audiences to support the language learning process. In 2006, the British Council started collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Ukraine on the development of English for Specific Purposes curriculum and national curriculum for the teachers' retraining courses. The British Council also influenced the improvement of English language teachers' professional skills and development of National qualifications framework. The English Language Resource Centres started teaching English to very young learners and corporate clients. More than 700 civil servants in Ukraine went through the English language courses offered to them.

More than 2,750 *United States Peace Corps* volunteers have served in Ukraine since the programme was established in 1992. Currently, there are 210 of them. Among other projects, Peace Corps volunteers concentrated

on teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) project in big and small towns and villages side by side with Ukrainian colleagues for two years sharing experiences and developing citizenship skills of critical thinking, leadership, cultural diversity that will support them in succeeding both in further education and in a future career. Volunteers teach English in secondary schools, universities and pedagogical colleges. They also help in teacher training at the In-Service Teacher Training Institutes bringing modern resources and methodologies to the Ukrainian educational system and fostering teacher-to-teacher links to promote the exchange of information on the best teaching methods. Volunteers also promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of Ukrainians and Ukrainians on the part of Americans.

In March 2002, the Public Affairs Section of *the U.S. Embassy* in Kyiv opened the Regional English Language Office to offer assistance and support to English language professionals in Ukraine, Armenia Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova, and to enhance mutual understanding between these countries and the United States of America. The Public Affairs Section provides in Ukraine a wide-ranging programme of academic and professional exchanges funded by the U.S. Department of State. These include the Fulbright Program and the International Visitor Program, as well as various exchange programs for students, teachers, university lecturers and younger professionals in a variety of fields. In addition, the Public Affairs Section supports 29 'Window on America' Centres, designed to provide up-to-date information on the United States to the public and to supply the English-language collections of books and periodicals to the host libraries. Educational advisers at Educational Advising and «Osvita» Centres throughout Ukraine conduct individual and group consultations. Besides, the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, through the Public Affairs Section, administers and funds specific assistance projects among which is the Pedagogical Innovations programme, which includes language education as well.

Under the authority of the French Embassy in Ukraine, *the French Institute of Ukraine ((l'Institut Français d'Ukraine, IFU)* in Kyiv was established in 1994 based on an intergovernmental agreement. The IFU's mission is

to ensure the promotion of French language and culture and to implement cooperation with the people of the cultural and artistic world in Ukraine. The activities of the IFU include French courses in a very comprehensive offer (children-adolescents-adults, intensive courses, specialized courses, courses for companies, etc.) that are aimed at a very large public. Different certifications (Delf, Dalf, TEF, TEFAQ etc.) are proposed by the IFU in order to give the possibility to each one to validate certain levels of knowledge of the French language. There is also a library that contains French-language books available to the public. Within the multimedia library, a special area is devoted to children. It is a unique space in Ukraine that aims to highlight the trends, places and events that are current in France. The cultural events present to the public and the Ukrainian professionals contemporary French art in its most varied forms: cinema, performing arts, visual arts, literature and debate of ideas.

The *Goethe-Institute Ukraine* started its activity in Kyiv in 1996. It provides information on current aspects of cultural, social and political life in Germany, offers extensive book and media stock as well as targeted information services for all who are interested in Germany or want to learn or teach German. It promotes the knowledge of the German language abroad and cultivates international cultural cooperation. The Goethe-Institute has opened the network of Goethe Centres, Cultural Organizations, Reading Rooms, and Language Centres in Ukraine. As part of the promotion of the German language in Ukraine, they offer seminars and a wide range of services for Ukrainian teachers of German. In cooperation with Ukrainian partners, they support national and European projects for the promotion of foreign languages. Within 9 educational centres and 4 reading rooms, the Goethe-Institute offers various differentiated language course programmes: general-language courses at A1–C2 levels for adult learners; courses for young learners between 8 and 15 years; preparatory courses for examinations in the German language; courses with special focus, for specific target groups or for training individual skills. The translation of German authors into Ukrainian is also encouraged. The German minority in Ukraine is promoted linguistically and culturally.

In connection with the language and cultural needs of various national minorities (Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, Greek, Bulgarian, etc.) that inhabit Ukraine, it is possible to say that they are promoted rather on a local than on the all-Ukrainian level through cultural centres (e.g. Dom Polski), language courses or different amateur groups.

Overall, we can observe the strengthening of partnerships in educational and cultural aspects of teaching and learning languages in Ukraine. Moreover, today it is obvious that this partnership has achieved not arithmetic but synergetic effect. If several people work together, and they care only about their own activity, then this group of people can hardly be called a synergy. This was the situation at the start of establishing ties with international organizations in the sphere of language education in my country. In contrast, if several people adjust their efforts, depending on the actions of others, or on how well the overall goal is achieved, then they do form a synergy. Today's collaboration of all the participants – Ukrainian and foreign organizations, official representatives and volunteers, students and teachers, teachers and teacher trainers – clearly and noticeably demonstrates features of synergy and enhances their capacity to achieve goals.

The effects of such synergetic partnership are manifold.

Primarily, it has opened the door to the wind of change in worldviews, educational priorities, and cultural experiences of Ukrainians. Both teachers and language learners were exposed to much broader face--to-face and books-mediated contacts with experts and representatives of other languages and cultures. In turn, our partners and visitors, users of other languages, can develop a deeper awareness of Ukraine, its culture, historical challenges and achievements. The backwash effect of this reciprocal exchange is not reduced to a simple arithmetic sum of knowledge of unfamiliar phenomena and cultural practices but leads to a revision of attitudes and breakdown of stereotypes.

From the perspective of a very general view, the approach adopted in the last two decades towards language use and language learning has become action-oriented and competence-based. In its completed form, it was presented to the Ukrainian public through the Common European

Framework of Reference for Languages in 2001. Its description in terms of competences and specification of learning objectives through descriptor scales provided comprehensive guidelines for the reform and development of language education as a life-long practice. In Ukraine, the competence-based approach caused a huge wave of scientific research and discussion. Today, it is used in different contexts and subject areas. In the field of language learning, it draws attention to a much broader range of abilities that languages users need to be successful in communication. This view of language learning makes it more distinct for teachers that it is not a matter of a proper use of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar only. The awareness of other abilities of the language learners is reinforced. These are pragmatic abilities to organize, structure and arrange the message to produce the expected communicative effect; strategies of communication and learning; knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use; comprehension of the intercultural potential of a foreign language and relations between the learner's culture and the cultures of the target language users; general existential features such as motivations, attitudes, beliefs. This new vision of learning objectives has substantially changed the process of teaching languages in Ukraine in favour of it being more learner-centred, motivating and creative.

Besides, the concept of foreign language acquisition articulated in terms of the intercultural perspective gives prior prominence to the social nature of this process and cultural diversity of the "community of practice" (Young, 2009, p. 146) that uses the language. The focus on cultural difference and diversity that are introduced through the "language and culture learning" approach into the practice of schools highlights the importance of such values as tolerance, respect for otherness, critical thinking for the sake of understanding as vital in upbringing a child. As Byram puts it, "what is important here is the comparative analysis and critique of cultures, both the cultures (in the plural) of the learners and the cultures (in the plural) of speakers of the language being learnt" (Byram, 2013, p. 59). He positions an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other

cultures and countries as an important component of citizenship educa-
tion leading to action in the world. We cannot boast of the complete vic-
tory of these values so far, but their constant presence in the educational
space of the languages learners gives more hope for positive outcomes
than their deficiency.

Some changes can also be observed in the content of language teach-
ing materials. Historically, because of ideological and political reasons,
there was a decades-long tradition in the former Soviet Union of using ex-
clusively school course-books designed by domestic authors. Today, more
and more schools give preference to authentic teaching sets and materi-
als published in the target language countries. It is not the aim of this
paper to discuss all the "pros" and "cons" of publishing more country-spe-
cific textbooks or employing teaching materials universal for all users. The
important thing concerning the effect of availability and variety of au-
thentic teaching materials is that Ukrainian authors start to follow the
trend of a multi-cultural view of the world, and include into the content of
their textbooks materials not only about the target language culture but
also introduce cross-cultural information about other countries of the
world. Thus, they prevent the learners from identifying the target lan-
guage and its use (especially English) exclusively with the country of its
origin but, instead, highlight the possibility to make it work as a meaning-
mediator for intercultural communication with non-native speakers.

Not of less importance is that the international partnership in lan-
guage education has fostered the mass practice of early language ed-
ucation in Ukraine for the sake of the naturally motivated language
development of a child. Today in Ukraine, bringing very young children
into contact with foreign languages is fully recognized as a facilitating
factor for faster language learning, the development of skills in mother
tongue and better performance in other areas. Early language education
in Ukraine is provided as an option for pre-schoolers in kindergartens and
at different courses for early development of a child. Since 2012, children
who have started compulsory schooling (at the age of 6–7 years) begin
studying their first foreign language from the first form and the second
foreign language – from the fifth form.

Finally, the international partnership has radically changed the methodology of teaching and learning foreign languages for the purposes of real communication. Moreover, it has also decisively shuttered the outdated mode of studying the mother tongue in Ukraine as a knowledge-based system, and turned it into a dynamic process of acquiring communicative competences.

Conclusions

It would be correct to end this overview of the synergetic potential of international collaboration in the field of language education in Ukraine by mentioning the possible challenges that accompany this process.

First and foremost, it is worth mentioning that Ukraine, having been a multicultural state since her early history, has a long tradition of plurilingual education and everyday communicative practice. The use of Ukrainian and Russian as first and second languages accompanied by the obligatory study of one or two foreign languages in the period of schooling creates favourable conditions for the successful integration into the European multilingual setting. But to keep in line with the common European objectives and achievement standards in language education, Ukrainian officials should promote a constant and sustainable policy of international partnership. This very simple truth, as recent events show, largely depends on the political preferences of the state power and may undergo quite unexpected changes.

Second, completing common goals depends on how well a partnership functions. In this respect, various aspects of partnership functioning are important: partner participation, partner relationships, stuff support, sufficiency and flows of resources, leadership, management, communication, governance, partnership structure, sustainability of the partnership, changes in the community policies and practices, and the external environment.

Of no less importance is the distinguished feature of synergy indicated by Mark Latash that "cooperation among its elements [is] such that

if one element does too little, another element does more" (Latash, 2008, p. 6). Hence, the Ukrainian participants in international synergetic cooperation should be ready to continue their hard work on sustainable integration into the modern multilingual and multicultural world even in case the resources or enthusiasms of the other element/elements of the partnership happen to stumble.

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Changing Lives, Changing Languages: Societal Impact on Language Teaching

Abstract: 1989 was a dividing line in the history of Central & Eastern European countries. Not only were political systems re-organized, but also social and cultural relations had to be revisited. It is valid to education as well because it welcomed new structures, subjects and philosophies, very often in new educational environments. In Hungary, language education was in a special situation: due to the changing social demands, it had to face new challenges with the introduction of foreign languages which had not been widely taught at the time. The three pillars of this study are the analysis of the shift from a socialist regime to capitalism and its reflection in language education, the description of the appearance of different languages in public and higher education, and the introduction of new methods and synergies applied in the new era of FLT (foreign language teaching). Illustrations of the presented results are provided from the two of the initial steps in the education system, namely pre-school education and kindergarten teacher-training.

Key words: change, educational challenges, foreign language teaching (FLT), good practices, teacher-training

It's hard for human nature
to make a true confession of the past.[6]

Introduction

Hungarians still cannot boast about their command of foreign languages. According to a EUROSTAT survey (Statistical, 2013) only 37% of the population speak at least one foreign language, which means that, considering the EU average (66%), Hungary is among the lowest in this regard. To explain the situation, usually two reasons appear. One of them perhaps stems from language typology and the other is rooted in language education.

If language families in Europe are taken into consideration, it shows that, while the majority of European languages belong to the Indo-European language family (which branches out into further groups like Germanic, Romance, Slavic, etc.), Hungarian, on the Ugric side of the Finno-Ugric languages, is largely isolated. In this sense, it, similar to the Basque and Altaic languages, is not part of the Indo-European language family. Therefore, the relative uniqueness or exotic status of the language may entail difficulties in language learning as well. Hungarian is not a widespread language, even if it is the mother tongue of a five million minority people in Europe, and it is not a widely learnt language either. The complex and complicated declination and conjugation system of this agglutinative language, together with a rich and refined vocabulary and a special grammatical structure, do not make it popular among language learners. Moreover, its usability is also highly limited. These drawbacks may justify why there are few people who wish to learn the language. At the same time, it would be worth examining reciprocity, i.e. if it is difficult for a foreigner to learn Hungarian, and this therefore challenges a Hungarian mother tongue speaker to learn a (an Indo-European) foreign language.

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[6]   From *By the Danube* by Attila József (translated by Peter Zollman).

As far as language education is concerned, a wrong attitude towards language learning and ineffective methods in language teaching must be mentioned in parallel between the periods of 1949 and 1989 in Hungary. Both of these negative approaches can be clarified from socio-political points of view, highlighting 45 years of dictatorship as a political and "the compulsory language" syndrome as a socio-educational factor. The present study gives an overview of the different aspects of the social–political–educational changes of the early 1990s; in particular, what led to these changes, how the education system managed to cope with a shortage of foreign language teachers, how the major methodological principles altered and, accordingly, what kind of cooperation was necessary to reach the new goals.

Turning points (1949, 1989) with an intermezzo (1956)

After the second world war and with the accession to the Soviet bloc, communist patterns started to be shaped in the economy and the state organisations. In society, education became the mediator of the new ideology. Instead of despised and banned bourgeois values, a new ideal, "the socialist type of man", had to be followed in culture, literature, and education as well. While classical (Latin and Greek) and Western languages (German, French and English) were taught before 1945, in post-war Hungary a new educational philosophy had been elaborated by 1949 which had a large effect on humanities, especially on history, literature and language teaching. From the autumn of 1949, Russian as a compulsory language was introduced in the upper grades of primary schools, as well as in secondary schools and at universities.

If the introduction of Russian can be considered to be the first turning point of the history of compulsory foreign language teaching in 1949, 1989 can be regarded as the second, when Russian as a compulsory language was taken out of education. In 1949, ideological reasons played the leading role while in 1989, massive social pressure resulted in the decision to cease the teaching of this language. On 16 June 1989 Ferenc

Glatz, Minister of Culture, declared that, although foreign language learn-ing would be obligatory, the language could be chosen by students. Ac-cordingly, from September 1989, Russian was no longer a compulsory language in Hungarian schools. The verdict was accompanied by a broad social agreement, yet it happened just as suddenly and without any elab-oration as the introduction of Russian teaching in 1949.

Between the two turning points, an intermezzo has recently been re-vealed which can be connected with the revolution of 1956. Politics and the different scenes of society were so entwined that it can be considered to be natural that attacks against the regime were made on several fronts. On 1st October 1956 a letter to the ministry was sent by a secondary school of a county town, Győr. It reads "[…] abolish the teaching of Russ-ian, otherwise, it will be the root cause of anti-Soviet movements among the young" (Keresztes, 2013, para.2). Naturally, this ultimatum cannot be judged as a major reason for the outbreak of the revolution, yet it reflects the general attitude towards the compulsory language and especially to-wards its socio-political background. Finally, the request for the abolish-ment was fulfilled more than three decades later.

Russian and the "other" languages (1949–89)

The obligatory status of Russian in Hungarian schools was main-tained from 1949 to 1989. Although, due to its limited application, most students found learning Russian a l'art pour l'art activity, without any tan-gible purpose, there were special circles where Russian was indeed used. It was spoken by soldiers in the Warsaw Pact, officials of the CMEA (Coun-cil for Mutual Economic Assistance), foreign trade companies and com-panies cooperating with the Soviet Union and in the tourist trade. Yet its practical usage in everyday communication was very rare. At the same time, there was a stable need for Russian teacher training to continue teaching the language at schools. Therefore, Russian as a major subject was available at every teacher training college and university. Generally, a student who went on to study at the tertiary level studied the language

for ten years (4 years at primary school and 4 years at secondary school, plus two years at every university).

The years spent learning Russian, however, did not bring much success for the majority of learners. There was an obvious gap between the input and the output of language teaching.

In Hungary, the usual proof of success in foreign language learning was taking a language exam at the Foreign Language Training Centre in Budapest. Between 1967 and 1980, this centre was not only the most prestigious "palace" of taking language exams and the issuing of certificates, but also the only one in the whole country. Its monopoly lasted till 1980 when new types of language examinations (e.g. Cambridge Certificate in English or Goethe Certificate in German) were allowed to appear on the market. Considering these results, a paradoxical situation can be noticed: it is conspicuous that in spite of the fact that Russian was the first foreign language learnt at school, the number of language examinations in second foreign languages like German or English were much higher than in Russian (Table 1, 2, 3). The reason can be found in terms of motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) and in the inadequate teaching methods of Russian.

Table 1. Teaching and knowledge of Russian
(Based on Medián, 2004, cited in Laki, 2006, p. 883)

Date of birth	Primary school Russian (%)	Secondary school Russian (%)	Language exams in Russian (%)
1975–79	86	13	2
1970–74	96	33	1
1965–73	98	36	3
1960–64	95	51	3

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Table 2. Teaching and knowledge of German

(Based on Medián, 2004, cited in Laki, 2006, p. 883)

Date of birth	Primary school German (%)	Secondary school German (%)	Language exams in German (%)
1975–79	19	34	8
1970–74	5	18	3
1965–73	6	19	4
1960–64	7	13	6

Table 3. Teaching and knowledge of English

(Based on Medián, 2004, cited in Laki, 2006, p. 883)

Date of birth	Primary school English (%)	Secondary school English (%)	Language exams in English (%)
1975–79	14	33	10
1970–74	6	19	7
1965–73	4	9	5
1960–64	2	10	6

Teaching materials were also poor and ideologically loaded. Even as far as the teaching of Western languages is concerned, only the newspapers of communist parties were available. Therefore, besides the Russian *Pravda*, only *Volksstimme* in German or *l'Unità* in Italian could serve as supplementary materials in language lessons. As they were all saturated with ideology, using them in the classroom was rather counterproductive in terms of language teaching.

Language educational differences

Looking back to the 1980s and comparing language teaching methodologies, a noticeable gap can be observed between the ways in

which Russian and, for instance, English was taught. What Kovács, Trentinné (2014) notice about the language learning methods of the Industrial Age and the Knowledge Age can be, with minor alterations, applied when comparing language education methods in the 1980s (Table 4.):

Table 4. Language educational differences in the 1980s

Methodological factors	Traditional Methods (Industrial Age): "Eastern" Languages	New Methods (Knowledge Age): "Western" Languages
Knowledge delivery	Teacher: 'spoon-feeding'	Learners' active participation
Structure of lessons	Schematic	Varied with activities
Textbooks	Transfer traditional topics	Introduce up-to-date topics
Technical equipment	Board and chalk	Audiovisual equipment
Focus	On the teacher	On the learner
Teacher's role	Teacher: donor (explanations)	Teacher: facilitator (interactions)
Learner's role	Receiving, storing and presenting knowledge	Equal partner, learning from the peers
Cultural studies	Transmit high culture	The concept of culture is extended
Goal of knowledge	Knowing **about**	Knowing **of**
Society → Education	**CONTROLLED**	(relatively) **FREE**

The last line can be observed as both a conclusion and the starting point of language education. All of the enlisted methodological factors in the case of Russian converged in the direction of a controlled educational setting: the classroom reflected the operational environment of the whole of society, a quasi "laboratory". The omnipotent teachers, the ideologically deeply affected textbooks and the schematic structures of the lessons, were more suitable to alienating learners from the foreign language than to involve them in learning.

On the other hand, it was unavoidable to resist the new stream in language teaching trends, especially in TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) where communicative and student-centred language teaching became not only slogans but gradually an everyday practice in the

language classroom. English lessons had a special atmosphere where the teacher could be considered as a facilitator; imported textbooks transferred authentic materials and, with the motivation and active participation of the students, a greater sense of achievement could be expected. In practice, it was the time when the dominance of the Grammar Translation Method decreased and students' needs and usability of the language were taken into consideration to a greater extent. Thus, the expansion of the Direct Method could be noticed, especially in English and German lessons. The method was supported by textbooks promoting communication; like the *Strategies* series in English and the *Themen* course books in German (more examples of innovations and new attitudes will be given in this article under the heading of *Good practices*).

Change in paradigm (1989)

Undoubtedly, it was the political change that irrevocably reformed language education as well. The Russian words "гласность" ("glasnost" as "opening") and "перестройка" ("perestroika" as "reconstruction") were welcome in and outside Russian classes. What Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, had announced could not be stopped: changes swept through the Soviet bloc. Each socialist country had its own characteristics which emerged in critical political situations affecting the country and its neighbours, too. The Polish Solidarity movement had an impact on Hungarian changes as did the Romanian revolution, and the Hungarian changes had their own ripple effect on the West. In Hungary, it was a time of the opening of the Austro–Hungarian border to Germans which helped the union of East and West Germany, the time of the so-called Round Table Talks between the single party of the old regime and the formation of new parties, and Russian troops leaving the country (Figure 1). All this happened in a peaceful way (vs. the revolution in 1956). The chance for a smooth and democratic transition was given.

Figure 1. The poster on the left reads "*Good-bye, Hungarians! The Red Army*"
(Source: Kivonulnak, 1990)

The great language shift in Hungary (1989)

Social pressure and political changes brought changes in language education in the autumn of 1989 when Russian officially ceased to be an obligatory language. However, it was easier said than done. As Malderez, Medgyes (1996, p. 2) put it:

> "[…] the euphoria felt by teachers, students and parents in 1989 proved to be short lived. It turned out that schools were unable to satisfy the great demand for English and German, because teachers of these two languages were in short supply; according to moderate estimates, the shortfall was in the order of 10,000."

While the question of *Who will teach the Western languages?* rightly arouse, a great number of Russian teachers were afraid of being superfluous and losing their jobs from one day to the other. The answer was given in three different ways, the results of which were combined in practice.

First of all, a new frame of teacher training was created by the establishment of the CETT (Centre for English Teacher Training) at ELTE University, Budapest. In this form of training (vs. traditional teacher training)

relevant changes could be noticed both in the frame and the content of training. Instead of the usual two major levels of teacher training in Hungary of the time, the institute focused solely on English teacher training in one program. It awarded a BEd. degree after 3 years, which was also new in Hungary in comparison to the old "college" (4 years) and "university" (5 years) system. Apart from formal innovations, the most conspicuous difference between the old and the new types of training were the contents. While language teacher training subjects (regardless of the language concerned) had been mainly theoretical, this type of training overtly put the emphasis on methodology; which was to a great extent in the background in the old form of teacher training. The traditional question of "what" was to be complemented with the question of "how".

The other side of the coin was the retraining of Russian teachers. At this time, in-service courses for foreign languages at different state colleges and universities were formed to "change" the majors of teachers from Russian to mostly English or German. Although the economic conception (i.e. to satisfy the needs with already trained language teachers) could be accepted, in practice it did not always work out smoothly, especially in the case of teachers who had been teaching Russian for decades and must have had professional and personal ties to the language. Yet, this type of training went on from 1989 to 1998. By this time, the shortage of language teachers was basically solved.

Apart from state solutions, the market also noticed the gap and tried to meet the requirements of language learners. Therefore, market orientated language schools mushroomed all over the country where a wide range of choice was offered, and also a wide level of quality in teaching could be noticed.

In parallel with all the changes inside Hungarian language education, at this point it is worth mentioning the support coming from outside of Hungary. Foreign language and cultural institutions did play an important role in the revival of language teacher training. The British Council (English), the Goethe Institute (German), the Italian Cultural Institute (Italian) were all a magnet for teachers who wanted to develop their language and teaching skills. For instance, the British Council

recruited teachers for their in-service trainings with such success that some of their training schemes were expanded to long lasting international projects which resulted in new teaching attitudes, methods and up-to-date materials, for example in the integrated teaching of language, culture and literature, for example, the course book, *Zoom in on Britain and Hungary* (Andrews, et al., 2001 a, b; Kitzinger, 2002). These innovations cannot be neglected even today, as they served as the basis of modern language teaching in the country.

The proportion of languages (after 1989)

The abolition of Russian as an obligatory language gave a special space for other foreign languages; with the difficulties detailed above. Within a decade (between 1990 and 2000) the proportion of languages taught in Hungary showed the following picture in primary and secondary education (Graphs 1, 2):

Graph 1. The proportion of languages in primary schools in percentage (Source: Report: Education in Hungary 2000)
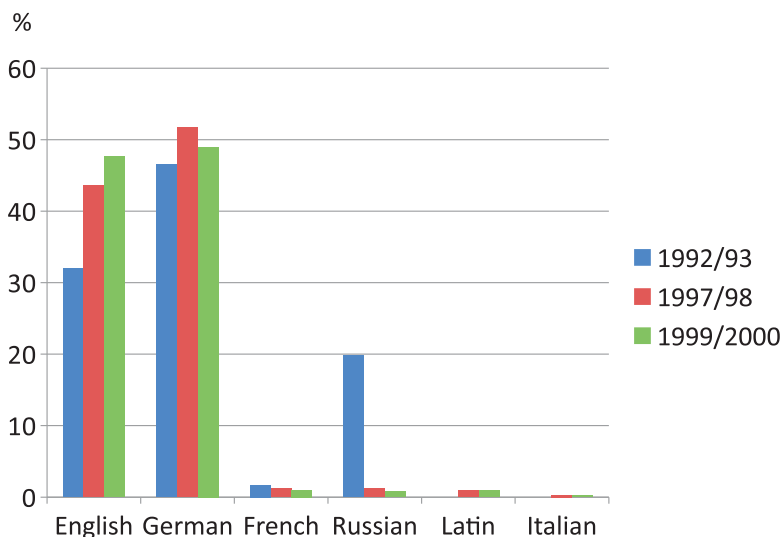
**Graph 2. The proportion of languages in secondary schools
in percentage terms
(Source: Report: Education in Hungary 2000)**
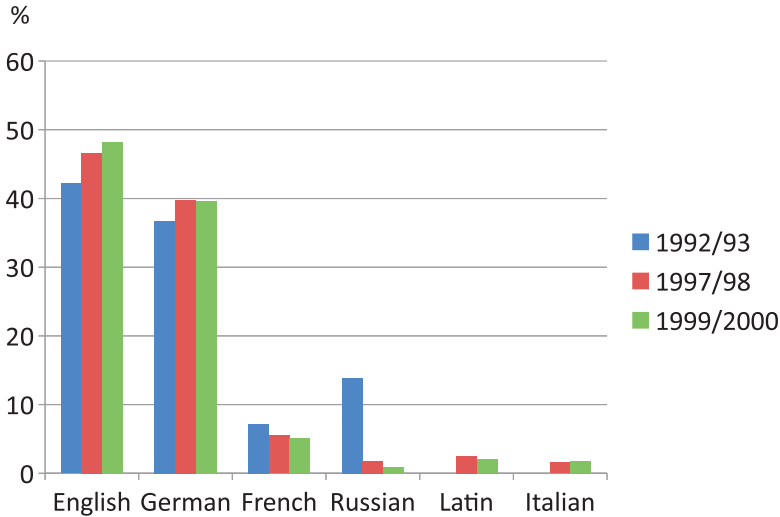
It can be noticed that English and German were the most taught and learnt languages in this period. English as a top lingua franca in the world today is self-explanatory, and considering the geographical location and historical ties of Hungary, German can be easily explained, too. However, if we take a closer look at the question, it could be noticed that German is more popular in the western part of Hungary, where there is everyday contact with Austria; due to daily tourism, education, commuting for work and other interregional relations. The great number of primary schools (even kindergartens) where German is taught as a minority language in the country might explain the slightly higher number of German students in primary schools than in secondary schools. Classical languages like Latin are not a part of the education system, even in academic grammar schools where they used to be (whereas in Italy for instance, it is still the case in classical *liceo*). Neo-Latin languages also seemed to be neglected in this decade. Yet, Russian in the transition period was still taught according to an exit scheme.

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New tasks

With the arrival of the new millennium, the profile of language education had to meet new requirements. The balance between languages taught started to show a more sophisticated picture. Although it basically did not make an impact on school education, new educational demands had to be taken into consideration which were also due to societal effects. Trade with new partners encouraged language learners to opt for Asian languages such as Japanese or Chinese. Revitalised tourism and trade with Russia brought the revival of the Russian language, which did not reach the level of Russian teaching in the period between 1945 and 1989, yet became important and attractive among the new generation in secondary schools and at universities. A global trend in bilingual education, especially in secondary schools in the frame of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), and at universities with joint degrees issued by Hungarian and foreign universities, can be observed. Besides familial bilingualism, a special parental demand activated institutional early childhood language development in pre- and primary schools. Migration, especially in the labour market (e.g. in car factories or NATO airbases) encouraged multilingual and multicultural education, an area which requires further research.

Additionally, recent trends in language education also had to be harmonised with European Union priorities which, according to An Action Plan for 2004–06 (Promoting, 2004) were as follows:

1. Linguistic diversity
2. Early start
3. Language learning in secondary and higher education
4. Lifelong learning
5. Language teacher training

Good practices

The revised Hungarian language education system, focusing on the above cited preferences, can provide a number of examples of best practice. These can especially be noticed in a previously neglected field in language pedagogy. Here two examples are mentioned, kindergarten teacher trainees' special language education at the faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Sopron (Kitzinger, 2010) and multilingual–multicultural education in a kindergarten at the NATO airbase in Pápa (Kitzinger, 2014).

Hungary has long standing traditions in training bilingual pre-school teachers for the kindergartens of minorities living in Hungary. Future pre-school teachers can choose from the languages of the Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovenian, and Roma minorities. Apart from the language training of the minorities, however, there is only one place where training pre-school teachers with a foreign language specialisation has been introduced. "English in the kindergarten" is an innovative programme that was launched by the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Sopron in the academic year 2006/07.

The faculty builds its English language teaching program along the same line as the German language pre-school teaching which has been in practice since 1959. The programme applies the "playful bilingual method", and its aim, besides introducing a foreign language in the pre-school, is to train a new generation of teachers who are qualified to work with the three to six age group. Trainees gain knowledge, specifically in early childhood psychology and pedagogy. As far as foreign language is concerned, the faculty wishes to give their students a solid linguistic background together with practical know-how tailored for very young children. In order to do so, along with the general basic subjects (English Grammar, Communication, English and American Literature), students study special subjects for the given age group, for instance Children's Literature, Intercultural Studies, and naturally, English Methodology for Pre-school Children.

Already from the second term of their studies, students observe English language sessions in the kindergarten. The aim of the "English in the

kindergarten" programme is to deal with English in an integrated way. It means that English is embedded in the children's daily routine and also in their activities such as art (drawing, painting), singing, physical education or environmental activities. The first students of the new English programme graduated in 2009 and, since then, the programme has achieved notable success.

The other example is from a Hungarian kindergarten where foreign and Hungarian children's integrated education is going on. The "Pápa Model" is a Hungarian educational pattern introduced in kindergarten pedagogy in 2008 which operates within the frame of the SAC/17 (Strategic Airlift Capability) NATO programmer and makes integrated multilingual and multicultural education possible for Hungarian and migrant children in Fáy András Kindergarten, Pápa. The main elements of the programme are as follows (Table 5.):

Table 5. The "Pápa Model"

The "Pápa Model"	
1.	The programme of the PM is based on Hungarian—English bilingualism while children, due to the international composition of the kindergarten groups, can also become familiar with several other languages.
2.	Kindergarten teachers and pedagogical assistants use the Hungarian and/ or the English language(s). At the same time, children's language choice and language use are optional.
3.	The language pedagogical aim of the PM is a) to give the appropriate motivation and impulse for kindergarteners to acquire their mother tongue and foreign language(s) and b) to facilitate language development under spontaneous and natural circumstances, embedded in playful setting whose result should be the oral production of languages according to the age characteristics.
4.	The programme puts a special emphasis on the acquaintance with Hungarian and other nations' culture present in the kindergarten and on their widespread introduction. Therefore, the multicultural aim of the programme is to arouse interest in exploring other cultures among children, parents and educators so that children could get accustomed to cultures and behavioural norms different from their own. At the same time, they should be familiar with their own culture's features and values as well.
5.	The major features of the PM are a) uniqueness, i.e. it is unexampled at worldwide language education policy level b) innovation, i.e. the continuous renewal and development (e.g. by projects, material and personal conditions) c) expansibility and expandability both in its linguistic and cultural contents.
6.	The prospect of the PM lies in its "good practice" or "pattern" status which can be implemented through further dissemination and cooperation emphasising both the advantages and drawbacks of the programme.

The examples cited here are characteristic of pre- and high school education which diverge in a special field, i.e. second language acquisition or development. However, almost every stage of education (primary, secondary and tertiary stages) underwent similar, relevant changes.

Conclusions

The review described a long period of time both in historical and societal changes. One of the aims of the study was to decipher a distorted truth and show how every segment of life is affected in a dictatorship, as Gyula Illyés writes in his long censored poem:

"Where seek tyranny? Think again:
Everyone is a link in the chain".
    From *"A Sentence on Tyranny"*, translated by Vernon Watkins.

The other aim was to describe and, from a certain distance, see the facts and mistakes that were made under an existing regime which is still so often blamed in Eastern Europe for the failures of the recent past. Interestingly enough, the same mistake was repeated in language education in Hungary: introducing Russian learning in a fortnight in 1949 was just as serious a mistake as abolishing it – also in a fortnight in 1989. This language, without any fault on its part, became the *victim* of a political regime and a faulty educational policy due to all the ideological and political loads it had to bear. Yuri Prokhorov calls Russian as "an ideological irritant" (as cited in Emelyanenko, 2016, para.9) of the communist era, and those who lived through these times, either as students, teachers or parents, know exactly what he means by this. Two decades had to pass to liberate this language from its very unfortunate past and give back the status this language deserves (i.e. the important 4th or 5th place on the language learning palette in Hungary).

The task of teachers and educational decision makers today is to be realistic in language teaching policy effective in teaching and learning

languages via tailor-made methods and a humane pedagogical attitude. In addition, it is important to pass on a passion for learning a language, and the culture associated by motivating students to regard a foreign language not only as a part of their intellect but also as a part of their identity.

Although this article intended to show the political and societal changes reflected in language education policy in only one country, namely in Hungary, it would be highly instructive and challenging to do research into and make comparisons of the theme in Central and Eastern European countries as well.

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The Popularization of English Language Learning in Primary Schools in Poland

Abstract: Accession of Poland to the European Union induced a variety of changes in different areas of life, including education. A second language was introduced as a compulsory subject in kindergarten and primary school and two compulsory foreign languages in general lower and upper secondary schools. English is the most popular of all languages in all types of schools, regardless of the level of education they represent. Globalization of the English language, the process which can be observed nowadays, has a significant impact on actions taken by schools to popularize learning this language. Therefore, the research was performed with a view to achieving a better understanding of the popularization of English language learning in primary schools in the larger context of a variety of factors. Basing on the analysis of research results, the conclusions reflecting real needs of learners as far as the more effective English language learning is concerned have been drawn. Sharing the research findings with the primary schools which participated in the research will contribute to their practical application.

Keywords: student, primary school, popularization of English language learning, motivation to learn.

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Introduction

The accession of Poland to the European Union brought about a number of changes which have taken place over the last decade. As a member of the European Union, Poland "(…) has been obliged to undertake many reforms aiming at getting the country closer to EU-15, reforms both in the field of law or economics, as well as the proper means, which are necessary to equalise the standard of living; Poland and other member countries which joined European Union in 2004, received financial support – European funds" (Wenerski, 2013, p. 9).

Giving the membership of Poland in the European Union, the changes within the last decade involve not only an increase of economic indicators, the modernization of the country or the restructuring of the Polish economy. The reforms have also affected the area of education and social culture. This refers to e.g. the rise in the sense of stability and security, or the awareness of "Polish euro-enthusiasm" among Polish people (Ananicz, 2014, p. 17). Another important benefit of the accession is the ease of crossing borders of member countries within the Schengen zone. It enables economic migration, simple leisure or educational travel.

However, the European Union did not clearly define its position on the issue of language. There have been multiple suggestions to create a unified all-European language, which could be Latin or Esperanto; nevertheless, this solution has proven to be too difficult, expensive and time-consuming (Skulimowska, 2013, p. 6). "There are 24 official languages, about 60 regional and minority languages and over 175 immigrant languages" in the European Union (Skulimowska, 2013, p.6). Moreover, the European Union constantly realizes the idea of multilingualism so that member countries can preserve their language and culture diversity as well as regional characteristics. The fundamental principle of the European Union is "the equal formal and legal status of official languages of all member countries, which are at the same time official languages of the EU" (Kutyłowska, 2013, p. 53). Although languages of all member countries are of the same importance, it should be noted that English, German and French are the most popular and widely used languages in the European Union (Kutyłowska, 2013, p. 82).

It appears to be the case that the most popular languages in Poland are the same foreign languages as in the whole EU. Starting from the school year 2008/2009, Poland joined the large number of EU members which ensure their students have an "early start" in terms of foreign language learning. Students are obliged to learn a second language from the first grade of primary school. Moreover, a third language is introduced as a compulsory school subject from the first grade of lower secondary school; when students continue learning in upper secondary school or technical upper secondary school, this period extends for another three or four years. The described changes stem from the fact that Poland favours and introduces all European tendencies in the teaching of foreign languages or even wants to go beyond them (Kutyłowska, 2013).

Over the period 2005–2011, English was the most popular foreign language and a compulsory subject in Polish schools. German was placed second, while Russian and French took the third place (Kutyłowska, 2013; Skulimowska, 2013). Thus, the popularization of English language teaching and learning on any level of education can be observed in Poland, starting from the pre-school stage.

Taking into account the geographical location of Poland and its border contacts, it should be presumed that the most popular languages would be German and Russian. However, it appears that English is the predominant foreign language and this preponderance is related to many closely interwoven factors, e.g. Polish access to the EU, historical determinants, the position of the United States in the world, digital media and both private and commercial electronic communication (Kutyłowska, 2013; Skulimowska, 2013). As David Crystal writes, English is nowadays not only the language of popular culture but, firstly, "the language of global communication" (Crystal, 2013, p. 2).

The popularization of the English language in Poland involves many benefits at the professional and private level. Speaking English provides countless opportunities for many people to find a job abroad. Moreover, many prestigious companies in Poland employ people who are fluent in this foreign language. It is related to the necessity of using English in doing business and cooperating with foreigners, during employee training and

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business trips abroad. It should be noticed that many words and expressions used on an everyday basis at work are loanwords from the English language, and some of them are loan translations (Skulimowska, 2013).

Another significant advantage of the popularization of English among young people is the opportunity to study abroad. Within the last decade, thousands of students have been given a chance to study abroad, to have a better insight into other cultures and, in particular, to improve their language skills. The statistical data from the Erasmus Programme are the best confirmation of the above-mentioned statements. Until 2014, the Erasmus Programme enabled over 120,000 Polish students to study or train in other EU countries, and 37,000 lecturers taught at the universities of these countries or attended training courses there (Ananicz, 2014, p. 15–17).

The additional benefits of a good command of English are: the ability to understand people from other cultures, the possibility of meeting them and getting to know them, a better opportunity to use the Internet in a more effective way, personal satisfaction and the strengthened sense of belonging to the European Union (Kutyłowska, 2013, p. 15).

English language is omnipresent and constantly promoted by the mass media, which can be seen in all sorts of advertisements and slogans. The continuing globalization of the language can be observed, which can be simply called a trend for loanwords in various areas of life, e.g. in business, economics, IT, music, sports, politics, nutrition, healthcare, beauty industry, fashion and youth cultures (Witaszek-Samborska, 1993).

Attention should be drawn to the fact that there are also some opponents of such a strong globalization and popularization of English in Poland. One of them is the famous professor, Andrzej Markowski, the head of the Polish Language Institute at the University of Warsaw. He says: "Obviously, the fact that we can use English language all over the world is very important and valuable. Nevertheless, we must make sure that globalization has not gone too far, in order to prevent the homogenization and Americanization of cultures. We need to notice and respect the role of national languages, which are the main distinguishing feature of cultural distinctiveness, a basis for national identity, and the preserver of tradition, etc." (Winiarska, 2006, p. 3).

With regard to the selected contexts of the popularization of English in Poland mentioned above, the research was performed in order to contribute to a better understanding of the popularization of this language in selected primary schools.

Methodology of research

The research was conducted in 2016 in selected urban and rural primary schools in Lublin Province in Poland.

Purpose

The research was undertaken in order to identify the methods of the popularization of English language learning in primary schools. Consequently, the specific objectives of the study were:

1. to learn about various forms of the popularization of English language learning in primary schools;
2. to get an insight into the most preferred forms of the popularization of English language learning;
3. to identify students' motivation for learning and their self-assessment of language skills;
4. to observe the differences between primary schools in urban and rural areas as far as the popularization of the English language is concerned.

The analysed research findings were shared with the primary schools participating in the research. They will be helpful for teachers and parents in determining and specifying further actions regarding the popularization of the English language which should be taken by schools.

Participants

The research was conducted in four primary schools in Biała Podlaska District, located in Lublin Province, in November 2016. It included 205 students from the third grade. The list of schools, cities, villages, the number of students and their gender is presented in Table1.

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Table 1. Students included in the research.

Location	Name of school	N	Girls	%	Boys	%
Biała Podlaska city	Szkoła Podstawowa Nr 3 im. M. Konopnickiej	54	28	51.85	26	48.15
Biała Podlaska city	Szkoła Podstawowa Nr 9 im. Królowej Jadwigi	52	27	51.92	25	48.08
Konstantynów village	Szkoła Podstawowa im. A. Mickiewicza	48	25	52.08	23	47.92
Janów Podlaski village	Szkoła Podstawowa im. Cz. Tańskiego	51	26	50.98	25	49.02
Total		205	106	51.70	99	48.30

N – number of students

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the respondents were girls. However, the girls outnumbered the boys only by a few per cent. Similarly, there was a small difference between the number of the respondents attending rural and urban schools, with the preponderance of students from urban areas. All of the students included in the research were 9–10 years old.

Instruments and Procedures

Qualitative methods were used in the research, since they are characterized by 'flexible' instruments adaptable to various conditions and situations which cannot be always predicted before the beginning of the research (Łobocki, 2006). It should be noted that the actions taken by schools in order to popularize English language learning are difficult to measure or they are even not measurable. Furthermore, the major advantage of qualitative research methods is that they make it possible to develop an in-depth understanding of a context which cannot be measured objectively. Thus, the choice of qualitative approach with the research method of an unstructured interview was governed by the subject and the objectives of the research. In Polish methodological literature concerning pedagogical research various types of interviews can be found. However, the most popular ones are structured and unstructured interviews. The interview questionnaire was developed for the purpose

of this research; the list of questions was formulated to gain information on the following topics: students' preferences concerning learning foreign languages, different forms of the popularization of foreign language learning in schools, students' motivation to study and self-assessment of English skills by students.

The schools enumerated in Table 1 agreed to participate in the research. The students taking part in the research were informed about the objectives of the research and were ensured that their answers would remain anonymous, which enhanced the quality of the research.

Results of the Research

Students' answers to the question on the popularity of foreign languages in their schools are presented in Table 2; numerical data were converted into percentages.

Table 2. Popularity of foreign languages in selected primary schools.

Popularity of the given language	Szkoła Podst. Nr 3 Biała Podlaska %	Szkoła Podst. Nr 9 Biała Podlaska %	Szkoła Podst. Konstantynów %	Szkoła Podst. Janów Podlaski %
English	78.00	81.00	76.00	68.00
German	11.00	12.00	8.00	9.00
Russian	4.00	3.00	16.00	21.00
Italian	4.00	2.00	0.00	1.00
French	2.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Other	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The data presented in Table 2 show that English is the most popular foreign language among the primary school students participating in the research, both in urban and rural areas. Such a considerable popularity of this language among the students may be attributed to its general popularization in Poland and the awareness that speaking English makes everyday life easier and creates better opportunities for further education.

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The differences between schools as far as the second foreign language is concerned were observed. German is the preferred language in urban schools, whereas in rural areas it is Russian which took second place. Such preferences can be seen as a result of the geographical location of these areas in proximity to the border with Belarus and contacts with Belarusian people. The least popular foreign languages among the students were: French, Italian and, occasionally mentioned, Swahili.

In order to confirm the statistically important dependencies between students in urban and rural areas, Pearson's chi-squared test was used for qualitative questions. In all of the analysed cases, a statistical significance $p=0.05$ was assumed. The analysis was conducted using the STATISTICA ver. 10 programme. On the basis of the calculated values of Pearson's chi-squared test with $\chi2=13.58$ and $p=0.0185$, it should be stated that the differences in popularity of foreign languages between students from urban and rural schools are statistically significant.

English is the most popular foreign language in urban schools (79.3%), followed by German (11.3%), Russian (3.8%), Italian (2.8%) and French (1.9%). On the other hand, in rural schools the most popular languages are: English (71.7%) and Russian (18.2%). These data are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Popularity of foreign languages depending on school location.

No.	Foreign language	Students %	
		Urban schools	Rural schools
1.	English	79.30	71.70
2.	German	11.30	8.20
3.	Russian	3.80	18.20
4.	Italian	2.80	0.50
5.	French	1.90	0.00
6.	Other	0.90	1.40
	Total	100.00	100.00

The results of the research on the popularity of English among students show a positive attitude to learning the language and a strong

motivation. The vast majority of students in all schools, namely over 80%, claimed to learn English with pleasure, whereas 20% of students learned the language reluctantly. When asked about the sources of motivation in language learning, the respondents gave multiple answers, therefore making it impossible to present the percentages. The following factors motivate students to study:

a) learning English after completing primary school;
b) listening to music, watching films, reading books in original;
c) developing hobbies and interests;
d) travelling;
e) meeting new people from foreign countries;
f) finding a good job in the future.

Another issue concerned different forms of the popularization of English language learning in primary schools. The students were to indicate different forms of popularization in which they participated. The answers were listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' participation in given forms of the popularization of English language learning.

Forms of popularization of English language learning	Szkoła Podst. Nr 3 Biała Podlaska %	Szkoła Podst. Nr 9 Biała Podlaska %	Szkoła Podst. Konstantynów %	Szkoła Podst. Janów Podlaski %
Language events at school, e.g. European Language Day	58.00	48.00	46.00	38.00
Language contests	11.00	12.00	8.00	9.00
Extracurricular activities at school, so called "English appreciation group"	45.00	43.00	36.00	31.00
Song contests	24.00	22.00	10.00	9.00
Declamation contests	28.00	31.00	0.00	0.00
Language programmes in which school participates	81.00	78.00	51.00	45.00
Other	20.00	15.00	5.00	8.00

Percentages do not make 100 %, because students indicated more than one answer.

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The analysis of the data presented in Table 4 shows various forms of the popularization of English offered by schools. The percentages indicate that most students, both in urban and rural areas, participate in language programmes organized by schools and financed by the European Union. It is possible for schools to employ English-teaching experts or purchase interesting teaching aids, books and CDs for such extra-curricular activities thanks to this additional funding. The least popular form of the popularization of English is a language contest, which may be attributed to the fact that only the best students are able to participate in it. All in all, the results show that schools offer a wide range of activities popularizing English language learning which are accepted and attended by students.

In order to state the statistically significant dependencies between students from urban and rural areas, Pearson's chi-squared test was applied. In all of the analysed cases, a statistical significance p=0.05 was defined. The analysis indicated statistically significant differences in the following cases: song contests (p=0.0083) which were more popular in urban areas (22.6%), declamation contests (p<0.0001), which were not held in rural schools, language exchange programmes (p<0.0001) which were more popular in urban areas (79.3%) and other forms (p=0.0095) which were indicated more often in urban schools as well. Despite no statistically significant differences in the case of other answers, it should be noticed that the students from urban schools participated more often in language events or contests. The data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Students' participation in various forms of the popularization of English language learning, taking into account school location.

No.	Forms of popularization of English language learning	Students %		χ^2	p
		Urban schools	Rural schools		
1.	Language events at school, e.g. European Language Day	52.80	41.40	2.68	0.1019
2.	Language contests	11.30	8.10	0.61	0.4347
3.	Extracurricular activities at school, so called "English appreciation group"	44.30	33.30	2.61	0.1065

4.	Song contests	22.60	9.10	6.96	0.0083*
5.	Declamation contests	29.30	0.00	34.11	0.0001*
6.	Language programmes in which school participates	79.30	47.50	22.39	0.0001*
7.	Other	17.90	6.10	6.73	0.0095*

* a significant difference if p<0,05; χ2- Pearson's chi-squared test

The next part of this research involved determining how the respondents assess their own command of English. The collected data were based on self-assessment performed by the students, and the results transformed into percentages are shown in Table 6.
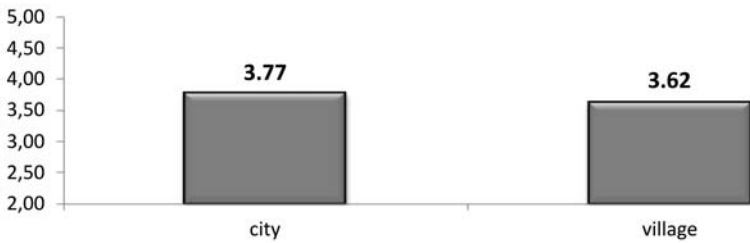
Table 6. Students' self-assessment of the English language skills.

Knowledge of the English language	Szkoła Podst. Nr 3 Biała Podlaska %	Szkoła Podst. Nr 9 Biała Podlaska %	Szkoła Podst. Konstantynów %	Szkoła Podst. Janów Podlaski %
Very good	16.7	18.00	12.00	13.00
Good	53.3	52.00	48.00	49.00
Satisfactory	25.00	23.00	30.00	27.00
Rather poor	5.00	12.00	10.00	11.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Based on the results presented in Table 6, it can be stated that most students in all schools evaluated their knowledge of English as good; however, the percentages in rural schools were lower than in urban ones. Students are aware of their language skill level, therefore only 12% to 18 % of them considered their knowledge of English to be very good.

In order to state the statistical dependencies between the students from urban and rural schools in terms of their self-assessment of English skills, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied. Thus, a numerical value was assigned to each answer on a scale ranging from 2 (rather poor) to 5 (very good).

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The results indicate that students generally defined their English level as average: 3.70±0.84. The students attending urban schools self-assessed their knowledge of English at 3.77±0.83 level, whereas students from rural areas at 3.62±0.84 level. Although the self-assessment of language skills in urban schools was higher than in rural ones, the difference between the evaluations proved to be statistically insignificant (p=0.1675). The collected data are presented in Figure 1.

Value of the Mann-Whitney U test: Z=1.38; p=0.1675

Figure 1. Students' self-assessment of their English language skills, taking into account school location.

The last stage of the research was designed to determine a variety of factors which are of crucial importance for learning English and have a significant impact on its effectiveness. It is a well-known fact that the educational process is affected by a number of factors, including personality traits and intelligence. Students were asked to identify various factors which they considered to be important in the process of learning English. The following list enumerates factors which were indicated most often:

1. attending extracurricular English activities, more than twice a week;
2. systematicness;
3. teaching methods introduced by teachers;
4. abilities and eagerness to learn.

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Discussion and Implications

Speaking foreign languages is one of key competences of modern man. The research results definitely prove that primary school students are aware of the need to learn foreign languages. English proves to be the most popular foreign language, both in urban and rural schools, regardless of their geographical location. Primary schools meet the expectations of their students and offer attractive forms of English language learning. Over 70% of students took part in such events and activities organized by schools, which proves that this is an interesting offer. Furthermore, such a vast offer makes it possible to choose the activities students like most.

Among Polish research reports on English language learning in primary schools, there is the report made by the Educational Research Institute in Warsaw, entitled: "English in primary schools – the process and learning outcomes", in which the results of effectiveness of teaching the language were presented. The research was conducted on 5,000 students. The collected data indicate that the prevailing majority of students at the end of their primary school education have a good mastery of basic listening skills and reading comprehension of very short texts. However, 50% of students have difficulties with combining the information from two texts consisting of a few sentences. The report also presented the weak points of English language teaching during typical classes, namely lessons are monotonous, and teachers over-rely on textbooks.

The research findings presented in this paper fit into the broader context of research on the effectiveness of education in primary schools conducted in some European countries. Such research was published e.g. in 2012 by Esra Ucak and Hüseyin Bag, Turkey (Ucak, Bag, 2012). As the research results show, primary schools offer a variety of interesting and attractive forms of the popularization of English language learning, which encourages students to take an active part in them. New trends in foreign language teaching in Poland, such as on-line learning and teaching via Skype, should be mentioned at this point. Such methods are widely appreciated by students.

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As far as the sources of the financing of English language learning are concerned, it should be stated that Polish schools, located both in urban and rural areas, seized the chance given by the EU and joined English language teaching and learning programmes funded by the European Social Fund. However, there is no information available on how much money was allocated to primary schools.

It can be concluded that primary schools in Poland are effective in English language teaching and are looking to the future of young people.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the research results, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Primary schools in Poland meet students' expectations in terms of foreign language teaching. Definitely, English is the most popular foreign language. Apart from traditional lessons, schools organize various forms of English language popularization, which are present both in urban and rural areas.

2. The vast majority of students are eager to participate in events and activities related to teaching English offered by their schools. Various forms of language popularization encourage students to learn and enhance their language skills. However, there is a statistically significant difference in popularity of foreign languages and participation in English language events between rural and urban students.

3. The majority of respondents are satisfied with the English language teaching in their schools, which is reflected in a high opinion they hold of their command of English and high motivation to study.

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REPORTS
& REVIEWS

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Review of publication
Zabawa. O uczeniu się, zaufaniu i życiu pełnym entuzjazmu [*Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm*]

Reviewed publication: André Stern, *Zabawa. O uczeniu się, zaufaniu i życiu pełnym entuzjazmu* [*Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm*], Wydawnictwo Element, Gliwice 2017, ISBN 978-83-65532-19-0, pp. 136.

A. Stern's work, *Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm* is widely recognized as a masterpiece on playing, having fun and also learning through play. The author is a teacher, pedagogue and researcher. His achievements are based on respecting the spontaneous tendencies of human beings and he created the studio known as the "*Académie du jeudi*" in Paris. Despite the fact that he never went to school, he teaches music, conducts lectures, is engaged in the field of computer science and has successfully performed various roles in the world of dance and theater. As an expert in the field of alternative education methods, he works with teachers, schools, universities, associations as well as parents and companies around the world. He is the chairman of the Arno Stern Institute (*Institut Arno Stern*), and also of the initiative *Men of the Future* (*Männer für morgen*).

The author's own story is a compelling one. André Stern began playing the guitar at the age of 4 and independently explored the history of classical music. Seeking the true sound of Flamenco music, he developed his own technique for playing and creating it. His musical career began in 1988 and intensified in 1990, when he founded the "*Fusion*" music and

choreography studio (*Atelier de Création Chorégraphique et Musicale*) in Paris together with the choreographer and dancer, Delphine Joubert. This in turn led to a very significant a meeting in 1993 with the Swiss master luthier, Werner Schär, opening up new possibilities in the development of his musical personality. In 1993, he also began working with the Madness Theater run by Giancarlo Ciarapica. He wrote also two books during this period: *And I Have Never Gone to School* and *My Father, My Friend.*

This book, *Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm,* consists of ten chapters, all about the role of play. The author depicts how useful and important it is, not only for children but for everybody – for teenagers and adults alike. In the first chapter he shows the difference between play and learning/work. He explains his ideas on the basis of real examples drawn from life – those of his friends, family, relatives and his observations of the people around him, so it is very easy to understand what the author means and lends a conviction to his statements. The author postulates the importance of children's ability to learn from playing, something he recognized as a natural need and source of joy and happiness. Children exist in a state of endless curiosity, and he/she will use it to learn about the world if adults do not inhibit it. In his book, readers can find some elements of his biography and also some information about his father.

The author shows the power of play in the quote: "The desire for fun is stronger in children than needs or moods. Stronger even than illness. Even very sick children play. They sometimes have limited possibilities but still – do not know when and with deeply moving consequence – grab an arise occasion, before it can move away. The desire for fun is stronger in children than pain"(Stern, 2017, p. 31). It is a very moving quote that shows the significant and natural role of play in the life of each child.

André Stern also cites some research about the human brain and how it functions, basing his work on scientific facts: "some research of the brain reveals that admiration plays a key role in human life. A child experiences it between twenty and fifty times a day. And each time the centres of emotions are moved"(Stern, 2017, p. 95). This is why neuronal combinations are developed and people become more and more able to solve

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some new and unique problems, becoming willing to take on even demanding challenges. Moreover, the passion in doing something might be the solution for the lack of motivation among learners.

At the end of the book, the reader can find also some pictures that show children playing and getting some knowledge about their environment, which some may find inspirational. The utilization of dialogues make the book even more realistic and approachable and the idea of learning via playing more understandable.

André Stern demonstrates his considerable capacity to act as an observer of the world, particularly of the relationships between playing, having fun and learning and working. The language used in the book is easy to understand but the content is far from simplistic and has a deeper meaning. The book may be of interest for a broad circle of people – some specialists (educationalists, psychologists) and also for parents and grandparents. It helps to remind adults of how significant and even profitable play is and teachers can use that truth to organize the process of learning along the lines of play, having fun and arousing learner's passions.

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