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Communication Competencies of the Child before Starting Compulsory Education as a Factor Affecting the Readiness for School

Dominika P. Stolinská*, Miluše Rašková, Eva Šmelová

Department of Primary and Preprimary Education, Faculty of Education, Palacký University in Olomouc, Žižkovo nám. 5, Olomouc, 771 40, Czech Republic

Abstract

The paper focuses on the issue of the transformation of Czech education with an emphasis on the steps leading to the integration (and subsequent inclusion) of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. On the basis of the criterion of the achieved level of communication competency of a pre-school-aged child, we present the child's readiness for compulsory education, outline the specifics of working with selected categories of special needs of children, and, on the basis of research, draw attention to the current readiness of teachers for working with such children and the status of such a child within the class.

The aim of the paper is to call attention to the risks which may be associated with the inclusion that is being prepared in Czech education.

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Keywords: Czech education, integration, inclusion, pre-school education, communication competencies, children with special educational needs.

* Dominika Provázková Stolinská. Tel.: +420 721 037 947.
E-mail address: dominika.stolinska@gmail.com

1. Transformation of Czech Education

On the threshold of the third millennium, we find ourselves in the wave of gradual democratisation. Globalisation processes are in progress around us, and such processes aim to unite human individualities in (not only) the European society, thus providing a higher standard of living.

These processes are also reflected in Czech education through the implementation of the European dimension in the Czech education system, which began with the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union. Many changes have been made. These changes definitely do not constitute only an imaginary disappearance of state borders brought about by the establishment of the Schengen Area. The novelties also affect education, which strives for the establishment of high-quality conditions that are suitable for a valuable and balanced development of the personality of an individual and his/her inclusion in the society[1].

If we want to speak of the society – the present-day society, formed by this era – we should have a specific concept in mind: information has become the symbol of the 21st century, and the mass occurrence of information has transformed developed countries into “information (sometimes also called post-industrial) societies”, where the social status of an individual depends on his/her own gained knowledge. High-quality education is therefore very important, as it predicts a greater chance for those who wish to compete in the global labour market [2]. In order to support and implement the provision of modern and high-quality education in the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (hereinafter the “MEYS”) approved Framework Education Programmes (hereinafter “FEP”), which have gradually been coming into force since 2005. That year may be seen as the official start of the school (= curricular) reform.

The supporting ideas of the curricular reform bring the opportunity to change Czech education in terms of quantity and especially quality. At the beginning of the implementation of the reform in schools, the reform was evaluated rather negatively by teachers; however, on the basis of international comparisons e.g. [3]it was proven that changes were necessary. Innovated social requirements place emphasis on increasing the quality of education in the sense that pupils should have abilities rather than knowledge. This criterion has become the main objective of the reform.

The existence of the human society has always been based on the idea of the necessity of education, which is to serve the future life of an individual and his/her inclusion in the society. Therefore, education is supposed to be beneficial to the society as such. The following conjunction applies: the society affects upbringing and education ^ upbringing and education affect the society. The ideals of the human life are placed in upbringing and education. Despite the fact that education cannot be all-powerful, it is a substantial and irreplaceable means how to achieve the goal set by the society.

Through education, we can form a human being in his/her entire comprehensive concept. We form the personality, affect the building of social relationships and partnerships, and also prepare the individual for the orientation in the advanced world[4].

After the first major transformation wave, a second wave comes – the modernisation of education in the context of inclusion. A trend which in this context strongly addresses the education policy lies in the establishment and support of the so-called inclusive schools. As P. Pitnerová and E. V. Maxová [5]state, an inclusive school constitutes such a school arrangement and functioning that the school can offer adequate education to all its pupils regardless of their individual differences. It is a response to diversity in all its forms

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