

ON THE FORMING OF SOCIAL AND EDUCATIVE FUNCTION OF PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: *An organised child care for children in their early childhood outside their families was originally focused on the poorest social groups, and it was not evoked by the progressive professionalisation of women – mothers. The first nursery for preschool-age children in the Austrian monarchy was founded in 1828 in Buda (today's Budapest). The imperial school law from the year 1869 (so-called Hasner's reform) covered also preschool establishments the attendance of which was not obligatory, and it implemented the institute of kindergartens as training schools by girl's teacher-training institutes. Before 1869 in Prague, four Czech nurseries were founded; however, a modern preschool institute with qualified teachers was founded 19th January 1869 at the initiative of Marie Riegrová, daughter of František Palacký. Besides Karolína Světlá and Eliška Krásnohorská, Riegrová supported the social approach towards so-called woman question.*

Keywords: *preschool institution; children nurseries; social and educative function; Marie Riegrová; principles of J. A. Comenius; kindergarten; education towards health.*

The childhood period is being reduced in the contemporary society, which is a problem that has been becoming quite topical recently; children, looked upon as little adults, are understood mainly as consumers, whose specific world is adapted to the world of their parents. Exaggerating a little, it is possible to say that in the history of childhood, this is a certain parallel to the period before the society modernisation.

In the middle-ages social environment, the childhood was also a transitory “grey zone“ of the human life before the incorporation in the world of the adults. Such a model of social behaviour changed in the 16th and 17th centuries in the aristocratic and burgher environments, and such a mentality was gradually applied also at lower society levels. The social transformation of childhood as a specific phase of human life began to profile as late as during 18th and especially 19th centuries, being influenced by the modernisation of the demographic regime much more than by the democratisation of education and instruction.¹

¹ Lenderová, Milena, Rydl, Karel. *Radostné dětství? Dítě v Čechách devatenáctého století.* Praha –Litomyšl: Paseka 2006, p. 87 ff

However, contrary to such an approach towards the “nascence of childhood“, the research of the history of mentalities proved even earlier tendencies towards the deepening of the emotional relations within so-called closer core family, and especially of emotional relations between the mother and her child.² Education of children started immediately after the delivery, which traditionally took place in home environment under the presence of a midwife and women relatives. Due to the threat of infant mortality, the child was baptized as soon as possible in order to assure Paradise for the child’s soul. Weaning usually took place in the first year of the child’s life; it ate common solid food with the adults and it had to get used to darkness, noise, cold, discomfort, etc. Warnings, examples and creation of habits were parts of the upbringing already in such a phase.³

In the Middle Ages, the education was based upon the acquiring of the basics of the Christian religion in compliance with the Bible and writings of the Church fathers. In the Renaissance period, both educational practice and theory were influenced by the Classical times. Education in humanities was neither reserved only for men, nor there were social limitations; however, without any doubt, the generalisation of education influenced the modernisation of the lifestyle of the upper social groups.

The contemporary value of education was specified by John Amos Comenius. His work is, in fact, philosophical culmination of national traditions, Reformation and Humanism closely linked to the prospective European thinking and culture. The proposition of Christian education, which takes into consideration different phases of childhood, can be seen in the whole Comenius’ educational and pansophic work. He wrote his famous educational works, such as *Information on Mother Schools (Informatorium školy mateřské)*; *Didactics or the Art of Artificial Teaching (Didaktika neboli umění umělého vyučování)* and a descriptive Latin textbook *The Gate of Languages Unlocked (Janua linguarum reserata)* in Leszno, where he worked as the headmaster of a Latin school after his emigration in 1628 (or 1627). In order to enhance the principle of visualisation and the connection of foreign language teaching with the subject teaching, Comenius created his world-famous illustrated encyclopaedia for children *Orbis pictus (The Visible World in Pictures)* with German and Latin texts. Comenius wrote this work in Sarospatak, where he had been invited in 1650 in order to reform local schools by Prince Sigmund Rákóczi of Transylvania, as he expected the Prince to resume his anti-Habsburg resistance movement.⁴ In 1632, he finished his *Didactic or the Art of Artificial Teaching* adding an annex to it titled *Restoration of Schools in the Czech Lands (Obnovení škol v Čechách)*; several years later, he reworked it thoroughly in Latin, and as late as in 1657, he published it in Amsterdam under a title *The Great Didactic (Didactica magna)*.

Comenius tried to find new educative methods and organisation of schools which would be in compliance with the practical requirements of the world economy development and voyages of discovery and application of natural science knowledge. He claimed a general reform of education with a uniform school instruction, compulsory school attendance for boys and girls from six to twelve years of age of all the social

² Delimata, Malgorzata. Dziecko w Polsce średniowiecznej. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie 2004, p. 12 ff.

³ Weiss, Sabine. Die Österreicherin. Die Rolle der Frau in 1000 Jahren Geschichte. Graz: U Verlag 1996, p. 10-36.

⁴ Marečková, Marie. Materiály k vývoji české historiografie (do počátku 18. století). Brno: Masaryk University 2001, p. 165. Kudrna, Jaroslav, Petráň, Josef. Čítanka k dějinám dějepisectví II. Praha: Charles’ University 1983, p. 128-129.

groups. Basic education was supposed to be common for all the pupils and the mother tongue would be used for instruction. Further higher education would follow. Practically-oriented children would be trained in a certain trade. Diligent and gifted students should be enabled to continue their studies at higher Latin schools, and between 18-24 years of age, they should continue their education at universities, as according to their capabilities everybody should have the right to achieve the highest positions.⁵

The educational democracy of Comenius was based in his rationalistic optimism: human mind has no frontiers. His objective was the practical application of knowledge for the benefit of mankind and especially for the rectification of mankind and re-education towards a better and peaceful world arrangement. Comenius believed that man was good by nature and that he might be ennobled by means of a correct education. That was why he called school the workshop of humanity.

Since 16th century, Protestant education was developed which, besides a general education in humanities, spread ideas of religious reformation. The conviction that the faith was a gift of God and that everybody had a right to adopt it according to her/his free will enriched the early Modern-Times society with an important element of democratisation.

Jesuitical education was developed taking into account such an approach and focused on the development of the aristocratic pupils' personalities. Such an exclusive approach continued till the Age of Enlightenment reform period; however, it was not taken into account in the state-driven modifications of school education and enhancement of the elementary education quality.⁶

The importance of school as a milestone between the childhood and adult age was growing. Due to Age-of-Enlightenment ideas, the state care of citizens' education was enforced. In the Czech and Austrian lands, the Imperial Education Law from 1774 liberalised to a great degree the availability of education, making education more systematic. The structure of literacy profiled itself also during the 19th century.⁷

⁵ John Amos Comenius – The Great Didactic. Chapter XXVII. Of the Fourfold Division of Schools, Based on Age and Requirements.

The process should begin in infancy and should continue until the age of manhood is reached; and this space of twenty-four years should be divided into well-defined periods. In this we must follow the lead of nature. ... The whole period, therefore, must be divided into four distinct grades: infancy, childhood, boyhood, and youth, and to each grade six years and a special school should be assigned

I. For infancy the school should be the mother's knee

II. For childhood the school should be the Vernacular - School

III. For boyhood the school should be the Latin School or Gymnasium

IV. For youth the school should be the University and travel.

A Mother-School should exist in every house, a Vernacular School in every hamlet and village, a Gymnasium in every city, and a University in every kingdom or in every province.

These different schools are not to deal with different subjects, but should treat the same subject in different ways, giving instruction in all that can produce true men, true Christians, and true scholars, throughout graduating the instruction to the age of the pupil and the knowledge that he already possesses, just as the various parts of a tree increase together at every period of its growth. ... (Translation: M. W. Keatinge, M.A. New York: Russell & Russell, 1967)

By Soul and Sword (edited by: Hefmanský, František. Prague 1958, p. 626-627.

⁶ Čornejová, Ivana. *Tovaryšstvo Ježíšovo. Jezuité v Čechách*. Praha: Mladá fronta 1995, p. 145 ff.

⁷ Čornejová, Ivana. *Jezuitské období univerzit v zemích Koruny české*. In: *Historická Olomouc a její problémy IX*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého 1998, p. 9-14.

⁸ Marečková, Marie. *Concept of state Schools and Healthcare in Civic Society. Pojetí problematiky státní školní a zdravotní péče v systému občanské společnosti*. In: *Řehulka, Evžen et al. Scholl and Health 21. 2*. Brno, MU 2007, p. 17-43.

An organised care for preschool-age children outside the family focused originally on the poorest social groups and it was not evoked by the progressive professionalisation of women – mothers. The first preschool-age children nursery in the Austrian monarchy was founded according to the West-European ideal in Buda (today Budapest) in 1828. Such a “Garden of Angels“ (Angyalkert) was created due to an initiative of countess Theresa Brunszvik of Korompa, who was the founder of a similar nursery in Vienna. In compliance with the decree of the court commission and the provincial order from 1832, such institutions were meant for children till five years of age, they were subject to the supervision of the Episcopal consistory and they had to be financed from charitable sources.⁸

In 1835, supreme burgrave Karel Chotek invited regional governors and Episcopal consistories to create similar humanitarian institutions, so-called child nurseries, in the Czech lands. Nurseries “for children whose parents had to earn their living by daily work“ had been created even earlier in Prague and Pilsen. Till 1848, twenty of such institutions were founded in Bohemia. In such institutions, the trivial educational plan was applied and the specifics of the preschool age were not taken into consideration. The majority of educators in such establishments were men. Only exceptionally, in the country or in provincial towns, unqualified elderly women were teachers in such nurseries.⁹

Although the specifics of children’s age and school by play was successfully enforced especially by Prussian educator Friedrich Fröbel, the founder of “children gardens“ (Kindergarten); the modern educational system as such was implemented by means of the Imperial School Law from 14.5.1869 (so-called Hasner’s reform), which entered into force in the school year 1870/1871. From such a school year, trivial, principal and normal schools were replaced with elementary and town schools. Curriculum was unified, making no differences between boys and girls. School did not depend on the Catholic Church. The school law applied also to preschool institutions, in which case, however, the school attendance was not compulsory, and the law implemented nurseries as training schools of girls’ educational institutes.

Although before 1869, there were four Czech nurseries in Prague in which only men were employed as educators, a modern preschool institution according to a French example with qualified women teachers was created due to the initiative of Marie Riegrová, daughter of František Palacký. In the Prague Old Town, 19th January 1869, a new Czech nursery was consecrated by Cardinal Friedrich Schwarzenberg. As direct reference to J. A. Comenius’s heritage, such nursery was called mother school. Besides its social function, which was caring for children of employed mothers from poor social classes, its objective was to assure modern national education of Czech children in the competition of German children’s gardens which had existed in Prague from 1864. Financing of nurseries was provided by a committee of ladies, later on called “The

⁸ Cach, Josef. *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách II. K problematice podílu školských institucí a názorů na výchovu a vzdělání na stavu kultury a vzdělanosti: Feudální společnost 1620-1848 (počínaje životem a dílem J. Á. Komenského)*. Prague: SPN 1989. This work is also a source of other data.

⁹ Jan Vlastimil Svoboda taught in a Prague nursery in Hrádek; his work “Nursery or the first, practical, descriptive, versatile education of young children in order to practically develop thinking and ennoble the heart with guidance towards reading, counting and drawing for teachers, foster-parents and parents“ was published in 1839, and the second edition was published in 1874. In 1857, Svoboda’s Prague nursery was handed over to teaching nurses. Lenderová, Milena et al. *Dějiny každodennosti „dlouhého 19. století II. Život všední i sváteční*. Pardubice: University of Pardubice 2005, p. 37.

Committee of Ladies for Town Schools and Nurseries“¹⁰, the chairwoman of which was Marie Riegrová. The operation of nurseries was financed from public collections; it was supported by the Prague municipal council, contributions were provided by institutions, companies and individuals.¹⁰

By the year 1883, besides one private Czech nursery, the Prague municipal council registered 11 Czech nurseries under its patronage. Also outside Prague, the number of Czech nurseries was growing fast, so that in 1888, in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Lower Austria, there were 172 Czech nurseries registered. Besides nursing fathers, 322 qualified nursing mothers and auxiliary nurses worked in such nurseries. At those times, there were 18 Czech nurseries in Prague with 65 nursing mothers. By 1914, there were 23 Czech nurseries in Prague.¹¹

Nurseries laid the basis of modern preschool education. Their function was mainly social and they focused on children from poor families. Such institutions did not just care for children of working mothers, but on behalf of mothers, due to a creative application of the principles of Comenius's *Information on Mother School* together with contemporary educational knowledge, such institutions strengthened physical, mental and moral education of children, systematically cultivating education towards health. In order to deepen the personal responsibility of children for their health, their activity was systematically utilised, as well as discipline, play, example and practical development of habits related to the correct lifestyle, diet, toughness, stay in countryside, regular sleep, physical cleanliness, home hygiene and care for the environment.

Already in nurseries, knowledge was systematically developed of nature and society, love for the mother land, national pride, respect for national history and appurtenance to the nation. The mother tongue played a very important role in such an education. Nursery had a better possibility than primary school to influence in the parents due to a daily contact with them. However, education in nursery and the family had to be necessarily closely related, focusing on the strengthening of positive physical, mental and moral aspects and characteristics, and on the enforcement of health hygienic habits in everyday life.¹²

Besides nurseries used mainly by working women from poor social classes, similar institutions appeared focused on children up to three years of age – baby nurseries. Baby nurseries financed through activities of different societies, existed in Prague from the year 1854. The Czech baby nurseries were inspired by the French example. At the initiative of Marie Riegrová, a foundation for the support of poor newborn children and their mothers was created, and in March 1884, the first Czech baby nursery was opened for toddlers up to three years of age. Soon, Czech baby nursery for infants was opened.

Preschool education which took shape in 19th century was not compulsory for children; it kept an optional character. It was not directly connected to the employment of women with demanding or lucrative professions. Care for children outside the family originated as a philanthropic activity and it was not directly connected to the employment of women-mothers outside their homes. Its objective was to provide clothing,

¹⁰ Lenderová, Milena et al. Dějiny každodennosti „dlouhého 19. století II. Život všední i sváteční. Pardubice: University of Pardubice 2005, p. 38.

¹¹ Lenderová, Milena et al. Dějiny každodennosti „dlouhého 19. století II. Život všední i sváteční. Pardubice: University of Pardubice 2005, p. 38.

¹² Monatová, Lily. Jak dítě poznává svět. Prague: SPN 1963.

warm food and basic hygiene for children from the poorest social classes. Therefore it was not in compliance with the traditional authority of family and the role of the mother; it was a sign of poverty and a certain social immorality.

Besides the preference of the educative function, preschool institutions were social establishments, attended mainly by children from poor families on whom such institutions focused. At the same time, they provided an option of education in the mother tongue. They were to prevent the danger of germanisation of Czech children in German preschool institutions which began to appear.

The enforcement of social approaches and progressive educational trends at the forming of Czech preschool institutions from the seventies of 19th century was strongly influenced by the focus of Czech women movement for the support of poor abandoned women (often widows of soldiers of the Prussian – Austrian war in 1866), assuring food and day-care of their little children. The merit for the social approach towards so-called woman question may be attributed, besides to Karolina Světlá and Eliška Krásnohorská, also to Marie Riegrová.

K PROBLEMATICE FORMOVÁNÍ SOCIÁLNÍ A VÝCHOVNÉ FUNKCE PŘEDŠKOLNÍCH ZAŘÍZENÍ

Abstrakt: Organizovaná péče o děti předškolního věku mimo rodinu se původně orientovala na nejchudší společenské vrstvy a nebyla evokována postupující profesionalizací žen – matek. Prvá opatrovna pro děti předškolního věku v rakouské monarchii byla založena roku 1828 v Budíně (dnešní Budapešti). Říšský školský zákon z roku 1869 (tzv. Hasnerova reforma) se vztahoval i na předškolní zařízení, kde však nebyla docházka dětí povinná, a zaváděl institut mateřských škol jako cvičných škol při dívčích pedagogických ústavech. Před rokem 1869 v Praze sice vznikly čtyři české opatrovny, avšak moderní předškolní instituce s kvalifikovanými učitelkami byla zřízena 19. ledna 1869 z iniciativy Marie Riegrové, dcery Františka Palackého. Jí patří zásluhy o sociální přístup k tzv. ženské otázce vedle Karoliny Světlé a Elišky Krásnohorské.

Klíčová slova: předškolní zařízení, dětské opatrovny, sociální a výchovná funkce, Marie Riegrová, zásady J. Á. Komenského, mateřské školy, výchova ke zdraví