

CZECH-POLISH

HISTORICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL JOURNAL

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17/2025/1

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CZECH-POLISH HISTORICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL JOURNAL

Volume 17/2025/1

Journal of the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University Brno

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ARTICLES

Ferdinand Krch's Pedagogical Legacy for Modern Inclusive Pedagogy

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Daněk, A. – Šafránková, D. – Karkošová, M. (2025). Ferdinand Krch's Pedagogical Legacy for Modern Inclusive Pedagogy. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 17/2025/1, 3–22.

<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2025-001>

The primary objective of this study is to present the personality of Ferdinand Krch and the contribution of his pedagogical thinking to the contemporary, modern inclusive paradigm and pedagogy. With the help of qualitative research design and selected methods of historical research, not only historical facts, publications and archival materials will be presented, but also Krch's efforts and attempts to introduce new pedagogical ideas in education and training with elements of socio-cultural-educational attitude towards inclusion, ethical-humanistic dimension of education, filled with love, sincerity and beauty. It will also seek to highlight Krch's legacy and the ideas of our pedagogical predecessors, referred to as experimenters, who were an inspiration for modern pedagogy not only in our country but also worldwide.

Keywords: *Ferdinand Krch, House of Childhood, Milič House, Children's Music and Rhythm Institute, inclusion, special pedagogy, social pedagogy, modern pedagogy, transdisciplinary overlap, pedagogical experiment, childhood, education*

Introduction

In the current global context, it is imperative to respect the rights of individuals, particularly the rights of children, and ensure their equal access to education. However, this inclusive trend cannot be attributed solely to school education; it is also necessary to create a space for mutual coexistence, fostering social

harmony in the spirit of humanism and ethical transcendence of humanity. The practical implementation of inclusive pedagogy, values, and attitudes in the context of inclusive coexistence in society involves discovering and relying on historical examples of inclusive approaches in this direction. The historical discourse on inclusive education and coexistence is then a natural and continuous point on the path in the footsteps of our pedagogical predecessors who embraced the need for inclusion long before the Salamanca Conference (i.e. before 1994).

The view into the windows of the pedagogical future is sharper and more precise when we lean on the mossy tree of the pedagogical past. In an excursion into Czech pedagogical history, we encounter several inspiring pedagogical figures whose ideas and approaches are slowly fading into the dust of pedagogical oblivion. In today's globalised world, we may be too eager to look abroad for inspiration and overlook the treasures that our Czech pedagogical history holds and offers. The historical excursion will focus not only on local prominent pedagogical personalities but also on our pedagogical predecessors who were world-renowned pedagogical innovators and whose contribution was rightly recognised and appreciated within Europe at the time, as well as overseas.

The primary objective of this study is to present the personality of a unique educator who played a pivotal role in the development of several of today's pedagogical disciplines. The father and founder of modern music education, who, even before the First World War, promoted the need for music education for every child, including its influence on the development of the individual from early childhood. Creator of a progressive children's home whose concept could be the inspiration for a modern residential care facility for needy children. Promoter of an ethical, aesthetic, emotional and humanistic approach in education, in the socio-cultural-inclusive focus of education, so much required in special education, social and inclusive pedagogy. Ferdinand Krch (1881-1973) was an educator who not only inspired many of the professionals with whom he worked and collaborated, but also, most importantly, influenced many of the children and parents he encountered during his teaching and creative life, and through his pedagogical legacy.

The study is structured in the following sections: an introduction to the research design, supported by relevant methods; an argument for the selection of a figure in Czech pedagogical history, i.e. Ferdinand Krch, based also on an analysis of the report of Carleton Wolsey Washburne (1889-1968), submitted to the American Congress in 1923, concerning the information and conclusions of his tour of European progressive schools, incl. Krch's legacy and its contemporary context. The next part of the article will be devoted exclusively to the personality of Ferdinand Krch and his pedagogical thinking, especially in the field of his key pedagogical projects: *The Children's Music and Rhythm Institute*, and famous *The House of Childhood*, with emphasis (among others) on the holistic approach to music education and its influence on the child, which

belonged in the 20th century. In Czechoslovakia in the 1920s, they were among the most significant pedagogical experiments, which also attracted international attention for their originality (Washburne from Chicago, Wisser from The Hague, etc.). An overview of Krch's activities would not be complete without mentioning his work at *The Milič House*, where he was one of the most important collaborators of Přemysl Pitter (1895-1976). The final part of the study will analyse Krch's seminal work, *Education of the Heart: Conditions of Emotional Education, A Handbook for Educators*, identifying the essential ideas of the work and their relevance to the contemporary concept of the inclusive paradigm and education. The discussion and conclusion of the study offer several suggestions with the aim of providing inspiration and reflection for a more intensive enrichment of contemporary pedagogy with the supporting impulses from our educational history.

Research Design

This study is based on a qualitative research framework, at the core of which lies an analysis of the writing in *Education of the Heart: Conditions of Emotional Education, A Handbook for Educators* (hereafter referred to as *Education of the Heart*), the culminating pedagogical work of Ferdinand Krch. The text is conceived as a comprehensive synthesis of his pedagogical ideas, which took shape within the framework of specific educational and training projects in which Krch actively participated during the interwar period. The analysis of *Education of the Heart* is thus not simply an interpretation of a single text, but a means of understanding the overall ideological development of Ferdinand Krch within a broader socio-cultural, institutional and historical framework.

The chosen methodological approach combines the strategy of a historical-cultural case study.¹ with elements of qualitative content, thematic and discursive analysis.² The aim is to reveal the internal structure of Krch's pedagogical thought, its key values and emphases, and to reconstruct the historical circumstances in which his approach was developed, implemented and evaluated, even outside the Czechoslovak context of the time. Above all, the direct historical method is employed, which involves studying and presenting historical facts and contexts directly.

The research is grounded in the epistemology of interpretivism, which emphasises the importance of historical and cultural context in understanding pedagogical phenomena. The historical case study allows us to examine not

¹Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: design and methods*. 6. vyd. Los Angeles: SAGE; Goodson, I. F. – Sikes, P. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings: Learning from lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

²Braun, V. – Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

only the ideological basis of Krch's conception but also the institutional framework in which his ideas were developed and applied, whether in the form of pedagogical initiatives, association activities, or the management of educational institutions. The identification of the context, pedagogical ideas and principles of Krch's conception and the analysis of the selected work is anchored in the following research questions:

Main research question:

What ideological and pedagogical principles emerge in the writing of *Education of the Heart*, and what are their implications for the modern inclusive paradigm, contemporary special and inclusive pedagogy and education?

Sub-research questions:

1. In what ways does *Education of the Heart* reflect Krch's previous pedagogical practice and experience?
2. What key values and concepts (e.g., aesthetics, freedom, spiritual education, ethical education, autonomous personality) are expressed in the text, and how do they relate to broader European reformist currents?
3. How can Krch's concept be interpreted in the light of contemporary approaches to education and the education of pupils with special educational needs?
4. How can the principles of *Education of the Heart* be linked to music education and its conception in *The House of Childhood* and Krch's writings?

Ethical Aspects and Reflection on the Historical Context

Although the research does not focus on human subjects and does not involve researcher-respondent relations, the methodological approach outlined above requires a high degree of historical, linguistic, and interpretive sensitivity due to the different meanings of terminological phenomena in historical and contemporary contexts. The pedagogical texts of Krch's active teaching career, especially his writing *The Education of the Heart*, reflect a specific historical, socio-cultural and ideological horizon in which concepts such as *morality*, *will*, *spiritual life* or *character education* are understood differently from contemporary scientific terminology. The study is also aware of changes in terminology and approaches to special and inclusive pedagogy. For example, terms such as *crippled children* or *orphanage*, which are common in contemporary texts, are cited here solely in their historical context, not as evaluative terms in their contemporary sense or meaning. The reform educator C. W. Washburne, in his report *Progressive Tendencies in European Education* (1923), also spoke highly of Krch's educational activities. His language, however, bears traces of cultural perception; for example, the labelling of children as *orphans* or comments about *the best artistic expression*

of an unselected group of children in Europe imply, from an outside perspective, a certain exoticization or superior view.

From the perspective of research ethics, we are aware of the necessity to be sensitive to conclusions, outcomes, and evaluations of contexts in the areas of historical terminology, variability and meaning of terms, institutional contexts of education, including the aforementioned perspective C. W. Washburne.

In *The Education of the Heart*, Krch expresses himself in the language of his time, mixing elements of Sokol humanism, religious ethics, pedagogical idealism and civic education. Expressions such as *education of the spirit, moral law, will to nobility*, or the *spiritual culture of the child* cannot be interpreted in isolation or mechanically transferred to today's pedagogical vocabulary and social context.

Although the article does not aim to evaluate the individual educational institutions in which Krch worked, it is clear that his pedagogical projects were related to children living in socially disadvantaged environments, often under institutional care. The interpretation of *Education of the Heart* is, therefore, necessarily burdened with an awareness of the unequal position of the child within the power structures of the time. The study aims to reflect not only on the author's ideological postulates, but also on the conditions in which they were implemented. It would be ethically problematic to highlight the ideals without stating the limits of their realisation. That is why we always take into account the institutional tension between the child's freedom and order, which may have been distorted in various ways in practice, when creating a text.

How we work with this source is therefore also ethically relevant: the quotations are given faithfully, but always interpreted as a contemporary product of an external view of Central European space. The research procedures deliberately avoid generalisations and stereotypes and focus on the explanatory value of the elements under investigation in relation to the reflection of Krch's work abroad.

Overall, the study approaches historical texts with full awareness of the fluidity of pedagogical concepts and cultural references. *The Education of the Heart* is interpreted as a contemporary document with timeless elements, while the possibility of different interpretative levels is consistently considered. Ethical reflection is not merely a formal adjunct to the research design, but an integral part of it.

Rationale of Research: the Krch's Trace in the Report of Progressive Tendencies in European Education

In implementing the direct historical method in the study of historical sources in the archives of the National Museum of Education, we have repeatedly encountered references in the manuscripts of Ferdinand Krch to laudatory references to Krch's activities in a document, the International Report

(see below) by Carleton Wolsey Washburne (1889-1968), who was one of the key American reformers and representatives of 20th century world pedagogy. Washburne's thinking was based on the progressive tradition and the pragmatic pedagogy of John Dewey (1859-1952), but was enriched by its practical application in public education. Washburne worked at the so-called Winnetka School (Winnetka Plan) in Winnetka, Illinois, where he applied the principles of individualised learning, free choice, and functional pedagogy, and was the creator of the Winnetka System. This system is inspired by, and based on, the Dalton Plan (Helen Parkhurst, 1881-1957) and seeks to address its shortcomings (for example: curricula, didactic guidance through workbooks, control testing etc.), especially in the areas of consistent individual attention to children, consideration of their needs and interests, their learning pace, and practical overlap of activities. Winnetka-Plan also uses individual study of basic skills and cooperative group learning in creative and social activities.³ In 1922-1923, Washburne undertook a tour of European countries, during which he visited more than two dozen schools in eight countries, including Czechoslovakia. Washburne summarised the results of this trip in a report entitled *Progressive Tendencies in European Education*, published as Bulletin No. 37 of the US Department of the Interior's Bureau of Education.⁴ This report was intended not only for the professional public but also served as an official briefing document for the US Congress. It aimed to offer an overview of innovative European educational approaches and to inspire American public education reform.

The report occupies an important place in the history of comparative pedagogy as it documents the state of reform movements shortly after the First World War in the authentic context of Europe at the time. At the same time, it has lasting significance as a pedagogical, cultural, and historical document that reveals how American experts perceived European innovations, particularly the potential for progressive and experimental efforts they observed in Czechoslovakia of the time. Washburne explicitly identifies two Czechoslovak institutions, the František Bakule School in Prague and the House of Childhood in Horní Krnsko, as exceptional examples of pedagogical modernity that went beyond the standards and expectations of the time. In our paper, we will focus on Ferdinand Krch, the director of the aforementioned children's home. His children's home is praised in the text of the Washburne Report in a quite exceptional way. Washburne states that "... *apart from the orphanage*

³ Washburne, C. W. (1925). *Adjusting the school to the child: The Winnetka Plan*. Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company; Washburne, C. W. (1974). The Individual System in Winnetka. *The Elementary School Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1086/462389>.

⁴ Washburne, C. W. (1923). *Progressive tendencies in European education* (Bulletin, 1923, No. 37). Washington: Government Printing Office. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/progressivetende00wash>.

in Czechoslovakia, the best school we visited in all of Europe was the Bedales School".⁵

With this statement, he not only points to the quality of the Kern facility but, in effect, places it at the forefront of progressive education throughout Europe. The text of the inspection report is not the only reference to the children's home in Horní Krnsko. Washburne notes several details and states: "*The instructor neither criticises the children's work nor suggests the best technique. The children here produce the best works of art I have ever seen from an unselected group of children in Europe or America*".⁶ According to Washburne, the success of the method lay in the fact that the children were surrounded by beauty and had free access to the artistic resources (pastels, paints, paper). At the same time, any copying or reproduction of designs was fundamentally excluded. Instead, they were encouraged to find their expression and, in a joint reflection, to evaluate their work according to aesthetic criteria they defined themselves. Not only was the process of creation important, but also the discussion of the results: "*The children hang their works on the wall and discuss together which they think are the best and why. Then they re-create, not by copying, but on the basis of their self-reflection*".⁷ These references clearly show that the pedagogical experiment in the Horní Krnsko orphanage was one of the most important progressive pedagogical projects in Europe at the time (especially in the heyday years of 1922-1923), thanks to the efforts and reformist orientations of Ferdinand Krch (see text below), who emphasised the ethical, emotional and aesthetic aspects of education.⁸

Ferdinand Krch (1881–1973)

Ferdinand Krch was born into the family of a Prague governor. All indications were that Krch would continue the family tradition and become a prominent civil servant. However, Ferdinand Krch decided otherwise. Just before graduation, he left the study of law and began to devote himself to the teaching profession. Some sources claim that his father was against the young Ferdinand's teaching career, while other sources describe his father as supporting this decision. Surprisingly, Krch himself does not comment on this topic. Krch repeatedly refers to his pupils as his family, but does not mention much about his biological family. Already in 1911, we encounter Krch's pedagogical experiments in Meziříčko near Želetava, where children (from the Workers' Gymnastic Units) were taught, according to contemporary pedagogical terminology, to learn about life in nature in an exploratory manner

⁵ Ibid. pp. 8–9.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 8-9.

⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

⁸ Author's note: also with the help of teachers Ladislav Švarc, 1883-1974, and Ladislav Havranek, 1884-1961.

by observing, perceiving, and understanding its laws, including ecological sensitivity. Until 1919, he taught mainly in Prague's municipal schools and also worked in the *Educational Home at the Good Shepherd*, where he met children with, in today's terminology, special educational needs. Krch remained faithful to this target group for the rest of his teaching career. Thus it is possible to find elements of inclusive education in his pedagogical approaches, with an overlap with the social aspects of inclusion (to be discussed further in this study). Ferdinand Krch gave himself entirely to his teaching mission.⁹ His progressive pedagogical innovations, with a respectful approach to children and support for their individual needs and interests, mirror the ideals of pedocentrism, free education, the social context of education, and natural education in the pedagogical thinking of J.J. Rousseau, J.H. Pestalozzi, L.N. Tolstoy, and finally E. Key, as well as J.A. Comenius. Never married, he found his purpose in life in working with and for children.¹⁰

Children's Music and Rhythm Institute

During his studies at the *Czech Institute for the Education of Teachers for Practical Schools*, the young Ferdinand Krch met Josef Křička (1888-1969). Unlike Krch, Křička came from a musical background with several excellent instrumentalists. Křička himself was considered a child prodigy in his time, but he chose the teaching profession. He continued his musical education, studying composition with Vítězslav Novák, and also taking Max Battke's music course and Jacques-Dalcroze's rhythm and meloplasty course.¹¹ Krch's receptiveness, love and sensitivity to music, desire to bring children to music and his loving relationship with children were manifested by the founding of a music circle in 1912 together with the composer Křička, the teacher Wilt and the medical student B. Schuster.¹² With the foundation of the *Children's Music and Rhythm Institute* (1912-1914) in Černá Street in Prague, an interesting experiment based on the integration of the attributes of music and its holistic overlap began with reference to secondary sources. Křička and Krch offered their vision of music education to children completely free of charge. They financed the project from their resources. The lessons were voluntary, open to both boys and girls. They sought to provide music education for every child. Krch and Křička did not focus only on talented children, but explored the effect of music on children without special musical abilities. Krch and Křička were not

⁹ Spěváček, V. (1978). *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

¹⁰ Vlasáková, E. (2017). *V tichu a skrytu: Fedor Krch, pedagog a člověk (1881–1973)*. Praha: Kalich.

¹¹ Siebr, R. (2005). *Josef Křička: novátor hudební výchovy: učitel, skladatel, člověk*. Praha: Sobotáles.

¹² Spěváček, V. (1978). *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

promoters of frequent performances. In their conception, music was performed not for external effect. We do not have much information available about the workings of the *Children's Music and Rhythm Institute*. For the most part, we are dependent on secondary sources. Krch himself rarely mentioned the period of the *Children's Music and Rhythm Institute*. However, these two years of joint work laid the foundation for the future conception of music education by Ferdinand Krch and Josef Kříčka. They did not understand music as something artificial and snobbish. Both teachers led children to the joy of music, to the pure experience of beauty, and built up the aesthetic sensitivity of children.¹³ They understood music as a holistic phenomenon. Although the Great War put an end to the experiment, Krch and Kříčka continued their collaboration and used the findings in their seminal work *The Child and Music*.¹⁴ In their modern conception of music education, one can see some elements of the so-called Dalcroze method,¹⁵ based on the perception and creation of rhythm through movement and natural rhythms of the body such as: breathing, pulse, walking etc. And the development of sensitivity and return to nature, although some of the practices of this method have been criticised by Krch and Kříčka.¹⁶

The Child and Music in a Holistic Concept

The *Child and Music*, with the subtitle *New Ways in Children's Music Education*, can be considered one of the key works for modern music education.¹⁷ Krch and Kříčka summarised two years of work with children in the *Children's Music and Rhythm Institute* in two volumes. The two volumes contain only 43 pages of text, written by Krch. The text section introduces the first volume, providing the reader with an overview of the authors' motivation for creating this work. It analyses the results of the pre-war experiment at the *Children's Music and Rhythm Institute* and articulates the authors' ideas about music education. Although he signs the text, Krch identifies Kříčka as the creator and soul of the collaborative work. Their statements are timeless and underscore, by structuring and integrating musical approaches, a holistic

¹³ Mazurek, J. (1995). O hudebně výchovném systému Josefa Kříčky a Ferdinanda Krcha. In: *Sborník prací Pedagogické fakulty Ostravské univerzity, Ars*, 2, pp. 59–62.

¹⁴ Daněk, A. (2016). *Rozvoj hudebních aktivit v Dětském domově Klánovice inspirovaný programem El Sistema*. Disertační práce. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita.

¹⁵ Authors' note: Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950), for further details see: Mazurek, J. (2016). *Metoda Jaques-Dalcrozova a česká hudební výchova (1911–1938)*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita. Hrnčířová, K. (2020) *Dech jako jednotící element projevu uměleckého souboru na základě Dalcrozeho metody*. Brno: MU, FF.

¹⁶ Author's note: inspiring for inclusive education and education with a methodological and psychotherapeutic overlap

¹⁷ Daněk, A. (2016). Dílo Ferdinanda Krcha jako inspirace pro současnost. In: *Janáčkiana 2016*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita.

and modern conception of not only music education, but also art and language education. The authors divided music education into natural (or family-based) and artificial (professional or school-based) categories. Artificial music education emphasises knowledge of notes, intonation and rhythm. Krch and Kříčka saw artificial music education as the education of music professionals. However, artificial music education is conditioned by natural music education. Natural music education refers to education acquired within the family. The child acquires musicality from singing parents, drawing it from the sounds of nature, from movement, from the whole of life. It is interesting to remember that Krch was born at a time when music was an integral part of life and a large proportion of the population was able to play a musical instrument.¹⁸

Kříčka and Krch did not see the goal of music education in musical virtuosity, but rather in the production of exceptional string players. In contrast to the traditional conception of music education at that time, they did not focus only on the improvement of technical musical skills.¹⁹ More than technical skills, they valued the ability to appreciate music, highlighting the interconnectedness of music with other arts. Above all, they emphasised the influence of music on the moral qualities of the individual. Krch and Kříčka highlighted the importance of folk songs. They emphasised the importance of natural movement and children's improvisation in the music education process. They rehearsed recitation groups, fairy tales and children's melodramas with the children.

Krch and Kříčka focused on the educational influence of music on the child's soul. Their concept of music education permeated the entire educational process. They referred to the ideals of Hostinsky, who argued that culture should be accessible to all social strata of society.²⁰ Krch and Kříčka were the forerunners of the ideas of Helfert, for whom musicality was a basic and given need for everyone.²¹ Krch and Kříčka criticised the excessive use of the Battke method in the education of the time. They saw an alternative in the use of folk songs. They also pointed out, for example, the neglect of songs in the minor key.²²

¹⁸ Laudová, H. (2000). *Prameny lidových tradic Čech: souhrn podnětů k dramaturgické a studijní práci folklorních souborů. 2.*, upr. vyd. Praha: Informační a poradenské středisko pro místní kulturu. Author's note: The presented educational model or example is applicable to any area of upbringing, education, and life in general (if we wish to raise well-mannered children, we must first have well-mannered families).

¹⁹ Kříčka, J. – Krch, F. (1918). *Dítě a hudba: nové cesty v hudební výchově dětské. 1. díl, Hry, písně, tance.* Praha: Dědictví Komenského.

²⁰ Hostinský, O. (1941). *Umění a společnost.* Praha: Jan Laicher.

²¹ Helfert, V. (1930). *Základy hudební výchovy na nehudebních školách.* Praha: Státní nakladatelství v Praze.

²² Kříčka, J. – Krch, F. (1920). *Dítě a hudba: nové cesty v hudební výchově dětské. 2. díl, Dětské melodrama, hudba k pohádkám a obrázkům.* Praha: Dědictví Komenského. Author's note: Songs in a minor key support the development of musical hearing, memory, imagination, and thinking. When combined with a major key, they play a significant role in cultivating

Both teachers also implemented their ideas of holistic music education in the orphanage for legionary orphans, in the famous *House of Childhood* in Horní Krnsko near Mladá Boleslav. Here, Krch and Kříčka had the opportunity to realise their ideas about music education, and music education became an integral part of the educational process at the House of Childhood. Although Kříčka was forced to leave the *Children's Home* due to workload, he remained in contact with Krch and they continued to cooperate in the path started in the *Children's Music and Rhythm Institute*.²³

The House of Childhood

The *House of Childhood* in Horní Krnsko near Mladá Boleslav was founded by Ferdinand Krch in 1920, together with the artists Ladislav Švarc and Ladislav Havránek.²⁴ It was an institution for orphans of legionaries, established by the *Czech Legionary Community*. Today we could talk about a children's home (there were children 6 -10 years old, 11 - 14 years old, but also 2 -3 years old), which was intended to create a family-type environment.²⁵ The *House of Childhood* was conceived as a children's home with a two-class, mixed municipal school for 54 children (accommodating 14 additional children, as per the original plan of the experiment). Teachers had complete freedom, with no marking or testing (formative assessment was used, rather than the current terminology, which was suitable not only for children with special educational needs). However, the children were tested before leaving the Children's Home and their success rate in joining the mainstream educational process was high. Several personalities worked with the *House of Childhood*. Josef Kříčka, Felix Zrno, and the writer Jaroš Gamma, who even led the children to vegetarianism as an expression of respect for living creatures.²⁶ And the artists Havránek and Švarc implemented art components in the teaching.²⁷ The director of the institute, Krch, continued the path begun before the war with Kříčka by the intensive use of music in the educational process.

harmonic perception, which can benefit many children with emotional and social disabilities by aiding emotional regulation and self-awareness.

²³ Daněk, A. (2021). Ferdinand Krch – stále aktuální tvůrčí jiskra pro moderní pedagogiku. In: *Metodický portál: Články* [online]. Praha: RVP. Dostupné z: <https://clanky.rvp.cz/clanek/c/s/22703/ferdinand-krch---stale-aktualni-tvurci-jiskra-pro-moderni-pedagogiku.html>.

²⁴ The beginnings of the project date back to 1919, with the support of Alice Masaryková. For further details, see: In: Spěváček, V. (1978). *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

²⁵ Author's note: For example, the clan groups in Peter Petersen's Jena Plan.

²⁶ Gamma – Krch, F. (1923). *V., „Domě dětství“: Drobné výklady dětem. Část 1. a 2. Osvobozené mládí*, sv. 1. a 2. Praha: Bedřich Kočí.

²⁷ Švarc, L. (1933). *Hlas z Domu dětství*. Mladá Boleslav: Učitelstvo okresu Mladoboleslavského.

In education at the *House of Childhood*, emphasis was placed on the unity of moral, emotional, aesthetic (including art, especially music, and work activities, particularly with Havranek) and physical education in a compatible environment for children and teachers, with a respectful and loving approach. The goal of the pedagogical activity was a morally strong individual. In the *House of Childhood*, Krch consistently promoted his so-called *education of the heart*. He argued that the main thing in education was to engage the heart so that it not only showed respect for all living things, but also took pleasure in being good.²⁸ The cornerstones of good education were the ability to love, to feel, to empathise, to think, and to serve something good.²⁹ He encouraged a sense of humor and joy in school, family and school cooperation, peer relationships and learning (students learning from each other, working together as in a large family). The integration of the curriculum, the so-called natural concentration of the curriculum, was supported.³⁰ Singing and musical activities were not only part of the classroom but also had a strong presence in extracurricular activities, and elements of dramatisation were encouraged. In his later work, Krch repeatedly referred to the results achieved by the children at the *House of Childhood* with the help of music education. This institute, a combination of school and orphanage, was for four years one of the most successful Czechoslovak pedagogical experiments. The results were also appreciated abroad.³¹

At the height of its fame, the staff complained that the frequent visits, excursions and foreign delegations left them no time for normal operations.³² It was mainly due to disagreements between the founder, the *Czech Legionary Community* and due to disagreements between teachers that the *House of Childhood* ceased operations in 1924.³³

After the closure of the *House of Childhood*, Krch continued his pedagogical activities. He joined Přemysl Pitter and worked at the *Milíč House* in Žižkov, Prague, which Krch ran after Pitter departed for emigration until its nationalisation. *Milíč House* can be described as a facility for after-school education, offering a range of interest groups that utilise work activities

²⁸ Matouš, M. (ed.) (2011). *Hovory: sborník Nadačního fondu Přemysla Pittera a Olgy Fierzové: památce Ferdinanda Krcha (1881–1973)*. Sv. 15–16, 2009–2010. Praha: Dingir.

²⁹ Krch, F. (n.d.). *O dětech*. Rukopis.

³⁰ In contrast to the concept of consolidation, for an explanation of various approaches to curriculum integration, we refer, for example, to the following publications: Šafránková, D. (2019). *Pedagogika*. Praha: Grada Publishing; Podroužek, L. (2002). *Integrovaná výuka na základní škole*. Plzeň: Nakl. Fraus.

³¹ Washburne, C. W. (1923). *Progressive tendencies in European education*. Washington: Government Printing Office. Dostupné z: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED540616.pdf>.

³² Švarc, L. (1933). *Hlas z Domu dětství*. Mladá Boleslav: Učitelstvo okresu Mladoboleslavského; Krch, F. (n.d.). *Dům dětství. Výchovný ústav pokusný v Krnsku 1920–1924*. Rukopis.

³³ Vomáčka, J. (2001). Dům dětství – inspirující příklad tvořivého pojetí učitelství. *Pedagogika*, 51(3), pp. 379–383.

(workshops, gardening) and elements of a healthy lifestyle (exercise, sports, nutrition, healthcare, vegetarianism, etc.), as well as meaningful use of free time with a moral educational overlay. It is one of the unique pedagogical initiatives in the Czech Republic and worldwide for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.³⁴ The founder, Přemysl Pitter, is rightly called *Czech Winton* because he managed to rescue many children from internment and concentration camps and provided them with an environment full of love and support, including recovery programmes, the so-called *Action Castle*. The activities of the *Milič House* were forcibly terminated in 1949, and the house was still used as a weekly youth centre until 1953.³⁵

The Work of Ferdinand Krch

Ferdinand Krch was a respected teacher in his time, who was very active in publishing.³⁶ An unfortunately unpublished work is a manuscript titled *House of Childhood: Experimental Educational Institute in Krnsko, 1920–1924* by Krch. He created the work over the course of 8 years. It has five parts, and in the 1,200 pages of the manuscript, Krch summarised not only his work in Horní Krnsko but also his entire pedagogical life. The manuscript is stored in the archives of the *Jan Amos Komenský National Pedagogical Museum*. There are other manuscripts, including textbooks, reading books, and number books, in Ferdinand Krch's collection. Let us mention, in particular, the music education textbook *Skřivánek*, subtitled *Introduction to the World of Tones*. *Skřivánek* was initially planned as the third volume of *Child and Music*. This four-volume textbook is very modern, for example, each month has a different thematic focus. Krch stressed the importance of patience in teaching music education, both on the part of the teacher and the pupil. Another manuscript housed in the National Pedagogical Museum is the work titled *On Children*. Of interest in this work is the section of journal articles, where we find Krch's articles *From the Auxiliary School* and *On Desolate Children*. Here, Krch describes his experiences with psychosocially vulnerable and disturbed children early in his teaching career. Krch has provided us with a fascinating glimpse into the early days of institutional education for impoverished children. Krch saw a poor family environment as the primary cause of the children's poor situation. In particular, he pointed to the devastating effect of alcohol on the upbringing of children.

³⁴ Authors' note: For more detailed information, see <https://pitter.npmk.gov.cz/milicuv-dum>.

³⁵ Author's note: Since 1976, the building has housed a kindergarten, and in 2001 it was granted the honorary title "Miličův dům Kindergarten."

³⁶ Rýdl, K. (1998). Učitelské osobnosti. Ferdinand Krch a rozvoj estetického vnímání světa. *Rodina a škola*, 45(2), p. 20.

Throughout Krch's work, the strong moral charge of Krch's pedagogical approach is evident. This can also be seen in a study titled *Education of the Heart: Conditions of Emotional Education, A Handbook for Educators*. Krch also collaborated with several journals. From 1919, he directed the youth magazine *Golden Gate*. Later, he edited the Czechoslovak Red Cross children's magazines *Lípa* and *Radost*, as well as the publications in the Lípa Library. Krch was the author or co-author of many children's books, plays and songbooks. Together with Ladislav Havránek and the painter Antonín Pospíšil, he worked on reading books, counting sheets and teaching aids. Several of them were published abroad. The most famous publications include *Three Hundred Funny Things by Kašpárek* (1932), *A Collection of Cheerful Exercises and Puns for Children* (1948), *The Five-List: Counting Fairy Tales, Rhymes, Games and Pictures in the field of the First Five* (1948, together with Havránek), *Running Fox to Tábor* (1960) and *Rhymes of Our Kačky* (1969). Ferdinand Krch wanted to show society the need to give children enough time and love in both family and institutional settings, with an emphasis on their interests and needs, in a respectful environment of kind empathy and understanding. In his time, he was recognised for his work at home and abroad.

Education of the Heart: Conditions of Emotional Education, A Handbook for Educators

As we mentioned earlier in the text, the vast majority of Ferdinand Krch's works have not been published in print. An exception is the work *Education of the Heart: Conditions of Emotional Education, a handbook for educators*. The work was published in the proceedings of the *Přemysl Pitter and Olga Fierzová Foundation*.³⁷ The critical review was undertaken by Miroslav Matouš (1921-2021), a renowned expert on the personality of Přemysl Pitter and his work. Matouš describes Krch's work, *The Education of the Heart*, as a significant achievement of Krch's. In the proceedings of the *Přemysl Pitter and Olga Fierzová Foundation*, in the so-called Talks, he allows us to become acquainted with the work that Krch understood as the essence of his pedagogical endeavours.

Education of the Heart focuses on several key attributes in education that are essential for the development and transformation of the child into a morally, ethically, and spiritually mature person. Here we find elements (in current terminology) of pro-parenting education, education for responsible partnership, marriage, parenting. The emphasis in education was on the development of emotional education from birth to the end of life as a necessary part of life in that (according to Krch) age of technology and rejection of spiritual

³⁷ Matouš, M. (ed.) (2011). *Hovory: sborník Nadačního fondu Přemysla Pittera a Olgy Fierzové: památce Ferdinanda Krcha (1881–1973)*. Sv. 15–16, 2009–2010. Praha: Dingir.

elements. This pedagogical legacy remains highly relevant today, as humanity advances technologically while falling behind in terms of civilisation (AI, virtual worlds, loss of ethical values, etc.).

Krch successfully defined education into several differentiated parts, which he characterised in detail. In the introduction, he discusses the education of young people before entering marriage. He points out the importance of taking a *Course in education for marriage and parenthood*. As the title suggests, both engaged couples should attend it diligently and inculcate principles, lessons for living together and raising children. Another reference is also to reflect on the inappropriate and premature institutional upbringing of the child in the nursery (separation from the mother) and what the disadvantages of this are for the young child. He encourages both parents to reflect, "...that love for the child must grow out of respect for his soul and responsibility for the child's intellectual, emotional and moral development. The child at first understands only expressions of love such as a smile (which he returns), open arms (the child also extends his hands), a hug, a caress, a kind address, a tender word (the child's fondness for human speech)".³⁸ Institutional care, or children's homes, or children's boarding schools, are instead perceived as institutions where children living permanently do not receive love from their parents, deprivation, separation anxiety, children have problems in vocabulary development, emotional adjustment and also with positive parental patterns in the family. The irreplaceability of the mother's role and role in the child's upbringing, a secure and safe bond with the parent is crucial and thus accompanies the young person throughout life. The upbringing of the heart is, in many ways, timeless in its historical legacy and remains relevant in the contemporary 21st century. The loving comfort of the family from which a child should emerge is changing today, both parents are often at work till late afternoon, not having enough time to devote themselves entirely to their offspring, inconsistent parenting or overly democratic liberal upbringing and consumerist lifestyle, absence of quality of life values along with overuse of social networking and living in the virtual world enter into the upbringing of a child. Krch states that: "*The home opens the senses and educates the heart, laying the foundations for the moral attitudes of the future man. A happy, loving home is the place where the foundations are laid for a total understanding of life and its values*".³⁹ A child's personality develops and takes shape during the preschool years, when attitudes and fundamental attributes of their personality are formed. The upbringing of both parents should be an indispensable component, even though each parent brings all his or her skills and knowledge to bear on education. We should not forget that the father's role in upbringing is important, and it is the father who teaches the child to play and learn, thus becoming a *hero* and role model for them. Again, a timeless

³⁸ Krch in Matouš, M. (2011), p. 9.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 10.

expression of the necessity of both parents, father and mother, raising a child, when in today's world many children grow up without this support in life. The mother's upbringing tends to focus on the emotional component and is most important for preschool children; the mother instills the principles of morality, good manners, obedience and diligence, including the development of speech.

Equally interesting, beneficial and timeless is the subchapter that deals with the employment of children as they grow older. At present, we tend to see parents rather *sparing* the child from small chores and focusing only on school results and performance, scheduling the children according to their school activities, often without shared time and activities. The child should also have meaningful activities and parents should not do them for the children. Again, this is a valuable idea given how contemporary parents often approach children and their free time. By doing so, children will learn skills that they can use further in sports, for example, becoming more resilient, more agile and more capable in synchronicity of movement. The fact that a child sees his or her parent creating chores or working in the garden is a role model for the child. Today's world places high demands on performance and time. However, little emphasis is placed on the work skills that shape a young person, often lacking a connection to positive role models in the family or wider environment, or a lack of respect for others' work. Nothing educates a child like seeing their mother and father work. Modern times offer various opportunities, such as speeding up household chores, doing the occasional mending, or minor repairs. Manual work has often remained a hobby. Leisure time, on the other hand, is rare and we tend to spend it in other ways than housework.

Other areas of Krch's concept of education include discipline, praise and rewards. Krch describes that we learn by making mistakes, especially children. *"Let us, then, make up for children's misdeeds so that it is not punishment, but only the removal of wrongdoing, correction, i.e., gain, growth. Punishment (especially in anger, which sometimes degenerates into vindictiveness and cruelty) is the educator's helplessness and inability to find positive compensation, is aggravation on both sides"*.⁴⁰ True pedagogical mastery lies in calmly explaining and justifying everything to the child. For us, the legacy of Kruch lies in his unwavering search for the good and in righting the wrongs of a child who has done wrong. It is important to encourage children to work with error, to help them find, understand, address and correct the mistake or transgression, initially in cooperation (parent-child). This should dispense with physical trinkets and lovingly appeal for an explanation of what the child has committed, and what the ways to solve it are. Corporal punishment undermines human dignity and can erode sincere love between adults. Again, this idea is timeless: we should strive to educate with love and patience at all times and in all circumstances.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 32.

According to Krch, we should also not forget praise and rewards in education, which are among the core elements of education. Praise helps to reinforce the child's behaviour positively and should be a motivation for the child. It should be formulated specifically for an activity that has been successful, which can further encourage the child's self-esteem. Children should learn from their successes, as well as from their mistakes. Praise is followed by rewards that work in education. Rewards in education should not only be financial, but also moral and value-based. It is essential to make the child feel good about his/her work (e.g. school work) and this should be the reward itself. Again, a very positive idea that can be used as an intrinsic motivator in education. Krch's legacy of educational endeavour is a kind of bridge between love and respect for the child in education. These are certain kinds of empathic ways that lead to the mystery of education, revealing what we do and how, rather than what we say. Krch's education is a specific intellectual, moral, and spiritual journey, standing on a solid foundation of emotional education that supports and respects each child (an element of inclusion).

Conclusion and Discussion

The primary research focus of the study was to interpret the ideological and pedagogical principles embedded in Krch's writing, *Education of the Heart*, and to examine their relevance to the modern inclusive paradigm, contemporary special and inclusive pedagogy, and education. Sub-questions then included a reflection on his pedagogical practice and experience, including key values and concepts of emotional and musical education. Krch's conception, viewed through the prism of contemporary approaches to the education and upbringing of pupils with special educational needs, was also an integral part.

Krch sees the highest goal of education in the principle of love as the highest meaning of life. With *Education of the Heart*, Krch was able to balance the love and respect of the educator for the child and the child for the educator. Based on a lifelong process of cooperation between emotional education combined with reason and intellectual education with sensitivity, he sought a way to understand and support each child (inclusive overlap). On these foundations, moral values (education) are then developed, leading together with the previous ones to the fulfilment of the spiritual essence of education. Again, there is an overlap with the contemporary notion of the inclusive paradigm, which emphasises the educational, socio-cultural overlap of living with and helping those in need. Education of the heart can become a safe journey of the educator to the child's soul through friendship and mutual trust, understanding and closeness (both in the family and the institution). The nurturing role model is a mirror for the child and his soul; words are useless if actions are lacking. No less important is the role of pro-parental education and its support in emotional education. It is essential to create a loving, safe, and happy home

for the child and to help the child empathise with objects, plants, animals, and other people, including co-responsibility and compassion for the sick, elderly, and disabled (inclusive overlap).

Krch's reference to the transdisciplinarity of education and upbringing is also inspiring, and is evident in the methodological and interpersonal approaches in the House of Childhood and the writings analysed. The emphasis is on the connection between emotional education and nature, music, physical, and artistic education, which provides a specific basis for aesthetic education, also seen as an outcome of the moral and labour components of education (including emotional education).

The inclusive orientation of Krch's pedagogical ideas is evident in his observation of the need for love among orphans, which tends to be greater and more intense (e.g., among the visually impaired, the hearing-impaired, etc.).⁴¹

The principles and methodological foundations of music education, as well as their implementation in the House of Childhood and the ideas presented in *The Child and Music*, would withstand scrutiny in a confrontation with the most modern approaches to contemporary music education. The holistic concept of Krch's music education consisting in the integration of singing, listening to music, playing an instrument and rhythmic (children's movement to music), consisting in the development of musical skills, the child's experience and perception of music is one of the basic educational elements in the child's development (together with emotional education). Ferdinand Krch was already fulfilling today's inclusive ideas a century ago. He was significantly ahead of his time and managed to holistically combine the educational process, music education and the field of personal and moral development. Through music, Krch aims at much higher standards than just precise intonation and rhythm. Music is meant to be a tool towards our better selves in relation to others. It is intended to help us develop into morally strong individuals. Krch's music education is a powerful, inclusive, socialising, and educational tool, without which the needs of students and their social coexistence with each other cannot be met.

This study is dedicated to the centenary of the closing of the Children's Home. Our goal is to remain faithful to the ideas of Ferdinand Krch and to strive to understand their historical legacy for present and future education, inclusion, and society. We believe that more intensive research, perhaps by digitising available Krch publications, will open up space for further research and the development of pedagogical thinking. Krch believed that no good idea can be lost; it just has to wait patiently for someone to come along who, through his understanding and love, will stir it to new life and further refine and develop it according to the needs of the times. Let us be inspired by his ideas, learn from

⁴¹ For further details see: Krch, F. (n.d.). *Dům dětství. Výchovný ústav pokusný v Krnsku 1920–1924*. Rukopis, p. 82.

Krch's deeply human approach, and strive to embody his kindness, love, respect, and understanding for children in the minor and major keys of inclusive education, with a heart.

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Forms of Health and Physical Education in the Theory and Practice of Civic Education of the Women's Civic Labour Union (Selected Examples)

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<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2025-002>

The Women's Civic Work Union, as one of the most influential pro-government women's organizations in interwar Poland, conducted a wide-ranging educational and instructional campaign, primarily in the field of civic and social education. Its goal was to create a "new type of Polish female citizen." In its work, the Association employed both traditional and modern means, forms, and methods of educational influence. Among the effective forms of educational activity were various types of summer camps: military-recreational, vacation, education-recreational, hiking, and those organized in permanent facilities such as hostels and boarding houses. These camps were intended to serve as a unique socio-educational space with significant pedagogical value, effectively shaping the social, civic, and national attitudes deemed desirable by the Association. As part of the camp activities, a healthy and hygienic lifestyle was also promoted, providing women with opportunities for rest and recovery of both physical and mental health.

Camps were organized in several attractive locations throughout Poland. Dozens of different types of camp centers were operated, involving a total of several thousand women.

Keywords: *The Women's Civic Work Union, women's education, physical, health and civic education, leisure camps, recreational camps, vacation camps, Second Polish Republic*

The Women's Civic Work Union (Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet, ZPOK) was one of the most influential women's organisations within the Sanation movement in Poland during the interwar period. It was established on 25th March 1928 and operated continuously until the outbreak of the Second World War. It had a clearly defined ideological and political character, which determined its goals and tasks. One of the top priorities of the Union was the activation of women and their civic and state education, the creation of a 'new

type of Polish female citizen', physically and mentally healthy, aware of her civil rights and duties, interested in state affairs, independent, distinguished by a deep sense of responsibility for the state, and participating in work "to raise ethical, cultural, economic and social standards."¹

In the image of the "new female citizen" that was propagated the strongest emphasis was placed on the importance of women's social activity in the model of feminine citizenship pursued by the organisation. It was emphasised that social work stimulating the activity and initiative of ZPOK members "in the interest of the common good of society and the state" was to be an important component of the process of civic and state education as a way of shaping the moral attitudes of the members and developing their self-esteem. The *Ideological Statement* of the ZPOK posited that the precondition for educating a good citizen was to recognise their worth, so the leaders of the organisation were tasked with instilling in their members and charges "absolute integrity; civil courage; a sense of individual and collective responsibility; respect for human dignity and a deep faith in human spiritual values."² In addition, the concept of a "new citizen" also contained the demand/purpose of caring for the physical health of women having the strength to meet the challenges and tasks ahead of them. Accordingly, the Union declared that it was the duty of its activists to promote a healthy, hygienic lifestyle, to enable women to have rest and regain their health because good health, both physical and mental, of girls and women was the prerequisite for effective educational work.

In practice, the most important educational task undertaken by the members of the Union was the implementation of a new model of civic and state education for women.

Educational, upbringing and civic work was mainly carried out by the Department of Political and Civic Education (Wydział Wychowania Polityczno-obywatelskiego, WWP-O)³ which implemented it mainly through its own day care centres where a systematic and logical programme of teaching about the state was conducted in the form of lectures, courses, discussion meetings and

¹ For more on the ZPOK see: Piwowarczyk, M. (2018). Rola Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet w kształceniu (i doksztalcaniu) zawodowym kobiet na Wileńszczyźnie w latach 1929-1939. In: J. Lusek (Eds.), *Oświata i nauka na Kresach Wschodnich w XIX i XX wieku*, Bytom: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań, Muzeum Górnośląskie w Bytomiu, pp. 175-192; Also: Piwowarczyk, M. (2016). Kobiety aktywne. Działalność społeczno-oświatowa liderki Wileńskiego Zrzeszenia Wojewódzkiego Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet (1929-1939). In: A. Dawid, J. Lusek (Eds.), *Kobiety na Kresach na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa-Bytom-Opole, pp. 43-60; Piwowarczyk, M. (2017). The educational role of the journals of social and educational associations in the Second Republic of Poland as exemplified by "Citizen Work" of the Women's Citizen Work Association. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal* 9/1, pp. 7-18; Piwowarczyk, M. (2014). Civil education in the theory and practice of Women's Civil Work Association in the Second Polish Republic. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal* 6/1, pp. 30-39.

² *Deklaracja ideowa* (1938). Praca Obywatelska 5-6, p. 2.

³ Until 1934 Department of Civic Education (Wydział Wychowania Obywatelskiego).

practical Work Groups. Thus, the work based on day care centres became one of the most developed forms of educational, upbringing and civic work carried out by the ZPOK.⁴

According to the leaders of the Union, the day care centres were the most important and effective form of educational work, but not the only one. In addition to day care work, political and civic education clerks also used other forms of work, including various types of summer camps, such as military and recreational, or recreational and educational holiday camps, hiking camps as well as holidays stays organised in permanent facilities, i.e. hostels and guesthouses.

The ZPOK quickly recognised the importance of health and physical education in its educational activities. This issue was treated as one of the top priorities in the work plans. It was recognised that health and physical fitness were prerequisites for the proper performance of daily duties, that “practising gymnastics, apart from physical fitness, brings the factor of order, discipline and effort into the life of a citizen”,⁵ which was desirable from the point of view of the political and educational goals of the Union and was considered to be “of genuinely inestimable value.”⁶ Therefore, already in 1930, the ZPOK, together with the social committee for the Preparation of Women for National Defence (Przysposobienie Kobiet do Obrony Kraju, PKdOK), began to organise military-style summer camps for working women (the first camp was organised in Fronołowo on the River Bug). In 1932 the promotion of health and physical education and the organisation of summer camps for young females who were unemployed or day-care attendees was taken over by the Department of Physical Education (Wydział Wychowania Fizycznego, WWF) at the Main Board of the ZPOK, which cooperated with the Departments of Mother and Child Care, of Political and Civic Education and of Women’s Affairs.⁷ Detailed guidelines for organising and running camps and their programmes were developed, including a detailed instruction on “civic education at camps”, prepared in 1935 by WWP-O instructor Halinka Żółtowska.⁸

The leaders of the ZPOK (e.g. Helena Witkiewicz-Mokrzycka) maintained the position that holiday camps were an excellent opportunity to spread the slogans and ideals of the Union; an excellent opportunity to instil these ideals

⁴ *Praca świetlicowa. Instrukcja dla świetlic Z.P.O.K.* (1934), Warszawa, p. 3.

⁵ Tańska, M. (1935). *Tajemnica dobrego samopoczucia. Gimnastyka i sport*. Praca Obywatelska 13, p. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybes Archyvas (Lithuanian Central State Archives) [hereinafter: LCVA], Wileńskie Zrzeszenie Wojewódzkie ZPOK (*Vilnius Provincial Association of the ZPOK*) [hereinafter: WZW ZPOK], Akta Referatu Opieki 1935, f.334, op.1, nr 71, *Okólnik nr. 1 Zrzeszenia Wojewódzkiego ZPOK. Wilno z dnia 26.II.1935*, unnumbered pages.

⁸ Jaroszewiczowa, H. (1938). *Wydział Wychowania Fizycznego*. Praca Obywatelska 5-6, p. 60; Żółtowska, H. (1935). *Wychowanie obywatelskie na koloniach i półkoloniach*. Praca Obywatelska 12, pp. 10-11.

into “young hearts and souls”; to raise well-rounded citizens. It was accepted that such camps created “exceptionally favourable conditions for the implementation of universal (and union-specific) educational tasks, i.e. to shape people into future participants in the cultural life of the nation, initially only as conscious consumers of cultural goods, and then as co-creators of these goods and implementers of ideals”.⁹ It was assumed that camps constituted a specific social and educational space, “that they created a separate environment with great educational values, effectively shaping the psyche of the female campers”.¹⁰ The camps were to serve the purpose to “raise the cultural level of girls, make them more complete, teach them to reach for the values of a wider environment, not only material but also mental”.¹¹ The camps were primarily aimed at improving the physical, health, spiritual and mental condition of their participants.¹² It was claimed that the camps provided all sorts of convenient conditions for the implementation of educational tasks, i.e. “raising the value of the individual because within the framework of a camp it is possible to develop independence, friendship, physical fitness, dexterity, senses, as well as valuable aspects of intellect, perceptiveness, initiative, independent judgement, strong will and imagination.”¹³ The union press wrote that “subordination to the group will teach young people the charm of coexistence, the desire to distinguish themselves not in a fight, but in noble sporting competition”.¹⁴

The most appropriate forms and means of implementing the educational programme at the camps were considered to be common room activities, bonfires, trips, gymnastic exercises, reading and talks – mainly in the field of political and civic education.¹⁵ These forms were used in educational work at all types of camps run by ZPOK: (1) military-recreational camps for working women; (2) holiday camps (“improving physical fitness and providing recreation”) for working women; (3) educational and recreational camps (“improving physical education”) for poor and unemployed women; (4) educational and recreational camps (“improving physical education”) for girls from union day care centres; (5) hiking camps, (6) permanent camps in own facilities of the ZPOK.

⁹ Bagińska, T. (1938). *Praca wychowawcy na kolonii i półkolonii*. Praca Obywatelska 12, p. 8.

¹⁰ Bagińska, T. (1938). *Praca wychowawcy na kolonii...*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹² *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.

¹³ Witkiewicz-Mokrzycka, H. (1938), *Letnia akcja opiekuńcza*. Praca Obywatelska 9, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁵ For the purpose and topics of the talks, see: Bagińska, T. (1938). *Praca wychowawcy na kolonii...*, op. cit., pp. 8-9; LCVA, WZW ZPOK, Akta Referatu Wychowania Polityczno-Obywatelskiego za rok 1935, f.334, op.1, nr 86, *Program pogadanek z zakresu wychowania polityczno-obywatelskiego*, unnumbered pages.

The ZPOK began to develop its camp activities intensively in 1932. In the summer of that year, educational and recreational camps were organised in five locations in Poland for over 1,000 girls, mainly from union day care centres.

In 1934, a camp campaign was carried out in Koźienice and Sulejów for a total of 500 participants. Between 1935 and 1937, a 4-week camp (in July and August 1935) in Durycze for 412 girls, a four-week camp (in July 1936) in Borkowo for members of the Warsaw-based Voluntary Work House (Dom Pracy Dobrowolnej, DPD) at the ZPOK, and four four-week camps (in July and August 1937) for 500 girls in Borkowo, Durycze and Koszewniki were organised. The largest number of camps were organised in the summer of 1938. They were located in Pierwoszyn near Gdynia (educational and recreational camp “improving physical education” for girls from day care centres between 1st and 28th August for 250 participants); Skole (an educational and recreational camp “improving physical education” for girls from day care centres between 1 and 28 August for 220 participants); Borowa near Kartuzy (a holiday camp “improving physical fitness and providing recreation” for women in blue-collar jobs, between 1st and 28th August for 180 participants); Chornohora near Vorokhta (a holiday camp “improving physical fitness and recreation” for women in white-collar jobs, between 1st July and 15th August for 100 participants, and an educational and recreational camp for girls from day care centres to improve physical education from 1st to 28th August for 330 participants); Borkowa near Żukowo (a “recreational and fitness” holiday camp for day care centre managers between 20th July and 20th August for 40 participants, organised by the WWP-O and WWF); Skała (military and recreational camp between 16th July and 1st August for 27 participants, organised by the WWP-O and the PKdOK Section of the ZPOK); Husiatyn (military and recreation camp from 1st August to 17th August for 27 participants, organised by the WWP-O and the PKdOK Section of the ZPOK); Zadrójki in the Vilnius Region (military and recreational camp from 1st August to 17th August for 15 campers, organised by the WWP-O and the PKdOK Section of the ZPOK); in the Lemko Region (a hiking camp from 1st to 22nd August for 15 women, organised by the WWP-O and the PKdOK Section of the ZPOK); in Pomerania (an academic “educational and propaganda” hiking camp from 31st July to 28th August for 60 participants, organised by the WWP-O and the PKdOK Section of the ZPOK).¹⁶

¹⁶ *Wykaz obozów i kursów organizowanych przez ZPOK w okresie letnim 1938*, (1938). Prosta Droga 23, p. 2.

Military-style and Recreational Summer Camps for Working Women

In June 1931, a second camp of this type was organised in Skole (Eastern Lesser Poland), co-financed by the military authorities. Nearly 300 women participated in it (in four two-week slots).¹⁷ Candidates aged between 18 and 35 were accepted into the camp.¹⁸ The majority of the camp participants were manual workers (factory workers) from state-owned factories, including the tobacco monopoly and military factories (from Warsaw, Lodz, Bialystok, Krakow, Radom, Brest, Vilnius, Grodno, Poznan, Katowice and Bytom). On the first day of the camp, the participants underwent thorough medical examinations to determine their state of health. A large number of women were found to be severely anaemic, exhausted and often with lung disease (these women were not allowed to participate in physical exercise).¹⁹ The health, physical and mental condition of the camp participants was vividly described in a report: "...they arrived from hard, laborious work, physically and mentally exhausted, filled with grey worries about everyday life and petty longings for a holiday".²⁰ Out of concern for the health status of the young women, their ("military") diet was adjusted to their health and needs, i.e. larger amounts of milk, vegetables and fruit were introduced in addition to bread and meat. The health/physical result of the stay in Skole was such that "despite constant exercise and motor games, despite trips and walks, an average weight gain of 2.5 to 4 kilograms, ... deeper changes, which the beneficial effects of mountain air and sun brought to the girls' bodies, could be recognised by changes in their disposition, skin colour, increased sparkle in their eyes, and increasing joy of life."²¹

The organisers wanted to make the two-week holidays, which female manual workers received each year, more attractive, and they assumed "that during the camp it would be possible to awaken in the women's souls a sense of civic rights and human duties, a desire for a fuller, more multifaceted life and a longing for beauty, and above all to bathe them in air and sunshine, the only remedies for the soul and body."²² Ultimately, due to the "poor physical condition of the girls, the stay in Skole was given the character of a holiday camp rather than a military camp."²³ The programme only included a small number of classes in military subjects, with the main emphasis on physical education and complete rest.

¹⁷ Ceysingerówna, H. (1931). *Obóz letni w Skolem*. Prosta Droga 27, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸ Ceysingerówna, H. (1931). *Obozy letnie dla robotnic*. Praca Obywatelska 14-15, p. 3.

¹⁹ Ceysingerówna, H. (1931). *Obozy letnie dla robotnic...*, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁰ Hajkiewiczowa, S. (1932). „Ciężkie czasy” a obozy robotnicze. Praca Obywatelska 11-12, p. 7.

²¹ Ceysingerówna, H. (1931). *Obozy letnie dla robotnic...*, op. cit., p. 3.

²² *Ibid*, p.2.

²³ *Ibid*.

However, the military organisation was retained – the daily schedule, discipline and forms.²⁴

A similar camp to the one in Skole was organised in 1934 by the WWP-O in Koziernice. The camp was intended for women from Upper Silesia, the Krakow and Kielce provinces, from factory and mining centres, with 204 participants.²⁵

In the second half of the 1930s, the ZPOK, through WWF, WWP-O and the PKdOK Section, more and more often organised camps of this type (military and recreational). This was a response to the deteriorating international situation and the need to prepare women (“new Polish citizens”) to defend the country in the event of a war threat.

Holiday Camps (“Improving Physical Fitness and Providing Recreation”) for Working Women

Camps of this type were recreational and leisure-oriented in nature. They were paid – “for those who could afford the appropriate fee”²⁶ – and mainly intended for women doing physical work. The fees were not high so the “holiday” offer of the ZPOK was attractive to many women, both financially and in terms of the programme. Through these camps, the Union pursued its political and educational goals – it promoted the model of a healthy, physically fit, strong woman, worker and citizen. In this way, it gained supporters for its ideas and organisation.

The model facilities of this type were the camps in Verkiai (Werki) near Vilnius where the Vilnius Provincial Branch of the ZPOK organised a holiday camp in 1937 (“improving physical fitness and providing recreation”)

²⁴ Daily schedule: ‘Wake up at 7 am, prayer at 7.05 am, gymnastics from 7.10 to 7.35 am from 7.35 to 8.15 am, washing in the stream and tidying up the tents, breakfast at 8.15 am, morning report at 8.45 am. From 9 am to 11.30 am lectures/talks and physical exercises.’ The programme of lectures, or rather talks included subjects such as Polish history, contemporary Poland, civic education, hygiene and rescue skills; and within military science: army organisation and gas defence. Physical exercises involved javelin and discus throwing, shot put, motor and sports games, jumping and running. ‘Occasionally, instead of physical exercises, there was swimming in the river or a walk. At 11.45 am there was a service report, and at 12.00 pm was lunch. From 12.30 to 1.30 pm there was an hour of silence, and from 1.30 to 3.00 pm was free time, during which the girls read, ran errands in town, or, in the case of the weaker girls, slept. From 3.00 to 3.45 pm, more physical exercise, from 3.45 to 4.15 pm, afternoon tea, from 4.15 to 7.00 pm, physical activities interspersed with talks or walks and trips to the surrounding forests and mountains. At 7.15 pm was dinner, from 8.00 to 9.00 pm, a bonfire or (on rainy days) common room activities, at 9.30 pm, lights out – from that moment on, talking was no longer allowed.’ Ceysingerówna, H. (1931). *Obóz letni w Skolem...*, op. cit., pp.8-9; Ceysingerówna, H. (1931). *Obozy letnie dla robotnic...*, op. cit., p. 2.

²⁵ *Obóz dla dziewcząt w Koziernicach*. (1934). Prosta Droga 29, pp. 4-5.

²⁶ Mianowska, S. (1938). *Jak pracowaliśmy w lecie*. Praca Obywatelska 20, p. 6.

for female manual workers of the Vilnius City Council (two 2-week slots; 1st slot: 1th-14th July; 2nd slot: 13th-28th July.²⁷ In 1938, camps were organised in Borów near Kartuzy and in Chornohora near Vorokhta (for the working intelligentsia).²⁸ The camp in Borów brought together 180 women aged between 21 and 50 years. Most of them were manual workers for whom efforts were made to create conditions at the camp to replenish their exhausted physical and moral strength by adapting the camp programme to its objectives, which was active rest, and to the mental and physical capabilities of the participants (“gymnastics and sports were practised, and all camp tasks were carried out diligently and willingly”). In her summary of the holiday campaign, the camp manager wrote: “The campers rested, gained weight and their faces brightened up. They became enthusiastic about the idea of camping and holidays, made plans to build their own holiday campsite and almost unanimously emphasised the need to widely promote the idea of holidays within the ZPOK.”²⁹

Educational and Recreational Camps (“Improving Physical Education”) for Poor and Unemployed Women

Educational and recreational camps for poor (low-income) and unemployed women were organised by the Women’s Affairs Departments (Referaty Spraw Kobięcych, RSK). For example, in 1932, the RSK of the Lviv Branch of the ZPOK organised a holiday camp in Ustrzyki Dolne from 5th July to 5th August for 46 participants aged 15 to 30 “from low-income backgrounds, who, for a small fee, could enjoy the best conditions for a whole month, with fresh air, sunshine, carefree freedom, good food and a pleasant social atmosphere.”³⁰

The centre (camp) was located in a large, comfortable, bright and airy house on the border between Ustrzyki and Jasień, near a mountain with a coniferous forest and the River Strwiąż, which provided an opportunity for swimming. The excellent mountain air, good and plentiful food, consisting of five meals a day, as well as the exemplary organisation of camp life brought the best results for the physical and moral health of the residents. Here, they found not only refreshment and respite after work, but also an atmosphere of benevolent cordiality, intellectual and moral stimulation, encouraging them to work on developing their character and to better understand their duties towards themselves, their families and the state.³¹ The good organisation was evident in the timetable of the camp day’s activities. In addition to ensuring exemplary order and tidiness and satisfying physical and intellectual needs, the

²⁷ *Obóz wypoczynkowy dla pracownic fizycznych*, (1937). Samorządowiec Wileński 5, p. 8.

²⁸ Mianowska, S. (1938). *Jak pracowaliśmy w lecie...*, op. cit., p. 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Pereńska, J. (1932). *Te, które nie znalazły dotąd wypoczynku*. Praca Obywatelska 20, p. 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*

camp command gave the residents freedom, allowing them to function according to their “individual inclinations and preferences”. The daily programme included gymnastics, sports games, walks, sunbathing and river bathing. After dinner at 7 pm there were talks on current affairs, social issues and literature, recitations, choral singing and reading aloud. In addition to these group activities and entertainment, the campers were given three hours in the morning for so-called free activities (e.g. reading books, handicrafts, writing letters, and spending time outdoors). Some attractive activities included lessons in art and rhythmic gymnastics and outings around the area. The daily routine, its organisation, medical care and good nutrition had a significant impact on the health, physical and mental condition of the participants. “The satisfactory health results were evidenced by the fact that all the campers gained between 1.5 and 6 kilograms. During the month they spent together, there was extraordinary harmony among the girls, who bonded as if they were one big family. No wonder, then, that they were very sorry to bid farewell to their holiday destination.”³²

Furthermore, the organisation of holiday camps for unemployed women was handled by the Department of Mother and Child Care, often in cooperation with the Women’s Physical Education Departments of the State Physical Education Office. The activities (programme) in the field of civic education for girls at such camps were conducted by the WWP-O.³³ In 1933, a total of 953 women aged between 14 and 20 years spent their leisure time at five camps (Kozienice, Kielce Province; Grandzicze near Grodno; Nowy Sącz; Sulejów near Piotrków; and Sieraków in the Poznan Province). “With few exceptions, they were girls in the most difficult economic situation: unemployed girls, orphans or children of unemployed parents, recruited from industrial and factory centres (including Warsaw, Lodz, Poznan and Upper Silesia).”³⁴ The holiday camps were intended to “restore their strength, give them health and moral benefits; the moral ones by bringing a moment of joy and relaxation into their gloomy, desperate lives, as well as by strengthening their faith in their own abilities and in the care of society and the state by directing their thoughts towards general social and state goals.”³⁵ The educational programme included the following activities: talks, common room activities, evening bonfires, gymnastics, trips and reading.

Subsequent camps of this type were organised in Grandzicze near Grodno (in August 1937, for 300 girls from Silesia, Warsaw and the provinces

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Śliwińska, L. (1933). *Obozy wypoczynkowe dla dziewcząt bezrobotnych*. Praca Obywatelska 19, p. 2. The State Office for Physical Education issued detailed instructions on educational work at summer camps implemented in the educational practice by the WWF ZPOK.

³⁴ Archiwum Akt Nowych (*Archives of Modern Records*) [hereinafter: AAN], sygn. 63, Akta Z. i J. Moraczewskich. Komitet Demokratyczny Wyborczy i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej [w l. 1928-33] (Pamiętnik po roku 1933), p. 341 (345).

³⁵ AAN, sygn.63, Akta Z. i J. Moraczewskich. Komitet Demokratyczny Wyborczy i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej [w l. 1928-33] (Pamiętnik po roku 1933), p.341 (345); Brzostkówna, H. (1933). *Na kolonji w Grodzicach pod Grodnem*. Prosta Droga 28, p. 2.

of Lodz, Vilnius, Novogradok and Bialystok) and in Durycze near Brest (in late July and early August of 1937, for 300 women from the provinces of Kielce, Krakow, Lublin, Volhynia, Tarnopol, Stanisławów and Lviv).³⁶

The effectiveness of the educational impact of such centres (camps) was repeatedly discussed among the members of the Union. A representative assessment of these forms of educational work was provided by Leokadia Śliwińska in the pages of *Praca Obywatelska (Civic Work)*: “As far as increasing physical strength is concerned, serious results were generally achieved, such as weight gain, lower temperature, improved well-being. As for the visible educational effect, the matter is not so obvious (due to the period being too short, only four weeks, and the exceptionally difficult scum that turned up at the camps).”³⁷

Educational and Recreational Camps (“Improving Physical Education”) for Girls from the ZPOK Day Care Centres

Every year from 1932, the union, through its departments, organised several summer camps for girls who participated in the activities of the union’s day care centres outside the summer period. During the holiday months, they were sent to camps where “physical exercise, games, fun and excursions, as well as prolonged exposure to fresh air and good nutrition had an excellent effect on their physical condition”.³⁸ It was assumed that the camps would also “shape ‘the girls’ souls under the influence of their leaders, in an atmosphere of harmony and order, in voluntary submission to the rules of discipline necessary for life in a larger group.”³⁹

In the summer of 1935, the WWF organised a central camp (educational and recreational) for girls from the ZPOK day care centres in Durycze near Brest-on-the-Bug between 15th July and 15th August. The camp was attended by 412 “day care centre girls” (divided into 3 sub-camps) and 32 instructors. The girls were aged between 14 and 20 years and they were sent to the camp from all over Poland, from the Provinces of Vilnius (24), Polesie (18), Volhynia (23); Krakow (2); Warsaw (94), Lublin (16), Lodz (68), Novogradok (6), Kielce (108) and Silesia (53).⁴⁰

The educational programme for the camp included physical education, trips, swimming, sunbathing, civic education, handicraft, singing and common room

³⁶ LCVA, WZW ZPOK, Akta Referatu Wychowania Polityczno-Obywatelskiego od 1.IV.37 r. do 1.I.38 r., f.334, op.1, nr. 250, *Pismo do Zarządów Zrzeszeń Wojewódzkich ZPOK z dnia 22.VI.1937*, p. 211.

³⁷ Śliwińska, L. (1933). *Obozy wypoczynkowe dla dziewcząt...*, op. cit., p. 2.

³⁸ *Obóz w Borkowie*, (1937). Prosta Droga 38, p. 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ LCVA, WZW ZPOK, Sekretariat 1936-37, f.334, op.1, nr 199, *Sprawozdanie Wydziału Wychowania Fizycznego za okres od 2 lutego 1935 r. do 15 listopada 1936 r.*, unnumbered pages; Miszewska, Z. (1935). *Hallo ! Tu obóz w Duryczach*. *Praca Obywatelska* 18, pp. 5-7.

activities. During the camp, a group of 85 people earned the State Sports Badge (the camp was co-organised by the Women's Physical Education Department of the State Physical Education Office).⁴¹

The camp was well organised and located in an attractive place and area. The daily programme included morning exercises, swimming in the River Bug, meals served four times a day in open-air dining spaces (final medical examinations showed that the participants had gained between 1.85 and 5 kilograms in weight), lots of sports activities and talks around campfires, participation in local and special events organised jointly with the local population as part of civic education.⁴²

Another four-week central camp in Durycze took place in August 1936 for 500 participants.

In 1937, another camp was held in Borkowo near Kartuzy, located in the beautiful surroundings of Kashubian Switzerland. It was attended by 140 women. During the camp, two trips were organised – to Kartuzy and Gdynia.⁴³ Bonfires were often organised, to which the local population was invited and participated in large numbers (a year earlier, in July 1936, a camp for members of the Warsaw-based Voluntary Work House (DPD) at the ZPOK was held in Borkowo and was attended by 70 people of whom 30 were from the DPD while the remaining participants were female manual workers).⁴⁴

In 1938, the WWF organised a camp for 500 members of the ZPOK, grouping them into three camp areas in Pierwoszyn near Gdynia, Borowo near Kartuzy by the lakes of the Kashubian Switzerland, and in Gadżyna in the Chornohora Valley.⁴⁵ The camp in Pierwoszyn (1st-28th August) was attended by 250 girls from the ZPOK day care centres (from Silesia, Vilnius, Volhynia and Pomerania). The programme of activities, although primarily aimed at 'making girls fall in love with sports and physical education, basking in the sun and eating well', was not limited to improving their health and physical fitness.⁴⁶ It also included educational and cultural activities and providing women with national defence training, familiarising participants with the general principles of national defence, the objectives and content of civic education, and in practical terms, with preparing food for large groups, known as 'mass cooking.'

⁴¹ LCVA, WZW ZPOK, Akta Referatu Wychowania Polityczno-Obywatelskiego za rok 1935, f.334, op.1, nr 86, *Sprawozdanie Wydziału Fizycznego ZPOK za czas od 24.VI. do 1.X.1935 r.*, unnumbered pages.

⁴² Ankiewiczowa, M. (1935). *Echa obozu ZPOK w Duryczach*. Prosta Droga 30, p. 4.

⁴³ *Obóz w Borkowie...*, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴⁴ LCVA, WZW ZPOK, Sekretariat 1936-37, f.334, op.1, nr 199, *Sprawozdanie Wydziału Wychowania Fizycznego za okres od 2 lutego 1935 r. do 15 listopada 1936 r.*, unnumbered pages.

⁴⁵ Mianowska, S. (1938). *Jak pracowaliśmy w lecie*. Praca Obywatelska 20, p. 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Hiking and Permanent Camps

Other types of camps organised by the ZPOK included hiking camps, intended e.g. for trade union activists (in August 1937 in the Tarnopol Province)⁴⁷ the purpose of which was to train and integrate a team of future instructors,⁴⁸ and so-called academic hiking camps for university students (organised in Eastern Lesser Poland (Małopolska) and Pomerania at the end of 1937 and the beginning of 1938).⁴⁹ The union also organised recreational and educational stays in its own permanent facilities. From 1932, over 300 women spent their summer holidays each year at the Narocz hostel and boarding house in Postawy.⁵⁰ Similar (but smaller) hostels and boarding houses were operated by the ZPOK in Braslav (Vilnius Province) and Druskininkai (Bialystok Province). The Union had their own model permanent holiday resorts, camps and summer camps in locations such as Klevan (Volhynia Province), Chociszewo (Lodz Province) and Ościśłowo (Warsaw Province).

Conclusion

Did the camp-based physical, health and civic education programmes organised and run by the ZPOK achieve their goals and objectives? It seems that they did. This is documented in the camp activity reports submitted each time by the organisers and instructors of these facilities. The effectiveness of this form of education in improving the physical and health condition of camp participants should not be questioned. However, the effectiveness of this work and its forms in terms of civic education may be and is the subject of discussion, in which, however, the unambiguous position of the ZPOK leaders must be taken into account. In their reports, the camp instructors wrote, among other things: “We implemented ... this civic education during every hour of the 30 days of living together at the camp. A day filled with hard work, strict discipline, frequent and well-planned trips to familiarise the campers with the image of contemporary Poland – these were the educational methods through which we transformed the girls, who were often unruly and rebellious towards the whole world, into disciplined citizens, aware of their duties, and it must be said that these methods did not fail.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Bezegowa, H. (1937). *Obóz wędrowny ZPOK*. Praca Obywatelska 20, p. 8.

⁴⁸ LCVA, WZW ZPOK, Akta Referatu Wychowania Polityczno-Obywatelskiego od 1.IV.37 r. do 1.I.38 r., f.334, op.1, nr 250, *Pismo do Zarządów Zrzeszeń Wojewódzkich ZPOK z dnia 21 maja 1937 r.*, pp. 283-284.

⁴⁹ Żółtowska, H. (1938). *Wydział Wychowania Polityczno-Obywatelskiego*. Praca Obywatelska 5-6, p. 25; Kowalczykówna, S. (1939). *Akademicki obóz wędrowny*. Praca Obywatelska 5, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Sadowska, H. (1932). *Schronisko nad jeziorem Narocz (woj. Wileńskie)*. Prosta Droga 12, p. 6; Domanusowa, A. (1933). *Nad jeziorem Narocz*. Prosta Droga 27, p. 12.

⁵¹ Mianowska, S. (1938). *Jak pracowaliśmy w lecie...*, op. cit., p. 6.

The effectiveness of the educational measures was also confirmed by letters written to the civic education instructors by the camp participants. One of the “initially most rebellious girls” wrote: “...from the moment I left the camp, I cannot recognise myself, I have completely changed.” “At the camp, we learned how much can be done in a single day”, wrote another. “Now I will try to do things differently at home, I will introduce camp order”, assured a third.⁵²

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⁵² AAN, sygn.63, Akta Z. i J. Moraczewskich. Komitet Demokratyczny Wyborczy i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej [w l. 1928-33] (Pamiętnik po roku 1933), p. 342 (346).

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Transformations in the Understanding of Specific Learning Disabilities in the Czech Context: A Historical-Comparative Perspective

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Šedá, M. – Viktorin, J. (2025). Transformations in the Understanding of Specific Learning Disabilities in the Czech Context: A Historical-Comparative Perspective. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 17/2025/1, 37-49.

<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2025-003>

This paper traces the historical development of perspectives on specific learning disabilities in the Czech Republic, from the earliest insights in antiquity to the contemporary inclusive trends in education. It captures the evolution from the medical model to the psychological approach and, more recently, to pedagogical interpretations. The paper highlights key figures, legislative milestones, and institutional changes that have influenced the approach to educating pupils with specific learning disabilities. Attention is also given to educational support systems, remedial care, and current challenges in the fields of diagnosis and education. The text demonstrates how societal views on these pupils have evolved and how the system of care has shifted towards individualization, respect, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Keywords: specific learning disabilities, history, pupils with specific learning disabilities, support, dyslexia

Introduction

Specific learning disabilities are not a new phenomenon – their manifestations were observed as early as antiquity and later addressed by prominent educational figures, including Jan Amos Komenský, who recommended adapting teaching to the individual needs of pupils. Currently, specific learning disabilities are viewed as neurodevelopmental differences that affect the ability to read, write, or calculate, while intellectual capacity and motivation for learning remain intact.¹ The contemporary approach to educating pupils with

¹ Snowling, M. J. – Hulme, C. (2012). Annual Research Review: The nature and classification of reading disorders – a commentary on proposals for DSM-5. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53/5, pp. 593–607. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2011.02495.x>

specific learning disabilities is influenced by a multidisciplinary perspective that emphasizes the collaboration of teachers, special educators, psychologists, and families. An essential factor in providing effective support is quality diagnostics and subsequent remedial intervention tailored to the pupil's specific needs.² Research indicates that the development of reading skills results from the interaction of biological, cognitive, and cultural factors.³ In the context of international professional literature, dyslexia is also considered a consequence of a deficit in phonological processing, which can be mitigated through appropriate interventions.⁴ Today, digital technologies are increasingly included into remedial care – their effective use can enhance the efficiency of teaching and contribute to increasing pupil motivation. Current trends thus focus on using technological tools as a supplement to pedagogical efforts, rather than as a replacement. Overall, the approach to pupils with specific learning disabilities is shifting from a purely deficit-based understanding towards a supportive model grounded in respect, individualization, and early intervention.

The Medical Approach

From the very beginning, the understanding of specific learning disabilities developed alongside advancements in neurology and related disciplines. The discovery of specific learning disabilities is not attributed solely to teachers, as might be expected, but also to medical professionals. Neurologists primarily viewed these disabilities through the lens of the functions of the individual cerebral hemispheres. The issue of specific learning disabilities has always been shaped by the interplay of theoretical and practical knowledge. Medical professionals and psychologists have played a significant role in shaping the historical perspective on this issue.⁵

In the 18th and 19th centuries, discussions centred on the localization of brain functions, where experts sought to determine whether the brain functions as a whole or is composed of regions responsible for specific functions. The shape of the skull roughly corresponds to the shape of the brain, and it was believed that, based on the study of skull contours, one could deduce aspects of personality traits. Attempts were made to localize speech functions to specific areas of the cerebral cortex. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, difficulties in teaching pupils to read were often attributed to poor vision,

² Bartoňová, M. (2019). *Speciálně-pedagogická diagnostika a intervence u žáků se specifickými poruchami učení*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

³ McBride, C. (2016). *Children's Literacy Development: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Learning to Read and Write*. New York: Routledge.

⁴ Høien, T. – Lundberg, I. (2019). *Dyslexia: From Theory to Intervention*. New York: Springer.

⁵ Bartoňová, M. (2004). *Kapitoly ze specifických poruch učení I: vymezení současné problematiky*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

and parents frequently sought help from ophthalmologists. Visual perception problems were considered the main cause of specific learning disabilities until the 1960s. A specific area in the frontal lobe of the left hemisphere was discovered to be responsible for the motor aspects of speech. Damage to this area significantly impaired the ability to articulate, produce speech, and express oneself. Another area at the top of the temporal lobe was found to play an important role in understanding spoken language and in the content of verbal expression. Initially, researchers highlighted the loss or limitation of the ability to speak or understand spoken language as a result of brain damage. However, later findings revealed that brain damage could have subtler consequences, affecting not only spoken language but also written language.⁶

A significant milestone came with the identification of a distinct type of reading disorder that differed from true alexia. Pupils lost the ability to read despite having normal intelligence and intact vision. Subsequently, a developmental form of speech dysfunction was described, which did not manifest in spoken language but in written language, leading to developmental difficulties in acquiring reading and writing skills. Not only the clinical picture and possible origins of the disorder were described, but also therapeutic interventions, including the use of tonal lenses in glasses. However, the efficacy and clarity of these treatments were not conclusively proven. The modern approach to the study of dyslexia viewed the core of the specific reading disorder as rooted in impairments of speech functions. Delays and disorders in the development of speech functions were believed to arise from difficulties in establishing unilateral brain dominance in specific areas, with hereditary factors also being taken into account. Such disorders were thought to respond to specialized training, provided that a precise diagnosis was made and appropriate remedial methods were implemented based on the individual needs of each pupil. Dyslexia, defined as the misinterpretation of perceived symbols, was believed to have origins in imperfect hemispheric lateralization, which disrupted the cooperative functioning of the brain's hemispheres.

The Beginnings of Care for Pupils with Specific Learning Disabilities in the Czech Republic

In the Czech context, the pioneering figure and founder of the field of specific learning disabilities is the distinguished psychiatrist Prof. Dr. Antonín Heveroch. In 1904, he published an article in the teaching journal *Česká škola* titled „O jednostranné neschopnosti naučiti se čísti při znamenité paměti.“ Using the case of an eleven-year-old girl with average intelligence, Heveroch described reading difficulties that resemble what we now recognize as dyslexia. He viewed this as a one-sided disorder stemming from minor anomalies in the

⁶ Matějček, Z. (1972). *Vývojové poruchy čtení*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

speech areas of the left hemisphere of the cerebral cortex. Unfortunately, as Heveroch himself predicted, research and practical care for these pupils (as was the case internationally) remained largely confined to the medical field for a long time. Heveroch also contributed to the journal *Pedagogické rozhledy* with an article titled „Dítě neposedá“, in which he described a child with mild cerebral dysfunction. The first scientific approach to this issue was later published by Otokar Chlup.⁷

Experimental Research in Healthcare (1950s)

Another significant group that addressed the issue of specific learning disabilities approached it from a psychological perspective. According to this view, the causes of specific reading disabilities are seen as a manifestation of a disrupted emotional relationship with a particular person, stemming from a neurotic foundation. In terms of therapy and support, psychotherapy was introduced. In the Czech context, this issue was addressed by experts from the psychiatric hospital in Dolní Počernice, with psychologist Josef Langmeier (1952) playing a key role in systematically addressing the remediation of specific reading disabilities. Langmeier worked at the children's psychiatric hospital in Havlíčkův Brod.⁸ In 1954, this care moved to the children's psychiatric hospital in Dolní Počernice, thanks to Otokar Kučera, who became the head of the psychiatric department there. Pupils with severe reading disabilities, who had experienced academic failure and displayed neurotic difficulties and behavioural anomalies, were admitted. Only after thorough and specialized examinations did it often become clear that the primary cause of their problems was dyslexia. Among the main findings were: before starting remedial education, the root cause of reading disabilities must be identified; optimal learning conditions must be ensured; develop methods tailored to the structure of the language; allow the pupil to reinclude into regular life.⁹

Kučera was one of the first experts to approach the classification of specific learning disabilities based on etiology through his research. He classified specific learning disabilities into three groups: encephalopathic (mild brain dysfunction), hereditary, and mixed.¹⁰

Since the 1930s, parallel movements have emerged that view the main causes of specific learning disabilities as the result of a multifactorial combination of factors, including health, neurotic, sensory, psychological, motivational, and social aspects.¹¹

⁷ Chlup, O. (1925). *Výzkum duševních projevů u dětí méně schopných*. Brno: Filosofická fakulta.

⁸ Langmeier, J. – Matějček, Z. (1966). *Neprospívající dítě*. Praha: Ústav zdravotní výchovy.

⁹ Kučera, O. a kol. (1961). *Psychopatologické projevy při lehkých dětských encefalopatiích*. Praha: Státní zdravotnické nakladatelství.

¹⁰ Černá, M. a kol. (1992). *Lehké mozkové dysfunkce*. Praha: Karolinum.

¹¹ Pokorná, V. (1997). *Teorie, diagnostika a náprava specifických poruch učení*. Praha: Portál.

The Emergence of Specialized Classes and the Shift into the Education System (1960s)

A different perspective on specific learning disabilities emerged from a theoretical standpoint, particularly in the field of educational practice. Teachers developed special methods for working with pupils, focusing on mastering basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Among Czech authors, Hana Tymichová¹², Olga Balšíková,¹³ and A. Fryaufová contributed significantly to the development of specialized tests. In 1962, the first dyslexic (specialized) class was opened in Brno. The establishment of this class was supported by Dr. Vratislav Vrzal,¹⁴ psychologist E. Kloubková, and teacher Věra Reinerová.¹⁵ In 1966, the first book titled „Poruchy čtení a psaní“ was published as part of the „Na pomoc učitelí“ series, written by Jaroslav Jirásek, Zdeněk Matějček, and Zdeněk Žlab.¹⁶ The inclusion of pupils with dyslexia into the educational system came in 1967, when chief physician Luděk Černý from the children's psychiatric hospital in Dolní Počernice advocated for the creation of seven experimental classes in primary schools in Prague.¹⁷ In Karlovy Vary, under the leadership of Tymichová, a primary school for pupils with dyslexia covering grades 1-5 was established in 1971.

Official Adoption of the Issue in Education (1970s)

On February 20, 1972, the Ministry of Education issued guidelines for the establishment of specialized classes for pupils with specific reading and writing disabilities, as well as for pupils with school adjustment difficulties. By the end of the 1970s, around 1% of pupils attended specialized classes. These classes had smaller groups of pupils, special educators, and adapted grading and classification systems. Remediation took place directly in the educational environment, with individualized speech therapy care. The official adoption of this issue in education was supported by the establishment of educational and psychological counselling centres in the early 1960s. These centres began focusing on diagnostics, interventions within the school environment, training dyslexic assistants, and providing education and methodological guidance.

¹² Tymichová, H. (1985). *Nauč mě číst a psát*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

¹³ Balšíková, O. – Dan, J. (1991). *Náprava čtení a psaní*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

¹⁴ Vrzal, V. (1969). *Proč vaše dítě neumí číst*. Brno: Krajské ústředí zdravotní výchovy a osvěty.

¹⁵ Reinerová, V. (1981). *Dítě s vývojovou poruchou čtení a psaní na základní škole*. Brno: Krajský pedagogický ústav.

¹⁶ Jirásek, J. – Matějček, Z. – Žlab, Z. (1966). *Poruchy čtení a psaní: vývojová dyslexie*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

¹⁷ Černý, L. (1983). *Dětské neurózy*. Praha: Ústav zdravotní výchovy.

In the 1970s, a variety of diagnostic materials, instructional guides, aids, and professional texts were created, some of which are still in use today.¹⁸

Stabilization and a Relatively Unified System (1980s)

During the 1980s, the issue increasingly moved from specialized classes into regular classrooms, with a focus on training primary school teachers. By the early 1990s, a five-tier system of remedial care had been developed and stabilized, which defined the possibilities for educating pupils with specific learning disabilities based on the severity of their disorder: (1) The mildest forms of specific learning disabilities were addressed directly in regular primary school classrooms by the class teacher. For example, the teacher would adapt teaching methods for the pupil with specific learning disabilities, assign additional exercises, and apply basic remedial techniques. (2) Some schools for pupils with specific learning disabilities established so-called mini-dyslexic classes, where pupils with learning disabilities from the same grade were grouped together for Czech language instruction. Other subjects were taught with their regular class. Czech language instruction was led by special educators. Another option was the creation of a so-called dyslexia cabinet or other specific learning disabilities, equipped with special tools and methodological materials. This cabinet was led by a special educator or a trained teacher, who worked with pupils in small groups (two to four pupils). Pupils would attend these sessions instead of certain regular lessons. (3) In cases of more severe disabilities, remedial exercises were carried out by parents under the supervision of a staff member from the educational and psychological counselling centre. (4) The pupil was placed in a specialized class. (5) The most severe cases, requiring complex care, could be hospitalized in children's psychiatric hospitals.¹⁹

In 1986, a methodological guide for the assessment and classification of pupils with specific learning disabilities was published. In 1989, the World Conference on Dyslexia was held in Prague. Since the second half of the 20th century, dyslexia had become a global issue. Overall, Czechoslovakia was recognized for its well-developed care for pupils with specific learning disabilities.²⁰

Professor Zdeněk Matějček is considered a classic figure in the care and support of pupils with specific learning disabilities in our country. This world-renowned child psychologist was a pioneer in the field of specific learning

¹⁸ Šauerová, M. – Špačková, K. – Nechlebová, E. (2012). *Speciální pedagogika v praxi: komplexní péče o děti se SPUCH*. Praha: Grada.

¹⁹ Vašutová, M. (2008). *Děti se specifickými vývojovými poruchami učení a chování a násilí ve školním prostředí*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita.

²⁰ Smečková, G. (2013). *Specifické poruchy školních dovedností - vstup do problematiky*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého.

disabilities, deprivation, disorders of intellectual development, and institutional and family care. He dedicated more than 35 years to this field, publishing numerous monographs, scientific papers, and professional publications. He was also the head of the Dyslexia Society in our country. His work is highly regarded not only by experts and teachers but also by parents. For his work, he received the highest accolades. Lili Monatová highlighted research in the field of computer games, which positively influence pupils' speech development. She also focused on preschool education, particularly early intervention.²¹

Politics of Integration (1990s)

After 1989, the care for pupils with specific learning disabilities, as well as for pupils with other disabilities, increasingly emphasized integration. Individual integration in regular classrooms was defined by Decree No. 73/2005 Coll., on education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs and exceptionally gifted children, pupils and students, as the preferred form of education for pupils with disabilities. The goals shifted from the traditional emphasis on knowledge in basic subjects to the development of all aspects of the pupil's personality, with respect for the social needs of the pupil.²²

The willingness of regular schools to accept pupils with specific learning disabilities into their classrooms and provide them with proper support was encouraged by increased norms. If necessary, an individualized education plan could be developed for the integrated pupil, which was a binding document to ensure the pupil's special educational needs. It included information such as the provision of individual care, educational goals, and a list of compensatory and teaching aids. The individualized education plan was usually created by the class teacher, based on recommendations from a school counselling facility.²³

In the field of counselling, the trend was to differentiate workplaces according to their area of expertise, leading to the establishment of the Institute for Pedagogical-Psychological Counselling, centres of educational care, special education centres, and the development of school counselling services. The private sector focused on professional care, creating methodological materials, publishing, and producing educational tools and computer programs.²⁴

A significant event was the founding of the Czech Dyslexia Society in 1999, which became a member of the International Dyslexia Association in 2000 and the European Dyslexia Association in 2001.

²¹ Monatová, L. (1996). *Pojetí speciální pedagogiky z vývojového hlediska*. Brno: Paido.

²² Michalová, Z. (2001). *Specifické poruchy učení na druhém stupni ZŠ a na školách středních*. Havlíčkův Brod: Tobiáš.

²³ Zelinková, O. (1994). *Poruchy učení*. Praha: Portál.

²⁴ Selikowitz, M. (2000). *Dyslexie a jiné poruchy učení*. Praha: Grada.

Support for Pupils with Specific Learning Disabilities in the 21st Century

Forms of education and the provision of remedial care were based on recommendations from educational and psychological counselling centre or in collaboration with special education centre and Dys-centre: (1) Individual care provided by the homeroom teacher within regular class – this form of care was applied to milder forms of learning disabilities within the regular primary school class. The teacher was expected to have basic knowledge and skills regarding the issue and to create the best possible conditions for remedial procedures. The pupil could also be integrated into the regular class if the learning disability was more severe and the conditions for integration were met. Integration was recommended for pupils with average or above-average intelligence, who were curious and easily adaptable. (2) Individual care provided by a teacher who has completed a specialized training course – the care was also provided by a special educator. He worked within the primary school classroom, led dyslexia support groups, dyslexia cabinets, and remedial care, while consulting with school counselling facilities. (3) Individual care classes established in primary schools – these classes were attended by pupils throughout the day. They typically focused on Czech language lessons with an emphasis on remedial care, and after these lessons, the pupil would return to their regular class. Remedial care was typically provided by a special educator. (4) Mobile teacher – typically a worker from an educational and psychological counselling centre or a special educational centre, the mobile teacher visited primary schools to provide remedial care during lessons. Remedial care was provided before and after lessons. (5) Specialized classes for pupils with specific learning disabilities – these classes had a reduced number of pupils (12). The lessons were taught by a special educator. These classes were established at primary schools, and for pupils with a diagnosed specific learning disability, an individualized approach was preferred. The designed remedial care took place throughout the entire educational process. Placement of pupils in specialized classes was based on the results of professional assessments and recommendations from the relevant school counselling facility, with the consent of the pupil's legal guardian and the school principal. Education in such a class required teamwork between teachers, school counselling professionals, parents, and pupils. The placement of pupils in smaller groups of peers with the same disability allowed for intensive and continuous special educational care, aimed at helping the pupil overcome their functional impairments in the central nervous system and develop a positive attitude towards education. This form of care was considered more beneficial than integration into a regular class for certain pupils. It was particularly suitable for pupils with average or slightly below-average intellectual abilities, those who were less adaptable, introverted, had neurotic traits, worked at a slower pace, and needed individualized attention. (6) Special schools for pupils with specific learning disabilities – a team of

specialists took care of the pupil, ensuring individualized and, therefore, special care throughout the entire educational process. (7) Child psychiatric hospitals – in the classes at psychiatric hospitals, pupils with severe disabilities were treated and educated. Remedial care was also provided here. These pupils typically had multiple disabilities, and therapeutic care was also provided. (8) Individual and group care in educational and psychological counselling centre, special education centre, and Dys-centre – group care was conducted in the form of educational and stimulation groups or individually guided remedial sessions. Parents were involved in this care, participating in joint group sessions, which also had a significant motivational effect on their children. These groups were organized not only for preschool children but also for primary school pupils.²⁵

Current Practices in the Care of Pupils with Specific Learning Disabilities

Another evolving direction contrasts with the neurological approach. In this perspective, educators and psychologists argue that specific learning disabilities do not stem from brain dysfunctions but rather manifest as a reduction in the pupil's abilities. In pupils with reading disabilities, causes for performance failure can be identified that are not neurological. Help and support should therefore focus on changing the methodological approaches within the educational process, as well as altering the home environment.

Another area that continues to evolve is the theory of right-hemispheric or non-verbal learning disabilities. These disabilities are linked to difficulties in spatial perception, poor emotional regulation, and an inability to navigate social relationships. These issues are sometimes associated with impairments in deeper brain structures.²⁶

The emphasis on inclusive education for pupils and the shortcomings associated with imprecise diagnostic criteria for pupils with specific learning disabilities contributed to the introduction of the three-tier care model: First level of care (individualized teacher support) assumes that for pupils who are experiencing early learning difficulties, teachers will minimize or eliminate them through immediate intervention. It is essential that teachers are professionally skilled and experienced in reading, writing, and arithmetic instruction. Close collaboration with the family is crucial. Teachers should offer regular consultations to parents, explaining the issues and approaches. The recommended duration of this stage is six months (at least three months), during which the teacher creates a portfolio and conducts educational diagnostics. If no improvement is seen, and the learning disabilities are not minimized, the pupil will be recommended for the second level of care. Second level of care

²⁵ Bartoňová, M. (2012). *Specifické poruchy učení: text k distančnímu vzdělávání*. Brno: Paido.

²⁶ Kocurová, M. (2000). *Specifické poruchy učení a chování*. Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita.

(pedagogical support plan) – in the second phase of intervention, the teacher consults the issue with staff from the school counselling workplace (such as a school special educator, school psychologist, or potentially a educational counsellor) or external school counselling facility. They will receive methodological guidance from professionals who visit the school. Based on these consultations, a pedagogical support plan is developed. This intervention is more intensive and should last from three to six months. If no improvement occurs, the pupil is referred for a comprehensive assessment at an educational and psychological counselling centre. Again, cooperation with parents is key. Third level of care (specialized interventions at a professional centre, individualized education plan) – based on the comprehensive pedagogical-psychological diagnostic assessment, the centre determines whether the impairment is severe enough to warrant a formal diagnosis. The pupil will then receive expert intervention in the form of specialized remedial methods and approaches. According to the relevant legislation, inclusion and the creation of an individualized education plan will be recommended for the pupil.²⁷

The three-tier care model supports the enhancement of professional competence, skills, and prestige among teachers. It is an operational system that allows for timely and efficient problem-solving and serves as a preventive measure for educational failure. Currently, the preventive-intervention care model is complemented by a system of support measures, as its first level directly mirrors this support system.²⁸

The success of educating pupils with specific learning disabilities is contingent upon the creation of an appropriate educational program and the implementation of suitable support measures. It is advisable to use alternative methods for acquiring knowledge and skills when teaching such pupils. Schools may adjust entrance and final exams for pupils with specific learning disabilities. Some degree of tolerance should be applied in evaluation and grading, but it is also important to consider tolerance in areas such as reading, handwriting, expression difficulties, and the use of computers in teaching.²⁹

²⁷ Mertin, V. – Kucharská, A. a kol. (2007). *Integrace žáků se specifickými poruchami učení – od stanovení diagnostických kritérií k poskytování péče všem potřebným žákům*. Praha: Institut pedagogicko-psychologického poradenství České republiky.

²⁸ Kucharská, A. – Pokorná, D. – Mrázková, J. a kol. (2014). *Třístupňový model péče (3MP) ve školách zapojených v projektu RAMPS-VIP III*. Praha: Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků.

²⁹ Michalík, J. – Baslerová, P. – Felcmanová, L. a kol. (2015). *Katalog podpůrných opatření pro žáky s potřebou podpory ve vzdělávání z důvodu zdravotního nebo sociálního znevýhodnění: obecná část*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého.

Conclusion

Currently, society is changing its approach and attitude towards pupils with specific learning disabilities. The issue of comprehensive care is being addressed, including for individuals in adulthood. One of the problems related to literacy concerns specific learning disabilities in adults, individuals who are at risk due to limited access to traditional education. While poor reading skills were previously not considered a significant issue and a poor reader was not seen as an exception, modern society is placing strong emphasis on basic education for the entire population. Education is now regarded as a priority and a marker of societal prestige. Persistent learning deficits in individuals with specific learning disabilities bring about numerous challenges, which continue to affect individuals into adulthood. The issue of care and support for pupils with specific learning disabilities is addressed by current legislation and well-developed strategic approaches. In the Czech context, we can observe a significant shift in how specific learning disabilities are perceived and how they are approached in educational practice. Previously, the medical model predominated, which viewed specific learning disabilities primarily as an individual deficit requiring expert diagnosis and specialized methods outside the regular school environment. This model emphasized the identification of the disability rather than the development of the pupil's potential. However, there is now a growing emphasis on a more comprehensive approach, which understands specific learning disabilities in the context of the pupil's broader psychosocial functioning and in connection with the environment in which the pupil is educated.

A significant feature of this transformation is the shift towards a supportive and inclusive educational model. This model does not focus on labelling pupils, but rather on the early identification of their needs and the flexible provision of support measures within the regular school environment. There is an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration, where teachers, special educators, school psychologists, and families of the pupils come together. The Czech system is thus beginning to more closely reflect international approaches, which focus on preventing school failure, strengthening the pupil's strengths, and naturally including support into daily teaching practices. From a historical-comparative perspective, this shift represents a transformation in values – from a focus on performance and diagnosis to cultivating a supportive environment that allows all pupils to meaningfully develop.

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Entrance Examinations as a Barrier: Language Proficiency and the Risk of School Failure among Foreign Pupils in Czech Education

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Švandová, T. (2025). Entrance Examinations as a Barrier: Language Proficiency and the Risk of School Failure among Foreign Pupils in Czech Education. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 17/2025/1, 50–65.
<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2025-004>

This article addresses the challenges faced by pupils with a different mother tongue (hereafter referred to as 'foreign pupils') in the Czech educational system. It focuses on their preparation for the standardised entrance examination for four-year upper secondary schools, particularly in terms of language proficiency and teacher preparedness.

The research is grounded in the implementation of the course, entitled 'Preparation for Entrance Exams to Secondary Schools', in the years 2024 and 2025. Additionally, it is informed by a meticulous linguistic analysis of examination materials in both the Czech language and mathematics.

The findings unequivocally demonstrate that the requirements of these compulsory tests align with levels B2–C2 (as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR]), which falls short of the level that can be attained by foreign students receiving maximum statutory support during their final school years. The discrepancy between the expected language proficiency and the possible language training received by foreign pupils has been shown to increase the risk of school failure.

The analysis further demonstrates that a deficiency in teachers' preparedness in the domains of Czech as a second language and intercultural communication diminishes the efficacy of pupil support. The study proposes measures to address this mismatch, including the realistic setting of language goals, the adaptation of assessment materials, systematic teacher training, and the strengthening of cooperation between schools and counselling institutions.

Keywords: *Czech Republic; foreigners in education; primary education; secondary education; language proficiency; Czech as a second language; entrance examinations; educational support; CEFR; intercultural communication; teacher preparedness*

Introduction

The integration of pupils with a different mother tongue (i.e. foreign pupils) into the national educational system and their support in developing the language of the majority are key factors for the full realization of the educational aspirations of individual pupils in the country of residence. A comprehensive overview of migration processes in both historical and contemporary contexts is provided in many titles¹. The historical development of teaching Czech to non-native speakers has been described Hrdlička². The topic of teaching Czech as a second, foreign, or non-native language has further been elaborated in the monograph *Čeština jako druhý jazyk*³. Similarly, one may note the substantial volume of information, as well as the extensive body of publications and methodological materials issued by governmental and non-profit organisations.⁴

However, we did not identify any publication that addresses the specific topic examined in our research, namely the linguistic demands of the unified entrance examination and their impact on foreign-language pupils in Czech education. Nevertheless, the topic of the unified entrance examination for secondary schools remains a recurring subject of expert and public debate, media coverage, and conflicting opinions.

In Czech primary schools, more than forty thousand foreigners were added at the turn of the school years 2021/2022–2022/2023 (Figure 1).

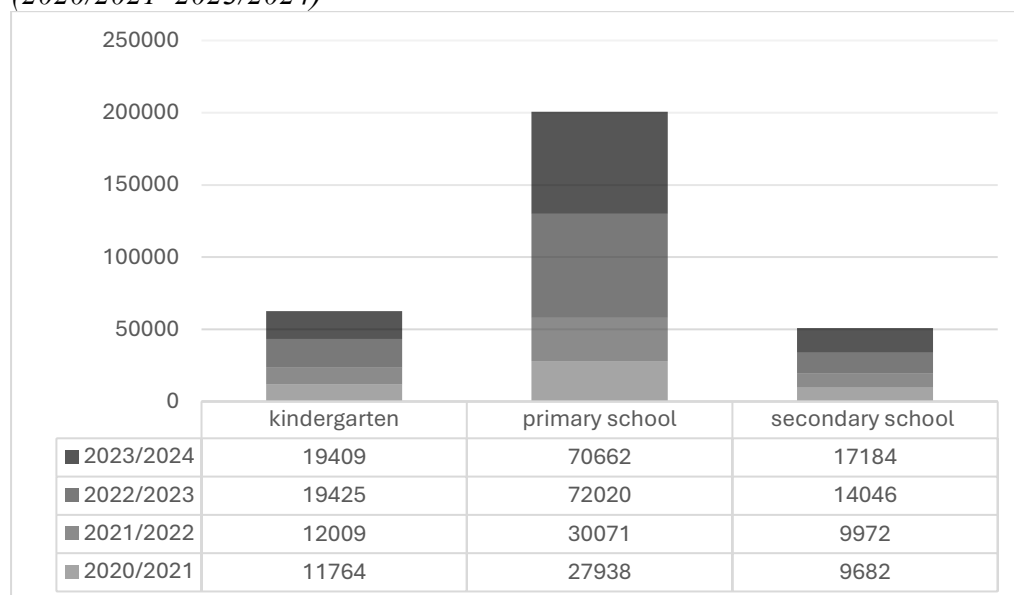
¹ Haas, H. de. (2024). *How migration really works: 22 things you need to know about the most divisive issue in politics*. Penguin Books; Cohen, R. (2019). *Migration: The Movement of Humankind from Prehistory to the Present*. Andre Deutsch; Uherek, Z., Honusková, V., Ošťádalová, Š., & Günter, V. (2016). *Migrace: historie a současnost*. Ostrava: Občanské sdružení PANT.

² Hrdlička, M. (2002). *Cizí jazyk — čeština*. ISV – Institut sociálních věcí; Hrdlička, M. (2025). *Čeština mezi jazyky*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, nakladatelství Karolinum; Hrdlička, M. (2023). *Kapitoly z didaktické gramatiky: (se zřetelem k češtině jako cizímu jazyku)*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, nakladatelství Karolinum; Hrdlička, M. (2019). *Kapitoly o češtině jako jazyku nematěřském*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, nakladatelství Karolinum.

³ Šormová, K., Hudáková, A., & kol. (2019). *Čeština jako druhý jazyk: Metodická perspektiva*. Univerzita Karlova, Filozofická fakulta. <https://books.ff.cuni.cz/cestina-jako-druhy-jazyk/>

⁴ Národní pedagogický institut ČR (n.d.). *Odlišný mateřský jazyk*. <https://zapojmevsechny.cz/odlisny-matersky-jazyk>; META, o.p.s. (n.d.). *Podpora příležitostí ve vzdělávání*. <https://meta-ops.eu/>

Figure 1: Increase of foreigners in education in the Czech republic (2020/2021–2023/2024)



Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020/2021–2023/2024

The highest numbers of newly arrived pupils were observed among pupils from Ukraine, who in these years usually stayed in the Czech Republic under a specific type of residence called temporary protection. The mechanism of temporary protection was activated by the European Union for the first time in March 2022⁵. The Czech Republic provided all holders of temporary protection, who applied for admission to upper secondary study programmes (four-year programmes with the school-leaving examination) in the above-mentioned years, with the possibility of a unique adjustment of the admission procedure under Act No. 67/2022 Coll.⁶ Pupils with another type of residence had to continue to take the standardized entrance examination in its original form (i.e. in the Czech language), and only with minimal support corresponding to their individual needs.

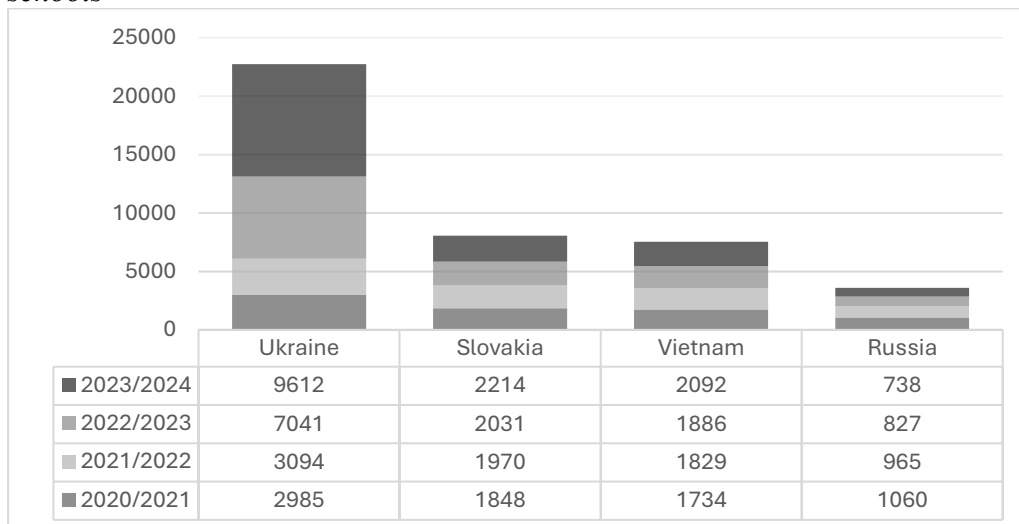
During the validity of this law (from 2022), we record at Czech secondary schools an unprecedented increase in the number of foreign pupils, especially of Ukrainian nationality (Figure 2).

⁵ European Council. (n.d.). How the EU helps refugees from Ukraine.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/refugee-inflow-from-ukraine/>

⁶ Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Other Education

Figure 2: The most numerous groups of foreign pupils at mainstream secondary schools



Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020/2021–2023/2024

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research presented here were:

1. To analyze the language challenges faced by foreign pupils in the form of standardized tests of the unified entrance examination,
2. To describe teacher preparedness and systemic barriers during the transition from lower secondary level (second stage of primary school) to upper secondary education (secondary school).⁷

Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis

The research was conducted based on the categorisation of language elements in the unified entrance examination tests for four-year secondary school programmes according to the language levels described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)⁸ and/or the European Language Portfolio⁹. The analysis examines the areas of lexicology

⁷ The results of this particular research aspect have not been included in the article.

⁸ Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (n.d.). *Společný evropský referenční rámec pro jazyky*. <https://msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/spolecny-evropsky-referencni-ramce-pro-jazyky/>

⁹ Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání (RVP). (n.d.). *Evropské jazykové portfolio (EJP)*. <https://ejp.rvp.cz/>

(vocabulary), morphology (word forms), syntax (factual structures), and text linguistics and stylistics (text comprehension, functional styles, and genres).

The data collection process involved the compilation of a list of problematic vocabulary items selected by foreign language students enrolled in the course entitled 'Preparation for Secondary School Entrance Exams', which was conducted in 2024 at the Center for Foreigners in the South Moravian Region. The course was attended by seven students aged between 13 and 15 years old, hailing from Ukraine (3), Afghanistan (2), Turkey (1), and Egypt (1). The duration of stay and study in the Czech Republic varied for each individual (from 6 months to 4 years). Their knowledge of spoken Czech ranged from A1 to B1+.

The statistical data from 2020–2024 were obtained from verified sources, which are listed in the link at the end of this article. In light of the research's focal point, the most prevalent data collection sources encompassed the yearbooks of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the reports of the Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI), and other pivotal documents from educational institutions within the Czech Republic. These include the Education Act and PISA studies¹⁰.

The years 2020–2024 were selected for this article primarily to provide a reflection of the situation in Czech education, which was strongly influenced by the arrival of students from Ukraine after 24 February 2022. These students are covered by Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in education in connection

¹⁰ Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (n.d.). *Statistická ročenka školství*. Statistický informační systém MŠMT. <https://statis.msmt.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>; Česká školní inspekce. (2025). *Tematická zpráva – Souvislost výsledků přijímací zkoušky a společné části maturitní zkoušky s vybranými znaky středních škol*.

<https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Tematicka-zprava-Souvislost-vysledku-prijimaci-zko>; Česká školní inspekce. (2025). *Tematická zpráva – Rovné příležitosti a prevence rizik ve školním prostředí*. <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Tematicka-zprava-Rovne-prilezitosti-a-prevence-riz>; Česká školní inspekce. (2024). *Tematická zpráva: Čtenářská gramotnost na základních a středních školách ve školním roce 2022/2023* [Thematic Report: Reading Literacy at Primary and Secondary Schools in the 2022/2023 School Year]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2024_p%C3%ADlohy/Dokumenty/TZ_Ctenarska_gramotnost_final_12032024.pdf; Česká školní inspekce. (2022). *Národní zpráva PISA 2022* [National PISA 2022 Report]. <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Narodni-zprava-PISA-2022>; Česká školní inspekce. (2022). *Mezinárodní šetření PIRLS 2021* [International PIRLS 2021

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with the armed conflict in Ukraine caused by the invasion of the Russian Federation (the so-called Lex Ukraine).

The Cermat tests, utilised for the purpose of language analysis, were administered to applicants for study on both regular and alternative dates between the years 2019 and 2024. The original versions of these tests are accessible to the public on the website of the Center for the Assessment of Educational Results (CZVV).

The article presents exclusively the findings resulting from the language analysis of the tests. In addition to this linguistic analysis, the overall research also included the following methods:

- meetings with teaching staff and with foreign-language students,
- a questionnaire survey among a sample of teachers in second stage of Czech elementary school.

The publication of the entire dissertation research is currently in progress and will be fully available at the beginning of 2026.

The Current Situation in the Czech Republic Regarding Support for Foreign-language Pupils

The present Czech education system is characterised by a paucity of teachers who are qualified to teach Czech as a second language. The first master's programme in the field of teaching Czech language and literature, specialising in pupils with a different mother tongue, was established in 2017 at the Department of Czech Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education at Masaryk University in Brno (Masaryk University, n.d.). Prior to this development, the university's offerings were limited to a programme entitled Czech for Foreigners, which was primarily geared towards adult education.

The provision of support to foreign-language pupils, otherwise referred to as pupils with a different mother tongue, extends beyond the scope of language teaching and necessitates the implementation of sociocultural and psychological intervention strategies. This paradigm shift necessitates a transformation of the teacher from a mere carrier of subject content to a mediator of the language in which subject content is conveyed. The provision of education for foreign-language pupils in the Czech Republic necessitates a high level of linguistic and cultural sensitivity. However, access to training in this area is often constrained by geographical limitations, teachers' time constraints, and the support of school management or personal interest. Addressing these challenges requires cooperation within and outside educational institutions.

It is imperative that cooperation between teachers (representatives of educational institutions), legal guardians, and foreign-language pupils is fostered in all possible combinations in order to ensure equal opportunities

in Czech education, irrespective of nationality, language, traditions, or other variables. In addition to this triad, however, in the area of education and setting up support for pupils at risk of early school leaving, it is also necessary to consider cooperation between schools and founders, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations.

The Czech School Inspectorate¹¹ identifies in 2025 collaboration between schools, teachers, legal guardians, counselling institutions, as well as founders and other partners in education, in conjunction with the competitiveness of individual educational institutions in the Czech Republic, as external factors of education that can influence the organisation and success of the educational process and the support of pupils at risk of school failure.

Language Support for Foreign-language Pupils in Czech Primary Schools

In public primary schools, instruction is provided exclusively in Czech, with the exception of foreign language lessons. It is therefore vital to consider pupils' language skills as a key factor in determining educational success. These skills influence two key aspects: first, the comprehension of subject matter, and second, the results achieved in standardised tests. These latter tests are used to determine whether a pupil should continue their education or not, in particular with regard to specific types of study.

Czech legislation first enshrined the right to language support for newly arrived pupils with insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction in 2021 in Section 20 of the Education Act¹². Pupils who do not meet the requirements for inclusion in this form of support may be eligible for language support in accordance with Section 16 of the Education Act. In the latter case, it is usually necessary to visit an educational-psychological counselling centre, which will determine the number of hours of Czech as a second language that the school will provide to foreign-language pupils.

The allocation of the full amount of language support enables foreign-language pupils entering the second stage of primary school to receive a number of hours of Czech as a second language corresponding to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Within this paradigm, it is imperative to accentuate the persistent shortcoming within the Czech education system, which is characterised by an inadequate level of

¹¹ Česká školní inspekce. (2025). *Vnější faktory ovlivňující kvalitu vzdělávání na základních školách* [External Factors Affecting the Quality of Education at Primary Schools]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Elektronicke-publikace/2025/TZ_vnejsi_faktory_ovlivnujici_kvalitu_vzdelavani_ZS/html5/index.html

¹² *Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Other Education*

preparedness among teaching professionals in relation to instructing Czech as a non-native language. This institutional unpreparedness is a significant factor influencing the time foreign-language pupils need to effectively learn the Czech language. Consequently, the scope of allocated teaching may not correspond in practice to the levels that pupils are actually capable of achieving. It is imperative to undertake a systematic linguistic analysis of the assignments allocated to pupils, even after the completion of the stipulated number of hours. This process necessitates a meticulous adjustment of the technical explanation and alternative forms of pedagogical communication.

Unified Entrance Examination from the Perspective of Foreign-Language Pupils

The unified entrance examination (henceforth referred to as the Exam) comprises two components: a written examination in Czech language and literature (ČJL) and a written examination in mathematics and its applications (MA). The tasks included in each grade level are based on the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education¹³. A comparison of the Exam's content with the key competencies defined for these subjects reveals overall consistency. However, an analysis of the vocabulary demands of the selected curriculum indicates a discrepancy between these demands and the content of Czech as a second language instruction. This finding prompted us to conduct a survey on the support available in the teaching of the tested subjects.

As is often the case in the field of education, it is evident that foreign-language pupils are expected to demonstrate a level of linguistic proficiency approximating that of native speakers when undertaking these examinations.

Czech Language and Literature Tests

The examination in Czech language and literature is designed primarily to assess pupils' receptive competence, specifically their ability to process and interpret a source text by means of comprehension-checking items. Morphosyntactic phenomena and other linguistic features are evaluated in direct association with the source materials. An overview of the texts used in the exercises of the Czech language and literature (CzLL) Examination for four-year secondary school programmes (4ySSP) in 2022–2023 is presented in Table 1.

¹³ Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (n.d.). *Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání (RVP ZV)*. <https://edu.gov.cz/rvp-ramcove-vzdelavaci-programy/ramcovy-vzdelavaci-program-pro-zakladni-vzdelavani-rvp-zv/>

Table 1:¹⁴

Overview of introductory texts of the CzLL, 4ySSP, 2022–2023

Exam Session/ Year	Author/Source	Title of the text	Genre
1/2023	J. Seifert	<i>Rozhledna na Petříně (Jablko z klína)</i>	poetry
	B. Chambers	<i>A Psalm for the Wild-Built</i>	fiction, space opera
	A. Patchett	<i>Dodger</i>	fiction, novel
	Časopis 100+1, Dotyk	<i>text about Scotland</i>	article
	iDnes.cz, epochaplus.cz	<i>text o vynálezu vysavače</i>	article
2/2023	J. Seifert	<i>Chlapec a hvězdy</i>	poezie
	iDnes.cz, zoom.iprima.cz	<i>a text about Predjama Castle</i>	newspaper article
	S. Mayer	<i>The Host</i>	fiction, sci-fi román
	M. Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	fiction, dystopian novel
	Časopis 100+1, iDnes.cz	<i>a text about the invention of the refrigerator</i>	popular-science article
1/2022	J. Neruda	<i>Balada česká</i>	poetry, romance
	a group of authors	<i>Jak to bylo doopravdy (a text about the statues on Easter Island)</i>	article
	M. Puzo	<i>The Godfather</i>	fiction, novel
	P. Boulle	<i>Planet of the Apes</i>	fiction, science-fiction novel
	iDnes.cz, reflex.cz	<i>a text about the Spanish tradition "Devil's Jump"</i>	newspaper article
2/2022	J. W. Goethe	<i>The Treasure Seeker</i>	poetry
	a group of authors	<i>Planeta tajuplných světů (a text about Mont-Saint-Michel Bay)</i>	encyclopedia entry
	D. Brown	<i>Origin</i>	fiction, mystery–thriller novel
	J. Jonasson	<i>The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared</i>	fiction, comic novel
	iDnes.cz, spanelskyptacek.cz	<i>a text about the Spanish festival Sanfermines</i>	newspaper article

Source: CERMAT (n.d.). Čtyřleté obory – Český jazyk a literatura: Testová zadání v PDF.

The textual stimuli used in the examination display considerable variation with respect to thematic orientation, genre, stylistic register, and historical provenance. This diversity of texts significantly complicates the understanding of vocabulary and language forms used, which consequently prevents full

¹⁴ The titles are provided in their English translations, whereas the titles of Czech works remain untranslated. For texts authored by a collective, we consistently present the Czech title, followed by the topic of the text in English in parentheses.

comprehension of the source text for several subsequent tasks assessing content, stylistic, and cultural understanding.

An important role in the tests is played by the occurrence of significantly archaic, literary, or atypical lexemes and stylistically literary devices subject to changes in inflectional Czech, which usually prevent foreign pupils from identifying their basic form and therefore understanding their meaning. All of these texts include also examples of lyric and epic discourse; one of the test forms analysed also incorporated a dramatic excerpt. In all instances, pupils were additionally required to undertake a poem analysis. Possible support through a translation dictionary and additional time is in such cases a measure that lacks its primary purpose.

Several test forms included items targeting the recognition and comparison of semantic or stylistic equivalence between idiomatic expressions – tasks that constitute highly specialised linguistic operations typically associated with C2-level proficiency. Idioms, as conventionalised multi-word units, exhibit non-compositional meaning, and successful idiom comprehension is closely linked to implicit sociocultural knowledge and to prolonged exposure to the linguistic environment in which an individual acquires the language.

The analysis of the text types listed in Table 1 – each of which contains linguistically marked or otherwise opaque features described in the introduction to this chapter—demonstrates that successful performance on the written examination in Czech language and literature for four-year secondary programmes effectively presupposes native-speaker-like proficiency in Czech on the part of foreign-language pupils, approximating the C1–C2 levels of the CEFR. Attaining such proficiency is not realistically achievable for these pupils, even under conditions of comprehensive language support at the primary-school level. Consequently, the unified entrance examination imposes disproportionate linguistic and cognitive demands on foreign-language pupils, substantially reducing their likelihood of success in the admission process and heightening the risk of premature disengagement from education.

Mathematics Tests

The examined mathematics tests showed a high degree of repetition of instructions, almost identical across individual years and test sessions. In terms of inflection, in 2024 there was a change in case usage and minor adjustments in the wording of instructions by replacing the academic form of verbs with a more communicative form (Table 2). The instructions are presented only in their original form.

Table 2:
Instructions, Mathematics tests, 4ySSP, 2022–2023

Instrukce		termín	1.	2.	1.	2.	1.	2.
		rok	2024	2024	2023	2023	2022	2022
1	V úlohách 1, 2, 4.1, 4.2, 6, 7, 8 a 16 přepište do záznamového archu pouze výsledky.	missing 16	missing 16					
1 a	V úlohách 1, 2, 3.1, 3.2 4.1, 4.2, 6, 7, 8 a 16 přepište do záznamového archu pouze výsledky.							
2	Doporučení: Úlohy 3, 4.3 a 5 řešte přímo v záznamovém archu.							
2 a	Doporučení: Úlohy 3.3, 4.3 a 5 řešte přímo v záznamovém archu.							
3	V záznamovém archu uved'te v obou částech úlohy celý postup řešení.							
3 a	Do záznamového archu uveďte u obou podúloh celý postup řešení.							
3 b	V záznamovém archu uved'te v úloze 3.3 celý postup řešení.							
4	V záznamovém archu uved'te čísla doplněná do rámečků.							
5	V záznamovém archu uved'te pouze v úloze 4.3 celý postup řešení.							
5 a	V záznamovém archu uveďte pouze v podúloze 4.3 celý postup řešení.							
5 b	Do záznamového archu uveďte u podúlohy 4.3 celý postup řešení.							
6	V záznamovém archu uved'te v obou částech úlohy celý postup řešení (zkoušku nezapisujte).							
6 a	Do záznamového archu uveďte u obou podúloh celý postup řešení. Zkoušku nezapisujte.							
7	Doporučení pro úlohy 9 a 10: Rýsujte přímo do záznamového archu.							
8	V záznamovém archu obtáhněte celou konstrukci propisovací tužkou (čáry i písmena).							
9	V záznamovém archu obtáhněte celou konstrukci propisovací tužkou (čáry i písmena).							
1 0	Velikosti úhlů nemějte , ale vypočtete .	vypočítejte	vypočítejte					
1 1	Zkontrolujte , zda jste do záznamového archu uvedl/a všechny odpovědi.							

Source: CERMAT (n.d.). Čtyřleté obory – Matematika: Testová zadání v PDF.

Within the scope of the research, we examined not only the instructions but also the linguistic complexity of the individual task prompts and the verb forms employed in these prompts. The linguistically most demanding tasks were specific word problems that incorporated the most complex linguistic features, including longer sentence structures, specialized vocabulary, complex syntax, and inflection.

The key components of preparing foreign pupils for mathematics tests within direct instruction – whether in Czech as a second language courses or in subject-specific instruction – appear to comprise:

- systematic development of mathematics-related vocabulary,
- practice with verbs in the imperative mood,
- the teaching of text comprehension strategies,
- and the gradual incorporation of authentic materials (tests from the unified entrance examination).

The above points are only a simplified list of basic strategies that may contribute in pedagogical practice to the improvement not only of language but also subject-specific competencies and knowledge in mathematics and its applications as well as other educational areas. As is most likely evident from the list, preparation for the unified entrance examination in mathematics is not solely the responsibility of mathematics teachers but is closely connected to the need for interdisciplinary collaboration across various educational areas, at a minimum in geometry, Czech language and literature, Czech as a second language, composition, and literary education.

Findings and Recommendations

The results showed that the language requirements of the unified entrance examination tests do not correspond to the scope of language support available to foreign-language pupils in primary schools. The findings indicate that pupils who receive the standard statutory support are unable to attain the language proficiency level required for successful completion of the entrance examinations.

The high variability of texts across different years makes it impossible to prepare a unified set of vocabulary and other linguistic features for which pupils can be systematically prepared. Therefore, from our perspective, text adaptation appears to be the only viable measure to ensure equal opportunities. We consider level B1, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), to be an appropriate target level for such adaptation. We propose text adaptation primarily in the following areas:

- shortening texts (i.e., removing segments not directly related to the comprehension tasks),

- dividing texts into shorter sections,
- replacing problematic vocabulary in task instructions with expressions from everyday communicative language,
- reformulating instructions into simpler syntactic structures.

Preparation for standardised tests does not constitute a short-term endeavour; rather, it entails a continuous process unfolding across several school years. Throughout this period, pupils engage in systematically targeted practice of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and text-comprehension strategies, progressing from simplified teacher-prepared materials used in direct instruction to the original unified entrance examination tests.

Consequently, the role of subject teachers shifts from that of transmitters of disciplinary content to mediators of the language through which such content is conveyed. In the absence of methodological guidance, accessible training opportunities, and ongoing professional development focused on language proficiency levels and evidence-based didactic principles applicable to the instruction of foreign-language pupils in heterogeneous classrooms, this shift is exceedingly difficult for teachers to navigate. The development of linguistic competences across all subjects—particularly in those assessed within the unified entrance examination—is essential not only for reducing linguistic barriers in instruction but also for mitigating the risk of early school leaving among foreign-language pupils.

Conclusion

Foreign-language pupils in the Czech educational system face significant linguistic and organisational barriers that limit their opportunities to fully develop their educational aspirations. This article focused particularly on the unified entrance examination, identifying it as a major obstacle to equal access to education in four-year secondary school programmes and, subsequently, to further studies at higher vocational or tertiary institutions.

The analysis of the educational system and the linguistic examination of written tests in mathematics and Czech language and literature demonstrated that the language support provided in primary schools often does not correspond to the level required in secondary school entrance procedures. The tests' linguistic demands – corresponding to levels B2–C2 of the CEFR – exceed the attainable language proficiency of foreign-language pupils even when maximum support is provided.

Teacher preparedness – especially in the areas of working with foreign-language pupils and implementing comprehensive language support – was also identified as insufficient.

The research showed that effective interventions include:

- setting realistic language goals,
- adapting test tasks,
- systematic teacher training,
- supporting interdisciplinary collaboration both within and beyond the school environment.

Preparation for entrance examinations is a long-term process that permeates the entire educational trajectory and therefore cannot be reduced to the final years of compulsory schooling. The procedures proposed in the results section can facilitate access to secondary and higher education not only for foreign-language pupils but also for pupils with special educational needs or pupils from the majority population who experience difficulties with text comprehension and interpretation¹⁵. Text adaptation is therefore an effective tool for supporting equal educational opportunities for all learners, without distinction.

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¹⁵ Česká školní inspekce. (2022). *Mezinárodní šetření PIRLS 2021* [International PIRLS 2021 Survey]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2022_přilohy/Mezinárodní%20šetření/PIRLS-2021_koncepcni-ramec_27092022_FINAL.pdf; Česká školní inspekce. (2022). *Národní zpráva PISA 2022* [National PISA 2022 Report]. <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Narodni-zprava-PISA-2022>

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PARTICULARITIES

Selected Correlations of Sexting among Secondary School Students and Young Adults

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Jurczyk-Romanowska, E. (2025): Selected correlations of sexting among secondary school students and young adults. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 17/2025/1, 66-79.

<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2025-005>

This article discusses sexting as a form of cyberbullying and its selected correlations in three groups: secondary school students, university students, and adults aged 18–45. Research conducted between 2020 and 2025 revealed that the phenomenon of sexting has changed over time, that there are differences between the sexes, and that protective and risk factors vary depending on the age of the respondents. Analyses of gender differences showed that girls experience sexting significantly more often. There were different patterns of relationships between age and sexting: among secondary school students, the frequency increased with age, while among university students and adults it decreased. The results concerning personality traits showed that among secondary school students, sexting was associated with openness to experience, and among adults with lower conscientiousness. The key predictor was the educational functionality of the family of origin: lower functionality was associated with more frequent sexting among school pupils and adults. The results confirm the relationship between sexting and age, which implies the need to adapt preventive measures to the stage of life and the specific psychosocial functioning of the groups studied.

Keywords: *sexting, secondary school students, university students, adults, educational functionality of the family of origin, Big Five personality traits*

Theoretical Background

The spread of the internet has initiated a new phase of intensive development of the information society. New technologies have brought numerous benefits: fast and relatively cheap access to information, increased productivity, and dynamic scientific progress. They have facilitated interpersonal communication, enabling long-distance relationships to be maintained, and have broadened access to education through e-learning and open-source tools. The

automation of work processes and the development of mobile applications have streamlined the organisation of day-to-day life and created new career opportunities. At the same time, however, there has been a growing concern about the negative consequences of human functioning in the digital environment. These include information overload, which makes it difficult to select reliable content, an increase in behavioural addictions related to problematic use of the internet and social media, and a shallowing of interpersonal relationships. There has also been a noticeable increase in online aggression, including cyberbullying, sexting, and hate speech, and concerns about privacy and data security breaches are growing. Excessive information stimulation can contribute to concentration disorders and difficulties in regulating emotions, while the development of the digital environment also encourages the spread of disinformation and manipulation.

Cyberbullying is defined as any behaviour conducted by individuals or groups using electronic or digital media, consisting of the regular sending of hostile or aggressive messages with the aim of causing harm or discomfort to the victim¹. Researchers point to the public nature of internet harassment, which particularly affects children and young people². The use of the internet or other digital technologies as a tool of aggression³ and the intentionality of the perpetrator's actions⁴ are also considered necessary elements of cyberbullying. An important factor contributing to aggressive behaviour online is the sense of anonymity enjoyed by users, which allows them to create false identities and reduces their sense of responsibility for their own actions⁵.

Cyberbullying can take various forms. Researchers distinguish between (1) *flame wars* – aggressive exchanges of views in online discussions, (2) *harassment* – sending aggressive and ridiculing messages, (3) *impersonation* – impersonating the victim in cyberspace, (4) *outing* – sharing the victim's private materials with other people, (5) *cyberstalking* – electronic surveillance and harassment of the victim, (6) *happy slapping* – disseminating photos and recordings of the victim's provoked behaviour, (7) *denigration* – disseminating humiliating and false information and materials about the victim,

¹ Tokunaga, R. S. (2010). Following you home from school: A critical review and synthesis of research on cyberbullying victimization. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26, 277–287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2009.11.014>

² Finkelhor, D. – Mitchell, K. J. – Wolak, J. (2000). *Online victimization: A report on the nation's youth*. Alexandria, VA: National Center for the Missing and Exploited Children.

³ Finkelhor, D., Mitchell, K. J., Wolak, J. (2000). *Online victimization: A report on the nation's youth*. Alexandria, VA: National Center for the Missing and Exploited Children. Pyżalski, J. (2012). *Agresja elektroniczna i cyberbullying jako nowe ryzykowne zachowanie młodzieży*. Kraków: Impuls.

⁴ Wojtasik, Ł. (2009). Przemoc rówieśnicza z użyciem mediów elektronicznych – wprowadzenie do problematyki. *Dziecko Krzywdzone. Teoria, Badania, Praktyka*, 8(1), 1–5.

⁵ Pyżalski, J. (2012). *Agresja elektroniczna...* op.cit.

(8) *exclusion* – deliberate exclusion from virtual groups⁶, (9) *hacking* – destruction of the victim's computer hardware and software⁷, (10) *sexting* – sending messages, photographs, or videos of a sexual nature⁸.

As mentioned, sexting is defined as sending, receiving, or sharing sexual content – in the form of text messages, photographs, or video recordings – using digital devices and electronic media. The literature emphasises that this phenomenon may be voluntary, but in the case of children and young people it is often associated with peer pressure, manipulation, or coercion. Sexting becomes a form of cyberbullying when intimate content is distributed without the consent of the person depicted or when it is used as a means of harassment, intimidation, or blackmail⁹. The dissemination of messages and other material of a sexual nature without the consent of the other party can have a number of consequences. Such action violates a person's privacy and intimacy, creates the risk of further dissemination of the material, causes shame, humiliation, and social stigmatisation, and may contribute to further pressure and manipulation. It can also – even if the original sending of sexual content was a form of flirting or cybersex – lead to further forms of cyberbullying: *sextortion* (sexual blackmail), *revenge porn* (revenge through the sharing of sexual material) or *grooming* (exploitation by adult perpetrators).

Research Procedure

The aim of the research, conducted between 2020 and 2025, was to diagnose the frequency of various forms of cyberbullying among secondary school students and young adults, including sexting. The research conducted at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2020) and after its end (May 2023) was comparative in nature. A total of 165 secondary school students took part in the research. The research conducted in 2025 was part of a broader project on the educational functionality of the family of origin. A total of 165 students aged 18-25 participated in the research. In addition, the analysis was expanded to include the results of research conducted between 2020 and 2025 on various forms of cyberbullying, in which 419 people aged 18-45 participated. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were used for the analysis.

⁶ Kowalski, R. M., Limber, S. P., Agatson, P. W. (2008). *Cyberbullying. Bullying in the digital age*. New York: Blackwell Publishing.

⁷ Pyzalski, J. (2012). *Agresja elektroniczna...* op.cit.

⁸ Klettke, B., Hallford, D. J., Mellor, D. J. (2014). Sexting prevalence and correlates: A systematic literature review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 34(1), 44–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2013.10.007>

⁹ Ibidem.

Results

Initially, the responses given by secondary school students at the beginning and end of the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed. The data analysis indicates significant shifts in the declared frequency of sexting between 2020 and 2023. Most notably, there was an increase in the percentage of students declaring no experience with sexting – the "never" response rose from 37.0% to 49.3%, which may indicate greater awareness of the risks and a more cautious approach to sharing intimate content after the pandemic. At the same time, there was a significant decrease in the "rarely" response (from 33.7% to 16.4%), which is the largest change in the ranking and may indicate a polarisation of behaviour: some students are completely giving up sexting, while others are engaging in it more often. The "sometimes" category remains at a similar level, with only a slight increase (from 13.0% to 15.1%), which suggests stability in moderate forms of behaviour. On the other hand, the percentage of people declaring frequent involvement in sexting has decreased (from 12.0% to 9.6%), which can be interpreted as a weakening of intensive practices in this group. The most worrying trend, however, is the increase in the "constantly" category (from 4.3% to 9.6%), indicating a doubling of the percentage of students who experience sexting constantly or very often. This change suggests that although the overall prevalence of sexting in the study population is decreasing, at the same time there is a small but particularly vulnerable group of young people engaging in high-risk behaviour (Table 1).

Table 1: Changes in the frequency of sexting among secondary school students in 2020 (n=92) and 2023 (n=73)

	Sexting (N=165)		
	2020	2023	Change
never	37.00%	49.30%	12.30%
rarely	33.70%	16.40%	-17.30%
sometimes	13.00%	15.10%	2.10%
often	12.00%	9.60%	-2.40%
constantly	4.30%	9.60%	5.30%

An analysis of data on the frequency of sexting among secondary school students, broken down by gender, shows that the differences between women and men are relatively small in most categories, although there is one notable exception. In the categories "never", "rarely", "sometimes" and "often", the percentages of responses are similar; women are slightly more likely to report zero (41.1% compared to 44.3% for men) or low (26.3% compared to 25.7%) levels of experience with sexting. The responses "sometimes" and "often" are similar, with differences of only 3.1 to 3.4 percentage points in favour of men,

indicating that moderate and frequent sexting occurs in both groups with comparable intensity. The most significant difference appears in the "constantly" category (10.5% for women, 1.4% for men). The difference of 9.1 percentage points is the strongest contrast between the analysed groups (Table 2). This may indicate greater social pressure on girls, greater susceptibility to manipulation in relationships, or different patterns of communication in close relationships. This phenomenon requires special attention, as constant engagement in sexting is associated with the risk of psychological and social consequences and exposure to phenomena such as sextortion, revenge porn, or grooming.

Table 2: Frequency of sexting among secondary school students (N=165) by gender (women n=90 and men n=70)

	Females (n=90)	Men (n=70)	Change
never	41.10%	44.30%	3.20%
rarely	26.30%	25.70%	-0.60%
sometimes	12.60%	15.70%	3.10%
often	9.50%	12.90%	3.40%
constantly	10.50%	1.40%	-9.10%

An analysis of the correlation between age and the frequency of sexting shows different patterns of dependence in the two populations studied. In the group of secondary school students (N = 165), surveyed in 2020 and 2023, a positive, statistically significant correlation was obtained ($r = 0.154$; $p = 0.048$). This means that among schoolchildren, older students are more likely to engage in sexting. This relationship, although weak, is consistent with the characteristics of adolescence – increased interest in intimate relationships, exploration of sexuality, and greater digital autonomy. It may also reflect older students' greater access to digital devices and higher level of technical competence, which facilitates this type of activity.

In contrast, in the group of students (N = 165) surveyed in 2025, the relationship takes a different direction. A significant negative correlation was found between age and sexting ($r = -0.178$; $p = 0.022$). This means that in this population, younger students engage in sexting more often than older students. This phenomenon may be due to several factors. Firstly, younger students – especially those just entering adulthood – may use social media, dating apps, or mobile messengers more intensively, which encourages fast and often more risky forms of intimate communication. Secondly, these differences may reflect a shift in priorities with age: older students are more likely to form more stable relationships, are entering early adulthood, and may be more aware of the risks associated with sharing intimate content.

A comparison of the two analyses indicates that age has a different effect depending on the stage of development. In late adolescence (secondary school students), increasing age is associated with more frequent sexting, while in early adulthood (university students), this relationship is reversed, with sexting being more common among younger individuals. These results emphasise that sexting is not a uniform phenomenon across the entire population of young people, but varies with development, relationship experience, and functioning in the digital environment (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison of correlations between sexting and age in studies of two populations: secondary school students (N=165) and university students (N=165)

Correlation Matrix		Age – secondary school pupils	Age – university students
Sexting	Pearson's r	0.154 *	-0.178 *
	p-value	0.048	0.022

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

A different pattern emerges from a study of adults aged 18–45 (N = 419) conducted between 2020 and 2025. This study also distinguished between active sexting (sending content) and passive sexting (receiving content). In this group, all analysed variables related to sexting show negative correlations with age, some of which are statistically significant. With age, the frequency of sending nude photos ($r = -0.120$; $p = 0.014$), receiving nude photos ($r = -0.132$; $p = 0.007$) and overall sexting ($r = -0.126$; $p = 0.010$) decreases. On the other hand, sending and receiving messages with sexual content also shows a downward trend with age, although these relationships did not reach statistical significance. This suggests that the intensity of sexting behaviour is highest in early adulthood and then gradually decreases. This may be attributed to, among other things, to greater experience in relationships, growing awareness of risks, life stability, or changes in the ways of building intimacy, which with age may rely less on digital communication (Table 4).

Table 4: Correlation between sexting and age in a study of adults aged 18-45 (n=419)

Correlation Matrix		Age
Sending sexually explicit messages	Pearson's r	-0.080
	p-value	0.104
Receiving sexually explicit messages	Pearson's r	-0.076
	p-value	0.120
Sending nude photos of oneself	Pearson's r	-0.120 *
	p-value	0.014
Receiving nude photos	Pearson's r	-0.132 **
	p-value	0.007
Sexting	Pearson's r	-0.126 **
	p-value	0.010

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The correlation between sexting and personality traits measured by the Big Five Personality Test [TIPI]¹⁰ was verified in two populations, as the 2025 study conducted among students focused on other issues. Therefore, the following analysis is based solely on a group of secondary school students and on studies conducted among adults aged 18-45.

The analysis of the relationship between personality traits and sexting reveals different patterns in the two populations studied. In the group of secondary school students, the results indicate that most of the personality traits measured by the TIPI test – such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and stability – show no significant relationship with sexting. The only trait that showed a statistically significant relationship with this behaviour was openness to experience ($r = 0.172$; $p = 0.028$). This relationship is positive, which means that students who are more curious about the world and inclined to explore new areas are more likely to engage in sexting. This result suggests that during adolescence, intimate digital behaviours may be part of the search for new experiences and a way of expressing oneself, and their occurrence is more related to developmental processes than to stable personality traits (Table 5).

¹⁰ Sorokowska, A. – Słowińska, A. – Zbieg, A. – Sorokowski, P. (2014). *Polska adaptacja testu Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) – TIPI-PL – wersja standardowa i internetowa*. WrocLab, Instytut Psychologii, Uniwersytet Wrocławski.

Table 5: Correlations between sexting and personality traits in a group of secondary school students (n=165)

Correlation Matrix		Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Stability	Openness
Sexting	Pearson's r	0.104	-0.018	-0.023	-0.066	0.172 *
	p-value	0.183	0.820	0.766	0.403	0.028

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

In the adult population aged 18–45 (N = 419), surveyed between 2020 and 2025, a clearly different pattern of dependence can be observed. In this group, conscientiousness plays a key role, correlating negatively, and statistically significantly, with various forms of sexting. People with higher levels of conscientiousness are less likely to send sexually explicit messages, share nude photos of themselves, and receive them, and their overall level of involvement in sexting is lower. Conscientiousness – associated with responsibility, foresight, and caution – thus acts as a protective factor, limiting risky digital practices. Other personality traits, such as extraversion, agreeableness, stability, and openness, do not show significant associations with sexting in this population, indicating that these behaviours are not strongly anchored in personality but rather result from situational, relational, and life context factors (Table 6).

Table 6: Correlations between sexting and personality traits in a group of adults aged 18-45 (n=419)

Correlation Matrix		Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Stability	Openness
Sending sexually explicit messages	Pearson's r	-0.052	-0.081	-0.173 ***	0.022	0.028
	p-value	0.290	0.097	<.001	0.653	0.574
Receiving sexually explicit messages	Pearson's r	-0.042	-0.022	-0.065	-0.038	0.086
	p-value	0.386	0.652	0.186	0.433	0.079
Sending nude photos of oneself	Pearson's r	-0.090	-0.073	-0.202 ***	-0.074	-0.008
	p-value	0.065	0.136	<.001	0.128	0.874
Receiving nude photos	Pearson's r	-0.033	-0.088	-0.101 *	-0.053	0.003
	p-value	0.500	0.073	0.039	0.280	0.957
Sexting	Pearson's r	-0.065	-0.080	-0.161 ***	-0.045	0.036
	p-value	0.185	0.101	<.001	0.360	0.459

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

A comparison of the two groups reveals a significant change in the role of personality in different stages of development. Among secondary school students, sexting is more common among those who are open to new experiences, reflecting the tendency to explore and experiment that is characteristic of adolescence. In contrast, among adults, conscientiousness is clearly important as a trait that inhibits engagement in intimate behaviour in the digital space. This means that with age and the development of social and emotional maturity, the factors conducive to sexting change: from curiosity and the need for exploration, typical of adolescence, to increased self-control, responsibility, and a reflective approach to risk in adulthood. This developmental nature of the relationship emphasises that sexting is not a homogeneous behaviour, but evolves as one progresses through the stages of life, and its psychological determinants are different in adolescents and adults.

The last research tool used was the scale of educational functionality of the family of origin¹¹. Analysis of the results revealed clear differences in the relationships between the quality of the family environment and the undertaking of sexting in different age groups. Among secondary school students (N = 165) surveyed in 2020 and 2023, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between family functionality and engagement in sexting ($r = -0.184$; $p = 0.018$). This result indicates that the lower the educational functionality of the family of origin — understood as a lower level of emotional support, poorer communication, and weaker parental control — the more often young people engage in sexting. This relationship is particularly understandable in the context of adolescence, when young people seek confirmation of their self-worth, closeness, and recognition in peer relationships, and deficits in the family environment can reinforce the tendency to engage in risky forms of emotional and sexual expression in the digital space (Table 7).

Table 7: Correlation between sexting and the educational functionality of the family of origin in studies of secondary school students conducted in 2020 and 2023 (N=165)

Correlation Matrix		
		Functionality
Sexting	Pearson's r	-0.184 *
	p-value	0.018

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

In the group of university students (N = 165) surveyed in 2025, this relationship did not occur — the correlation between family functionality and sexting proved to be statistically insignificant ($r = -0.082$; $p = 0.293$). This result may indicate that with the onset of early adulthood, the influence of the family of origin weakens in favour of situational, relational, and individual factors. Students are more likely to function outside the direct control of their parents, make independent decisions, enter into relationships, and their intimate behaviour in digital media is shaped less by family patterns and more by current interpersonal experiences, relational identity, and social context. The lack of correlation between the studied population may also result from the selection of the research sample, as the very fact of undertaking higher education may be related to the educational functionality of their family of origin (Table 8).

¹¹ Kwiatkowski, P. (2016). Resiliencja rodziny jako źródło pozytywnej adaptacji młodzieży. *Wychowanie w Rodzinie*, 13(1), 311–343. <https://doi.org/10.23734/wwr20161.311.343>. Kwiatkowski, P., Jurczyk-Romanowska, E. (2022). Retrospektywny pomiar jakości wychowania w rodzinie – propozycja nowego narzędzia. *Wychowanie w Rodzinie*, 28(3), 13–28. <https://doi.org/10.34616/wwr.2022.3.013.028>

Table 8: Correlation between sexting and the educational functionality of the family of origin in a study of university students conducted in 2025 (N=165)

Correlation Matrix		
		Functionality
Sexting	Pearson's r	-0.082
	p-value	0.293

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

A different picture emerges in the population of adults aged 18–45 with varying levels of education ($N = 419$), surveyed between 2020 and 2025. In this group, consistent, negative, and mostly statistically significant correlations were found between family functionality and all analysed forms of sexting (active and passive). Lower parenting functionality in the family of origin was associated with more frequent sending of sexually explicit messages ($r = -0.185$; $p < .001$), more frequent receiving of such content ($r = -0.120$; $p = 0.014$), a greater tendency to send one's own nude photos ($r = -0.257$; $p < .001$), and more frequent receipt of nude photos ($r = -0.126$; $p = 0.010$). The strongest correlation was observed for sending one's own nude photos, which may indicate that individuals from less functional families more often compensate for emotional deficits by seeking closeness, confirmation of their value, or approval in the digital space, often in risky ways.

A general sexting index was also examined in adults, which also correlated negatively with family functionality ($r = -0.206$; $p < .001$), which is consistent with the analysis of the relationships between specific manifestations of sexting behaviour. Deficits in emotional security, relationship, and communication patterns internalised in childhood may persist and manifest themselves in adulthood through greater susceptibility to risky forms of intimate communication (Table 9).

Table 9: Correlation between sexting and the educational functionality of the family of origin in a study of adults aged 18-45 conducted in 2020-2025 (N=419)

Correlation Matrix		Functionality
Sending sexually explicit messages	Pearson's r	-0.185 ***
	p-value	< .001
Receiving sexually explicit messages	Pearson's r	-0.120 *
	p-value	0.014
Sending nude photos of oneself	Pearson's r	-0.257 ***
	p-value	< .001
Receiving nude photos	Pearson's r	-0.126 *
	p-value	0.010
Sexting	Pearson's r	-0.206 ***
	p-value	< .001

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusions

The conducted research allows us to conclude that sexting is a developmentally diverse phenomenon, conditioned by both individual and environmental factors. The results indicate that among secondary school students, the frequency of sexting has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic – the overall prevalence of this behaviour has decreased, but at the same time, the group of young people who frequently or constantly engage in this type of activity has increased, which emphasises the need to intensify preventive measures aimed specifically at high-risk individuals. An analysis of gender differences revealed that girls engage in sexting on a repetitive basis significantly more often than boys, which may be a consequence of peer pressure, differences in social norms or greater susceptibility to manipulation in intimate relationships.

The relationship between sexting and age proved to be different in different groups: among secondary school students, older age is associated with more frequent engagement in this behaviour, while among university students, on the contrary, sexting is more common among younger people. Among adults, the intensity of sexual behaviour in the digital space gradually decreases with age.

Personality analyses revealed that among secondary school students, the only significant predictor of sexting is openness to experience, while among adults,

conscientiousness plays a key role, acting as a protective factor against risky digital behaviour.

The educational functionality of the family also proved to be an important factor. Among secondary school students and adults, a lower quality family environment was associated with more frequent sexting. It can therefore be concluded that the educational functionality of the family of origin is an important factor protecting against risky behaviour of this kind.

In summary, the results of the study emphasise the need for a multifaceted approach to the prevention of risky behaviour in the digital environment. Educational activities should be adapted to age, developmental level, and the specifics of peer relationships, taking into account both psychosocial components and personality variables. Furthermore, preventive and educational measures should cover not only those directly exposed to cyberbullying, but also their families, especially in the early stages of raising children.

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Reports

The 35th East European Summer School of the University of Warsaw

Since 1992, the East European Summer School has been annually held by the East European Studies Institute of the University of Warsaw (*Studium Europy Wschodniej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, SEW UW*). This programme therefore emerged immediately after democratic transformations in Central Europe and still represents an important international platform for young scholars, mainly postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Subsequently, for more than three decades, young scholars up to 35 years of age from the post-Soviet bloc republics, but also from Western Europe and the USA, can meet in the East European Summer School at the beginning of the summer. In the two or three weeks spent in the Polish capital and its surroundings, they can attend lectures and seminars given by leading Polish and foreign researchers on the history, culture, politics or literature of Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. The past-time experts were personalities such as Bronisław Geremek (1932–2008), Csaba Gy. Kiss (1945–2025), John Micgiel (*1953), Bohdan Osadchuk (1920–2011) or Richard Pipes (1923–2018), whereas Czech science was represented by Jaroslav Valenta (1930–2004).

Besides numerous lectures and seminars, the Summer School programme usually offers visits to public institutions such as archives, museums or libraries and meetings with interesting people of the cultural and public life. Over the past years, the summer school attendees had an opportunity to meet the film directors Andrzej Wajda (1926–2016) and Krzysztof Zanussi (*1939) and converse with them. Each year, the programme also includes sightseeing trips outside the capital city and a chance to exchange opinions and knowledge on important research areas that the young, emerging researchers study at their domestic universities or other institutions. Throughout its existence, more than 700 persons from almost 30 countries (most of them neighbouring Ukraine) including the Czech Republic have already attended the Summer School. Its establishment was initiated and long-time organized by Jan Malicki, director of the East European Studies Institute of the University of Warsaw.

The 35th East European Summer School of the University of Warsaw took place from 30 June to 14 July 2025. It gathered twelve young scholars from Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine. The school started with participation in the 21st Warsaw East European Conference "*Time of Global Turbulence: Challenges for Central and Eastern Europe*" (30 June – 2 July 2025). The opening ceremony consisted of an introduction by Prof. Helena Krasowska, the current Summer School director, followed by a lecture by Jan Malicki, the East European Studies Institute director, on the *Most Significant East European School Lecturers*

(I–XXXVI) and a guided tour of the university campus (3 July 2025). The morning programme on the following days provided lectures by foreign researchers (historians, philologists and political scientists), which were intended for all the participants. In the afternoons, seminars divided into three groups were organized in parallel: 1. History and Culture (headed by Dr. David Kolbaia from the University of Warsaw); 2. Literature and Art (headed by Professor Kalina Bahneva from the University of Sofia); 3. History and International Relations (headed by Professor Dušan Segeš from the Slovak Academy of Sciences). The individual seminars consisted of the participants' lectures, which were followed by discussions hosted by heads of the three sections.

An accompanying section of the Summer School offered a rich cultural and educational programme, most importantly a visit to selected Warsaw museums and libraries (e.g. the University of Warsaw Library, the Polish History Museum in Warsaw, Museum of Modern Art or the National Museum). The two-week stay was concluded by a joint day trip to Żyrardów, a town famous for a long tradition of industrial linen production, which is a candidate for the UNESCO World Heritage List inclusion.

The closing ceremony took place on representative premises of the Tyszkiewicz–Potocki Palace, which serves as the seat of the East European Studies Institute of the University of Warsaw. The final speech was given by Prof. Ihor Tsependa, Rector of Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University, who focused on scientific diplomacy in the contemporary world. The subsequent panel discussion entitled *Thirty-Five Years in the Region: The Course, Events and Consequences* was hosted by former Summer School attendees who are currently holding high academic positions in their countries. One of these participants, Doc. Břetislav Dančák, is Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Poland, previously Vice-Rector of Masaryk University in Brno. In the end, the attendees received a diploma on successful attendance of the 35th East European Summer School of the University of Warsaw, which authorises them to join the Graduates and Lecturers Club. The club leaders composing of former chairpersons hold regular reunions for their members connected with organization of international scientific conferences, which have already taken place in Brno, Yaremche, Kaunas, Kiev, Lviv, Odessa, Prague, Sofia, Warsaw and Vilnius. The next conference is scheduled for autumn 2026, most likely in Belgrade. The participation in the East European Summer School in Warsaw can therefore contribute to the scientific growth of young researchers in the humanities and help them establish important international contacts.

Aleksander Baron

The *Legiovlak* Arrived at the Brno-Slatina Stop

On Saturday, 13 September 2025, a train forming part of the long-term project *Legiovlak* (i.e. *Legion Train*)—a commemoration of the legionnaires' journey at the end of the First World War—was stationed at the Slatina railway depot. This event is closely linked to the life stories of the tens of thousands of Czechoslovak legionnaires who traveled across Russia on such trains between 1918 and 1920 along the Trans-Siberian Railway, often compelled to engage in combat with Bolshevik forces in order to secure their passage. The highlight of the event was a series of guided tours conducted hourly, each led by a guide dressed in a legionnaire's period uniform.



Photo: the author's archive

The authenticity of the visitor experience was ensured primarily by the fourteen richly equipped military cars that together represent a historical military echelon. During the tour, visitors were able to learn about the purpose of each car and, thanks to the exhibited artifacts, gain a truly unique insight into this chapter of Czechoslovak history. The Legion Train comprises cars for the field post office, medical services, film production, command and staff functions; a *teplushka* (heated troop car), sales, tailoring, blacksmithing (reconstructed in Slovakia), accommodation, as well as two flatbed cars. Each of the cars contains authentic reconstructions of period equipment, legionnaires

in historical uniforms, original artifacts, and several hundred photographs displayed on panels documenting the history of the Czechoslovak legions.

Representatives of all generations showed their interest in visiting the Legion Train, and the guided tour enabled visitors to spend a pleasant afternoon while deepening their understanding of this remarkable and adventurous chapter in the lives of our forebears.

Jan Egerle

REVIEWS

KONEČNÝ, Michal. *13 snů o svobodě. Osudy židovského Brna ve třech stoletích.* (Thirteen Dreams of Freedom. The Fates of Jewish Brno Across Three Centuries). 192 stran. 2024. Host.

The city of Brno is associated by the broader public with the Jewish community primarily through the villas of prosperous entrepreneurs linked to the textile industry at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet the full history of Brno's once-thriving Jewish community is far less widely known. The book *Thirteen Dreams of Freedom* seeks to provide a more authentic representation of this topic by examining the lives of individuals who shaped the history of Jewish Brno from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

Through thirteen life stories, each associated with a month of the Jewish calendar, the book describes various episodes in the lives of Jewish inhabitants, whose destinies were intertwined with the Moravian metropolis. The book narrates the story of the Jewish merchant Moses Dobruschka and his descendants, who benefited from the issuance of Emperor Joseph II's Edict of Tolerance, which permitted Jews to own land, pursue formal education, and engage in any trade. It further examines the abolition of ghettos and the early activities of the Jewish community following its emancipation in the second half of the nineteenth century, including the construction of a representative synagogue and the public role of the politician and merchant Julius Gomperz. The narrative also addresses the life of Baruch Jakob Placzek, the rabbi of Brno and later the chief rabbi of Moravia, who was a key initiator in the development of Jewish education in Brno; the patron and supporter of the arts Arnold Skutetzky; the architect Ernst Wiesner; the human-rights advocate Nora Lustigová; the painter Oskar Spielmann; the communist politician Otto Šling; and the rabbi Richard Feder, whose life is currently presented in an exhibition housed within the interior of Brno's Arnold Villa.

As a significant contribution of the book could be considered its elaboration of the diverse life stories of the Jewish population connected with Brno, highlighting the broad range of their life trajectories—shaped by their talents, professional achievements, and, regrettably, by the persecutions they endured under nondemocratic regimes. The structure of the narrative in the individual chapters also deserves recognition, as the author succeeds in effectively interweaving the various life histories with major social events and prevailing historical trends. The book acquaints the reader, for instance, with the consequences of the French Revolution; it highlights the significant role played by the emancipation of the Jewish community and the constitutional order of Austrian empire; it reflects the workers' unrest in late-nineteenth-century Brno and the related labor movement and social questions; and it addresses modern architecture, the communist coup of February 1948, the decolonization

of Algeria, and, of course, the events associated with both world wars. The book's graphic design also deserves appreciation. Each chapter is supplemented with illustrations in a uniform color scheme. Concluding section of every chapter includes photographs and additional materials related to the specific topic.

The book thus offers the reader a coherent perspective on the winding historical trajectory of the Jewish community in Brno. In this context, it also provides an essential overview of key social tendencies that shaped public life more broadly, while exerting specific impacts on the Jewish population. At the same time, the fates of the individuals portrayed in the book serve as a source of inspiration, reflecting the many achievements they attained in artistic and scientific fields and, not least, their contributions to the spiritual life of this region.

Jan Egerle

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AUTHOR GUIDELINES

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CZECH-POLISH HISTORICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL JOURNAL
Volume 17/2025/1

Published: bi-annually

Publishers's Address

Masaryk University
Žerotínovo nám. 617/9, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic

Bus. ID: 00216224

Date of Issue: 30. 11. 2025

ISSN 2336-1654 online