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# CONTENTS

## STUDIES

*Viola Tamášová – Zuzana Šulganová*

Promotion of Family Reading in the Context of Children's Early Reading Literacy Development 9

*Jana Duchovičová – Nina Kozárová*

Responsibility and Task Structuring as the Basic Attributes of Learning Styles and Their Relation Towards Consistency and the Quality of Hierarchy of a Learner's Mind Map 29

*Ljiljana Leskovic – Goran Vuković – Robert Leskovar – Jana Goriup*

Some Aspects of Burnout in Nursing Homes 47

## ARTICLES

*Zsuzsa Emese Csobanka*

The Z Generation 63

*Róbert Osad'an – Elizabeth Reid – Mária Belešová*

Intercultural Primary Education in the Second Half of the Decade 77

*Katarína Cimprichová Gežová*

Divorce Rate in the Slovak Republic as a Social and Educational Problem 87

*Henryk Noga*

Professional Development of Information Technology and Technical Education Teachers 96

## INFORMATION

*Viola Tamášová – Silvia Barnová*

The Jubilee of PaedDr. Mária Uhereková, PhD. 105



# FOREWORD

*Dear Colleagues, dear Readers!*

*We are bringing something new – the summer issue of the scientific journal Acta Technologica Dubnicae. From now on, it will be published three times a year in regular intervals. We have a sufficient number of high quality authors and we intend to present their scientific work on the pages of our journal. Following the peer-reviewing process and subsequent corrections by authors, we are introducing the content of this issue consisting of seven papers by professionals working in various scientific fields but accentuating the educational aspect as one of our requirements and one contribution in the section of information.*

*The first scientific study entitled ‘Promotion of Family Reading in the Context of Children’s Early Reading Literacy Development’ was written by Viola Tamášová and Zuzana Šulganová from Slovakia. In their qualitative research realized in families in Slovakia, the authors deal with early reading literacy development of pre-school age children. A special attention is paid to the promotion of reading in family environment. They point out that the children’s relationship to reading starts developing before entering school, therefore, they consider families to be the basic indicators of the development of children’s relationship to reading and to books in general.*

*The next scientific study, by Jana Duchovičová and Nina Kozárová, is entitled ‘Responsibility and Task Structuring as the Basic Attributes of Learning Styles and Their Relation Towards Consistency and the Quality of Hierarchy of a Learner’s Mind Map’. It focuses on the identification of the relationship between the learning style and the mental representation of curriculum content. By means of analysis, the authors found out that the learning style in the observed factors of responsibility and task structuring does not influence students’ mental representation of the curriculum content.*

*A group of four Slovenian authors Ljiljana Leskovic, Goran Vukovič, Robert Leskovar and Jana Goriup elaborated the third scientific study ‘Some Aspects of Burnout in Nursing Homes’. They state that nursing personnel in nursing homes for elderly citizens are exposed to a number of factors that contribute to possible burnout syndrome. The objective of the research was to measure the degree of burnout, check the correlation between the burnout syndrome and satisfaction at work, and psychosomatic symptoms, as well as to figure out the*

*main characteristics of burnout syndrome among the nursing personnel in nursing homes for the elderly in Slovenia.*

*Csobanka Zsuzsa-Emese, an author from Hungary, in her scholarly article 'The Z Generation' attempts to define various circumstances that make a generation. The author points out the characteristics of new generations focusing on the so-called Z generation. As a literature teacher, she mentions personal examples to make the article alive. Her aim is to prove that it is important to take the new habits and specifics of teenagers into account in order to teach more efficiently.*

*In the article 'Intercultural Primary Education in the Second Half of the Decade', the international group of authors represented by Róbert Osad'an (Slovakia), Reid Elizabeth (USA) and Belešová Mária (Slovakia) deals with a currently very sensitive topic for the European Union. The authors accentuate that intercultural education advances the comprehension of different people and cultures. They emphasize teaching that accepts and respects that diversity is normal in all areas of life and that different does not necessarily mean "wrong". Intercultural education at primary schools should respect all the attributes of cultural differentiation and advocate equal opportunities for all and so transform the society, the authors say. Its realisation is recently not that easy in the European Union, especially in relation with the current events connected with the issues of immigrants. It requires a lot of patience and clever work in the field of education.*

*The sociological but also social educational problem of divorced families is dealt with by Katarína Cimprichová Gežová in the article 'Divorce Rate in the Slovak Republic as a Social and Educational Problem'. Divorce is considered an unwanted phenomenon in the society which brings many problems for both parents and their children. Family break-up and the loss of one of the parents leaves lifelong consequences on the child and is a source of loss of personal and family safety. The author aims to point out the importance of finding a way how to talk together before and during divorce and to do best in solving problems in the possibly shortest time.*

*Our Polish author Henryk Noga in his article 'Professional Development of Information Technology and Technical Education Teachers' deals with the issues related to the professional development of information technology and technical education teachers in Poland. An analysis of documents shows the stages of professional development. It is especially important in case of teachers teaching technical subjects and information technology (IT) who should be familiar with the latest technology as well as up-to-date information from the field of didactics of technical subjects. It is a crucial work competence of this century.*

*The Editorial Board of Acta Technologica Dubnicae sends her summer greetings to PaedDr. Mária Uhreková, PhD., a living personality of Slovak pedagogy, in the occasion of her life anniversary. The authors of the article are the Chief Editor and the Managing Editor of Acta Technologica Dubnicae.*

*Dear Readers, I wish you beautiful summer days with interesting and valuable papers which we have prepared for you.*

*Viola Tamášová  
Editor*





# STUDIES

## Promotion of Family Reading in the Context of Children's Early Reading Literacy Development

*Viola Tamášová – Zuzana Šulganová\**

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**Abstract:** The proposed study deals with early reading literacy development of pre-school age children. A special attention is paid to the promotion of reading in family environment. Children's relationship to reading starts developing before entering school, therefore, we consider families, alongside with intentional reading development in kindergartens, to be the basic indicators of the development of children's relationship to reading and to books in general. The results of our quantitative research reflect the current situation in reading literacy development of pre-school age children in Slovakia, in particular families, and from the point of view of both the participating parents and their children.

**Key words:** reading and pre-reading literacy, pre-school age, promotion of family reading, spontaneous literacy, early literacy, reading habits.

### 1 Introduction

The notion of literacy as such has recently often been put into relation with pre-school age. Research shows that the developmental potential of pre-school age children is specific and sufficient. This means that if it is not being developed, later, it may not be used to its whole extent and this potential could be wasted (Zápotočná, 2011).

It is impossible to define literacy at pre-school age as it is developing spontaneously at this age. We understand reading literacy as the result of the literacy process in which a person has acquired some reading knowledge, skills and competencies and then, subsequently, starts improving them. According to Pazonyi and Bodonyi (2013), facilitating reading (i.e. creating opportunities for it without any pressure to carry out the task) by developing children's

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imagination through story-telling, involving them in different actions, and also providing children with texts and pictures to cater the visual types, should be done from as early as possible, maybe even from the last year of pre-schools. At pre-school age, these skills are at the stage of early formation and development, which can be characterised by images, knowledge and some skills acquired before entering formal training at school. From this perspective, we consider the concept of early literacy at pre-school age to be suitable for development. In literature, we can meet the notions of *reading pre-literacy*, *emerging literacy*, *beginning literacy*, *pre-reading literacy* or, in general, *early literacy*. In the last years, the concept of early literacy has been gradually replaced by the notion of *reading maturity*, or *preparedness for reading* as there is a certain point of time when a child is capable and prepared to start learning to read and write.

Undoubtedly, the environment, in which a child is growing up, represents the basic indicator of its development. Some attitudes that influence one's future orientation and one's adult life start developing in early childhood, i.e. at pre-school age, when children spend most of their time in families (Barnová, 2010). We can say the same about the attitudes towards books and the process of reading and writing itself. In the last decades, research has begun to deal with the issues of reading literacy in relation to children's family environment and the reading culture in their families. Dobbs-Oates et al. (2015), Montero et al. (2014), Snow et al. (1997) and Moss and Fawcett (1995) declare that children whose parents practised reading activities with them, read books to them at pre-school age, achieve better results in school education than those children whose parents did not read to them and, thus, did not help them create a positive relationship to books (Chandler, 1999). The authors consider such a mutual interaction of parents and children effective in the field of children's reading literacy development as reading to children and talking with them about the text stimulates their imagination, extends children's lexicon, teaches them about the surrounding world, and to work with text.

Many scientific articles, large studies and research emphasize the mutual interrelation of the positive impact of reading to children in families at an early age and their success in the school environment. Tamášová and Šuverová (2008), Kissinger (2004) and Fitzgerald et al. (1991) highlight the mutual relationship between family reading and the school success of a child, too and emphasize the need for reading with children at pre-school age in the family environment. They emphasise the role of a parent as the basic role model for children's early literacy. Indisputably, besides activities supporting elementary understanding and reading, other family activities with children contribute to children's literacy development as well. In their studies, Glazer (1989), Bryant et al. (1990) and Maclean et al. (1987) emphasize the importance of singing songs to children in their family environment, as songs also support the love to

language, rhythm, promote phonological consciousness, being a significant predictor of the later literacy development (Chandler, 1999). Kissinger (2004) and Strickland (2004) accentuate the role of adults as basic models for reading literacy development and deal with the nature of a child's thinking development. They recommend parents to have high expectations on the thinking processes of their children. This way they can promote the development of children's lexicon, and, at the same time, a high degree of comprehension of the stories read. Last but not least, with the aim to promote the beginnings of reading, they recommend parents to teach their children to read before they enter the school environment.

Support on the side of the family environment in the field of early literacy development of pre-school age children is of a negligible importance. It enables children to develop reading competencies in a natural, experiential and playful way and to form a basis for their positive relationship to literature at a later age, their reading competencies and reading comprehension.

## **2 Methodology**

The first impulse to the realisation of the research was the recognition of the need for the development of children's early reading competencies in family environment, which we consider to be a significant factor influencing the development of a child at pre-school age and the basic determinant of adaptation to the school educational environment. The research problem was formulated into particular research questions closely related to the aims of the research. The main goal of the qualitatively oriented research was to find out the value of the process of reading in family environment in relation to the influence of parents on the development of children's reading literacy, as perceived by parents and their pre-school age children; and to inquire on the intentional and unintentional practices of parents in the process of early reading development at pre-school age. The partial goals of the research were to inquire on the educational methods and means by which parents influence their children's relationship to reading; on various forms of text materials that children are in contact with in their family environment, the family library collection; perception of the process of family reading by pre-school age children; and, last but not least, to analyse and compare the forms of reading activities and of the activities promoting the development of the lexicon that today's parents prefer.

The basic method of collecting research data was a semi-structured interview with parents and children individually. One of our requirements was to realise the interview in the participants' natural family environment, as such kind of observation of the family environment was believed to help us understand the participants' relationships and responses better. During the interviews with the

parents and their pre-school age children, we focused on the set framework of questions – semantic categories, that represented the development of pre-school age children's reading competencies in family environment and were created by us. The framework of interview questions and the semantic categories were as follows:

*Family model*

- parents' relationship to reading, parents' reading history, grandparents' relationship to reading, the importance of reading in the family, family reading activities, joint reading rituals, children's reading models;

*Place of books in a family*

- the place of books in a family, perception of books for children in a family, the place of books in leisure time, the favourite book, the existence of a family library, visiting a library;

*Process of reading*

- the concept of reading, reading for the future of children, reading literacy, fiction vs. reality, child reader;

*Accompanying activities*

- discussions about the read, children's fantasy development, interactive reading with children, children's identification with storybook characters;

*Visual components*

- the content of books for children, the quantity of pictures, the structure of children's books, the design of books for children, other possible ways of the perception of pictures and text.

For a more complex understanding of the importance of family reading for children at pre-school age, we used another method – the method of content analysis of drawings. Gavora (2007) points out the pros of using drawings in qualitative research - in the form of drawings, especially children are able to say what they are not able to express in words. In our interview questions focusing on reading and reading activities in family environment, we motivated and inspired children to complete the drawing task: Draw a picture about how you read fairy tales and storybooks at home. When analysing children's drawings, we focused on the analysis of the common elements that dominated in the children's pictures. They enabled us to find out about the perception of family reading by children at pre-school age in the context of the conditions of their family environment. They were as follows: the place of reading, the context of the environment, children in the role of readers, a close person, the element of literacy, other elements.

We worked with a small sample of participants – ten parents (mothers) and their children – intensively and repeatedly. We obtained important data for fulfilling the goals of the research. We adjusted the size of the sample to the quantity of the gathered data. All the mothers had been informed on the organisation and the realisation of the research in advance as well as with the use of the gathered data.

In this study, with the aim to ensure the anonymity of the participants, we do not list their real names. All the persons mentioned in the research have pseudonyms. For a better orientation and differentiation of participants, we use the following labels:

1. pseudonym p. name of the parent – e.g. p. Petra (parent Petra);
2. pseudonym ch. name of the child – e.g. ch. Kristína (child Kristína);
3. pseudonym f. number of the family – e.g. f. 1 (family No. 1).

### **3 Results**

The aim of the research was to find out how parents and children at pre-school age perceive the value of the reading process in family environment in relation to parents' influence on children's reading literacy development. We focused on the ways parents (mothers) support their children in the field of developing a positive relationship to reading activities at pre-school age, when reading literacy, as one of one's key competencies, begins. At the same time, the research dealt with the concept of family reading from the children's point of view in a particular family environment.

Based on the subjective responses of the participating mothers and children and their drawings displaying family reading in a particular family environment, we came to the following results:

#### *3. 1 The concept of family reading from the point of view of mothers and their pre-school age children*

When inquiring how mothers and children at pre-school age perceive the concept of family reading, we worked with the subjective responses of mothers and children participating in our research. Based on the approach, motivation and individual experience of the mothers in the field of promoting the development of children's reading literacy and, at the same time, on the pre-school age children's attitudes and interests in the elements of literacy and in books as a source of information, we have enriched knowledge in the field of the issues of reading literacy related to family education in the suggested semantic categories as follows:

### *3.1.1 Family model*

As for the role of the family in the process of developing a child's positive relationship to books, based on the obtained responses, we can point out the importance of support on the side of grandparents. We can state that the influence of grandparents in the given field was evident in family environment (f. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10). Tough times, heavy workload and lack of time were perceived by mothers as the basic determinants that negatively influenced the situation of joint reading with children, and the need for grandparents' help in bringing up their grandchildren. Mothers experienced a decrease as for their own reading activities in the context of workload and tough times related to the role of a mother and also to the emergence of new information-communication technologies that had a significant impact on the decrease of reading in families. Despite the above mentioned, the joint family reading of the mothers and their children was realised in every participating family, but in various frequency and depth. We can assume that all the participating mothers were aware of their function as an indicator of reading literacy development of their pre-school age children, even in cases when they themselves did not incline to activities related to reading books. The most intense role model of a grandmother, as for reading activities and preferences, could be seen in family No. 8, where the grandmother even those days represented a positive role model for reading for the mother. She had lead her daughter to reading activities from her early childhood and in this unconscious way she had built the mother's interest in and inclination to family reading. Both of them preferred and intentionally lead their children to reading habits. The opposite situation could be observed in the case of three mothers (f. 2, 5 and 9), where a positive relationship to reading habits and a regular contact with books had developed spontaneously, though, reading had not been preferred in the family environment during childhood. Family No. 7 was a specific example, where the mother's reading role model in her childhood and those days had been represented by her grandparents who, even at an older age, enabled the child and its mother a contact with books from their large family library, which they had built in the early years of their marriage. It is them who, by their reading culture, had inspired and motivated the mother to read books and it had had an impact on her child as well. On the other hand, we consider important to mention the impact of the grandmothers' (f. 6 and 8.) and mothers' (f. 1 and 3) profession of a teacher, their intentional promotion of the development of children's reading competencies, and the effective promotion of their reading literacy as one of the key competencies for the future development of a child. In one case (f. 1), with the grandmother as a reading role model, the element of bilingualism was present. The grandmother read the child books for children in German only (not in Slovak), so she enabled the child a contact with German words in a natural way and gaining knowledge in a foreign language at pre-school age.

The language and the verbal expression of a child are determined by the age of the particular family members that the child spends his/her free time after coming home from the kindergarten with. From the responses of the mothers and their children, we have found out that children living in a family environment where the age of the family members, parents, children and siblings was in agreement with the situation in traditional families, i.e. where there were no large age differences between the parents, between the siblings and between the mother and the child, children preferred and used traditional verbal expressions typical for their stage of development. In two cases (f. 1 and 2), children were growing up exclusively with adults, as their mothers had had children at a later age. In their responses, we noticed some untraditional verbal expressions, they were using foreign words and phrases typical for adults. The mothers pointed out the fact, that their close environment perceived their children as 'too smart', differing from their peers. Besides the family environment, kindergartens were found irreplaceable as for the development of children's reading literacy, they promoted it also by visiting local libraries (f. 1 and 6), reading books and making up various stories with children. Both the parents and children considered these activities very important in kindergartens (f. 2, 4, 9 and 10). The mothers (f. 4 and 10) with no inclination to reading activities saw the kindergarten as a substitute role model for reading. According to the opinion of these mothers, it was the kindergartens' duty to form children and to lead them to building of a positive relationship to books. We noticed a tendency of these mothers not to recognise the importance of the presence of a parental role model for children in the process of developing their reading literacy. The joint family reading was realised in the context of going to sleep in every participating family, and, by the mothers, it was considered to be a kind of a family ritual transferred from generation to generation. They saw the function of the joint reading with children before they go to sleep in strengthening the mutual parent-child relationship, creating a calm atmosphere and mutual closeness. One of the mothers (f. 1), saw the time before sleeping as "a part of a day when the child's mind and creativity should not be disturbed by any impulses".

The fathers did not take part in reading activities, two families (f. 2 and 7), were an exception, where in the first case, the father made up his own stories because, according to him, when reading the same story from a book repeatedly, we support an uncreative development of children. The mothers highlighted the function and the importance of the fathers' dramatization during the joint reading with children. Such a dramatization on the side of the fathers was expected by children, too. The mothers showed satisfaction with the presence of the father as one of the factors that influence the development of children's reading habits. The mothers explained the absence of fathers during the joint reading with children by poor reading habits of men in general.

### *3. 1. 2 The place of books in families*

In all the participating families, we registered the presence of books. Their importance was perceived by the mothers variously. The exclusive presence of books for children was evident in families where the parents showed no inclination to reading activities and where the parents were not active and regular readers (f. 4 and 10). Based on the responses of the mothers from the particular families, we can assume that, on one hand, the mothers recognised the need for developing a positive relationship to reading and the need for model situations, on the other hand, they did not do these activities. Neither of the two mentioned families had a family library, but the children had their own libraries. The independent choice of books that a children wished to communicate with, when reading with their mothers, was characteristic for all the families, while, in their responses, the mothers called for books appropriate to the age of children. We registered the children's interest in books in all the participating families, what was confirmed by the mothers' responses as well. The participating children perceived books as toys that attracted them by their visual components and helped them to fill their leisure time. The mothers accentuated the children's high level of curiosity in general, including the field of activities done by mothers. It was the children's curiosity and spontaneous interest that was seen by the mothers as the characteristic feature that could be supported and applied regularly to promote the development of knowledge, lexicon and reading skills in family environment. During the interviews, a new semantic category 'tough times' was created; it was perceived by the mothers from two aspects. From the first aspect, the mothers saw the difficulty of the situation in the context of parents' lack of time, because they had to fulfil more and more demanding requirements, which was reflected in higher requirements on children and their progress, too. They recognised the social changes and the changing requirements on children compared to times, when they had been children. The mothers saw the 'toughness' regarding the requirements on school results, which had been transformed into school documents, textbooks and various educational materials in Slovakia. From the second aspect, they saw the difficulty in the context of changes in storybooks for pre-school age children and in the topics prevailing in these books. The mothers in their responses, on one hand, evaluated traditional Slovak folk tales that they knew and possessed from their childhood positively, on the other hand, when reading together with their children, they were preferred only in three of the families (f. 1, 5 and 8). Their quality was seen in mediating the traditional way of life, the surrounding world to children, and in mediating some positive educational elements, from which children could learn moral and ethical values. In the responses of all the participating mothers, we observed the preference of family stereotypes in bringing up children, but also in buying books and the subsequent choice of books for the joint reading. In the mothers' responses, we found a whole scale of prejudice regarding what should girls and what should boys read, i.e. different gender approach, which is considered to be



fixed and relatively proven especially in the case of books for child readers. Their existence is undeniable.

In the responses, we found a tendency of children to develop a positive relationship to certain books, which was reflected in an increased frequency of reading the same book during the joint reading as a part of family rituals and activities. Besides traditional books for pre-school age children, some of the mothers (f. 1, 9 and 10) pointed out the positive aspects of interactive books that they were reading with their children. Their efficiency was, above all, understood in the sense of increasing a child's interest in working with books and a better understanding of the text.

In the given field of questions, based on subjective responses obtained from the mothers, another semantic category 'children's contact with books' was formed, as some of the mothers (f. 2, 3 and 6) found it necessary for children to realise the place and the importance of books in the society, their impact on their future, and, at the same time, to appreciate books.

### *3. 1. 3 The process of reading*

In this set of questions, in this semantic category, we paid attention to the fact whether the mothers and their children understood the complexity of the process of reading and in what context they were able to define reading literacy. Although, none of the children from the participating families could read, we identified a spontaneous interest in the letters of the alphabet in case of all the children. The children were aware of the fact that letters formed certain text structures bearing information. They did not recognise letters only in the context of books, but they were able to identify letters in their environment. The participating children were not able to differentiate between individual letters, with the exception of those in their names. Children knew neither the techniques of reading nor writing, but despite this fact, we did notice an increased interest in letters and in the process of reading. They identified themselves as readers and saw themselves in the role of 'adults'.

The mothers, from this aspect, agreed that children as child readers were not capable to fully recognise the differences between fiction and reality in storybooks, but they observed children's identification – personification with their favourite storybook characters. Only one mother (f. 1) was of the opposite opinion, she intentionally mediated reality when reading fairy tales, by which she accelerated her child's natural development of the perception of fiction. Based on the responses, we can assume, that the process of reading itself was most frequently perceived by children in the context of one's literacy and the acquisition of necessary information (f. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10). The children realised that texts bore some kind of information and the 'ability to read' was

crucial for the development of one's personality; as children said it – “for not being stupid”. The similarity in the perception of the process of reading with the previous assumption could be seen in the case of one child (f. 5), who saw the knowledge of the process of reading as a determinant of one's job opportunities. Another point of view was offered by a child (f. 2), who understood the process of reading in the context of the joint reading before falling asleep with the function of a lullaby and his/her unfamiliarity with written text and the techniques of reading. The child did not see a deeper meaning in the process of reading. In this case, we noticed the child's fixation on the regular joint activity with his/her mother, i.e. on reading before falling asleep, that represented a regular ritual in the particular family. Some of the mothers (f. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 10) considered elementary schools to be crucial for the development of the active process of learning to read and write. We could identify some kind of children's ‘protection’ from reality on the side of the mothers – which their children could not read or write before entering elementary schools. We observed a targeted promotion of the children's process of learning to read and write before entering the school environment only in one case (f. 8). That mother had recognised the challenges of the child's school progress and success in the future, therefore she was intentionally leading the child to an active process of reading and acted as a positive role model for reading. This way the child had been gradually building knowledge about individual techniques of reading. When inquiring information regarding the understanding and perception of reading literacy as one of a person's key competencies, in the responses of the mothers, we identified the existence of knowledge and information from the given field. In three cases (f. 2, 3 and 9), the mothers were familiar with the term reading literacy from the media, as it was used in the context of the results of Slovak pupils in testing their reading literacy as a part of international studies PISA and PIRLS, while in one case (f. 3), the knowledge of the mother could be related to her pedagogical profession. The mothers from the participating families mostly defined the notion of reading literacy in relation to the need for reading comprehension, they accentuated the necessity of checking reading comprehension during the joint reading with children. Some weaknesses in defining this notion were found in the mothers' responses in two families (f. 4 and 10), where the mothers did not incline to reading activities and had not developed a positive relationship to regular reading of books. These mothers put reading literacy into relation with lay understanding of the gradual development and improvement of reading and writing skills, and, at the same time, in connection to children's school success.

### *3. 1. 4 Accompanying activities*

In some sets of questions, we focused our attention on the diversity of the accompanying activities applied and realized in a particular family environment in relation to joint family reading with the child to promote its creativity,

imagination, thinking and the development of the child's lexicon. For a child at pre-school age, working with a book is a game. It is a natural activity by which a child can learn about many things and phenomena. Fairy tales, various creative stories and reading books represent a precondition for uncovering children's skills and knowledge. In all the participating families, from the aspect of the mothers' initiative, but also from the point of view of children, we identified various activities promoting children's reading literacy. In some of the families, a joint discussion about the read was the most frequent accompanying activity during the joint reading with children, while questions about the read were applied by mothers as a diagnostic tool of the comprehension of the story. The mothers declared the need for getting feedback from the child with the purpose of getting information about the child's concentration on the read text and its comprehension. The mothers were the initiators, they were asking targeted questions about the read text in most of the participating families (f. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10). In two cases (f. 3 and 6) we found out that the discussion about the story read was led by children by means of spontaneous reflection on and description of storybook characters that the children identified with. The mothers in these families insisted on monitoring the suitability of books for children, while in three cases (f. 1, 9 and 10) we observed creative work with interactive books, which, as containing various additional components evoking children's curiosity, enabled children to discover the surrounding world in a playful way and naturally influenced children's thinking and creativity.

In the children's responses, we identified an increased interest in interactive books. We can assume that joining the visual and auditory elements of books helped children at pre-school age to understand the read text better, and, on the other hand, increased the children's interest in books containing tasks and, thus, giving them the opportunity to complete some elements creatively. In this case, we can point out the function of children's fine motor skills improvement. A specific example of working with books was presented by the mother (f. 9), who intentionally transferred knowledge to her child in cases when he/she misbehaved. It was in agreement with the plot of the fairy tale with the aim to give him/her a lesson and to distract his/her attention from inappropriate behaviour. Other creative activities that mothers did with their children were those focused on making up and finishing stories. In three cases (f. 5, 6 and 7) we could see examples of adding text to picture stories. From the subjective responses of the participating mothers and their children, we learned about some oral interactive activities when working with books in families (f. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 9). The character of the realised activities contributed to the development of reading literacy and literacy in general. The highest degree of creativity on the side of the mother could be seen in one case (f. 7), where the mother intentionally promoted her child's fantasy and creativity by means of visual art – after reading a fairy tale, she instructed the child on visualising his/her thoughts.

### *3. 1. 5 Visual components*

When collecting the responses and the evaluation of questions focusing on the perception of individual visual elements in books for pre-school age children and on children's perception of the visual aspect of books, we received clear, almost not differing responses from the mothers and their children. We could see an agreement in the responses of both children and their parents regarding eye-catching book covers for children and books in general, too. It was considered to be the basic criterion of selection. In the responses of the participating children, we identified the presence of gender stereotypes in the process of choosing books, and their preference on the side of the mothers. In the in the children's responses we observed an agreement regarding the requirement for the presence of illustrations in storybooks. Pictures were decisive for child 'readers', which was emphasised by them. In some cases, (f. 2, 3, 6 and 8), the differentiating factor between the books for children and books for adults was the presence of colourful pictures in children's books and their absence in books for adult readers, that were characterised by children as uninteresting. One child (f. 1) strongly refused the presence of pictures in books for adult readers reasoning that they could read and write and, therefore, they did not need any pictures. In some of the participating families (f. 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8), the parents practised the so-called 'picture reading' with their children, when the child constructed and completed the story depending on his/her understanding of the read text and the pictures. The details of the pictures helped the child to construct his/her own plot and using this method he/she got into the role of an independent reader. In the participating families (f. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10), children were able to retell a story meaningfully, and it was possible to identify the storybook characters, the plot, the beginning and the end of the story. The absence of the plot, beginning and the end of the story and of a brief description of individual pictures in the book could be noticed in the case of one child (f. 8). Two of the mothers (f. 3 and 5), from this aspect, pointed out the need for 'more detailed' pictures in children's books, that could support children during the joint or 'independent reading', and, at the same time, help parents in the creative construction and making up new stories. Regarding the perception of the visual components in books for children, the participating children (f. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9 and 10) when manipulating with a children's book, demonstrated knowledge of some print conventions. Though, the children did not know the process of reading, we identified the children's correct manipulation with books – turning the pages, holding the book, reading from up to down and from left to right. The children knew the title, the author and the numbers of pages in the book. The requirement for illustrations in books, their colourfulness, was present in several families (f. 1, 3, 4, 8 and 10), where the mothers pointed out the need for a larger size of books and of their visual components, and they suggested to apply real life stories with the intention to mediate children some basic information for life in

the society, information necessary for achieving school maturity, and with the intention to help children when entering the school environment. Three of the participating mothers (f. 2, 8 and 10) preferred commercial books by foreign authors that contained large colourful pictures that were eye-catching for pre-school age children.

### *3.2 Perception of the process of family reading by pre-school age children in the context of the conditions of family environment*

When inquiring on how the children understood the concept of family reading that appeared and was realised in particular families, we worked with the products of children's visual expression (drawings) in combination with their subjective responses. We gathered information for a better understanding of the concept of family reading in the context of the conditions of the family environment, by which we have contributed to the field of conceptualising the process of reading in family environment from the point of view of child participants in relation to the promotion of children's reading literacy in families.

All the drawings collected from the participating children told us about the situation of family reading in which the children acted as the main characters. When trying to identify the places where reading took place in the drawings, they varied. The child's own bedroom was depicted as the place of reading in five drawings only (ch. Kristína, Rebeka, Amália, Tomáš, Daniela). Children saw their rooms as a place where they liked to spend their free time, they had all their toys, books and furniture. As we saw again, gender stereotypes were applied in the choice of the colours of furniture for girls and for boys. In some of the drawings (ch. Alexandra, Anna, Lukáš, Matej) we identified the outer environment (court, garden, the place in front of the front door) as the place for reading – these families lived in family houses. These children had enough opportunities for meaningful spending of their leisure time in the fresh air in the nature and such activities were supported by their parents, too. In one case (ch. Simona), the child depicted family reading in her parents' bedroom. She understood family reading as joint reading before going to sleep, which was a ritual in her family. Children were portrayed as independent 'readers' in the drawings of three of the participating children (ch. Kristína, Amália, Matej), which corresponded with the interview results where we found out that their mothers did not promote reading habits in family environment. The drawings displayed the children as independent readers widening their knowledge by making up their own stories depending on the fact, how they understood the pictures in the book. These children expressed their own interest in reading activities with books in their drawings and the absence of parents and their help when reading a storybook. The pleasure of making up stories based on pictures could be seen in the drawings, too, there was a smile on the faces of the readers.

In one case (ch. Kristína), the drawing contained some abstract elements. It was a proof of the child's creative approach. She displayed the storybook as "magic" and "flying" in the room. We can explain the child's creative thinking processes by her preference of the joint interactive activities of the mother and the child, e.g. the joint writing of poems and songs. The mother, in this case, did not insist only on reading books to her child to promote the development of her reading literacy in the family environment. The beginnings of abstract thinking could be seen in one child's drawing (ch. Anna). She was able to display then abstract elements of the 'big magic book'. An interesting way of portraying parents was present in one child's drawing (ch. Matej). Their presence was not perceived by the child in the context of the joint reading, but in the context of everyday running of the household. The child registered the presence and acting of his parents who were his role models. In the drawing, he showed objects to which he had developed an emotional relationship. The presence of a dog reflected the need for a substitution for the absence of a parent when reading books. In the rest of drawings (ch. Rebeka, Alexandra, Tomáš, Anna, Simona, Daniela, Lukáš), one of the parents was present during the joint reading. The father participated only in one case (ch. Simona), everywhere else mothers were present. The child told about the presence of the father during the joint reading by means of visual expression. She expected her father's dramatization of the text during reading the story, his creative expression that the child liked and preferred the joint reading with her father to reading with her mother. We can see the contribution of dramatization when reading fairy tales in promoting the development of imagination and children's lexicon, and in a creative expansion of the children's world of experience. The presence of the mother during the joint reading was evident in six drawings (ch. Rebeka, Alexandra, Tomáš, Anna, Daniela, Lukáš), which corresponded with the responses of the mothers and the children regarding joint reading activities preferred in particular families. The mothers were displayed close to the children, which means, that the children received help and support from their mothers in the process of early reading literacy development. In two cases (ch. Rebeka, Daniela), the drawn characters were of the same size and the book was placed between the mother and the child. That way these children put themselves in the role of equal partners during the joint reading.

At the same time, in some drawings (ch. Rebeka, Daniela, Alexandra, Anna), children portrayed themselves as their mothers' copies, which is a proof of their inclination to their mothers as role models for behaviour, acting and reading activities. The most frequently drawn products for reading were storybooks; they were preferred by the families during the joint reading because children liked them. This fact corresponds with the responses of children regarding their interest in particular books. The existence of own library was depicted in two of the drawings (ch. Rebeka, Tomáš), while, in the first case, it had a central

position in the picture. By means of drawing, the children showed the quantity of children's storybooks in their family environment and their relationship to them. In three of the drawings (ch. Kristína, Amália, Simona), the doors of the rooms were closed, expressing children's need for privacy during practising reading habits, and, at the same time, the feeling of safety and security in their family environment. The children were aware that every book contained a different story. They were able to express it by using different colours for different books. The position of the book in the drawing was emphasised by detailed lines (ch. Kristína, Rebeka, Amálka, Tomáš, Anna, Daniela, Matej), while in three cases (ch. Kristína, Anna, Matej), we identified the presence of letters in books as elements of literacy reproducing the text bearing information.

In our study, we have already pointed out that the children demonstrated knowledge of some letters in the context of the letters that their names consisted of. Though, the participating children did not know the techniques of reading or writing, they were able to recognise letters and text. One child's drawing (ch. Anna) contained a coherent text entitled "Welcome to the magic book". The child's interest in writing letters was demonstrated by asking an adult to write the text that was, subsequently, retraced by the child.

In the detailed parts of the drawings, with regard to the main theme, i.e. perception of the process of family reading by pre-school age children in the context of the conditions of their family environment, the real situation of family reading in particular family environments was reflected by children.

#### **4 Discussion and conclusions**

We interpret the research on a qualitative level. The results are based on the obtained information from the field of developing reading literacy in family environment. Therefore, we do not compare the results obtained in particular families, but we present general conclusions that we have come to in our research. The results show that family reading and the development of children's early reading literacy depended on the mothers' approach to reading habits and on how important the process of reading they considered to be. Also the mothers with no inclination to reading habits were aware of their function as an indicator of reading literacy development of their children as early as at pre-school age. The joint family reading of mothers with children was realised in families with pre-school age children in a various frequency and depth, mainly in the evening in the context of going to sleep, what was perceived by the mothers as a certain family ritual. At the same time, they pointed out the function of reading with children before falling asleep for strengthening their mutual relationship and for the development of children's lexicon. The mothers were not satisfied with the insufficient participation of the fathers in the joint reading with children. We can

declare that the way the mothers practised activities related to reading with their children and regulated the children's tendency to read, was influenced by the model of promoting reading literacy and the approach to reading in general that had been applied by their parents (i.e. by the grandparents of the participating children), which was confirmed by the mothers' responses. In the field of the targeted action on the side of the family members in the process of early literacy development of pre-school age children, the mothers and their children confirmed a strong impact of grandparents in promoting children's reading. The mothers used tough times, heavy workload and busyness related to the role of a mother as excuses for the insufficient realisation of reading activities with children. These were perceived as the basic determinants influencing the lack of time for the joint reading with children on the side of the mothers and the subsequent need for the presence and help on the side of the grandparents in bringing up their grandchildren and in promoting the development of children's reading literacy. A positive role model for reading for children was represented by kindergartens, which realised activities focusing on listening to stories, understanding them and evoking an emotional interest; and, thus, prepared children for entering the school environment effectively. We can assume that the mothers considered forming and leading their children towards the development of a positive relationship to books to be the duty of kindergartens.

When inquiring on the position of books in family environment we noticed the presence of books and family libraries in families. In families with no inclination to reading habits, we observed the exclusive presence of books for children. The parents were aware of the need for children's contact with books when learning about texts, letters and pictures even at pre-school age; they perceived it in the context of children's spontaneous interest in books that was confirmed both by the parents and the children. During the interviews, we found out that the mothers preferred the children's independent choice of books for joint reading activities. They monitored the suitability of the chosen books from the point of the age of children, by which they supported the development of children's personal predispositions. In this way they worked with the children's natural and spontaneous interest in books. On the other hand, we observed the existence of gender stereotypes in choosing books for reading by children. It might be rooted in the presence of gender stereotypes in the everyday life of families.

The mothers preferred interactive books during the joint reading with children, they saw their efficiency mainly in increasing children's interest in working with books and helping to understand the plot better. In this context, they emphasised how difficult it was to buy a suitable book for children. They saw the main deficiencies of books for children in unclear text, obscure pictures, and the American impact on the themes for children and on the visualisation of books, which might lead to parents' disability to explain stories from other cultures.



By an analysis of data with the aim to answer our research question focusing on the perception of the process of reading in the context of the issues of reading literacy by the parents and their children, we received clear answers. Children, before entering the school environment, demonstrated a spontaneous interest in letters. They knew that letters were a part of certain text structures that bore information. At the same time, they were not able to differentiate between the letters, but the children's fixation exclusively on letters that their names consisted of could be observed. Although the children could not read, they demonstrated their own understanding of the process of reading, especially in the context of one's literacy, getting information necessary for life, but also in the context of the necessity of being able to read and write. This was perceived as one of the conditions for getting job opportunities. The children connected the ability to read with feeling 'adult' and they recognised their independence in the acquisition of information. Children's interest in the process of reading could be observed in their prevailing desire to interchange the roles of the reader and the listener during the joint reading with their mothers. In the given field, the mothers' knowledge on the issues of the perception of reading literacy was important. They defined it in relation to the results of Slovak pupils in testing their reading literacy within the international studies PISA and PIRLS presented in the media. They perceived it in connection with the need for reading comprehension. They emphasised the need for feedback from children both when checking understanding of the text read and during the joint reading with children at pre-school age. It helps to avoid mechanical reading on the side of children in the future. On the other hand, we can point out lay understanding of reading literacy by those mothers, who were not fond of reading habits in family environment. They perceived it in connection with the requirement for developing children's ability to read and write. As they said, it had been related to the later school success of children.

The next research question dealt with the intentional and unintentional impact of parents on the development of children's early reading. It was focused on the ways of developing children's lexicon and improving their understanding of the heard or read text from the point of view of the mothers and their children. We identified a wide range of activities promoting children's reading literacy. A discussion about the story was the most frequent accompanying activity by the joint reading when the mothers were asking questions to satisfy their internal need for finding out, if the children had understood the read story. This way they got feedback from the child and information on if the child paid attention to the read text. The mothers practised activities during which they were making up and completing stories based on pictures and, thus, helped children to understand the concept of a picture as the carrier of particular information. They inspired children to independent 'picture reading', by which a child could gradually get into the role of a reader and learn about the concept of printing books. Based on

the results, we can state that there was an increased frequency of using interactive books when working with children in families, we observed a spontaneous interest in them. On one hand, most children inclined to books with auditory elements that enabled a better understanding of the read text through joining auditive and visual elements. On the other hand, children liked books where, thanks to task based activities, they had the opportunity to complete some elements creatively. These activities were improving children's fine motor skills as well. In their responses, the mothers and their children accentuated the contribution of using various interactive activities when working with books and spoken language (joint recitation, rhymes, singing, making up rhymes, verses, poems, activities related to visual expression - retracing pictures in books, the letters of the alphabet, drawing pictures after reading a story, drawing storybook characters that the children had identified with, etc.). Such activities, by their character, contribute to the development of reading literacy and literacy in general.

The clear responses of almost all the mothers and children allowed us to answer our next research question focused on the perception of the visual components in books for pre-school age children, and on children's perception of the visual aspect of books. It is the visual aspect of books for children, their colourfulness, and the presence of a variety of illustrations that the mothers find the most important criterion when choosing a book. There is a tendency of children to incline to a certain type of storybooks. In this context, we can point out the existence of children's gender stereotypes when choosing a book and their enforcement on the side of the mothers again. At the same time, children accentuated the necessity of the presence of pictures in children's books, what is more, they considered them to be the distinguishing factor between the books for child readers and the books for adult readers. During our research, we observed so-called 'picture reading', where pre-school age child 'readers' were able to construct and complete meaningful stories depending on their understanding of what was in the pictures and in the text read – they took the role of independent readers. In this context, the mothers accentuated the need for a larger number of detailed elements in pictures that would help to grasp the child's attention and perception during the repeated joint reading with the mother. Despite children did not know the process of reading at pre-school age before entering the school environment, they demonstrated knowledge of some print conventions, they knew how to manipulate with books, how to turn the pages, hold the book, to read from up to down, from left to right, they knew the title of the book, it's author and page numbers. The mothers considered a larger size of books for children, their visual components and the colourfulness of books the basic features of suitable books for pre-school age children, and suggested to include real-life motives with the aim to get basic information for life in the society and

information for achieving school maturity, too. It should help children when entering the school environment.

Our research dealt with the issues of children's reading literacy from the aspect of an unsystematic stimulation on the side of the literal family environment. The results of this research may represent a contribution to a further extension of knowledge in the field of reading literacy in the context of family environment and effective development of reading literacy as soon as it begins to appear at pre-school age. We gained the results based on the experiences of children and their parents who were involved in our research. At the same time, we assume that despite the limits of a qualitatively oriented research regarding the impossibility to generalise the research findings, our results will offer inspiring suggestions for further research questions.

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# **Responsibility and Task Structuring as the Basic Attributes of Learning Styles and Their Relation Towards Consistency and the Quality of Hierarchy of a Learner's Mind Map**

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**Abstract:** The study focuses on the identification of the relationship between the learning style and mental representation of curriculum content. The research problem identifies the relationship between the learning style factors – responsibility and task structuring and the selected categories of curriculum content representation – consistency and the quality of hierarchy identified through mind mapping. For the purposes of the research, we used the LSI Questionnaire by R. Dunn, K. Dunn and G. E. Price, a mind mapping test and chi-square statistics were used for the evaluation of research findings. The research sample consisted of 115 respondents. By means of analysis, we found out that a learning style in the observed factors of responsibility and task structuring does not influence students' mental representation of the curriculum content.

**Key words:** learning style, mind map, mental representation of curriculum content, semantic net, text structuring, responsibility, task structuring.

## **1 Introduction**

The efficiency of the educational process belongs to one of the most discussed issues of the educational reality. It has been a matter of interest of pedagogical and psychological scientific communities as well as professional and lay public represented by teachers and students' parents. We suppose that the implementation of psycho-didactic knowledge on learning styles and methodology of mind mapping can contribute towards a quality increase and the effectiveness of education. A number of studies carried out within the last twenty years with the attempt to reveal learning mechanisms and the structure of thinking have become the sources of the latest knowledge on optimization of

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education and learning strategies. The thesis by Thagard (2001, p. 25), that thinking is comprehensible mostly in meaning representing mind structures in the concepts of computing procedures operating on these structures (so-called computing-representation mind assumption – CRUM) contributed towards a vast development of cognitive science as well as neuro- and psycho-didactics, which focus their research attempts towards the operations with mind content and mental representations as subjective, inner ideas about outer realities, existing within a learner's mind.

Logic thinking principles with the stress on inference rules applying to the collection of premises are the main interests of cognitive science. "If-then" structures are also significant because if we operate with rules we do not use logical deduction but an overview of possibilities. Professionals state that some rules may be innate; however, most of them are the results of inductive generalization or specification – modification of existing rules according to the particular situation. The focus is on concepts, their conduction, creation of mind systems, semantic nets, the way we understand and learn the content of concepts, cognitive grammar, validity of prototype and classical application of concepts, and the extent to which the basic ideas on concepts and the ability to create the new concepts are innate (more in Duchovičová, 2010).

However, the ways of concept representation in the brain are still mysterious. Thagard (2001, p. 92) summarizes that concepts representing words of spoken and written language form an essential type of mental representations but the idea that every concept is clearly defined may be rejected and the concepts may be viewed as sets of typical qualities as using concepts lies in the acquisition of approximate correspondence between concepts and the world. Mind map structures have been dealt with by e.g. Kosslyn (1994), Glasgow and Papadias (1992), as well as Wong, Lu and Rioux (1989).

Social constructivism represented by Vygotsky has significantly contributed towards the explanation of the relationship between the mental structure and the social cultural environment. In didactics, cognitivism contributed to the origins of developmental education, learning with support (Zankova, Elkonina, & Davydova) theory of meaningful learning (Ausubel, 1967) based on the theory of cognitive development (Bruner, 1965), and the theory of prior knowledge (Dochy, 1992, 1996).

Following significant psychological and didactic action, our ambition is to contribute to the cognitive knowledge by means of a research carried out in the field of learning style preference in relation to the representation of curriculum content shown in a representation scheme "mind map". Based on the fact that our educational activity should help the children's orientation; it should

contribute to the organization of thinking and terminology used by them. Human knowledge is based on a solid base, it is a semantic map (net) interconnecting the acquired notions (acquiring a notion represents creating an idea about its content).

A specific kind of elaborating mental concepts is to interconnect notions which we are already familiar with. Fischer (2004, p. 72) points out that creating concepts starts with remembering new words and their categorizing into an existing net of knowledge – thus a new form of comprehension starts. However, we categorize notions, not sentences. This is a mistake of many teachers. When recalling some information, we very rarely proceed word by word – we do not read from our memory (that would be a demanding and a long-term procedure). We can retrieve memories only due to the fact that we recall key words and images and we build up the utterances.

Transmission of the curriculum content in schools either by a teacher or textbooks is mostly linear and contains certain, as Ausubel (1967) calls them, advance organizers. These are mainly the introductory parts of a thematic field regulating the further advance of a student having a balancing function (activating the student's prior knowledge in order to have something to build on) and an explanatory function (providing the student with new knowledge which is essential for understanding further content). Organizers enable gaining a certain overview. A student, though, has to cover also certain relations among the notions – the whole semantic relation net. This one is usually not explicitly included in the teacher's presentation nor the textbook, it is covered implicitly. The learners thus have to fully concentrate and find the relations among the notions by themselves (they can read written texts several times but they cannot listen to the same spoken utterance again). The notions and the identified relations have to be extracted from the original text and built up in a more accurate way by the student: it is necessary to construct their structure. Teachers and textbook authors presume that learners are able to do these actions, however, nobody teaches them how to do so, even though it is an essential part of their learning style. Teachers underestimate this psycho-didactic aspect. Students' skill of text structuring is only developed by trial and error and, therefore, the identification of the text structure is often not correct or incomplete. Sometimes, the whole text structure is presented by the teacher and the students passively memorize it in order to be able to reproduce it.

In the end of the 1960s, researchers started to focus on searching for the methods of teaching students to structure the curriculum. The concept of the orienting basis of activity by a Russian psychologist Galperin (1980) and the schematic concept (a specific procedure also called "hand-out") belong to the older theories of curriculum structuring. More modern approaches to curriculum structuring

were developing in the 70s – 90s based on the theory of semantic memory, theory of learning strategies, theory of information processing with the aim to improve the strategies of thinking. Knowledge on symbolic memory has led to the idea that processing and storing information can be conveyed hierarchically by an organized system of schemes and sub-schemes. As stated by Mareš (2001), the theory on graphs was elaborated later on. Based on that, it is possible to develop complex relations as well as richly structured networks. It is mainly about deep elaboration from up to down or bottom to up, and by reorganization. If a student is to learn the curriculum content, then it is convenient to have it organized before learning. By an increasing number of variations of coding, the number of possible key searches, and thus the probability of correct recall from the memory, increases. Non-linear abstract representations of curriculum structure are based on the idea of organizing key notions and relations as clearly as possible, visualizing them and drafting an easily accessible, abstract „external memory.”

Nowadays, there are many different types of graphical displays with different names, however, the term “mind map” is used to label various methods and techniques. The issues of mind maps and non-linear schematic display were introduced into pedagogy by Dansereau et al. in 1970 and, later on, his theory was broadened by further research (see Bahr & Dansereau, 2004).

The use of mental schemes and mapping seems to be the first step towards the improvement of critical and creative thinking; therefore, this issue is in the centre of attention of our study. Our focus has been narrowed to the didactics of a selected subject.

## **2 Mind maps**

The life in modern democracy tends to remove ignorance. It is generally known that the worst thing is to remember isolated knowledge without any logical connection and which one is not able to associate with other curriculum content. These aspects are a prototype for teaching history.

Buzan (2011, p. 41) characterizes a mind map as follows, “A mind map is a picture expression of beam thinking. It is a process within which the human brain thinks and comes up with ideas. When we catch and illustrate them, we create a mind map, an outer mirror reflecting the actions going on in our heads”. Thanks to a mind map, new and prior knowledge are sorted naturally. Moreover, when creating a mind map, people use both the hemispheres. The left hemisphere is engaged due to logical organization, words, notions and numbers. The right hemisphere due to imagination and visualisation. Thus, engaging both



hemispheres contributes to easier remembering of the content and to more effective learning.

A mind map is developed in a simple way. A key word is written in the middle of a blank sheet of paper. Later on, the notions associated with the key word – the main topic, are written around and linked together – individual branches. The aim of mind mapping is to create a certain structure of notions – a semantic net. This structure can help students find out and verify the logical coherence of their individual interpretation of the selected thematic field.

According to Hubatka (2010), there is a vast number of possibilities of how to use mind mapping in the classroom. It can be finding the key notions in a thematic field, a form of taking notes, a method for helping a teacher create a meaningful structure of the curriculum content, a form of group or individual work, a new way of structuring the curriculum content, stopping memorizing by students and developing learning with comprehension. Maps also make memorizing, reconstructing and retrieving the content easier. It is impossible to comprehend the way in which our students think, the way they learn and remember things, if teachers keep explaining a topic in front of the class for 45 minutes. We have to provide students with space to express themselves. If we show them how to comprehend, think critically, analyse in a broader sense, we can help them in their lives.

Consistency and the quality of hierarchies of a learner's mind map are the focused constructs in our study.

We have found resources for the evaluation of students' mental maps in the works by Daley (2004), Swan (1997), Bahr (2004), Perusich (2010), etc. Mind maps can be evaluated in two ways. The first lays in visual assessment by which we are able to identify the absence of certain notions. The second method is called "scoring" which is based on certain criteria that can be adapted by the researcher in order to work with the statistical data in the most suitable way. As for operationalization, the quality of hierarchies is related to the levels of relationships, some kind of connection between higher and lower order notions which are mutually interconnected. A map consists of main knots (points), for illustration of which any geometrical shapes may be used. The most essential, however, is information written inside the geometrical shapes. Learners can express the relations among information by using hierarchy for the topic organized in the mind map. The quality of hierarchy is thus understood as the level on which the notions are connected into the hierarchy.

Another parameter of operationalization is the consistency of a mind map. Under that notion we understand the quality of the mind map created by a student. We

set the following criteria of consistency: mapping the curriculum content by the student is only elementary, the student's overall insight into the curriculum content presented in the mind map, whether the mind map covers actual but also prior topics/contents, the number of illustrated relationships and the overall image of the mind map.

### **3 Learning style**

For the purposes of the study, it is necessary to give an illustration overview of the levels which we can encounter when working with the concept of learning style. The first aspect is the interpretation framework which refers to relevant theories or their more modern adaptations helping to increase the significance of various learning styles as well as of the research on particular mental processes. The application framework which tries to show the practical point of using learning styles in the teaching process and also for the fields of diagnostics, methodological and research procedures, can be considered to be the second aspect. The aim and the common motive of interpretation and application framework is an attempt to overcome the possible deficiencies of teaching and to offer a richer and a more effective way of instruction.

The issues of learning styles have been researched on for more than forty years and they are dealt with in Slovak literature in studies and scholarly articles as, for example, by Turek (2002), Kaliská (2008, 2009), Zaf'ková (2011), Riding and Rayner (2009,) etc. Learning styles are mostly defined as procedures used by learning which are preferred by an individual in a particular period of time (Fenyvesiová, 2006, p. 69).

Mareš (1998, p. 75) characterizes a learning style as a collection of procedures preferred by an individual in a certain period of life. It is a specific way of learning used by a learner in different learning situations whereby these procedures are not stable and they can vary throughout the learner's life.

If students recognize their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process, they can choose the most effective procedures in which they can achieve the most effective results. Therefore, every person can create a system of behaviour for the learning process which seems to be the most effective. It is the learning style which differs with every person by its structure, quality but also the way of application or flexibility.

We agree with Tassel (2010), who considers an individual learning style to be a sum of methods of gaining information and various reactions in life situations. The learning style, according to the author, reflects the emotional reactions of a person, attitudes, habits and preferences. By recognizing their learning styles, we

can communicate with students easier, to suggest and store inputs from the environment. Riding and Rayner (2009, p. 51) divide learning styles into three categories based on the similarities in the psychometric scheme, in understanding the notion of learning but also in relation to developing a learning strategy. These authors consider the learning style a unique set of differences which cover one's personal preferences in the educational process, the form of educational activity, and the differences in personal and intellectual fields. The classification represented by these authors is divided into groups of models of learning styles based on:

- learning processes – on experience and empirical learning,
- learning processes – on study orientation,
- preference of instruction,
- development of cognitive skills and learning strategies.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Reference</i>
<b>Models based on learning process</b>		
Particular experience/reflecting observation/abstract comprehension of notions/active experimenting	Two-dimensional model covering perception and procession of information	Kolb (1976)
Activists/theoretic/pragmatic/reflector	Preferred ways of learning creating an individual attitude towards learning	Honey and Mumford (1986, 1992)
<b>Models coming out of study orientation</b>		
Orientation on importance/reproduction/orientation on performance/holistic orientation; later on deep, strategic, shallow, without goals, powerful.	Integration of instruction preference with processing information in learner's attitude towards study.	Entwistle (1979) Entwistle and Tait (1994)
Shallow-deep performance orientation/inner –outer performance orientation.	Integration of attitudes towards a study with motivational orientation.	Biggs (1978, 1985)

Synthesis-analyses/developing processing/memorizing of facts/study methods.	Quality of thinking within learning regarding differences, transfer and memory and retaining the facts in the memory.	Schmeck (1977)
<b>Models based on instruction preference</b>		
Elements of environment/sociological/emotional/ physical/psychological.	Learner's reactions on key stimuli: environment, socialization, emotionality, physicality, psychology.	Price (1976) Dunn and Dunn (1989)
Participant- avoiding Cooperating- competitive/independent - dependent	Social interaction developing three bipolar dimensions into a scheme describing learner's typical approach towards a learning situation	Grasha and Riechmann (1975)
<b>Models based on development of cognitive skills</b>		
Visualization/verbal symbols/sounds/feelings.	Learning styles defined based on a form of perception	Reinert (1976)
Dependence on the field/searching - focus/width of categorization/cognitive complexity/impulsiveness/balance - focusing/(in)tolerance.	Cognitive profile of three learner types reflecting their position in bipolar, analytical and global continuum expressing an individual development of cognitive skills.	Letteri (1980)
Cognitive skills/perception reactions/preferences at study and instruction.	Identifies 24 parts of learning style collected into three dimensions. The model assumes that development of cognitive skills is a condition for effective learning.	Keefe and Monk (1986) Keefe (1989, 1990)

*Figure 1. Learning style models by Riding, R. and Rayner, S. (2009)*

Petlák (2009) accentuates the use of learning styles in school environment and he believes that the importance of their use is underestimated. He points out the fact that students' brain is not a passive organ which works in a way a teacher wants to. It means that knowledge on brain functioning and learning processes helps teachers identify the students' ways of learning and learning strategies and based on that teachers can influence students' learning performance by application of appropriate methods respecting individual peculiarities in the learning process.

Different studies dealing with learning styles meet in opinions when respecting an individual learning style means rejection of traditional presentation of curriculum content by a teacher which increases the number of students engaged in the learning process. According to Lojová (2005, p. 176), an educator should use a wide spectrum of techniques, methods and activities so that students can subconsciously choose only those subjects which enable them to process information in the easiest possible way.

According to research findings, learners with a visual learning style prefer learning in a quiet environment with clear instructions from the teacher and they are the most responsible group when learning. Learners with an auditive learning style are, according to research findings, less responsible when learning and prefer a sound background. Learners with a kinaesthetic learning style are the least responsible and they almost do not need to structure the task given by a teacher.

In the proposed study, we paid attention to the selected components of learning styles, in particular responsibility and task structuring. Therefore, for identification of the level of these constructs, we used the LSI questionnaire of learning style: Learning Style Inventory (Dunn, Dunn, & Price, 2004). The questionnaire accentuates the preference of some factors influencing learning and being decisive for a learner's learning style. It summarizes the emotional, physical, social and environmental factors preferred by individuals when learning, focusing attention in the educational process, i.e. what makes them different from their peers. The questionnaire consists of 71 questions, in which the authors concentrated on 21 variables. In particular, it is the preference of silence or noise when learning, the need for light and warmth when learning, the qualities of furniture, intrinsic motivation, persistence, responsibility, task structuring, independent learning or learning with friends, the necessity of the presence of an authority when learning, auditive vs. visual learning, tactile learning, need to consume food and drinks when learning, preference of learning in the morning, afternoon or in the evening, changing the place of learning, and extrinsic motivation by parents or teachers. The variable of responsibility is connected with students' effort to do what they consider to be correct. In school

environment, the question of responsibility is mostly related to students' attempts to fulfil all the requirements given by their teacher. Students' responsibility is connected with their attempts to satisfy the authority of adults as well as with a responsible attitude towards a given task regardless its difficulty. By means of the second variable "task structuring", our intention was to find out whether students prefer having the description of a task with a detailed definition of the requirements for completing it or they like the possibility of independent work on tasks more. The factor of task structuring represents the bipolarity between whether students need or do not need clear instructions.

## **4 Methodology**

### *4.1 Research objectives*

The study objective was to find out whether there is a relationship between the learning style of a learner and the mental representation of the curriculum content. The research problem identifies the relationship between the following learning style factors: responsibility and task structuring, and the selected categories of curriculum content representation: consistency and the quality of hierarchy identified through mental mapping.

The following suppositions came out of the stated research problem:

1. We suppose that responsibility as a factor of learning style influences the mental representation reflected in the consistency of a mind map
2. We suppose that task structuring as a factor of learning style influences the mental representation reflected in the quality of hierarchy.

### *4.2 Research methods*

In the context of the needs of the formulated research problem, for the purposes of the research we used:

1. LSI questionnaire by Dunn, Dunn and Price (2004) for secondary schools where we carried out our research. We gathered information regarding the individual students' learning process, how they proceed when learning something new or a difficult content by means of LSI questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 71 questions. The acquired data were processed by coding individual items so that it was clear whether a learner either 0 - does not prefer or 1 - prefers the particular factor.
2. The method we used for the inquiry on the mental representation of curriculum content was the test of notion mapping. Learners recorded a key word in a blank paper, later the notions, names and dates which were, according to them, connected with the topic or the key word and they linked

them by lines. In every classroom, it was a non-structuring way of mind mapping as the learners did not get a list of notions associated with a key word. When evaluating the mind maps, we determined the criteria (quality of hierarchies, consistency of mind maps), which were scored as follows:

- Quality of the hierarchies: the quality represents the level of particular hierarchies which was coded by points from 1 to 5, one point representing the lowest level and five the highest one. We paid attention to the meaning of the connection between the key notions and the hierarchy, the connection between notions and the importance and meaningfulness of the hierarchy;
  - Consistency: Consistency of a mind map was scored by points 1-10. 1 represented the lowest number of points and 10 the highest. We determined particular criteria as for example: the overall visual design, characteristics of the pictured relations, overall insight of a learner into the curriculum content - whether he/she maps only elementary content or tries to use cross curricular relations as well, whether the mind map pictures both prior and the actual curriculum content.
3. The determined field of research focused on a relation research problem; therefore, we used a chi-square test of independence in order to evaluate the findings.

#### 4.3 Characteristics of the research sample

The school environment in which the research was carried out was limited to secondary grammar schools. We assumed that students at secondary schools/secondary grammar schools had more stable structures of knowledge; therefore, the mind maps would contain more notions and mutual hierarchies. The research sample covered four classrooms with both boys and girls. Every respondent had the same conditions for filling in the LSI questionnaire as well as for making a mind map of a certain topic. In order to generalize the results, we tried to choose the sample in the most objective way. In total, we chose 115 respondents from 4 school classes.

Table 1

*The structure of the research sample*

Class	Total	Girls	Boys
<b>3A</b>	29	20	9
<b>3B</b>	31	23	8
<b>3C</b>	26	11	15
<b>3D</b>	29	13	16

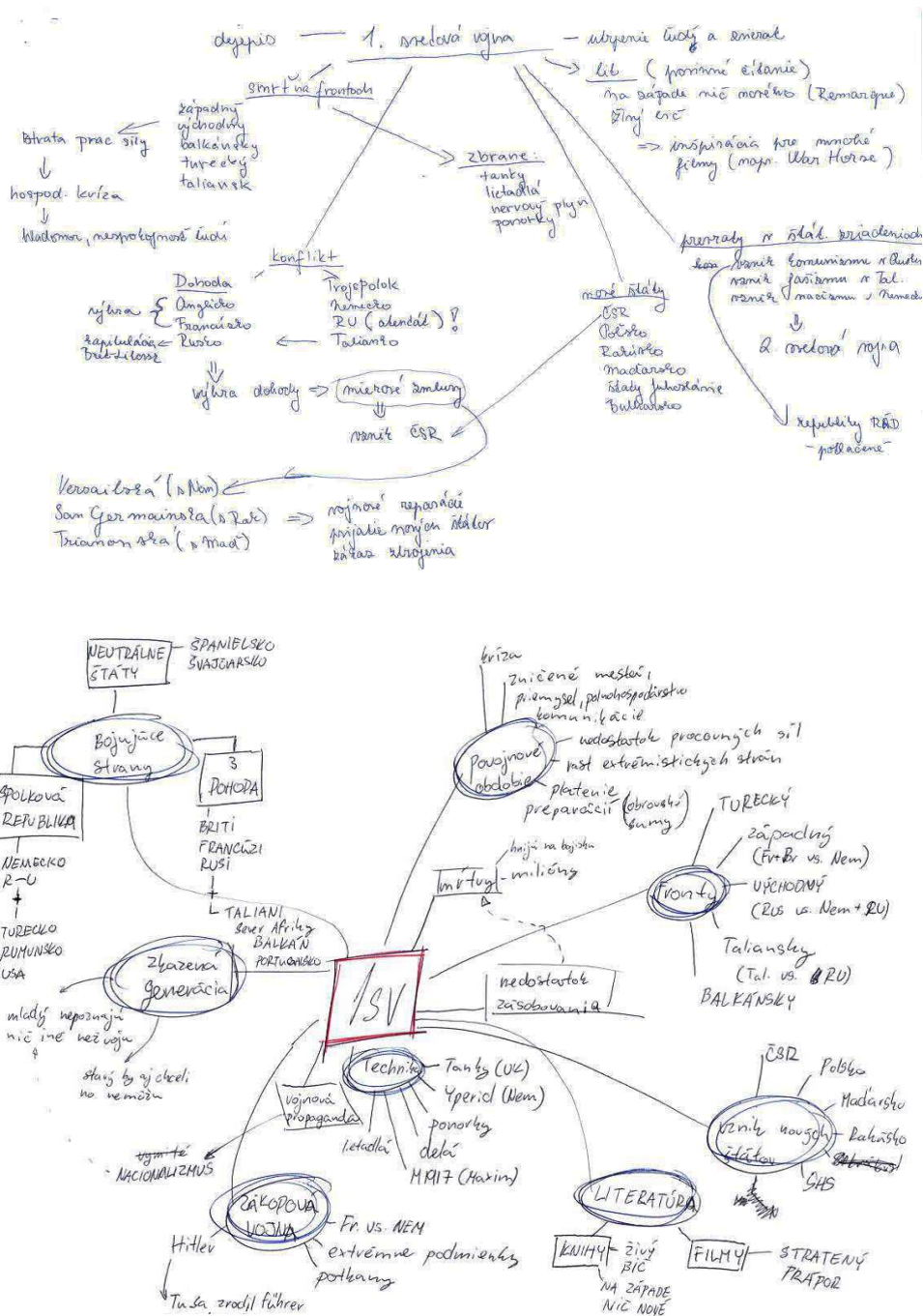


Figure 2. Examples of mind maps



#### *4.4 Research results*

In the research, we focused on the relation level of learning style preference and the students' mental representation of the curriculum content by means of mind mapping. The research was carried out in November – December 2014, in the school building during history lessons.

In relation to the aim of the research which was focused on finding the relation level of learning style preference by learners and their mental representation of the curriculum content, our objective was to learn about the ability of students to interpret the mental representation of the curriculum content of a selected thematic field of a social science subject – history – by means of a mind map. The stated field of research focuses on a relational research problem; therefore, we used chi-square test of independence for the evaluation of our finding. We came to the following conclusions:

For the first stated supposition, “We suppose that responsibility as a factor of learning style influences the mental representation reflected in the consistency of a mind map”, we examined two statistic signs, whereby we achieved an orientation image of their dependence by organization of the gathered data in a two-dimensional table. In the heading, we indicated the variants of one sign and in a legend the variants of the second sign. In the individual fields of the table, we indicated the frequency of combinations from the variants of both signs. The last line of the table represents the column sums of empirical frequencies and the last column of the table represents the line sums of empirical frequencies. In the right bottom corner of the table we indicated the total number (sum) of observations.

Chi-square test of independence was used for proving our statements, assumed by hypothesis 0, that following features are independent, an alternative hypothesis 1 was the supposition which presupposed the dependence of following features. In order to make judgments on whether the empirical frequencies are or are not against the hypothesis H0 on independence of both features, the so called expected frequencies were necessary to construct. These frequencies were contained in the table in case of independence of the following frequencies.

Our testing criteria were counted as follows:  $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$

If our counted value is lower than the table value, the zero hypothesis is assumed to be valid. In case the counted value is higher than the table value, the alternative hypothesis is valid.

Table 3

*Factors of responsibility and mind map consistency*

cons.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
0	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	1	13
1	4	11	9	12	10	17	13	10	6	10	102
	4	12	10	14	12	19	15	12	6	11	115

to 5	above 5	
6	7	13
46	56	102
52	63	115
to 5	above 5	
8.026087	4.973913	
62.97391	39.02609	0.000266

The feature “factor or responsibility” and the feature of “consistency” were independent. We created a table of empirical frequencies, thanks to which we could see in several cells that the frequencies are lower than 5. Therefore, we reduced the number of columns and lines in the table and counted the expected frequencies for the reduced table. We counted the value of the testing criterion 0.000266. This value is lower than the one from the table (3.84). The test showed that there is no dependence between the tested features.

By means of data analysis, we focused on the finding whether the factor of responsibility influences the consistency of a mind map. We came to the conclusion that the learning style of a student in the factor of responsibility does not influence the mental representation reflected in the consistency of a mind map.

Table 4

*Factor of task structuring and quality of hierarchies*

hier.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	13	
0	0	1	0	4	3	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	12
1	4	6	7	7	9	14	20	14	8	6	6	1	1	103
	4	7	7	11	12	15	21	14	9	7	6	1	1	115

to 6	to 13	
10	2	12
67	36	103
77	38	115
to 6	to 13	
7.408696	4.591304	
63.5913	39.4087	0.091578

In Table 4 we tested Supposition 2, “We suppose that task structuring as a factor of learning style influences the mental representation reflected in the quality of hierarchy”.

The feature “factor of task structuring” and a feature “quality of hierarchies” were independent. We created a table of empirical frequencies thanks to which we could see that frequencies are lower than 5 in several fields of the table. We made a reduction of the columns and lines in the table and we counted the expected frequencies. We counted the value of the testing criterion 0.091578. This value is lower than the one in the table (3.84). The test showed that there is no dependence between the tested features. Based on an analysis of the obtained data, we can state that the quality of hierarchies is not influenced by the factor of task structuring.

Based on these results, we can state that suppositions 1 a 2 were not confirmed as none of the tested features – the factor of responsibility, the factor of task structuring – influenced the chosen parameter of operationalization of a mind map (consistency, quality of hierarchies).

After an overall interpretation of tables we can state that students' subjective mental representation of the curriculum content does not significantly influence their learning styles. It means that there must be a different reason for significant differences in the mind maps of students of the same year of study.

## **5 Conclusions**

The aim of the research was to analyze and test the students' ability to interpret the mental representation of some curriculum content from the field of history by means of mind mapping taking into account their preferred learning styles on the selected level of education. Students in schools are not systematically prepared to be able to structure their knowledge. They have to develop the competence to create their own net of knowledge by themselves. The school environment does not take into account the individual learning styles of learners, what is more, many of them are not even able to identify them. We are aware of the fact that not every student likes learning or knowledge interpretation through mind mapping. Every human is unique, an individual with a particular learning style. Therefore, teachers – the managers of the educational process – should intend to satisfy most of their students' individual needs.

It is the teacher who can contribute to the elimination of pointless social and emotional problems related to stress arising from not understanding a topic, the difficulty of the curriculum content, from the school environment, etc. by his/her approach. Teachers can help their students by their professionalism, application of professional competencies, love to students and their teaching profession. Teachers should lead their students towards activity during the lesson, interest in classroom activities and the covered content. Only that way can students discover the unknown and to construct their own structure of knowledge. It is important for every learner to understand the covered content, to be able to connect it with prior knowledge, to work with it and to apply it into everyday life. If teachers show their learners the possibility to structure their knowledge in an easy way, they will understand the curriculum content better and not only the quality of their knowledge will increase but also their approach towards learning and the particular subject will change.

Schools are perceived as institutions with a strong impact on one's personal development and realization of one's personal potential. We think that if mental representation of content through mind mapping was used more, the knowledge

of learners would be better structured and, therefore, working with knowledge would be easier.

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## Some Aspects of Burnout in Nursing Homes

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**Abstract:** Nursing personnel in nursing homes for elderly citizens are exposed to a number of factors that contribute to possible burnout syndrome. For this reason, the set objective of the research was to measure the degree of burnout, check the correlation between the burnout syndrome and satisfaction at work, and psychosomatic symptoms, as well as to figure out the main characteristics of burnout syndrome among the nursing personnel in nursing homes for the elderly in Slovenia.

**Key words:** burnout, work satisfaction, psychosomatic symptoms, nursing homes for the elderly, nurses.

### 1 Introduction

Nowadays, for the burnout syndrome there is still no standard definition, despite the fact that a great deal has been written about what it is and what can be done in relation to it. A few definitions, which occur more frequently than others can be found in the literature. The care is loaded with many working conditions, which create a good basis for the development of burnout: too much work, a constant concern, high responsibility, low level of decision-making, lack of awards, inappropriate technology, low salary and shift work (Goriup & Purgaj, 2009; Leskovic & Leskovar, 2014). In contrast to nursing personnel in other institutions, nurses in homes for the elderly accompany their patients for many years, mostly until their death. Nursing care of people with dementia often brings about a qualitatively and quantitatively overload of the personnel due to high work requirements, functional and behavioural dilution of a patient and the ethical dilemmas raised by the difficulties of interpretation when it comes to elderly people, especially in the long-term residence situations, where specifics are immense. What is more, care of patients with dementia requires a lot of

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emotionally involved work of the nurses. Therefore, nurses are experiencing a higher pressure at work. Although some of the personnel are able to resolve the feelings, excited by such work, and thus maintain the empathy, some nurses, however, develop symptoms of exhaustion, feelings of low self-esteem, failure and helplessness. Carers of people with dementia are daily exposed to ethical conflicts, since it is difficult to interpret all of the patients' wishes. Thus, the carer is often required to act in the name of patient, which can lead to double blind conflicts and exhaustion of the carer. Precisely the complex situations faced by nurses, and their close connection with the patients, enable us to talk about the possibilities of the burnout syndrome occurrence, not only about overload at the workplace. Selič (2010) points out that burnout is a sign of an exhausted and defective bio-psycho-social well-being, which can lead to absenteeism or leaving the profession. Glasberg (2007) indicates in a study about burnout among health care workers, that the health care reorganization is causing a structural instability, more conflicts and unclear responsibilities, all of which contribute to an increase in numbers of days on sick leave caused by symptoms of burnout. Åström (1990) found in his study, conducted in Sweden, that of all the nurses who work with the elderly, approximately 25 percent have a high estimation of burnout and approximately 35 percent of them had already been at risk of developing the burnout syndrome. Among the nurses, who were willing to change their jobs, 27 percent were at risk of developing the burnout syndrome. Among those, who would not change their profession, the share was lower, namely 16%.

## **2 Healthcare demands a rethink of education**

Filej (2001, p. 72) is convinced that nursing is based on education, knowledge and techniques derived from humanistic and natural sciences; as a discipline the primary and fundamental task of which is "to care for people". Therefore, nursing is a science of how to help and care for people in a state of health and disease at the time of independence and when assistance in carrying out basic life activities is needed. A nurse is a person who keeps, brings up and protects the other. She is ready to care for sick, injured and elderly people.

As nursing is one of the most highly health professions in European Union, and a license is required to practice in all 28 States, also in Slovenia, and due to the rapid development of the health sector and the requirements and needs of the society for knowledge in the healthcare field an adequately qualified and trained practitioner of nursing is expected, who during tertiary education obtains relevant competencies for an effective implementation of health care (Bezenšek, 2007, p. 217).



Health care in contemporary Slovenia is provided by a myriad of professional groups, separated educated. Ideally, a team working has the patient at its centre and nurses, doctors, therapists, radiographers and laboratory scientific officers all working together and sharing information on the patient. Equally, the primary includes general practitioners, midwives and community nurses liaising with pharmacists. Especially the relationship between nurses and doctors has been affected by changes in the old dichotomy of nursing as care and medicine as treatment. The educational professionalization strategies of nurses have challenged the role boundaries between nurses and doctors and nurses take on prescribing and treatment roles, as the demand for nurses to take on some (before) doctor roles, have increased. These trends show how inter- and intra-relations in health care are becoming more complex, but also might be understood as simplistic. Often, however, the reality behind this idealized sense of harmony and cooperation is one of subtle hierarchies, poor communication and misunderstanding. There are tensions and disputes within and between them, in addition and change from a variety of different sources including the public, the media and government, as well. All are facing constant conflicts (the battle for authority between nurses and doctors etc.), challenges which often lead to burn out. Certainly, there are deep-seated anxieties about the collapse of trust between them.

Modern nursing demands a rethink of educational goals and skills for a successful professional health management and the according education system. In Slovenia education for nurses is organized in faculties for health care and nursing, with an undergraduate study programme adjusted to the European directives for regulated profession. Currently, the undergraduate study programme Nursing level I, which is adjusted to the Bologna Declaration, as well as post-graduate study programmes i.e. the post-graduated study programme in Nursing, the post – graduate study programme in Bioinformatics and the higher education study programme Nursing – level I (Bologna program) and the post – graduate study programme Management in health and social care are being performed. The educational programme graduates distinguish themselves in their professional attitude towards work, interdisciplinary knowledge, ability to communicate effectively, broad education, self- reflection, the ability of quick and correct decision-making, heart and culture and their sentient and ethical attitude towards the patient and elderly, as well as other users of their services, the ability of teamwork and work in international teams and projects. Thus, in their professional work, students and especially graduates are guided by the following principles, that: people are always the most important; relationships are based on honesty; the diversity of people and ideas are welcome; conflicts are a creative source of new ideas; discussions are held on an academic level; excellence is realized through teamwork; commitment to intellectual achievement is highly valued.

Access to healthcare education involves a highly competitive selection process. This process in itself can be seen as the first step towards professional socialization. Once entry to nursing school is secured, education involves not only the transfer of knowledge but also the absorption of appropriate attitudes and behaviour towards patients and colleagues. In this sense, the nurse profession has, within its training process, a built-in capacity to mould new members in its own image. Studies of nurse education have shown how this capacity is maintained through the formal educational curriculum, which passes on knowledge and skills and involves periodic formal assessment, and the informal curriculum, which transmits attitudes, behaviours and beliefs and where the assessment is based on the approval of performed roles. This procedure gradually built up to style of doing things that are accepted and seen as “professional”. This profession is a great challenge and can be handled only by nurses with a deliberately planned system of educational activities, applying diverse methods, forms and means; those who act as actual authorities by their personal example, gestures and words. The nurse should act as a personality in every situation, be a good example and a coordinator of professional influences; she should be able to act assertively and argument professionally and not be manipulated by anyone. The nurse should be self-disciplined, enthusiastic, sincere and self-reflexive, if needed. She should not fall prey to scepticism and despair.

However, the Slovenian concept of health education is still connected with the conviction that the doctor is the only one able to manage the whole medical organization. The classical principal has its roots in the idea that the basic education for nurses is mainly practical oriented and managers in healthcare are supposed to think they have to take control of the staff and lead them to objective economic aims, not to support the role of education for nurses. This kind of leading has negative effects on the professional work of nurses. Thus, managers should support and lead their staff at work. Medical employees are supposed to find their own way to exceed the stereotypical education of nurses and their work. They work in a team, considering values of the organization, interests and wishes of patients, working in co-operation with their colleagues. At work, nurses, according to modern education skills and their competences, are self-confidential and have their own vision, knowing other alternatives. They know how to differ the good and the bad ethically. But sometimes, they expose the situation of crises.

How can we understand this sense of crises among nurses? Rather, their professional relationships can be better understood by the concept of “countervailing powers”, as work relations in health care are characterized as “a series of moves” between nurses and others involved, especially important

nowadays in this increasingly uncertain world. Most important characteristics of nurse profession are:

- discrete body of knowledge over which nurses have control,
- non autonomy over conditions of work and from state and capital,
- monopoly over health market for services,
- code of ethics,
- strong sense of altruism is a core motive and performance is valued
- more than financial reward,
- training is lengthy and its quality and content is determined by the nurses themselves,
- contradictions within assumed value systems.

During their professional career, nurses must deal with more or less serious problems, intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, stressful situations, and other adverse circumstances, risk factors that can negatively influence one's healthy development. They increase the probability of negative developmental outcomes and problem behaviours. As under their influence one's reactions are often unusual, not relevant to the given situation, we drew an important distinction between professional autonomy and professional dominance, as nurse's professional power is based on her education and competences, autonomy over her own work and dominance over activities of co-workers, coping with different forms of autonomy in her professional formation (clinical, economic, social and political autonomy). So qualities such as nurse professional ethics, knowledge, monopoly, and authority over patients and autonomy over her work are seen to be very important in the face of public.

All these facts allow educational goals about their work to emerge. In order to allow the development of the health system, healthcare should not be understood as a system of isolated components. In health organizations people form the system. Here, individuals and groups meet, having different opinions, convictions and thinking. They all have their own system of values, needs and interests. A health organization is successful and effective only if an individual group faces the permanent need for education, but the most important is the co-operation between all elements.

### **3 Nurses in nursing homes**

The consequences of population aging are numerous, both economic as well as social, but they are most evident in the field of labour and healthcare system, as well. Postmodern society increasingly tends to exclude the elderly, it treats them as incompetent for independent living. Therefore, the tendency to put them into nursing homes is increasing, where they cope with nurses which are overworked,

tired and burn out. And mostly not enough educated for intergenerational cooperation, as working with elderly requires thoughtful planning, understanding their needs and (mostly) health problems, what led to different ethical and legal dilemmas. Nurses working in nursing homes take different responsibilities that cannot be defined only by law and regulations. In addition, nurses should protect and respect not only the elderly's health but also their privacy. But are they educated enough as their work with elderly has become an increasing challenge as the demands of elderly are rapidly evolving and become more complex and diverse?

Carrying out the work of a nurse in nursing home, besides high professionalism and self-control also takes respect for moral principles. Ethical behaviour presupposes the respect for the self, for elderly, empathy and the ability to take into consideration interests and needs of the elderly when making a decision. A professional ethical approach of a nurse means to apply general moral principles. Therefore, the education should prepare nurses to master: verbal communication, principles of conflict-free communication and principles of good manners, the ability to gain confidence of the sick, closely follow the standards, be confident about their work, be willing to study permanently and have a sense of justice. And, last but not least, to create her professional authority.

## **4 Methodology**

Our research involved 98 participants, all working in the position of a nursing assistant in nursing homes for the elderly citizens in Slovenia. More specifically, an average of 10 respondents from each home for the elderly participated in the research, and the selection of participating nursing homes was random. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

### *4.1 Sample*

There were 97 women and only one man among the respondents. Their average age was 38 years, the youngest participant was 20 years old, and the oldest was 53 years old.

### *4.2 Instrumentation*

For collection of data we used a questionnaire about the burnout syndrome, a questionnaire to measure satisfaction at work, a check list of psychosomatic disorders, structured interview and a socio-demographic questionnaire.

#### *4.2.1 Measuring the burnout*

The used questionnaire about the burnout was the C. Maslach - MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1979, Penko, 1994), which enabled us to measure the rate of burnout. The questionnaire's measurement characteristics were often tested, and it

measures the three aspects of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfilment. It is composed of two parts, the first part is measuring frequency, and the second part is measuring the intensity of individual subscales.

Each part of the questionnaire contains 22 items which are measured on both dimensions (frequency and intensity) by using the two Likert-type scales. The frequency of occurrence is estimated from the value 1, which indicates a rare observation phenomena (a few times per year), up to the value 6, which indicates an often observation phenomena (every day). The intensity is enumerated from the value 1, which means a very poor experience, up to the value 7, which means a very strong experience. In both cases, the value 0 can be chosen, if the state has never been experienced.

For each of these two parts of the questionnaire, the points are calculated for each subscale separately. Thus the obtained total points represent results in six subscales, indicating frequency and intensity of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal fulfilment. Higher is the number of points on each of the subscales, the greater is the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfilment. The burnout is indicated by the higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and smaller personal fulfilment.

#### *4.2.2 Measurement of satisfaction at work*

The satisfaction at work has been measured with the adaptation of an American questionnaire, known as the Job Descriptive Index, shorter JDI (Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969, Konrad, 1994). The questionnaire measures satisfaction with five aspects of work, namely: the work itself, co-workers, direct managers, salary and promotion. It contains 106 items altogether, for each the participant assesses whether it is applicable to their situation and answers with yes, no or I do not know. Approximately half of the items have a positive valence, and the other half has a negative one. The questionnaire points are calculated as follows: items with the positive connotation, answered with a yes, are attributed three points, the I do not know answer gets one point and the answer no gets no points. For items with a negative connotation, the response no is attributed three points, the I do not know answer gets one point and the answer yes does not get any points. Points are calculated separately for each aspect of satisfaction and thus we obtain five scores (Konrad, 1994). Using the computer program JD1.EXE, where we enter the raw data, it calculates how many points an individual has achieved in the individual aspect and factor and in which category of satisfaction the result belongs to (Sabadin, 2000).

#### *4.2.3 Measuring psychosomatic symptoms*

The frequency and intensity of the psychosomatic symptoms were measured by using the check list of psychosomatic symptoms, made for the purpose of research, based on the Engel's classification of psychosomatic disorders (1967, in Luban-Plozza et al., 1993). The check list consists of 11 groups of problems and diseases, where some groups have also been added some of the more common psychosomatic diseases.

#### *4.2.4 Data collection process*

The research was conducted in 2010 in ten Slovenian homes for the elderly citizens. First of all, the request for cooperation was addressed to the directors of the homes for the elderly. Upon the approved request, we started the contact the head of the nursing care in each home. The purpose of cooperation was explained to each of the participant, as well as we informed them that participation in the research was on a completely voluntary basis and that the data will be processed only collectively. With those who gave their consent for participating, we performed an individual interview, which took place in one of the premises of the home for the elderly, where the participant was employed. In the final part of the interview the check list of psychosomatic disorders was included as well. Each interview lasted approximately for half an hour. The participants were also asked to complete two more questionnaires at home, and answer some socio-demographic questions. After a few days, they returned the forms and questionnaires to the head of nursing care, who forwarded them to us. Of the 150 distributed questionnaires, 98 were returned and suitable for further processing.

#### *4.2.5 Statistical Analysis*

The collected data were processed in the SPSS 18.0 program. The only exception were the data from the questionnaire about the job satisfaction at work - JDI, which were processed and evaluated using the program JDI.EXE. We used the following statistical analyses:

- for description of the sample and displaying results from the questionnaires and the interview, we used descriptive method, the normal distribution was checked with the Kolmogov-Smirnov test;
- for verifying the correlation between different variables, we used the Spearman's correlation coefficient.
- the differences between the arithmetic mean values of the individual variables were examined with t-test and the analysis of variance.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 The Burnout syndrome

Table 1

*The number of participants according to the individual phase of frequency and intensity*

*Burnout according to the 8-phases model (N= 98)*

	phases of burnout							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
frequency of burnout	34	0	17	0	45	1	1	0
intensity of burnout	29	0	7	0	59	2	1	0

It is evident from table 1 that according to the frequency of burnout, one third of participants were placed into the first phase of burnout, less than a fifth in the third phase, and half of the participants were placed into the fifth phase of burnout. According to the intensity of burnout, most participants (59) were placed into fifth phase, a little less (29) were recognized in the first phase of burnout. The third, sixth and seventh category were in both cases of burnout more poorly represented, and none of the participants were placed into the second, fourth and eighth phase.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of indexes and dimensions of burnout in terms of frequency and intensity (N = 98)*

	$M^a$	$SD^b$	asymmetry	kurtosis
frequency				
index of burnout frequency	2.37	1.04	-0.21	-0.99
emotional exhaustion	3.32	1.18	0.23	-0.93
personal fulfillment	4.24	1.14	-0.72	-0.22
depersonalization	1.40	1.03	1.07	2.00
intensity				
index of burnout intensity	2.42	1.07	-0.14	-0.66
emotional exhaustion	2.72	1.57	0.50	-0.33
personal fulfillment	4.38	1.29	-0.44	0.40
depersonalisation	1.67	1.09	0.40	-0.60

*Notes.* Standard error in the asymmetry test was 0.34 in all cases, in the kurtosis test it was 0.67.

<sup>a,b</sup> - the average scale ratings and their standard deviation due to a different number of items in the various scales were calculated; the average rate may vary between 0 and 6 in terms of frequency and between 0 and 7 regarding intensity.

It can be seen from table 2 that the participants have chosen the highest ratings, both in terms of frequency as in terms of the intensity, at the personal fulfilment dimension, and the lowest ratings at the dimension of depersonalisation. In this respect, it is worthwhile to note that a high level of burnout is defined by the high results in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and the low results in the dimensions of personal fulfilment. On all dimensions of intensity, the arithmetic mean values are slightly higher, which is most likely due to one multi-stage scale assessment as with frequency. Between the two indexes of burnout there are no major differences, not with the arithmetic mean value, nor with the standard deviation value. A left asymmetry in the dimension of depersonalisation in terms of frequency can be seen, however, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ( $Z=0.73$ ,  $p<0.66$ ) shows that the distribution of the mentioned variable does not much differ from the normal distribution. As for the other dimensions and both indexes of burnout, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test does not show significant deviations from the normal distribution. We were also checking the internal consistency of the MBI questionnaire and its dimensions. The reliability coefficients were relatively high, the Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale of the burnout frequency was 0.77, and for the intensity scale it amounted to 0.85.

### *5.2 Satisfaction with work*

The descriptive statistics enabled us to find out that participants were choosing the lowest grades when enumerating their satisfaction with the personal income, the highest grades, however, were assigned to satisfaction with the head nurse and co-workers.

Similarly, the review of the factors of satisfaction reveals that the lowest grades are observed at the satisfaction with personal income, and the highest average assessment grades are assigned for the satisfaction with the head nurse and co-workers. Furthermore, from five aspects of the satisfaction category, we calculated the average category of satisfaction with work for each participant. The average varied between 1.60 and 4.60, their average was 3.09, SD was 0.82.



Table 3

*Spearman's correlation coefficient between dimensions and indexes of burnout, and aspects and factors of satisfaction with work (N=98)*

JDI	frequency of burnout				intensity of burnout			
	či	oi	d	ipi	či	oi	d	iii
aspects								
del	-0.11	0.23	0.02	-0.13	-0.25	0.18	-0.27	-0.26
vod	-0.17	0.17	-0.07	-0.20	-0.27	0.09	-0.15	-0.26
sod	0.06	0.22	0.06	-0.04	-0.01	0.15	0.06	-0.07
doh	<b>-0.32*</b>	<b>0.38*</b>	-0.21	<b>-0.41*</b>	-0.28	0.25	-0.18	<b>-0.37*</b>
nap	-0.05	0.02	-0.07	-0.04	-0.21	0.11	-0.15	-0.22
zad	-0.14	0.28	-0.08	-0.21	-0.26	0.24	-0.15	<b>-0.29*</b>
kzad	-0.13	0.27	-0.06	-0.19	-0.27	0.21	-0.18	<b>-0.32*</b>
factors								
f1	-0.19	0.26	-0.10	-0.24	-0.26	0.18	-0.08	-0.26
f2	0.01	0.22	0.05	-0.08	-0.06	0.14	0.06	-0.10
f3	<b>-0.37*</b>	<b>0.41*</b>	-0.23	<b>-0.47*</b>	<b>-0.34*</b>	0.25	-0.20	<b>-0.42*</b>
f4	-0.14	0.08	-0.10	-0.13	-0.28	0.14	-0.17	-0.29
f5	0.02	0.27	0.06	-0.04	-0.10	0.25	-0.15	-0.16
f6	<b>-0.33*</b>	-0.08	-0.08	-0.20	<b>-0.40*</b>	-0.08	<b>-0.31*</b>	-0.28
f7	0.02	0.05	0.05	-0.06	-0.07	0.01	-0.13	-0.07
f8	-0.22	0.22	-0.07	-0.22	-0.27	0.17	-0.12	<b>-0.25*</b>

Notes. \*-correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 risk level; \*\*-correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 risk level;

či – emotional exhaustion; oi – personal fulfilment; d – depersonalization; ipi – the index of burnout frequency; iii – the index of burnout intensity; del – satisfaction with work; vod – satisfaction with the head nurse; sod – satisfaction with co-workers; doh – satisfaction with personal income; nad – satisfaction with the possibility of promotion; zad – total satisfaction in the workplace; kzad – the average category of satisfaction with work; f1 – satisfaction with the head nurse; f2 – satisfaction with co-workers; f3 – satisfaction with personal income; f4 – satisfaction with the possibility of promotion; f5 – satisfaction with work; f6 – the absence of the stress effects of work; f7 – absence of the sense of work alienation; f9 – the absence of negative personality traits of the head nurse.

The correlation between the personal income satisfaction and the frequency of emotional exhaustion, and burnout indexes was proven statistically significant. More specifically, it is a negative correlation, which means that more than a person suffers from burnout, the smaller is their satisfaction. Satisfaction with personal income is also significant correlating with the frequency of personal fulfilment, in which case there is a positive correlation. Frequent and intense emotional exhaustion and more intense depersonalisation, are negatively associated with the sixth factor, which refers to the absence of the stress effects

of work. The latter means that the participants, who more often and more intensively experience emotional exhaustion and those who experience more intensive depersonalisation, perceive more stress effects of work and vice versa.

### 5.3 Psychosomatic symptoms

Table 4

*Descriptive statistics and the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the Check list of psychosomatic symptoms scales for the past, as well as for the last 12 months (N = 98)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	asymmetry	kurtosis	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
in the past	15.58	9.36	0.75	-0.26	0.90	0.39
the last 12 months	15.40	10.03	0.69	-0.54	1.02	0.18

*Notes.* Standard error in the asymmetry test was 0.34 in all cases, in the kurtosis test it was 0.66.

We can see in table 4 that both scales of psychosomatic symptoms have similar arithmetic mean and dispersion. The distribution of both scales does not differ statistically significant from the normal distribution, what is shown by the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Spearman's correlation coefficient between the scales amounts to 0.84 and is statistically significant ( $p < 0,01$ ). Cronbach's alpha of the check list equals 0.95.

### 5.4 The Burnout syndrome in correlation with psychosomatic symptoms

Table 5

*Spearman's correlation coefficients between the dimensions and indexes of burnout and psychosomatic dimensions and symptoms (N = 98)*

<b>burnout</b>	<b>psychosomatic symptoms</b>	
	<b>in the past</b>	<b>in the last 12 months</b>
<b>frequency</b>		
index of burnout frequency	<b>0.37**</b>	<b>0.37*</b>
emotional exhaustion	<b>0.44**</b>	<b>0.47**</b>
personal fulfilment	-0.04	0.00
depersonalisation	0.28	0.23
<b>intensity</b>		
index of burnout frequency	<b>0.39**</b>	<b>0.29*</b>
emotional exhaustion	<b>0.46**</b>	<b>0.39**</b>
personal fulfilment	-0.16	-0.11
depersonalisation	0.11	-0.01

*Notes.* \* - correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 risk level; \*\* - correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 risk level.

## **6 Discussion**

We have found out that, depending on the frequency of burnout in the participants, a third of them was classified into the first burnout phase, less than a fifth into the third phase and a half of the participants into the fifth phase of the burnout. According to the intensity of the burnout, most participants (59) were classified into the fifth stage, a little less (29) into the first phase of burnout. Both in terms of frequency as in terms of the intensity, the choice of the highest grades was for the dimension of personal fulfilment, the lowest grades were enumerated for the dimension of depersonalisation. In this respect, it is worthwhile to note that a high level of burnout is defined by the high results in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and the low results in the dimensions of personal fulfilment. On all dimensions of intensity, the arithmetic mean values are slightly higher, which is most likely due to one multi-stage scale assessment as opposed to the frequency. There are no major differences between the two indexes of burnout, not in the values of arithmetic mean, not in the standard deviation. A left asymmetry in the dimension of depersonalisation in terms of frequency can be seen, however, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ( $Z=0.73$ ,  $p<0.66$ ) shows that the distribution of the mentioned variable does not statistically differ much from the normal distribution. As for the other dimensions and both indexes of burnout, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test does not show significant deviations from the normal distribution. We were also checking the internal consistency of the MBI questionnaire and its dimensions. The reliability coefficients were relatively high, the Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale of the burnout frequency was 0.77, and for the intensity scale it amounted to 0.85.

We also confirmed that the correlation between the total satisfaction in the workplace and the average category of satisfaction at work is statistically significant and negatively connected with the intensity of experiencing burnout. This means that in the workplace more satisfied participants less intensively experience burnout and vice versa.

When checking the correlation with the Spearman's correlation coefficient, as statistically significant were proven the positive correlations between emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms (in both dimensions of burnout and in both scales of psychosomatic symptoms). What is more, in the past and in the last year, a positive and statistically significant correlation was proven between psychosomatic symptoms and both burnout indexes. The latter correlation is most likely the consequence of the emotional burnout, which takes a large part in the creation of the burnout index (4/7). The latter thesis can also be confirmed by a seemingly low and statistically insignificant correlation of psychosomatic symptoms with other dimensions of burnout (personal fulfilment

and depersonalisation, both in the aspect of frequency, as well as the intensity). Since the personal fulfilment negatively contributes to the burnout syndrome, we would at this point expect a negative correlation between psychosomatic symptoms and emotional burnout, which was also generally shown (except in the case of personal fulfilment in terms of frequency and psychosomatic symptoms in the last year, where the connection is zero), however, these correlations are low and statistically insignificant.

The research focused exclusively on Slovenian homes for elderly people. After studying other researchers' work we could tentatively compare our study to the research done by Zeller, Hahn, Needham, Kok, Dassen and Halfens (2009), who found out that the most significant source of stress for the employees of elderly homes and visiting nurses is verbal violence from patients (threats, insults). Selič (2010) points out in her study that employees in primary medical care are burdened and Kržišnik and Čuk (2010) warn that the workers in psychiatric medical care experience stress while working with geriatric patients.

The implication is that hospitals, nursing homes and homes for the elderly around the world experience similar problems to those in Slovenia, i.e. lack of staff, low levels of education and work-related stress (physical and psychological) which all contribute to the burnout phenomena. Our research was limited to ten homes but it could nonetheless be concluded that the problem of burnout is indeed present in all social welfare institutions and needs to be examined and studied seriously.

## **7 Conclusions**

The above-mentioned, as well as many other things and elements influence the work of nurses on an unconscious level. This is also because their working place, from the economic and psychologic point of view, is a colder, inhospitable and much more demanding place than it used to be in the past. Often, nurses are exhausted emotionally, physically and mentally and they start to burn out, as their work, family and other obligations destroy their energy and devotion. Despite of being successful, they do not feel happiness and enthusiasm anymore. Their devotion to work decreases and they become cynical. The nurse's occupation with elderly exposes her to a broad range of physical and psycho-social insults.

This is the reason why they do their best in health care to be as less as possible personally involved in the problems of the elderly. Nurses are responsible for the preservation for the stereotypes, as certain stereotypes can be to their advantage or disadvantage. The research "Nurses in Slovenia", done by Klančnik Gruden (2000) at Ljubljana University Clinical Centre, revealed that nurses most often saw themselves as "working hands" and "kind-hearted",

followed by the opinions “doctor's assistant” and “professional” on the third and fourth place. Nurses try to keep the status of a “good” nurse when being in contact with their patients, even if they do not always succeed due to too much work. They are convinced that for elderly their empathic relationship is more important than their professionalism.

Nurses are very much aware of these problems and the restrictive government measures. This is the reason why they are trying to improve the importance of their function with elderly and in the health organization. We all are obliged to provide a rational relationship between service and its price. Due to this, nurses working with elderly are expected to be flexible and always available. Based on this, the economic logic interfered into the relationship between the elderly and the nurse which is immanent and their private one (Goriup, 2011, p. 845). Judging from the obtained results, it is urgent that the risk factors contributing to the burnout syndrome are recognised in time. Therefore, social welfare institutions need to start developing a process of evaluation of psychosocial and medical risk factors contributing to work stress, or face large financial losses due to stress-related sick leaves. On the other hand, institutions should provide moderate work demands, give their employees a chance to choose and control the work tasks they perform, reward them for good performance, strengthen co-worker relationships, promote honesty, respectfulness and fairness, and most importantly, help employees to feel that what they do is meaningful and appreciated.

In order to be able to generalize the findings, we suggest that nurses working in nursing homes, avoiding burnout, should be as educated as possible, because this is the only way to provide a holistic and qualitative nursing care to elderly. Efforts should be made to raise the educational structure in this profession. Only the nurse's knowledge and her high professionalism will contribute to the improvement of the general health of the elderly, higher quality of their lives and the development of the society in general.

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# ARTICLES

## The Z Generation

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**Abstract:** The author of this article seeks to define various circumstances that make a generation. The author points out the characteristics of new generations focusing on the so-called Z generation. As a literature teacher, she mentions personal examples to make the article alive. Her aim is to prove that it is important to take the new habits and specifics of teenagers into account in order to teach more efficiently.

**Key words:** ITC, new generation, new challenges, Z generation, personal traits of a teacher, requirements of the educational system.

### 1 Introduction

The need for rethinking the diversity and the trend of being different from the next generation (basically since 1968) called youth has been becoming more and more important across Europe. The intense spread (which is not getting slower at all) of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's information and communication technology (ICT) makes it reasonable to consider answering this question as an international one. This paper is mainly focusing on the Hungarian point of view and then looking up the European horizon. (About the author: besides her research, she is a Hungarian Literature and Grammar teacher at a secondary school in one of the districts outside of the capital. Her personal experiences helped her extend this paper with some added value.)

Bertalan Komenczi (2009) distinguishes different cognitive habits in the history of human development. His research used cultural relevance and was based on the work of Harold Innis (1951) and Marsall McLuhan (1962, 1964), and the results were in this respect as well: the causes of the cognitive changes are due to the outcomes of the radical changes in communication and understanding.

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The society of teachers have heard more and more about the “new generation” and “new challenges” during the last few years in Hungary. In the beginning, the focus was on the key terms, definitions and the characteristics of this generation. However, now it has become clear that an examination of the way that the new generation works and shares “good practice” is essential and necessary.

Based on my educational and teaching experience, it can be established that generational change, the wide spread of ICT and their rapid development are inseparable processes. It is enough to think about the paper-based school grade system, which disappeared within 9 years and the appearance of digital grade system to replace the first one. It can be also easily seen that mobiles have been replaced by smart-phones among students, which have become part of their everyday lives.

## **2 Generations Research: X, Y, Z**

Clearly, it seems to be a two-way mechanism of action; in the world of ICT, young people transform the known society and the digital world is changing them. They feel and live the time, they spend their leisure time differently, have different conceptions about relationships, contacts, conversations and learning. In recent decades, a number of books have been published defining a child belonging to an object/phenomenon. Paul Ariès (2000) called McDonald's as a “fetish” alarmist in his writings: speaking about McDonaldization as a bad mother who became pregnant in the time of globalization and makes the consumer and producer, the two dominant groups of young people, of globalization dishes unified.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst Paul Ariès condemns the restaurant chain, a Swedish author Anita Werner (1998) is more optimistic about the TV, “she voters a holistic approach to the phenomena in addition; her research on the relationship of television and children’s attention focuses on examining the cooperation and interaction of various factors” (1999). Werner says that in order to let children’s identity and competence develop and to be able to understand the reality, they need their own experiences, personal communications and impressions, gained from the media, to be interplayed (1998).<sup>2</sup> However, television has become outdated, when asked, my students answered that they barely watch TV. During the eight years I have spent teaching, the world of internet has supplanted television.

In the following part, I have reviewed the interpretation of the concept of generation.

Károly Mannheim (1938), an influential sociologist, wrote, “The social phenomenon described by the concept of generation is actually the identity



formed by connected groups and embedded in the social-historical process.” In other words, the current generation - according to Mannheim - forms a social group, in which the age does not restrict the human being a group member, but extends to a group of those individuals, who were at their pubescent age or at the early stages of their adulthood necessarily confronted with the pre-existing culture and most probably the intention of its transformation is already in their mind (2007). Mannheim puts the concept of generation parallel to the class concept, meaning that a human is born into it, does not want to leave it, only if their status changes.

The generations research done by Howe and Strauss (2000) sets three criteria, by which we can talk about a generation. The first is “perceived membership” which means that the person feels, perceives himself part of a group, as a member of it. The second criterion is called “shared beliefs and behavioural forms”, so the common beliefs and forms of behaviours, such as family, careers, religion or political view. Thirdly, the “shared history”, containing all the historical events that happened during their childhood and adolescent age, which had a great influence in most group members’ private life. They admit that the history converts generations and vice versa. They state an operation similar to the pendulum: the period of awakenings and exploration comes after crises and development time of the history.

McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010) emphasize the common experience of people born in the same historical period, which refers to their technological knowledge and historical experiences. Instead of biological determination they want to define the term ‘generation’ sociologically. Why is it important to distinguish generations from each other? These differences among generations are usually the main causes of problems in working and living together, and communicating with each other. After all, there are differences in motivation, decision making, shopping habits and consumer behaviour as well.

Mária Törőcsik (2011) speaks about cohort experiences, about all the generations’ experiences, which make people belonging to these change their approach/outlook. The deeper agenda of the concept is that “the members of each generation are interconnected by the shared experiences of their adolescence, popular culture, economic situation, world events, natural disasters, heroes, public enemies, politics, technology, so by all those experiences that make a cohort, an age group in the sociological sense” (2003).

Baby Boomers (great generation)	X generation (digital immigrants)	Y generation (digital natives)	Z generation (nation of Facebook)	Alfa generation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born after the II WW</li> <li>• Motto: “war never again”</li> <li>• Several social changes: equality in women’s rights, Vietnam War</li> <li>• Increasing consumption</li> <li>• Competitions and idealism</li> <li>• First time they meet PCs as adults</li> <li>• PC is not the main way of communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born at the end of the 60s, beginning of 70s</li> <li>• Number of divorces, economic uncertainty are increasing</li> <li>• age of Disco and hip-hop culture</li> <li>• Age of TV and videogames</li> <li>• Start of individualism</li> <li>• They met PC when they were young</li> <li>• Witnesses of the development of information technology and then information society</li> <li>• They use internet more or less</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born in the 80s and 90s</li> <li>• Increasing number of conflicts</li> <li>• The spread of digital technology: e-mail, sms</li> <li>• Optimism, are not afraid of the technology</li> <li>• Loyal to brands</li> <li>• They met internet when they were children</li> <li>• Dependent on media</li> <li>• First digital citizens</li> <li>• Social relationships are doubled: they have virtual and real ones</li> <li>• They are interested in cultural contents</li> <li>• They accept their parents’ values</li> <li>• They like social activities</li> <li>• They prefer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born around the millennium</li> <li>• They do not know the world without internet</li> <li>• Use internet and social networks</li> <li>• “Global connectivity”, flexibility, being smart, tolerant of different cultures</li> <li>• Social network sites are the main platform for communication</li> <li>• Information consumers and providers</li> <li>• Very good device skills</li> <li>• Thousands of online contacts</li> <li>• Multitasking (blogging, listening to music, writing emails)</li> <li>• Quicker decision making</li> <li>• They are not stuck to a place</li> <li>• They learn, make friends, have fun differently</li> <li>• There is no legal sensitivity on downloading,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing economics</li> <li>• New expectations, educational trends, materialism</li> </ul>

		visuals and audios instead of texts ● They want to achieve their aims as soon as possible and often want to fulfill their wishes ● They prefer games to hard work	changing files ● Emotional incompetency	
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*Figure 1.* Characteristics of generations. (Based on Nagy & Székely, 2012; Nagy, 2016)

But it varies from year to year: there are already existing papers, which define the aforementioned generational differences in different ways. András Buda (2013) describes the definitions formulated by Prensky 2001 in his paper called ‘Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants — A New Way to Look at Ourselves and Our Kids’, instead of the age and the dichotomous categorising based on the age he wants to consider the qualitative indicators of using digital technologies and recommends to consider the differences among these indicators. So, he sketches a range of possible roles from “digital refugee” and “digital explorer” to “digital innovator” and even “digital addict.” Moreover, the newer, 2013 research uses the term, applications of the generations called “generation apps”.

### 3 Concept of generation Z and their attributes

Taking a closer look at the generation Z, we can see that there are already several ways to refer to them, “Post millenars”, “Facebook generation”, “Digital Natives”, “Switchers”, “Dotcom children”, “Netgeneration”, “iGeneration”, “C - Connection – generation”, “D - Digital – generation”, “R - Responsibility – generation”. These are today’s 14-25-year-olds.

Around 2000, studies about the new generation appeared, firstly Don Tapscott (1998/2001) then Marc Prensky (2001) wrote about a generation, which was “born into a world full with info communication devices and because of that we need to face several changes regarding the online socialisation, learning and living habits of the new generation” (Tóbi, 2013, p. 111). Tapscott, who defined

the term, said that the members of the net generation better understand and extensively use “gadgets”. Prensky in his study published in 2001, creates the model of digital natives, digital immigrants, in which he talks about an explosive change. “Our students today are all ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet.”<sup>3</sup> In Hungary, around 1996-97, the Schoolnet program prepared the conditions for the formation of the net generation, since “all Hungarian secondary schools could join the web’s blood circulation”, says Péter Fehér.

Research carried out in late 2009 and early 2010 by Judit Hornyák and Péter Fehér (2011) would rather recommend to use the term “online generation” instead of “net generation” and “digital natives”. Their research showed the following results: young people aged 10-25 spend a lot of time on a computer, using mostly chat or visiting social network sites. The level of ICT literacy is low and the formation of an own ICT language with its specific grammar can be seen, mainly due to the expansion of online communication.

The properties of the Z generation collected during the Pécs project, called ‘Science Communication for the Z generation’ in 2013 are the following:

The active social media users have many contacts and they mainly live their everyday relations through these channels (personal meetings are also important to them, however, keeping the online contacts have an equally important role). In daily consumer goods they do not really eat fast food and drink sugary soft drinks – even if it also appears among them, indeed, but it is not that typical. The number of smokers and those who drink alcohol regularly is quite high. They have their “beloved brands” (lovemarks), which are extremely important - based on the in-depth interviews these are the iPhone as a smartphone, they often referred to. Their content consumption can be easily recognised: they do not like the consumption of high quality culture among young people and they typically prefer pop music, movies. Purchasing movies and music for them means that they usually download (piracy). They prefer contents found on the internet, spend lots of time on surfing on the internet, watching Youtube videos. Generally, their consumer characteristics are very different from the members of the Generation Y, the smartphone is a status symbol, although the functional connotation is also very important to them (based on in-depth interviews), “who was not connected continuously to our group, to be cut off” (Tóbi, 2013).<sup>4</sup>

Let me mention a foreign example, Susan Greenfield (2009), who in her work ‘The Quest for Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ states that children being considered as “natives” in the digital world since the time they were already born have different emotions and brain functions. Using a computer has become an essential part of their home life. Alvin Toffler (2010) has an idea that the

illiterates of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not those who can not read and write, but those who have not learned to learn. He saw the problem, which changed the learning habits and objectives of Generation Z thirty years ago. "Without the ability to learn, we will be lost in the world of information, we cannot solve any everyday problem and we cannot prosper in our social relations management" (Molnár, 2010, p. 3).

In the book of Annamária Tari (2011) entitled Z generation, she defines the following:

1. Kids nowadays do not have strong family relationships as it was in the case of the previous generation.<sup>5</sup>
2. They are smart, but their emotional intelligence is significantly underdeveloped, "They process information if they understand it but they are unable to process it emotionally".<sup>6</sup>
3. Due to apps that do multitasking (having, doing several things at the same time), being precise, or being able to concentrate, memorize something has become more difficult in long term.<sup>7</sup>
4. The personality becomes more narcissistic: the main goal is to leave their "digital footprint" for others – using only the global interest.<sup>8</sup>
5. What will be the effect of the rudeness of virtual games with little morality, lack of empathy and valued in TV shows on children psyche?<sup>9</sup>
6. The opinion of peers is overrated and becomes the most important.<sup>10</sup>
7. Visual thinking is dominant, so imagination and creativity are on the second place – Avatars, Second Life world are among the typical roles.<sup>11</sup>
8. Many representatives of the Z generation are suffering from chronic sleep deprivation because they do not want to miss anything (Facebook, etc.).<sup>12</sup>
9. There is the possibility of living a happier life but with less value.<sup>13</sup>
10. Thanks to media, role models, celebrities and stars have a stronger impact on them.<sup>14</sup>
11. New ways of partnerships and sexuality appear.<sup>15</sup>
12. Last but not least, the tasks of education are as follows: motivation, effective teaching methods, new roles of teachers supporting "independent learning" styles, putting reading on the second place, the importance of physical activity, the pursuit of cooperation (Petry, 2014).

My personal experience confirms the research results. The reading habits of the Z-generation students are as follows: they do not necessarily read less, but they read different things and in different ways. György D. Fenyő (2011) describes the thesis about the altered Hungarian reading habits, in which he compares the characteristics of the "traditional reading" and the "new reading" strategies. I can also confirm these as valid characteristics.

“Traditional reading”		“New reading strategies”
Verbal: based on language elements, words, sentences	<b>Text reception</b>	Simultaneous: many information at the same time
Linear	<b>Direction of reading</b>	By leaps
Global, full understanding	<b>The aim of reading</b>	Focus on unique elements
Structured thinking	<b>Expectation from the reader</b>	Starts with pictures, the text is on the second place
Information elements in structures, finding and understanding the meaning	<b>The process</b>	Focus is on the reader not on the writer
Deeper, slower	<b>Reading speed</b>	quicker

*Figure 2. Traditional and new reading strategies. (Fenyő, 2011)*

## 4 The inner world

I have already mentioned the appearance of the TVs’ world, in other words about the real and not real world, which was extended by the virtual world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Timea Antalóczy and Zsuzsanna Pöröcz (2014), in their presentation “Continuous presence” showed that 78% of American adolescents have smart-phones and they called chat sites “drugs” because 3 out of 4 teens are addicted. About the constant presence that is a constraint characteristics of the Z Generation members, the following are listed: general activity, interruptible contact because as they say, if you do not talk to him, you can delete him, parallel existence is applicable, there is no absolute connectivity, no responsibility about the future and there is no risk either. There are simple relationships determined by the mutual satisfaction rate and the possibility of leaving the physical present world. The presence is controlled, “If you are not online, you do not exist”, “if you are available online you exist”, and there is just contact simulation: one created the community and not were born into it. The authors highlight the paradox of the virtual presence meaning that one of the goals is not to be alone, however, people become lonely. This also determines the lack of another person’s physical presence, which means that others are far away. Zygmunt Bauman (2000), who introduced the theory of liquid modernity,

wrote that its characteristics are about the individual, namely the constant changes of situations and the object of focus. It is a kind of chaotic continuation of modernity, where a person can shift from one social position to another in a fluid manner. Nomadism becomes a general trait of the 'liquid modern' human flowing through his/her own life like a tourist, changing places, jobs, spouses, values and sometimes more. That is why everything is unstable, breakable, people need to remain flexible and get more and more new information all the time in order not to have a constant fear of their lives. Last but not least, the consumer patterns are transmitted to human relationships, including disposability and the life without commitment to someone.

## 5 Conclusion

Freedom becomes a paradoxical concept in this world, as people can always and at any time, be controlled and checked. The high number of connections is not as deep as it could be in reality and causes changeable identity because all the data are kept, it is actually not true.

David Le Breton (2010) writes that during the last two decades the social and cultural transformation ended the classical definition of being an adolescent by extending and expanding its boundaries. Pregnancy, alcohol, anorexia, bulimia, drugs and tattoos are common concepts among today's adolescents. The consumer society dictates what someone should look like, which makes a huge impact on adolescents' relationship to their own body and that issue is very important at this age. After all, this is the age of realising and accepting the physical body itself, and because of this, the influence of the internet, ads and other external influences are very important at this stage. These will establish their identity.

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<sup>1</sup> When I was a child, one of the biggest presents was an ice-cream (“mekis ice-cream”) in the McDonald’s. In the school, at the last English lesson of the year, we always went there as a treat. I no longer partake in this treat. However, I see McDonald’s is still one of the most popular meeting spots amongst my students; a lot of them meet there before their first lesson to buy a coffee or their breakfast and they spend plenty of time there after school. McDonald’s became a symbol of status because even if they know the quality of the food is poor and that it is not cheap they say “it is tasty and it is good to be there”. Quick and simple solution.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the television, a child has to experience various realities, and it just gets more complicated if we think about children nowadays and all the virtual and real world in where they need to stay alive. Out of the real world, there are many virtual ones: the virtual world of Facebook, video games, movies and series, the world of avatars will be one part of their identity, which leads a way to breaking the identity into pieces in where it is completely unsure what is true, constant and stable. We can hear a lot about the crisis of values, but it might be more important to examine the crisis of the identity which we should fight against as teachers day by day. We should help students to find their stable identity in themselves over different worlds. Maybe this is connected to the extended “child being”: till they are living in symbolic and virtual worlds they can be only visitors in adulthood.

<sup>3</sup> Although till 2007 students did not use phones during the lessons at all, nowadays it is quite common that students, when changing classrooms, are using their smart-phones/tablets on the corridor, mainly chatting with someone, or even after the bell goes when sitting down in the class, their smart-phone is still in their hands and they are finishing the last messages. Previously, I witnessed students passing written messages on paper, going through other students’ hands. Since the Mozanapló was introduced and is being used, we as teachers have been taking a laptop/tablet with us lesson by lesson. Since that time, I have also started my lessons with registering students being absent on our digital school register system and it became easier and quicker to save grades of verbal tests even in the lesson.

Another positive thing is that while a few years ago the presence of ICT devices, technologies in class was very special and unique, nowadays using devices is dominant. As I am not a fan of forbidding things, I was very concerned about forbidding the usage of mobiles in class, as our school policy says. In the beginning I let my students to use their mobiles. However, I had to realize that the current year 9 and those who are not really interested in literature, like students specialized in sports, are mostly chatting, playing online or checking images even if they have tasks to do. In my opinion, the main reason why students use mobiles in class is that they are not that interested in analysing literature and having conversations. The first solution I found was that I asked their honest opinion about the moment when the lesson became boring for them and told them that I only let them using their mobiles if they are looking for an image, an interesting fact about the topic, which should be posted then on the class Facebook wall with a description of it. This description was supposed to be the personal opinion on why they liked and posted the element, meaning that I could return the situation and make them start to work with our topic without realising it. To stop them chatting during the lesson

is hard and the only solution I have found is asking them whether it is really that important to talk to their friends and then telling them to end the conversation. But three weeks ago something changed and I decided not letting them to use mobiles. I think they are too attached to these technologies and they have to learn to be independent from them. For now, I do not trust the usage of ICT technologies in class that much either. I feel that it is more important to show real conversations, the presence and that is why we need to decrease the usage of technologies in the classroom. Now, we are learning “in blocks”, meaning that besides a kind of study block that they get time to play or if someone is waiting for an important message the person has to let me know about the time he is expecting it and then she or he can check his phone at a certain time. It also happens that a student would like to show a video, we watch it and then start to work. Although I know that I need to be stricter regarding using technologies in the classroom, I think it is more important to work based on a guideline created by us and not on rules formed by me or the school. On the other hand, I have to say that giving punishments is surprisingly still very effective, students are afraid of getting one, but for me it is one of the worst things that can happen during my lesson.

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned above, the fast-food culture is present among my students. The smoking experience appears in varying proportions since there are stricter controls on smoking in schools. As smoking is not allowed there, it is not that popular. Lately, the school’s neighbours came to speak to the headmaster because students were smoking under the window. I personally know that students often gather together on the weekends to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. It turned out that during these gatherings they want to relive some other state of being and, of course, besides being together they also want to be cool in the eyes of the others. Music is very important to them, during their free periods in school or on the bus or train when coming to school they often listen to music. It is also a good technique of being hidden in certain situations. The newly purchased smart-phones and tablets are also status symbols and the students are always happy to search any material related to the lesson on their device. It is a frequent problem that the wifi in the school is not good enough. One of my student, who got a few years-old phone with which he could only make calls and send messages after he had left his smart-phone somewhere, was the object of jokes. He made us realize the strangeness of the everyday life, which was very thought-provoking.

<sup>5</sup> Only one fourth of my students talks to their mothers about their problems, another fourth talks to their fathers and the rest mainly tries to avoid having any conversation with their parents. Of course, there are exceptions. At the last parents evening a mother told me that they, as a family, always sat down at the table for an hour and everybody had to talk about how the person was even if, for example, her daughter would have preferred to be alone. Even if, fortunately, there are several examples of children and their parents being able to talk to each other, sometimes it is not that easy. Another mother told me that sometimes it was incredibly hard to accept that her daughter was like an adult and then suddenly she was a stubborn teenager again.

<sup>6</sup> In my case, I think this is a particularly important problem, because since I have discovered that only three out of thirty students in my class get any sex education from

their parents and some of the girls have already approached me with different problems related to this topic, I consider that it is very important to provide such information. I understand and accept if a parent says that sexual education is none of his business, but it's a very difficult question, because, as I can see, students find completely irrelevant and distrustful content about the topic and see distorted body images. I usually start to talk about the confusion of the body image in year 9 using my own personal experiences regarding my diets and early bulimia problem, which is completely relevant after seeing a girl eating only salad and a kind of crisp bread (called abonett) at this age. Prevention is very important and I hope that my reliable and true examples will help students to avoid a hard situation. I use the poem *Dosszié* by Krisztina Toth, for talking about sexuality, in which the story of losing virginity can be read. I have heard back that for some of the students it was a bit too early to face this, but on the other hand it is hard to find the proper time for this because I know that others are already beyond everything in year 8. The solution that I can see is that we as adults should be more patient and careful about this topic, but still students need to talk about these things, and even by using contemporary literary or other materials, techniques we should give them the opportunity to develop their emotional intelligence. This is possible in small steps but only if you really, really pay attention to who they are, what kind of texts they understand, how they feel. For example, last week I brought in a Gabor-Lanczkor's poem which was completely hard for the year 9 students and we got stuck. It was a mistake and I did admit it to my students as well, who then became more open and we could have a great, honest conversation about responsibility, making decisions and understanding others.

<sup>7</sup> It is a challenge for teachers to develop the ability of memorizing things by integrating different concentration exercises even from drama pedagogy. We need to pay attention to the recognition of the time students get tired and when different teaching techniques or self-reflection should be used. When did I get bored? From which part was the learning material not interesting? Why is it not interesting for me? What does the fact that I was thinking about something else say about me? These were our main questions.

<sup>8</sup> This is related to many things. For example, the fact that everyone is up late and everyone wants to stand out. They search for and test their identity for which Facebook is a great place - How many people like my images or shared music? Receiving more and more likes becomes a living phenomenon among my students as well.

<sup>9</sup> The most played games are building and skill games. The last one surprised me because even if the game is not that challenging, they can spend hours with this. The game, called 'Zombie' was exciting, the "lovagos" was challenging and they loved to explore different ages to go through them. From this and from being so active in class I feel that students are less mature than a few years ago. Till they play games they do not need to face the real world. Neither having oral or written tests.

<sup>10</sup> I do not think that it has changed. Being accepted by others and belonging to a group have always been very important.

<sup>11</sup> This is true, indeed. Even considering personal or educational space, this is the most important element. They like to share and show videos and pictures. When my students had to take photos in order to complete their task, they worked with more enthusiasm and finished the task quicker as well as they put more effort in the project just like in our Nothing project. The outcome of the video project with my Y11s was excellent: their work ethic was amazing just like their final project. They are very happy to take a photo of the lesson notes, put it on class group, however, it does not mean that they study more. That is why I would encourage to use their creativity in this way. For example, they wrote comics for existing photos, and analysed texts and literary works more creatively when they could do it in the way they liked (as a video). The appearance of avatars in these games is probably the first feature, anyone can be a knight, a hero, a zombie, a killer or an honorary citizenship - all without their real personality.

<sup>12</sup> It depends on the student. I can see examples of both. Classes specialized in sports are very consistent as for a good performance they need the right amount of sleep. But with the growing number of all kinds of extra lessons, the learning time is extended and they sleep less. Then, after holidays, they are so happy to tell stories about staying up till late at night and sleeping a lot in the following morning.

<sup>13</sup> I think many teachers fight for a valuable life, and although I agree that there is a big danger, I believe that we have a huge responsibility towards it. So this is up to us - I would not say that this is a generation's characteristic. Or I would ask, where is the parents', teachers' and adults' point to other examples?

<sup>14</sup> This is typical, although I have never met the dangers arising from it in my school. Watching the celebrity world is perhaps significant, but I cannot give an example which clearly emerged only because of that phenomenon. Previously, we had "Táncdalfesztivál", now we have X-Factor. Even today, like before, they follow people in the spotlight.

<sup>15</sup> In 2012, looking for two Y10 female students, one of them told embarrassed that she was afraid to get pregnant. It was not the biological process of pregnancy. On the other the weight of the body is the thrust of the race, but, of course, the wanton and girls themselves easily assess the tax remained the same.

## **Intercultural Primary Education in the Second Half of the Decade**

***Róbert Osad'an – Elizabeth Reid – Mária Belešová\****

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**Abstract:** Intercultural education advances the comprehension of different people and cultures. It emphasizes teaching that accepts and respects that diversity is normal in all areas of life. It attempts to sensitize the pupil to the concept that we all have developed in varied ways and that different does not mean “wrong”. In the presented article, we deal with a term defined in the context of intercultural education. We think about the way of its implementation in primary education, while respecting all the attributes of cultural differentiation. Intercultural education examines forms of xenophobia, trying to diminish them, and advocates equal opportunities for all. Intercultural education works to modify individuals and institutions and so transform the society (What is intercultural education? Do we in the West have the materials to accomplish this in our classrooms?).

**Key words:** intercultural education, multicultural education, interculture, primary education.

### **1 Introduction**

Cultural relativism reinforces the idea of equality between different cultures in terms of intrinsic value and discourages any attempt at proclaiming one culture as being superior or inferior to others. Values, norms, symbols of a culture must be evaluated within their context and functionality, and not by the criteria of a different culture (Cristea, 2012). Within the given context, the coexistence of several cultures in the same area gave rise to a set of related concepts: multicultural, intercultural, as well as multiculturalism, interculturality. The concepts of difference and diversity can create tension in themselves. As school populations become more diverse, instructors should understand the needs and cultural sensitivities of a broad range of learners and build means for working

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with them effectively. Some of these groups include, but are not limited to, women; students with disabilities; students of color; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students; and increasingly, international students. The primary teacher also hopes to interact with the parents of these students and therefore must be sensitive to cultural differences. The establishment of the global vision and the improvement of intercultural communication skills demand students to acquire basic intercultural knowledge, global awareness, attitudes to respect multiculturalism, and common values in different cultures (Huang, 2015). How can we reach a new social perception of difference? First of all, by means of transcultural education promoting a positive approach of the difference. This entails the notions of interaction, exchanges, reciprocity, real solidarity, equality of chances, etc. Second of all, the acceptance of these differences and the education in the spirit of interculturality (Bortun, 2013).

We use the term intercultural education to include multicultural education, anti-racist education, human rights education, active citizenship, inclusive education, conflict-resolution, bi-lingual and multilingualism, gender and LGBT issues and anything that promotes prejudice and detracts from tolerance and acceptance of others and their culture, customs and traditions (Garcia). Hopefully, we have had some practice incorporating methods and materials into the curriculum with these groups, as schools in the West now are receiving unprecedented numbers of students from Africa and the Middle East.

## **2 Aspects of intercultural education**

Intercultural education has been proven to bring positive results in terms of lowering racial prejudice, developing learner and social identity, celebrating diversity, promoting human rights and citizenship (Róg, 2015). Human rights are universal but the right to maintain cultural differences sometimes challenges human rights (UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education, 2010). Balancing cultural diversity and human rights is a delicate act. All pupils benefit from learning about diverse cultures and meeting people with different perspectives, while those from underrepresented groups are encouraged when their contributions are recognized (International Association for Intercultural Education). There are three aspects of intercultural education: teaching a classroom of diverse students, intercultural teaching methods and multicultural content or teaching materials. The diverse classrooms have already come to the West and the classroom population portends to become even more diverse in the coming years. The school is the most visible educational aspect of Western societies, and its effectiveness is central to the development of democratic society. Its goal is to develop the potential of students through knowledge and the building of competences, values and attitudes that prepare them for productive life in society.

The major challenge when discussing the issue of education and multiculturalism is dealing with some of the inherent tensions that arise in reconciling competing world views with each other. Such tensions reflect the diversity of values, which co-exist in a multicultural world. Often, they cannot be resolved in a single “either/or” solution. However, the dynamic interchange between competing aspects is what lends richness to the debate on education and multiculturalism. On one side the definitions of intercultural education appear to be often imprecise, incomplete, and even simplistic. It is, in general, considered a method to teach in multi-ethnic classrooms avoiding behaviours of intolerance or even racism. In addition, although some of the “political” documents show awareness of some kind of relation of foreign language learning to intercultural education, the way how one affects the other and vice-versa is not completely explored (Ferrari, 2015).

Our world is experiencing rapid change and cultural, political, economic and social upheaval challenge traditional ways of life. Education plays a major role in promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Programmes that encourage dialogue among students of different cultures, beliefs and religions can make an important and meaningful contribution to sustainable and tolerant societies. Education not only reflects society but also molds its development (Intercultural Education in the primary school, 2005). Teachers have an important role to play in the development of a tolerant, peaceful intercultural society. Education is no miracle worker, but it can challenge racism and promote intercultural awareness. Education develops the child’s intercultural skills, attitude of tolerance, and knowledge. An intercultural education is valuable to all children in equipping them to participate in an increasingly diverse society. Intercultural Education can provide a quality education for all. Yet Intercultural education must promote diversity in universality – a difficult challenge. The aims of Intercultural Education are summarized nicely in ‘the four pillars of education’ identified by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (1996): Learn to know, Learn to do, Learn to live together, Learn to be.

### **3 Background of intercultural education**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) stated, “Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.” The statement challenges the traditional social concepts of “Us” and “Them” or “Insiders versus Outsiders”. This statement might be called the beginning of awareness of a need for intercultural education but did

not necessarily trigger action until special interest groups demonstrated their demands. The governability of all pluralistic, democratic societies increasingly depends on the ability of the governments to provide equity in public and social life, and to educate citizens to be open to intercultural dialogue and be tolerant of each other's ways of being, doing and thinking (The National Association for Multicultural Education).

The decade of the 1960s was a period of social activism and change when people of the West were forced to reexamine their cultural heritage and multicultural education began to emerge to address the educational needs of a society that continues to struggle with the realization that it is not monocultural, but is an amalgamation of many cultures. In the 1970s, ethnic minorities and women confronted racism and sexism in society as seen in a monocultural education. Women had been struggling for rights for decades and had gained the right to vote and to drive automobiles. The World Wars granted women the right to work in the West out of necessity and many of them never went back into the home. Ethnic studies and women's studies developed in the 70s to add their traditionally silenced voices to the education and therefore to the development of the culture. These sectors were followed by people with disabilities, various religions and more minority cultures in the late twentieth century. Many national governments made a commitment at the World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001 to develop and implement a National Action Plan Against Racism. Much Intercultural Education in today's classrooms stems from this conference, although much had been done previously. Both educators and students must participate in integration, as it is a two-way dynamic, not the sole concern of one or the other. Intercultural education is not meant as a radical change and is not resource intensive. It needs respect for difference, and an evolving change of attitude. C. E. Sleeter (1996, as cited by Hanley, 2012) in his paper, "Multicultural education as social activism," delineated five approaches to multicultural education:

- Advocates of the Teaching the Culturally Different approach attempt to raise the academic achievement of students of color through culturally relevant instruction.
- In the Human Relations approach students are taught about commonalities of all people through understanding their social and cultural differences but not their differences in institutional and economic power.
- The Single Group Studies approach is about the histories and contemporary issues of oppression of people of color, women, low socioeconomic groups, and gays and lesbians.
- The Multicultural Education approach promotes the transformation of the educational process to reflect the ideals of democracy in a pluralistic



society. Students are taught content using instructional methods that value cultural knowledge and differences.

- Educators who use the Social Reconstructionist approach to multicultural education go a step further to teach students about oppression and discrimination. Students learn about their roles as social change agents so that they may participate in the generation of a more equitable society.

These categories overlap, and educators may use more than one approach simultaneously. The Multicultural Education and Human Relations approaches seem most appropriate to the lower primary grades, while the other three approaches can be incorporated in the upper primary grades. The inclusion of an occasional holiday or hero in a curriculum which leaves the European American story as the main narrative the West cannot create the understanding needed for a multicultural society, nor can it provide the kind of education needed to educate a multicultural populace to become active citizens of a democracy (What is intercultural education?).

#### **4 Intercultural education today and into the future**

UNESCO (Guidelines) has developed three principles for intercultural education which are good to review:

Principle I. Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.

Principle II. Intercultural Education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.

Principle III. Intercultural Education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.

The European integration process raised, in turn, a series of problems. Membership in the European cultural space and the construction of what we call European cultural identity requires an inter-sectorial approach to harmonize economic, commercial, social goals with the cultural ones. The Pan-European space, thus shaped, the diversity of cultural practices and traditions of European countries must be perceived as wealth and not as a source of division and conflicts (Pasca, 2012). In the twenty-first century with massive migration going on, intercultural education must continue to change and not only include

traditional minorities but the minority cultures of refugees and migrants from the Middle East and Africa. These changes must include customs, values, religions and differing gender roles of the cultures of these recent arrivals to Europe and the West without diminishing the attention already devoted to minority races, women, LGBT, disabilities and other minority groups. The recent migration of those fleeing the Middle East and Africa is changing the profile of classrooms in the West and appears to be set to continue adding sizable numbers of migrants with backgrounds very different than those of the children who currently fill the classrooms of the Western countries. Since the Enlightenment in the West, there is a tendency to downplay religion in public life. Nevertheless, there is a growing visibility of religious or spiritual belief and practice now in political thought and social activity. Conflict which uses religion as a motive is increasing and the search for religious meaning is taking on new forms (UNESCO). Students are not only multicultural now, but also multi-faith. It would seem appropriate for these newer students to include materials previously excluded because they were deemed common knowledge, like Christianity and Judaism in the comparative religions. It should not be taken for granted that the perceived common knowledge of students is accurate. UNESCO states in its guidelines on intercultural education, "It is fundamentally important that democratic societies address inter-religious issues through education."

Most of the migrants and refugees entering the West are coming from Muslim countries. As with all cultures, the customs and values which are held and practiced in Muslim countries are not better or worse than those held in the West, they are only different. Moreover, many migrant children have not attended school for months or even years, as it was unsafe or their school was destroyed. This challenge will be added to that of learning (Byram, 2015) the local language if the child does not already speak it. If a child has a disability, it may be necessary to convince the parents that there is still schooling available for such a child.

Gender roles in particular are more traditional in Middle Eastern cultures than in the West. Education may be valued for boys more than for girls. It is expected that the girls in the family will eventually marry and go to be part of their husband's family, serving as his wife and the mother of his children in the home. After a long and continuing social struggle for women's rights and equal pay for equal work, many women in the West may see this as "giving up the struggle" before the fight is won. Teachers may find that they must work on their own attitudes, as being wife and mother is an acceptable career choice. While the primary teacher is not usually involved in career guidance, this value may still manifest in inconvenient ways. Girls may be kept home from school to care for younger children and/or do the cooking when their mother is not available for whatever reason, whether giving birth to a sibling or taking another child to the

doctor. It may be difficult to explain to the parents that learning is important for girls, even on the elementary level. The girl still needs to be able to read and do basic maths in order to shop and follow a recipe. It may be just as difficult for Western career women to realize that many women find fulfillment in the roles of mother and wife and that this is a valid life choice but one that should be made later in the girl's life.

Religion, in the form of comparative religion, has begun to be taught in many schools which will ease the teacher's role. While many people in the West do not profess any particular belief, it is important to respect those who do hold to a specific religion, be they students, parents or other adults. In this vein, no religion or its practicers should be belittled. Particularly in regard to religion, the issue of tolerance is likely to come up. While some religions teach that they should be shared with others by conversion, students should be instructed that in a democracy each person is allowed to choose his or her religion or none. Proselytizing should be discouraged by anyone on the school grounds; if they want to share their religion it should be done outside of school hours and off the campus.

Touching both gender roles and religion, Muslims worship on Fridays. Observant men who are going to the mosque may not want to touch a woman or girl, or even take something from them directly, in order to maintain his purity for his visit to the mosque. Different Muslim countries and cultures vary on whether women also attend mosque; if they do, they sit in a separate area. This custom may affect parent/teacher conferences and assemblies when parents are invited to attend.

Various other customs may affect the primary classroom. Most Westerners have become accustomed to women and girls wearing head scarves but there are many other customs. Many Middle Eastern cultures find it offensive to show the sole of the foot to another person, whether shod or not. This can cause unintended offence when Westerners lift their foot to show their new shoes to another person. Teachers might wonder why some students sitting cross-legged on the floor will twist their feet under them in uncomfortable-looking ways. This may be the motive. There are too many various customs to enumerate them here. A sense of exploration, openness to learn, slowness to take offence and willingness to forgive will go a long way toward smoothing ruffled feathers when there are misunderstandings. More teacher training in intercultural issues would help sensitize teachers to many potential problems and help them deal with them diplomatically and efficiently.

## **5 Conclusion**

Intercultural education enacts social change by way of education toward a more tolerant, accepting society. It requires imagination, critical thinking, and commitment to a different tomorrow, inclusive of all of our histories and peoples. It is part of the continuous human journey toward justice and pushes us toward fulfilling the promises of democracy. The goals of intercultural education for the second half of this decade are not different than before. They remain:

Creating a safe, accepting and successful learning environment for all;

- Increasing awareness of global issues;
- Strengthening cultural consciousness;
- Strengthening intercultural awareness;
- Teaching students that there are multiple historical perspectives;
- Encouraging critical thinking;
- Preventing prejudice and discrimination.

The audience of students and their parents has changed and will continue to change to incorporate many newcomers from Middle Eastern and African countries who hold the values, religions and customs of those cultures from which they came. While not everything about their customs will be new to teachers in the West, there will still be many new things we can learn from them and about them.

While there are many materials available for incorporation into the curriculum, there is room for continued review and revision of teaching materials. The teacher may find lots of materials available online, but finding them can be time consuming. Materials like The Big Myth, make available creation myths from many cultures in an interactive website (<http://www.bigmyth.com/>) available in English, German and Dutch. These can be adapted to the primary classroom, reminding students that if they find differences in the story, it is because the myth associated with their culture has not been read yet. But finding these materials can add hours to the teacher's work. Perhaps more helpful would be intercultural training for teachers to make them aware of potential problems and help them work with students from varied backgrounds.

Within today's changing societies teachers must meet the needs of a culturally diverse student body. Beyond cultural awareness, or what may be generally termed "tolerance", teachers more and more need to identify cultural implications and adapt pedagogical approaches to meet students' cultural and academic needs (Mc Keown & Kurt, 2012).

The need for thoroughly integrated textbooks which incorporate multiple historical views, social customs and religious traditions is clear. New illustrations with multiple races and abilities represented are not enough. Adding a holiday celebration or occasional hero of another culture is not enough. A thorough review and revision of texts and curricula are needed to meet the needs of today's multicultural children who will grow up to be tomorrow's leaders and citizens. It is not the job of teachers to reconcile conflicting view in a multicultural world, only to present them without prejudice. It helps if we prepare our students by reminding them occasionally that we are all different, not better or worse, just different. We can learn from each other and with patience and forgiveness; we can learn together and build bonds that will form strong friendships. The varied students we teach can grow up to be active participants in a free, democratic society.

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## **Divorce Rate in the Slovak Republic as a Social and Educational Problem**

***Katarína Cimprichová Gežová\****

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**Abstract:** Divorce is considered an unwanted phenomenon in the society, although the divorce rate increases. There are many problems for both sides – parents and their children - coming along with divorce. The legal adjustment of divorce may violently strike not only the lives of children influenced by divorce but also the lives of other persons, whose existence is seriously endangered or complicated by establishing new life conditions. Family break-up and the loss of one parent leaves lifelong consequences on the child. The decision for divorce should be therefore thoroughly considered, because it is the point, where the source of loss of personal and family safety arises. Our aim is to point out the problems arising from divorce not only for the divorcing couple, but also for their children, above all, because divorce should not mean hostility for sensible people, particularly if they have children. It is necessary to find a way how to talk together before and during divorce and to do best in solving problems in the possibly shortest time.

**Key words:** marriage, family, crisis, divorce, children.

### **1 Introduction**

In every family it comes to an argument or a conflict between partners. The institute of divorce is nothing bad as such, (often redemption), because it solves such problems that are not solvable by any other interventions. Divorce as such is not to blame for negative attendant circumstances in family. The process of divorce as such is not guilty for increasing the divorce rate, but the disagreement determinants which have reached it. The fact that partners want to solve their problems by divorce is in the process of divorce mostly the reason to separate marriage. On the other hand, every particular divorce situation is individual. “Fragments” of breaking-up hit always different people and complicate their lives in various ways. This terminal state of “dying out” of the family will never have ideal legal, official or economic tools to get rid of negative attendant features. Divorce can be regarded as a type of measurement that should prevent total emotional exhaustion, suffering and get rid of stress impulses caused by

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long-term difficulties and disharmony in common life. It comes to massive changes in individuals' lives. It concerns the process of divorce as such, property division, agreement about further parental laws and duties, alimony for children or former partner. It's crucially important to cope with these issues quickly, although the rapid sequence of events does not offer too much space for it. It comes to the formation of a demanding situation getting the psyche of an individual into a not easy situation. Psychologists classify divorce as being on the second place regarding the seriousness and complexity of the situation immediately after the death of a close person (Poupětová, 2009, p. 18). The perception of divorce changed considerably after 1989. That year was a year of many significant changes from political as well as from economic and social points of view. The centralized and planned-controlled state adopted suddenly the system of market economics in autumn 1989. It brought two insights into praxis. On one hand, people gained new freedom in decision making, on the other hand, individuals became fully responsible for themselves. Obligation of work and fixed financial income changed after the revolution into survival from one day to another and fright of the future. Nowadays, the situation in the society causes not only existential problems, but it has a negative impact on new families. In many cases it comes to breakup and destabilization within the family what suppresses the resolution of young people to establish their own families. From the sociological point of view, the topic of divorce and its still increasing rate is not a taboo anymore. The ratio of divorced marriages to filled divorce petitions is for our little Slovakia still extremely high. Seriousness and consequences of divorce have been trivialized, what is obvious. The presented issue is addressed by recognized world authors, such as Alba-Fisch (2016), Demby (2016), Altmaier and Maloney (2007), Horn, Puffer, Roesch and Lehmann (2016), Jenkins, McGowan, Knafo and Noam (2016), Vanassche, Corijn, Matthijs and Swicegood (2015), Sodermans, Botterman, Havermans and Matthijs (2015), Tach and Eads (2015) and others. According to Višňovský (2010, p. 33), it comes to a decrease of the value of marriage and the value of family. The social status of women has changed and it is reflected in the structure of family relationships and the stability of traditional relationships in marriages.

## **2 Discussion**

There's no doubt that divorce belongs to situations which are difficult to cope with, are full of conflicts and new obstacles which are needed to be beaten. Such an unpleasant situation may cause alcohol abuse, medicament addiction or development of different types of substantial or non-substantial addictions. It can strike both parents and children, because they consider similar situations an escape from stress. They build defense mechanisms subconsciously to cope with trauma. "Among most frequent defense mechanisms are the following:



- rationalization – partners want to give generally accepted reasons for their action,
- projection – partners try to project their own mistakes into their partner's behavior and to get rid of the responsibility for family breakup" (Wolf, 1994, p. 72).

The precursors of divorce and its first, pre-divorce phase, are the problems between partners, commonly named as marital developing crisis. There are three marital crises, whereas the first one is obvious immediately after the first signs of communication problems and a decrease of sexual desire appears. The married couple cannot come to an agreement on basic things that did not use to be a problem before. Suddenly, things they have never noticed before become annoying, the partners are not able to get on well anymore, to ignore some of their needs and one of the partners becomes more egoistic than in the past. They have several arguments in a short period of time, but if they hear the word "divorce", they get scared and do everything to rescue their relationship. The beginning of this phase appears in the third to seventh year of marriage (Plzák, 1998, p. 119-123). The length of time between arguments and reconciliation shortens.

Consequently, the second marital developing crisis comes. It appears between the seventeenth and the twenty-fifth year of marriage. It can take one or more years. According to J. Prevendárová a G. Kubíčková (1996, p. 58), this crisis is connected with the coming retirement of partners and with the fright of future. Among other factors are health problems, higher sensitivity, feelings of lonesomeness and uselessness when children leave their homes – the so-called empty nest syndrome; that all can be the cause of a sudden wave of disagreements in partnership.

The third crisis comes due to deepening and not solving the problems of the previous stage. It starts in the fiftieth or the sixtieth year of partners' age. In addition to the feelings of uselessness, hormonal changes can occur. People need more energy to handle situations. Contrary to it, if the symptoms of third crisis get stronger, they cause higher nervousity and thick atmosphere in the household. The stronger signs of marital breakup are as they follow:

- indifference of one of the partners towards helping in the household;
- arguments concerning mostly finances;
- ventilation of problems outside the family;
- waning care of children;
- absence of sexual life;
- one of the partners is considering divorce (Lazarová, 2002, p. 63).

It is important not to cease with communication with the partner during the crisis, although it often happens that an argument develops from an attempt to talk about problems rationally. In many experts' opinion, such a way of communication is useful as constructive arguments leading to a univocal solution are a good incentive to a new period of partnership coexistence. It is important to keep thinking positive, to have clear opinions and not to act in affect during the marital crisis. In our inquiry, we dedicated ourselves to the ways of remedy of broken partnerships and 48,57% of people said that they had tried to talk with their partner constructively, they had proposed a solution and they had wanted to solve the situation actively. We find this number quite low, because, in our opinion, not all the marital problems are so serious that the marriage should end up in divorce. We think that most of them are resolvable by means of communication or with the help of an expert. According to J. Prevendárová (2014, p. 35), the disability to come to an agreement springs from gender differences between men and women. The way of men's communication is often plain, general and sometimes more vulgar than women's. Men often make judgments and use imperatives. Men often relegate the listener to a subordinate position. Women use different relationship contexts, show their feelings, expect emotional support and want to have suggestive questions answered. Their expected result of an argument is that their partner admits that it is them who want the best for both of them.

People get married with expectations. They look for support from their partners, existential support in their families, sense of life and they try to escape from problems. When their marriage gets to a blind alley, they thus look back on their fulfilled or non-fulfilled existential desires. In the process of making the decision to fill in a divorce petition, the list of pros and cons of the marriage play a role. But to what extent do they assess the marriage? It brings about many further questions: What are the criteria for deciding whether the marriage is good or bad, whether it fulfils its function or not? In which way does this marriage fulfil its functions better or worse than other marriages? Will divorce give or take something from the family members? What is then the "reality" in marriage and after divorce? Wouldn't the couple be shocked after revealing the relativism of their perception of reality? Would they ask, "Does our marriage fulfil its purpose?", "Does it bring pros to our family members?", "Does the social environment accept the state of our marriage?", "Are the negative aspects of our marriage serious, unbearable?", "Would a break-up, respectively a new partner, compensate me or my children for the negatives of my present marital life?", instead of asking, "How is our marriage? Good? Bad? Better than other ones?"

Divorce is, however, the only socially accepted form of ending a marriage during the life of the partners. It is not only the affair of the couple and their children, but also a social affair influencing the social system. Ending a marriage

is regulated by the Law about Family No. 36/2005 of the Collection of Laws, which tells, that “the court may end the marriage by divorce on the proposal of one of the partners if the relationship between the partners is as seriously disrupted and permanently broken-up, that the marriage cannot fulfil its purpose anymore and it cannot be presumed that partners renew their marital coexistence”. The court finds out the causes having issued in serious relationship disrupt and it takes them into account during the process. The court always takes the interests of infants into consideration” (Act No. 36/2005 Coll. on family and on amendment of some other acts).

According to M. Hargašová (1983, p. 23) the causes of marriage breakup are connected in a complicated tangle of factors that have an impact on each other:

- biological (age uniqueness, temperament);
- psychological (characteristic features, skills, creativity);
- cultural-sociological (social norms, persistent opinions about family duties);
- physical (environment, economical and politic situation).

J. Gabura (1987, p. 7) lists the causes of breakup as follows:

- different education of partners;
- communication gap between the partners in the married couple that finally leads to an emotional breakup;
- change of value orientation in nowadays society;
- immature attitude of partners towards divorce;
- inability to solve small problems;
- another partner;
- improper expectations from the partner;
- personality traits;
- emotional absence
- romantic love;
- coexistence with a risky partner.

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic records as the most frequent cause of marriage breakup the divergence of characters, opinions and interests in total number of 6875 cases in 2013, what is about 921 less than in 2006, when this cause was recorded in 7796 cases. It is surprising, because the question, why would such partners get married if their characters were compatible with the relationship arises. Why did they get married if they had totally different opinions and interests? In 2013, infidelity is given as the second most frequent cause of breakup in 1149 cases and the third cause is alcoholism in 815 cases. We can claim that we have reached similar results in our search, too, although we anticipated some changes. We were convinced that if partners decide to get

married, they know each other well and they are able to help each other to manage everyday situations. Unfortunately, men and women have often fixed ideas regarding their partners. It is necessary to take into consideration that there is no ideal partner and a right choice depends on the ability to adapt to the partner, to be tolerant and to make compromises. Our inquiry confirms the results by the Statistical Office but with one difference, infidelity of one of the partners, claimed by 46% of interviewees, takes the first place. The second reason was the divergence of characters, opinions and interests and the third one was alcoholism. We assume that the real cause of breakup lies in the divergence of characters but the married couples do not admit it in front of the court.

Marriage breakup hits the emotional life of partners, their financial independence or the question of housing that is firmly connected with finances. If the finances are concerned, 76.35% of women declared a definite worsening of their financial situation. The number of divorces had a slightly decreasing tendency in 2013 (according to the Statistical Office, 11 637 marriages were divorced that year) contrary to 2006 when there came to a massive increase in the divorce rate in total number of 14 007 marriages, so there were 49 divorces to 100 new marriages. Divorce has thus become a serious issue not only for a married couple getting divorced, their families, but also a problem of the whole society. It is a serious social and sociological problem. Several experts say that divorce has a huge impact on children's education and their further life in an incomplete family. Often, the school results get worse. The school – family cooperation is extremely important in general, but also in the field of prevention of socio-pathological phenomena. It is inevitable when dealing with problems in pupils' behavior (Emmerová, 2015, p. 116). Most children in the Slovak Republic are consigned to their mothers (the inquiry confirms 72.30%). The author I. Špaňhelová (2010, p. 132) lists the following advantages for children:

- the child is under a more united education of one parent (the other parent has almost no opportunity to intervene in upbringing as rarely comes into contact with the child);
- the child lives in one stable environment – at home, only visits the other parent's household at weekends;
- fully accepts one parental role (it can have pros and cons, too, because this role is often overloaded).

However, Špaňhelová (2010, p. 132) points out the disadvantages of being under the exclusive custody of the mother which can have a negative impact on the child:

- children do not know much about the role of the other parent – the male or father's role (they do not know about their interests, attitudes to certain situations, etc.);
- children do not know how their fathers behave in everyday situations;
- mothers' behaviour can be perceived as stressful (since they must take care of themselves and their households);
- it can seem that mothers do not have enough time for them because of their busyness;
- mothers' busyness does not allow them to talk with their children peacefully;
- mothers often find themselves in a stressful situation because of the lack of finances. They cannot let their children have what they would like to have.

In the given case, fathers do not have the opportunity to take a big part in the education of their children, because they spend only a short period of time together, mostly every second weekend. In most developed countries, alternating custody is a legally regulated solution after the divorce of parents. It was passed by the amendment of the Act on Family from 1 July 2010 in Slovakia as well. The civic association Fathers' League has published an overview of foreign studies about the advantages of alternating custody on its website [www.ligaotcov.sk](http://www.ligaotcov.sk). After summarising 33 inquiries including totally 1846 children under the custody of one of the parents (mother or father) and 814 children in serial (alternating) custody, compared with children in complete families, it follows that children in alternating custody have significantly better conditions for socializing than children being under the custody of one of the parents (mostly the mother). In our research, we realized the absence of researches dealing with the preference of alternating custody. We were surprised by its results, because alternating custody took place before the exclusive custody of the father, indeed in 26.13%. This type of custody is not common in our society. There are many supporters and opponents of alternating custody. Špaňhelová (2010, p. 139) speaks about the propriety of alternating custody regarding the age of children, "The introduction of alternating custody is recommended for children from the third year of age, whereas children under this age need to live in a stable environment. In such an environment they gain the feeling of safety and then they can change the environment, as well". Men demand alternating custody more often than women, what springs from prejudices in our society. Women strictly insist on the exclusive custody of mothers. We can state that the aim of alternating custody is, above all, to preserve and to strengthen an equal contact of an infant with both parents. "Alternating custody can work very well under the condition that both parents are mature and flexible personalities, able of mutual communication, parents and children incline to such type of custody and the households of the parents are close to each other. A failure or an absolute disability of alternating custody

comes about when there is a strong enmity between parents, if they are not able to communicate without unceasing arguments, if one parent has a serious objection against such a custody and their households are too distant from each other” (Warshak, 1996, p. 172). It is very important for parents to cooperate and to consider what is best for their children. “By bringing up and self-education it is necessary to point out the adaptation functions providing the environment with a balance and the balance of human organism. Personality is formed in the process of the mutual interaction between the human and the environment. All the external conditions form an individual, but the relationships between people have a decisive influence on this formation” (Perhács & Paška, 1995, p. 157).

### **3 Conclusion**

People get married for various reasons; to find the sense of life, defence, shelter and they expect some positive effects. Contrary to it, if their partnership (marriage) ends up in failure – divorce, individuals can find themselves in an even worse subjective situation and position in the society than before getting married. Nowadays, the society develops hectically under the conditions of globalization, technical progress and social turnarounds. This factor influences young people’s behaviour and decision-making to a great extent. Nowadays, when people get into the position of “homo homini lupus” (one a wolf to another), it is very important to lead the youth, to help them with their position in life, to clarify the significance of marriage and the importance of choosing a suitable partner to them, because a good marriage does not come from nothing, it is a dynamic, developing sensitive “social organism”, the shape of which depends on the married couple and their behaviour to each other.

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# Professional Development of Information Technology and Technical Education Teachers

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**Abstract:** Due to normal work duty and responsibilities, the responsibility for students' motivation and self-development motivates teachers for continuous training and thus to expand their own competencies. It is especially important in case of teachers who graduate technical and information technology (IT). IT teachers should be familiar with the latest technology as well as innovative solutions in the field of didactics of technical subjects.

This article concerns issues related to the professional development of information technology and technical education teachers in Poland. An analysis of documents shows the stages of professional development. It also highlights the requirements necessary to fulfill on different levels of a teacher's professional career.

**Key words:** teacher's career, teacher's development, education, teaching skills.

## 1 Introduction

Today's demands and the upcoming challenges result in growing expectations from teachers – on their ability to interpret and understand the processes taking place in the educational system of the country as well as worldwide trends. Teachers' professional development comes along with the duty of continuous improvement, gaining knowledge and mastering skills. Being a good teacher includes many features. Fulfilling the professional duties and responsibilities in order to meet the students' educational needs require patience, wide knowledge, teaching and communication skills and a variety of pedagogical competencies. Continuous education of teachers is understood as an accessory of teacher candidates in improving their professional qualifications as a supplement to teacher training leading to gaining full professional qualifications; as providing teachers with proper knowledge and equip them with skills that expand their qualifications and go beyond it. Teachers' development is based on the parallel and interrelated evolution of both practical-moral and technical competencies.

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According to Czeslaw Banach (2009), teachers' development, their adaptability and innovativeness depend on their capabilities in various spheres of life – from the knowledge of education law to determination and participation in the decision making process concerning the functioning of a school.

Many publications, discussions, conferences on the teaching subject have been held and written already. Despite this, the problem is still relevant and present, often returns to the headlines of magazines and books, and is the subject of seminars and scientific conferences. There are many questions in the field of education that still need to be answered. What kind of competencies and features should characterize a contemporary teacher? How should teacher training look like? How to improve the skills of practicing teachers? How should their work proceed? What is, what can, and what should be the position of a teacher in the society and in the system of education? These are just some of the questions that regularly appear and have almost never received a clear, complete and final answer. General education of technical education teachers in Poland takes place mostly in universities and colleges. The existing model of training technical education teachers often does not take into account the specifics of the teachers' future work. This means that regardless of whether prospective teachers are willing to work in general or vocational education, the educational program and the obtained training are the same.

## **2 Teachers' professional development**

Teachers should be interested in the development of their own skills and knowledge if their aim to influence and affect the development of their students. Therefore, a career plan is helpful. The career development of teachers is defined in legislation – art. 9a-9i Act of January 26, 1982 (Teachers' Charter with further amendments), and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 1 March 2013 on the professional promotion of teachers (Journal of Laws 2013, Item 393). Mastering skills by teachers is important, it is a part of the process of their personal development and a means of improving the quality of the institutions in which teachers are employed. Only teachers employed by institutions included in the system of education can be promoted.

The development of a teacher depends on many factors - motivation, mental, spiritual, etc., arises from the personal capabilities and various components of human personality.

Teachers' development means a positive change in the quality of educational competencies that truly support the education and the development of students, and above all, improve the personality of the teachers.

It has to be underlined that teachers' professional development continues throughout their active participation in school education. Teachers' development is based on expanding their skills, competencies as well as general knowledge and knowledge from the fields of pedagogy and psychology. Professional development can be characterized by the four levels of professional promotion. According to the Teachers' Charter, teachers can obtain the following professional promotion grades:

- trainee teacher;
- contract teacher;
- appointed teacher;
- chartered teacher.

The four promotion grades are described below.

### **3 Trainee teachers**

An internship is a time of preparation, in which freshly graduated teachers gain and develop knowledge, skills and experience needed for further promotion. A teacher willing to enter into an internship contract in a school does not submit an application to a headmaster of a school, his/her work begins with the beginning of the school year, but not later than 14 days from the date of commencement of classes. In the case of an employment relationship upon expiry of this deadline, the teacher cannot start the internship until the end of the year.

The headmaster of a school assigns a mentor teacher, which has to be at least a contract teacher. This mentor does not have to be a teacher of the same subject, but his/her experience in teaching and education is important, as well as his/her knowledge of the work in the school.

The task of the supervisor is to help the trainee teacher in the process of preparation and implementation of the development plan and to evaluate the project for the training period. The trainee teacher prepares a professional development plan which shall be submitted to the headmaster within 20 days from starting conducting classes. The headmaster has to accept or to return the professional development plan of a trainee teacher (with remarks for revision) within 30 days from the date of receiving it. If the plan is returned to the trainee teacher, he/she has to improve it and make some necessary changes according to the headmaster's suggestions. In this case, the teacher is obliged to improve the plan immediately and to re-submit it to the headmaster. A professional development plan should include:

- the specifics and the needs of the school;
- activities to be performed (in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 1 March 2013 on the professional promotion of teachers) (Journal of Laws 2013, Item 393);
- knowledge, skills and experience the trainee teacher should develop.

After the “probation time” the teacher is obliged, within 30 days, to submit a report on the implementation of the individual skill development program to the headmaster, which may be in the following forms:

- records of completed tasks (analysis of own activities, assessment of their effectiveness, estimated adjustments, conclusions) in a dedicated notebook;
- lesson plans, children’s works, etc.;
- a list of studied professional literature, certificates from participation in professional development forms.

The school’s headmaster evaluates the teacher’s professional achievements after the initial internship taking into account the degree of implementation of the plan of professional development. After receiving a positive assessment for the internship, the teacher has 14 days to submit an application to take the qualification procedure.

The application is submitted to the headmaster who appoints a selection committee from the teaching staff, which includes:

- the headmaster - as its chairman;
- a school subject specialist (educational), if there is not such in the school, another qualified employee of the school is appointed;
- a supervisor.

The date of the interview is set by the headmaster. The interview is conducted by the committee. The trainee teacher applying for promotion to the position of a contract teacher submits a report on the implementation of the plan of professional development and has to answer some questions asked by the committee.

#### **4 Contract teachers**

An internship starts at the beginning of the school year, but not later than 14 days from the beginning of the school year, at the request addressed to the headmaster of the school. The internship lasts for 2 years and 9 months. As in the case of trainee teachers, the school’s headmaster assigns a tutor from among the appointed teachers.

During the internship, contract teachers realize their own professional development plan, which should include:

- the specifics and the needs of the school;
- tasks to be undertaken by the teacher according to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 1 March 2013 on the professional promotion of teachers (Journal of Laws 2013, Item 393);
- requirements for the grade of the contract teacher;
- knowledge, skills and experience the teacher has to develop.

The teacher's professional development plan is presented to the headmaster of the school for approval. The headmaster approves the plan presented by the teacher within 30 days from the date of commencement of classes. During the apprenticeship, the most important tasks of a teacher are:

- participation in the work of school authorities related to the activities of education or other proceedings arising from the statute and the needs of the school;
- developing knowledge and skills;
- exploring the education law and the education system.

During the process of fulfilling the tasks included in the teacher's plan of development, the school's headmaster gathers information about their execution and the efficiency of classes conducted by the teacher.

After completion of the internship, within 30 days, the teacher works out a report on the implementation of the plan of professional development and submits it to the headmaster. The school's headmaster assesses the professional achievements for the period of the internship, taking into account the development plan, the tutor's evaluation of the project and the outcomes of the consultation with the parents' board. The headmaster of the school may also ask the student council for an opinion. The parents' board presents its opinion within 14 days after being asked to do so. The teacher, after obtaining a positive evaluation of professional achievements, may submit a request to resume the proceedings for the next grade to the authority of the school.

The application shall include:

- certified copies of documents confirming the applicant's professional qualifications;
- a certified copy of the teaching degree contract;
- the school headmaster's certificate containing information about the employment and the range of subjects that the teacher is supervising, the

date of confirmation of the plan of professional development, the date of the report on the implementation of the plan of professional development, the candidate's professional achievements during the internship period and the date of issue.

## **5 Appointed teachers**

A contract teacher can begin an internship for being promoted to an appointed teacher after working for two years after becoming a contract teacher. The teacher must submit a request to the school's headmaster, because the promotion to the next career stage is not automatic when the conditions are fulfilled. It may be that the teacher does not submit a request and remains at the same job position until the end of his/her teaching career. When applying for an internship, the teacher must submit the project of his/her development plan to the school's headmaster. As with the previous stages, during the internship, the teacher realizes his/her professional development plan approved by the school's headmaster. For the internship period, the teacher receives an evaluation of the professional achievements. After a positive evaluation, the teacher submits an application form to the governing authority of the school in order to begin the examination procedure. The governing authority of the school analyzes the application form and other documents submitted by the teacher. The analysis consists of checking whether the teacher has fulfilled all the requirements and submitted all the necessary documents. If the documentation is correct, the governing authority of the school appoints the examination committee which will conduct the exam.

## **6 Chartered teachers**

An appointed teacher can start training for becoming a chartered teacher after working at a school for at least one year after the date of getting the last promotion. As in the cases mentioned above, professional training starts at the beginning, but not later than 14 days from the beginning of the particular school year. The teacher has no mentor at this level, but the headmaster approves the development plan and makes an assessment of the professional work the teacher has already done. The school's headmaster is also a member of the qualifying committee, that evaluates the candidate's fulfillment of the necessary requirements for becoming a chartered teacher.

## **7 Job specification of technical education teachers**

### *7.1 Vocational subject teachers*

The relationship between education and the economic life is a factor having an impact on the enormous diversity of the content of education, which is why

general technical teachers form a very diverse group within the teachers' community. These differences relate inter alia:

- A number of subject teachers, after the completion of a certain field of study and the acquisition of skills, may teach a certain number of subjects. And so, graduate mechanical teacher receives permission to teach dozens of subjects in the curriculum of various kinds of mechanical professions. The situation is similar in the case of economic subjects, electricity - electronics, construction, etc.
- Types and forms of lessons, theory lessons, practical examinations, laboratory exercises, laboratory classes.
- The pace of changes in the content of education changes the content of teaching, especially when it comes to specialty items – these were taking place rapidly in comparison to other subjects.

From December 31, 1990 branches of teacher training were liquidated and their role in organizing teachers' training was taken by provincial pedagogical methodological centers and some universities. In 1991, pedagogical studies were converted into teaching courses. Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 5 March 1992 concerning teacher training (Journal of Laws 1992, Item 1152013) resolved pedagogical technical studies. These decisions significantly weakened the system of training vocational subject teachers because of the rapid economic development.

### *7.2 General subject teachers*

A novice teacher obtains the position of a trainee teacher and begins to climb up the ladder of promotion from the internship. For the first year of work, a teacher becomes familiar with the work of school, gains the necessary experience. The internship starts automatically at the beginning of the school year, but no later than 14 days from September 1. If the teacher still has an established employment, he/she cannot begin the internship that school year. For the next 9 months, the teacher is a trainee teacher. When the internship begins, the headmaster assigns a mentor for the trainee teacher. The mentor has to be an appointed or a chartered teacher, but does not have to teach the same subject as the trainee teacher.

The next stage in a teacher's career is the position of a contract teacher who applies for the position of an appointed teacher. Then, he can start an internship as an appointed teacher, having worked at the school for at least two years from the day of conferment of the previous career stage. Similarly, as it is in the case of the previous stage, internship starts at the beginning of the school year, but no later than 14 days after it. But in this case, the contract teacher must submit a request to the headmaster of the school. This plan should take into consideration

the specifics and the needs of a school and the requirements in accordance with the law regulation on promotion. Also, one should take into account his/her existing knowledge, skills and experience.

A chartered teacher with at least 20 years of teaching experience and after 10 years of employment as a chartered teacher, may receive the title of an honorary professor of education. This title is awarded at the request of the Chapter Affairs Professors of Education, the minister responsible for education. The teacher must also have a significant and acknowledged career. Applications to the Chapter should be submitted by the pedagogical supervisor.

## 8 Conclusion

Teaching is a profession that requires constant self-development and training. Because of many changes in education law, teachers in Poland have to be especially aware of these amendments and have to adjust their careers all the time. Technical and information technology teachers additionally have to be familiar with the latest technology as well as innovative solutions in the didactics of technical subjects.

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# INFORMATION

## **The Jubilee of PaedDr. Mária Uhereková, PhD.**

*Viola Tamášová – Silvia Barnová\**

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PaedDr. Mária Uhereková, PhD., a distinguished representative of Slovak pedagogy, will celebrate her life anniversary in September. She was born 28 September 1946 in Hrachovo, a picturesque village near Rimavská Sobota.

She started her professional career in 1969 after finishing her university studies at the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava located in Trnava. She studied teacher training in the fields of Biology and Chemistry.

First, she worked as a specialist at the department of creation of didactic tests in the institution called Psychodiagnostické a didaktické testy (Psychodiagnostic and didactic tests) in Bratislava. Then, she started teaching her teaching subjects

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at primary schools, e.g. in Vysoká na Morave and in several schools in Bratislava (Duklianska ul., Nevädzová ul., Ul. Š. Majora, Cádrová ul., Ul. E. Thälmann). At some of the schools, she was the head of the department of biology, she was employed as a lecturer at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Comenius University and was also a methodician of biology. Later, she worked as a school inspector for natural sciences at the Inspection Centre in Bratislava, as the chief school inspector at the Inspection Centre Bratislava I – V and as the head of the department of elementary schools and kindergartens. From this position, she moved to State Pedagogical Institute in Bratislava and became a didactician of biology. As she gained rich experiences in the fields of teaching at elementary schools, methodics, subject didactics and from school management, it is natural that she became a school inspector and the director of the department of school inspection at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava. From this high position she moved to State School Inspection in Bratislava and worked as a school inspector for elementary schools. Her professional and personal qualities were really needed and she took up the position of the deputy chief school inspector (till 2007).

Between the stages of her career, Dr. Mária Uhreková expanded her qualifications - from post-gradual studies, attending professional courses, courses of school management, to earning the academic degree of Doctor of Pedagogy (PaedDr.) in 2001 at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Comenius University in Bratislava and the highest academic degree Philosophiae Doctor (PhD.) in the field of pedagogy at the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava in 2007. The same year, she changed her employment and started lecturing (until 2011) at Comenius University in Bratislava, Department of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Education as an assistant professor. She specialised herself in school management, school legislation and documentation, as well as drug abuse prevention. In these scientific fields, she has published many studies, scholarly articles, handbooks for teachers, taken part in various project and contributed to many scientific conferences. Since 2011, she has worked as a university teacher at a private institution, Dubnica Institute of Technology in Dubnica nad Váhom. She is an excellent teacher, students have characterized her as an excellent, bright and tolerant teacher with a human approach to her students. She has supervised many Bachelor and Master theses of a high level and her themes belong to the most topical and interesting ones.

Dr. Uhreková has taken part in many KEGA and VEGA grant projects of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic as a member of research teams and, since 2009, she has contributed to the work on the national project External Evaluation of the Quality of Schools Supporting Self-Evaluation Processes in Schools to a great extent. She focuses on the importance of self-evaluation

processes in schools and on the need for an active use of quality criteria and the instruments of self-evaluation in the process of evaluating the individual modules that were created and verified in practice by her. She aims to show some new methods and forms of work of external evaluation of schools to the professionals at State School Inspection and, at the same time, to create, in co-operation with professionals from the field of pedagogy, instruments for internal evaluation of schools. All her effort and the purpose of the project is to increase the quality and the level of provided education in accordance with the European trends. For her, the quality of education is one of the most important educational requirements.

She has reflected her love to biology in the textbooks for elementary and secondary schools she has created (in co-authorship). Among them are: Biology for the 8th Grade of Elementary schools (*Prírodopis pre 8. ročník základných škôl*, 2006), Biology and Health Care for the 1st Grade of the Field of Study Social Educational Worker (*Biológia a starostlivosť o zdravie pre 1. ročník študijného odboru sociálno-výchovný pracovník*, 2006), Biology – Organisms and Ecosystems (*Biológia - organizmy a ekosystémy*, 2010), Biology and Health Care (*Biológia a starostlivosť o zdravie*, 2007, 2014), Biology (*Biológia*, 2010), Biology for the 5th, 7th and 8th Grade of Elementary Schools (*Biológia pre 5., 7., 8. ročník základnej školy*, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014), in Hungarian mutation – Biology for the 7th Grade of Elementary Schools and the 2nd Grade of 8-Year Grammar Schools (*Biológia az alapiskolák 7. és a nyolcosztályos gimnázium 2. évfolyama számára*, 2012), Biology for the 5th Grade of Elementary schools (*Biológia az alapiskolák 5. évfolyama számára*, 2012), Biology – Life of Organisms and Hygiene of Environment (*Biológia - život organizmov a hygiena prostredia*, 2014). These are colourful, beautiful and creatively prepared textbooks with a high quality content taking into account the didactic aspect. It is a pleasure to teach from them!

Recently, she has been working on big project of Dr. Josef Raabe publishing house, Slovakia – on the creation of Methodical Handbook for Biology for the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade of Elementary Schools (*Metodická príručka k učebnici Biológie pre 5. ročník základnej školy*) and Didactic Introduction to the Current Trends in Teaching Biology (*Didaktický úvod k súčasným trendom vyučovania biológie*). It fills her with energy and enthusiasm.

Dear Dr. Mária Uhereková, a precious friend and colleague, always decent, active, helpful, punctual, intelligent, non-confrontational, but ready to fight for the truth. In our name and on behalf of the Editorial Board of *Acta Technologica Dubnicae*, we wish you a lot of creative energy, good prosperity, a lot of love from your dearests, pleasant professional meetings and friendly meetings with those who like you.

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