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The Roma and Education in Pedagogic and Andragogical Contexts

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The upbringing and education students from other the majority groups of the population puts higher demands on teachers. This is accountable to the specifics of the cultural and social background of these students, particularly students of Romani descent. Given the situation with 300,000 Roma living in the Czech Republic, and about half a million in the Slovak Republic, nearly every teacher may meet Romani students at the schools. Preparation of teachers for the specifics of the Romani culture is therefore important, as it helps teachers in the pedagogic sphere form relationships with Romani children and adolescents, as well as in the andragogical sphere with Romani parents.

KEY WORDS: Romani student, Romani parent, andragogics, pedagogy, romology, romistics

Preface

Education of Romani students cannot make do without pedagogy (teacher's role, Romani pedagogic assistant's role in relation to Romani students) or without andragogics (role of the teacher's ap-

proach to the parents of Romani students, knowledge of the laws and ways of life of adult Roma, Romani culture, history, and so-called ROMIPEN, i.e., Romanihood, which refers to expressions of deep-rooted Romani culture demonstrated in the life of the Roma people as their spiritual and value-setting basic existence).

In the text we want to emphasize the fact that successful education of Romani students and education policy concerning the Roma is not possible without profound knowledge of the Romani people, their history, culture, and the rules of their identity, as well as relations between the majority and the Romani minority. The spiritual outcome of the approach to Romani students and their parents derives also from the spiritual legacy of the “pedagogy of love”, democratic upbringing based on equality, irrespective of the differences between races or nationalities, in accordance with the principles promoted by the Czech social pedagogue *Přemysl Pitter* (1895–1976). Of course, in this context, it is necessary to mention also the concrete work and philosophy of upbringing related to Romani students promoted by another prominent Czech social pedagogue, *Miroslav Dědič* (born 1925), who built up a system of positive educational approach to Romani children and their parents in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

Education of Romani students as a Pedagogic Theme

Education of Romani students as a pedagogic theme seems to be a tautology. The name of the theme is a reaction of some of the suggestions made by “reputed specialists” who try to defend the theme as a social issues, rather than as part of social work, where it belongs according to their judgment.

I do not second that opinion. Namely, education of Romani students is a strictly pedagogic theme, even though it incorporates a number of social, nationalist, cultural, and political factors. That however is a normal pedagogic reality that cannot justify defining upbringing and education of the Roma a merely social theme, or

mere part of social pedagogy or social andragogics. From the beginning of our scientific and pedagogic activities, while searching for suitable methods of educating Romani students in the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, we have understand this theme in this context.

We want to show the importance of the educational theme in relation to Romani students, teaching at different levels of schools, as well as in relation to Romani pedagogic assistants who work primarily in Czech and Slovak elementary schools, where their work involves a lot of communication between teachers and Romani students, between teachers and Romani parents, and between schools and Romani communities in certain localities with high concentration of Romani inhabitants. Our work is also based on multicultural approaches.¹ It is important that students or workers at schools and other institutions deal with or become professionals who are capable of conscious self-regulation and self-evaluation of their performance.²

The institute of Romani pedagogic assistants at schools was established already in former Czechoslovakia in the years of 1992–1993 as an experimental program and exists to this day, even though in somewhat weaker parameters. The Czech Ministry of Education endeavored to ensure education of Romani assistants in various forms, of which the following are most important:

- acquaintance with Romani history;
- acquaintance with Romani culture;
- acquaintance with the history of relations between the Roma and the majority;
- acquaintance with issues concerning Romani national and nationalist identity;

¹ O multikulturních kompetencích srov.: J. Balvín, *Pedagogika, andragogika a multikulturalita*. Praha: Hnutí R, 2012; J. Hladík, *Konstrukce a modely multikulturních kompetencí*. In: *Pedagogická orientace 2010*, č. 4, s. 26–46.

² J. Hladík, S. Vávrová, *Mechanismy fungování rozvoje autoregulace učení studentů*. Praha: Hnutí R, 2011.

- acquaintance with methods of teaching Romani students;
- acquaintance with basic pedagogic theory, methodology, and didactics.

In addition writing about the ways and contents of work with Romani pedagogic assistants, it is also a good idea to prepare concrete programs for work with Romani pedagogic assistants, which can be used as inspiration implementation of romological programs at schools, not only universities, but also secondary and elementary schools. We believe that these programs should be part of civic education and multicultural education in these types of school. It is a cross-section theme in our schools, but it is applied best as part of civic education, as well as history, music, creative arts, etc. Our text may be used as theoretical basis to concrete programs.

Concepts of Scientific Activities and Education of Romology

In Czech and Slovak universities, romology is studied as a specialization, often together with pedagogy. It deals with all of the above themes that Romani pedagogic assistants have been acquainted with (today, the term assistant teacher is preferable). As part this specialization, students are introduced not only to the history, culture, and relations between the majority and Romani minority, but also with pedagogic issues (education of Romani students) and andragogical issues (relations with Romani parents and the Romani community as a whole). In this context, we can find much inspiration in Pitter's approach to the parents of children who used to come to the Milíč House (in a modern dictionary we would call it a children's club house or low-threshold facility). Founded in 1933 in the style of Pitter's humanist, pacifist, and religious education, it functioned until 1951, when the communist system dissolved it and converted it into after-school facilities for children of working mothers to be raised in the new socialist way. Přemysl Pitter himself had to go into exile under the threat of imprisonment.

In the Milíč House, meetings were organized for parents, where they were told in an unforced manner how to raise children and how to handle complex behavioral situations in child raising, etc. These activities are also inspiring for the work with pedagogues and assistants working with Romani parents of school children or children taking part in leisure activities in low-threshold clubs.

As part of the requirement to present one's own concept of educating Romani children, created on the basis of our scientific and pedagogic activities to date, I want to present an educational concept in a field that I consider borderline, yet very useful for the work of pedagogues (as well as Romani pedagogic assistants, newly teacher assistants), who are preparing for teaching students at elementary schools or educators at educational institutions, leisure clubs, etc. Content-wise, such preparation corresponds to the work of a social pedagogue, but is equally essential for any teacher. Namely, most Romani students at elementary schools are enrolled in special elementary schools. Unfortunately, up to 2005, Romani students were mostly enrolled in special schools (approx. 80%), which they attended together with handicapped students. This was a blatant discrimination of members of the Roma people, yet it somehow prevailed and functioned pertinaciously to the extent where it was declared a great means of facilitating integration (today called with the modern term of inclusion) of Romani children in the society. Discrimination was also the mere fact that the alumni of special schools had limited access to further education. For instance, they were unable to pass graduation exams at high schools. Nowadays, the situation is such that all students are supposed to attend a regular elementary school, yet approximately 35% Romani students remain in so-called special and practical elementary schools. It is a Solomonic solution, something like "to have your cake and eat it", but one cannot expect a rapid change to happen in a situation where many Romani communities have been marginalized for a long time in the society, both in Bohemia (city ghettos) and Slovakia (Romani village settlements).

Teaching romology in various forms and under various names is being practiced at most pedagogic faculties, as well as philosophical faculties, since the 1990's, i.e., since the Velvet Revolution in 1989. After the revolution, newly established universities, as well as the existing ones, were even encouraged to pledge commitment of research of Romani issues. For instance the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University founded the Institute for the Study of Romani Culture, where the new university promised to monitor developments in cultural, social, and educational spheres involving Romani communities. In Prague, the Indological Institute of Charles University opened a Department of Romistics, which specializes mainly in teaching the Romani language, culture, and history of the Roma. In Slovakia, a Department of Romani Culture was established at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, which currently functions as the Institute of Romological Studies. The advantage of romology is that it can incorporate a broader spectrum of determinants that impact positively on the education of Romani students, in addition to language and cultural determinants (which are dealt with in romistics). In our educational concept we want to emphasize social and cultural aspects, in addition to language, historical, anthropological, ethical, and philosophical aspects, i.e., the very concept that are analyzed best by romological scholars.

Why Romology, rather than Romistics

The option of teaching **romistics** might be a lot more acceptable for preparation of future teachers and other specialists, such as anthropologists, social workers, health care workers, and Romani pedagogic assistants, etc. However, this specialization is quite specific, as it concentrates on the Romani language and culture, history, and other aspects of the theme known as "the Roma". These themes are taught as part of the main curriculum, whereby romistics has been taught since 1990, especially thanks to a prominent romist, Milena

Hübschmannová, at the Dept. of Indology, Charles University, which also has a section of romistics, as mentioned hereinabove.

Romology, contrary to romistics, examines issues concerning Romani communities and their role in the society in a broad sense of the word, i.e., the multiplicity of aspects, not merely the language. The study may give teachers and other specialists in social sciences (including technical ones) the base for understanding the situation of the Roma and their relations with the majority. This opens opportunities for students, future teachers, or other specialists, as well as for Romani pedagogic assistants, who are likely to deal with Romani communities in their career, to comprehend better the situation of Romani students at schools, the situation of Romani clients in social services, the tense situation between the Roma and the majority in legal matters, as well as in dealing with the state administration or local government, etc.

Romology, however, is to be understood (while respecting the names of various subjects taught at our pedagogic departments, mostly as elective subjects) as an auxiliary subject for students of pedagogy, social work, andragogics, as it helps future teachers to get some insight into the sensitive issue of relations between the Roma and the majority, learn about the basics of Romani culture, history, nationalist aspects and specifics of the development and social background of Romani children and their families, and also the pedagogic aspects of work with Romani students. Classical romology is taught as part of social work studies at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, the Institute of Romological Studies, formerly Department of Romani Culture, which had existed since the beginning of the 1990's.

We consider **František Štampach** the founder of romology. He studied the Roma (then Gypsies) already in the former Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) in the broadest sense of the word. From the pedagogic perspective, particularly important is Štampach's book from 1933 entitled *A Child over the Abyss (Dítě nad propastí)*,³ where he describes the Gypsy child as "endangered" child. However,

³ F. Štampach, *Dítě nad propastí*. Praha, 1933.

he does not find the reasons for this statement in the child's mental deficiency or retardation, rather in the existing social and historical conditions. According to František Štampach, the endless chain of failures on the part of Romani children could be and must be interrupted through socio-pedagogic work and willingness of teachers and other students, including majority students as well as majority parents to accept Romani children, respect their social and historical situation, and integrate them in the society gradually as equal members of the society. At present, this trend is called **inclusion**.⁴ Romani students often are students with special behavioral and educational needs and that is how they ought to be viewed and approached by schools and teachers. Romani pedagogic assistants, social pedagogues, and andragogues may play a meaningful role in this process.

The new conceptual apparatus respects the unique and exceptional character of students with special needs. All problem issues related to humanist education should therefore form an integral part of regular schools and simultaneously part of the education of children with special needs during the process of their upbringing and education. Every pedagogue with a humanist approach ought to be aware of these particulars and be able to adopt a correct attitude, while respecting each child's individuality requiring special educational attention.⁵

These new forms of work focused on the creativity of Romani children play an important motivation role. The co-author of this article, J. Novotná, concentrated extensively on research and practical application of the creativity of Romani students. For many years, she, along with other authors and research workers achieved significant progress in the quality of their education.⁶

⁴ V. Kurincová, T. Turzák, *Príprava budúcich učiteľov na vyučovanie v podmienkach inkluzívnej školy v kontexte formovania hodnotového systému vysokoškolákov*. In: M. Siroťová (ed.), *Hodnoty a ich odraz vo vysokoškolskom vzdelávaní*: Pedagogika Actualis II., Trnava: Univerzita sv. Cyrila and Metoda, 2011, s. 109–120.

⁵ T. Turzák, S. Szabadosová, *Nové pojmy, nové prístupy, nová výchova*. In: *Rodina a škola: mesačník pre rodičov a učiteľov*. č. 1. roč. 57. 2009, s. 12–13.

⁶ Srov. J. Dargová (v súčasnosti Novotná), M. Ďuričeková, *Rozvojatvorný model edukačných aktivít učiteľa rómskych detí*. In: *Voľný čas a záujmové aktivity rómskych detí*.

In the pedagogic perspective, communication with Romani parents is complemented with andragogical aspects of the matter (andragogics as theory of enlightenment and education of adults). Although a teacher is a pedagogue, not an andragogue, he should be knowledgeable of the principles of communication with adults, who are in this pedagogic situation represented by Romani parents. A leading Slovak specialist in the field of inclusive pedagogy and communication with the students' parents as an effective means of raising and educating students, Tomáš Turzák, wrote,

One of the phases in family life is the enrollment of a child in the school. Both the parents and children encounter new challenges and obligations. Any child that "different", unique, requires more attention, not only on entry into the school, but in the decision-making process of opting for segregated or integrated school attendance. Both the parents and the specialists ought to be well acquainted with the rights and obligations of the parents, who have to be prepared to assume their new role as parents of a student with special educational needs.⁷

The above approaches are currently "in", even though are based on ideas dating back to **František Štampach**, a humanist and founder of romology in response to the need to educate Romani students systematically already between W.W.I. and W.W.II. The ideas of **František Štampach** (and not only him alone) have become one of the theoretical sources of our scientific work on development

Prešov: Grafotlač, 1999, s. 44–75; J. Dargová (v súčasnosti Novotná), *Tvorivosť žiakov vo výučbe*. In: J. Maňák et al. (eds), *Tvorivá škola*. Brno: Paido, 1998, s. 45–56; J. Dargová (v súčasnosti Novotná), *Creativity Training in Pre-Service Teachers*. Pedagogická revue, Special English Number, Vol. 57, 2005, s. 64–79; J. Dargová, L. Čonková, *Emocionálna inteligencia a tvorivá výučba*. Prešov: Privatpress, 2002; J. Novotná, J. Jurčíková, *Kritické a tvorivé myslenie v edukaci a výzkumu*. Brno: Paido, 2012; J. Novotná, *Creativity as the Ultimate and Instrumental Value of the Youth*. Studia Edukacyjne 2013, nr 25, s. 243–268.

⁷ T. Turzák, *Práva a povinnosti rodičov výnimočného dieťaťa v kontexte kooperácie rodiny a školy*. In: *Klíma školy v 21. storočí. Zborník z konferencie s medzinárodnou účasťou*. Banská Bystrica: PF UMB, Centrum vzdelávania doktorandov. 2008, s. 172–175.

of systematic, long-term research at schools that have positive experience with teaching Romani students.

Another important source, especially in the pedagogic sense, is the work of the social pedagogue **Miroslav Dědič**, who worked successfully with Romani students after W.W.II. In 1950, he founded **the first Romani boarding school in Květušín, Šumava**. He applied his experience in practical communication with Romani children (pedagogic work), which included quite naturally and importantly communication with the parents of the Romani students (andragogical work).⁸

In the process of summarizing various concepts of teaching romology, we cannot omit to mention romistics, founded by **Milena Hübschmannová**. In addition to language as the main subject in romological studies, attention was also paid to the specifics of the Roma people, compiled under one common term: **ROMIPEN (ROMANIHOOD)**. Particularly valuable are the following of her publications:

Šaj pes dovakeras-Můžeme se domluvit (Hübschmannová, 1994),⁹

Godaver lava phure Romendar - Moudrá slova starých Romů - collection of Romani proverbs (1991),¹⁰

Narodila jsem se pod šťastnou hvězdou - stories by Romani writer Elena Lacková (Lacková, 1997).¹¹

The third important source of our approach to the education of Romani students is the life and work of the Czech social pedagogue **Přemysl Pitter** (1895–1976). The 100th anniversary of his birth, in 1995, was declared an international anniversary of UNESCO. The J.A. Komenský Museum in Prague organized a major conference in

⁸ O pedagogické i andragogické práci Miroslava Dědiče viz J. Balvín a kol. *Romové a jejich učitelé. Sborník z 12. setkání Hnutí R. Ústí nad Labem: Hnutí R, 1999.*

⁹ M. Hübschmannová, *Šaj pes dovakeras-Můžeme se domluvit*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 1994.

¹⁰ *Godaver lava phure Romendar - Moudrá slova starých Romů - soubor romských přísloví*. Praha, 1991.

¹¹ E. Lacková, *Narodila jsem se pod šťastnou hvězdou*. Praha: Triáda, 1997.

that occasion. Subsequently, we organized, jointly with other teachers of Romani children under the R-Movement of Cooperating Schools (Hnutí R), which was dedicated to the pedagogic and ethical legacy of this social pedagogue and the possibilities of using his multicultural European work for the education of Romani students. The collection of papers from that conference was entitled: **Přemysl Pitter and Multicultural Education of Romani students**.¹²

Conclusion

We consider education of Romani children and communication with Romani parents important activities not only for schools, but also for the society as a whole. Namely, correct and forthcoming relationships of teachers with Romani students and with their parents have a positive effect in that they create a wholesome atmosphere of intercultural social relations. In order to broaden the scope of teachers' experience with Romani children, it is necessary to prepare them in a more comprehensive scale in the Romani culture, history, language, sociology, etc. In this text, we have outlined possible applications of romistics and romology, so that they could be systematically offered at our schools.

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¹² *Přemysl Pitter and multiculturalí výchova Romani students (Cesty k překonávání bariér ve education)*. 4. setkání Hnutí R. V Praze 1.-2. prosince 1995. Sestavil J. Balvín. Ústí nad Labem: Hnutí R, 1996.

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Romowie a edukacja w kontekście pedagogicznym i andragogicznym

Streszczenie

Wychowanie i edukacja uczniów z grup mniejszościowych stawia duże wymagania nauczycielom. Odpowiada za to specyfika kulturowa i społeczna tych uczniów, szczególnie uczniów romskich. Biorąc pod uwagę 300 000 Romów żyjących w Czeskiej Republice i około pół miliona w Słowackiej Republice, prawie każdy nauczyciel może spotkać romskich uczniów w swojej szkole. Dlatego przygotowanie nauczycieli na specyfikę romskiej kultury jest ważne, ponieważ pomaga nauczycielom w sferze pedagogicznej, tworzeniu relacji z romskimi dziećmi i nastolatkami oraz w sferze andragogicznej z romskimi rodzicami.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: romski uczeń, romski rodzic, andragogika, pedagogika, Romowie