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# FOREWORD

*Dear Colleagues, dear Readers!*

*The whole year of 2015 is marked by the 10th anniversary of the foundation of Dubnica Institute of Technology in Dubnica nad Váhom and our scientific journal Acta Technologica Dubnicae, which celebrates its 5th anniversary. We are a young institute and a young journal, which does not mean that we have not achieved a lot. The opposite is true, both the institute and the journal are successful. Acta is penetrating the world, it is gaining a reputation, regular readers and contributors. This year, thanks to our cooperation with De Gruyter Open, we have started to assign DOI numbers to all scientific studies and scholarly articles (even for the back issues since 2011).*

*What can we find in the new, summer issue of the journal? As it is polythematic again, the papers focus on the issues of school climate and education of both students and teachers, relationships, questions of family education, the problems of the education of seniors and the psychotherapeutical potential of Lego bricks. After its meetings and the reviewing process, the editorial board prepared this issue of the journal consisting of two scientific studies, five scholarly articles, two reviews and one piece of information about an important life anniversary.*

*The section of scientific studies is opened by Viola Tamášová's paper entitled "Professional and Career Development of Vocational Subject Teachers as a Trend in the Lifelong Learning of Teachers". In the study, she pays attention to the trends in lifelong learning of teachers from the point of view of self-education as one of the forms of teachers' personal development. The author introduces research on the needs of secondary vocational school teachers (SVS) as one of the outcomes of the KEGA 005 DTI-4/2013 project.*

*The second scientific study "Education of Older People for Combating Their Loneliness" written by the Slovenian authors Jana Goriup, Branka Čagran and Katja Krošl is oriented partially sociologically, deals with the issues of education of older people for combating their loneliness, the reasons for it, and its consequences. It is important to realize that the European population is aging and, as the results of their empirical research show, the most at risk are older people living alone.*

*Róbert Osad'an from Slovakia in coauthorship with Riana Hanna from the USA, in the scholarly article entitled "The Effects of the Media on Self-Esteem of*

*Young Girls” seek to explore the studies that focus on the younger age group, and help understand the relationship between the media and young girls’ self-esteem.*

*The issues of family relationships, ineffectiveness in creating lasting and open relationships within family backgrounds, family breakdown and the father’s and mother’s roles in raising children are discussed in Katarína Cimprichová Gežová’s article “Father’s and Mother’s Roles and Their Particularities in Raising Children”. The author brings a new approach to this field of parents’ lives.*

*The two coauthors - psychologists - from Hungary László Neidert and Kinga Bíró introduce a research project pertaining to the psychotherapeutic potential of Lego bricks. This very interesting and inspiring paper is published under the title “Project Inner Brick - Colourful Plastic Bricks in Psychotherapy - An Introduction To Methodology”.*

*Yurimi Grigsby, Carolyn Theard-Griggs and Christopher Lilly from the USA focus on the use of the method of digital storytelling in the article “Digital Storytelling and Second Language Learners”. They draw our attention to the fact that the teaching and learning strategy called digital storytelling can promote critical thinking, connect new content with prior knowledge, enhance memory, and foster confidence and motivation for learning, which is an up-to-date issue.*

*The section of scholarly articles is closed by the paper “Positive School Climate (A Theoretical Empirical Conspectus)” written by, Jana Hanuliaková and Silvia Barnová from Slovakia. They deal with the issues of school climate as the product of a specific social group. From the aspects of neuropedagogy and neuroscience, they emphasise the importance of a positive school climate and accentuate the mutual determination of the climate and some selected determinants such as inappropriate behaviour, interaction and safe educational environment.*

*Acta brings two book reviews - by Daniel Lajčín and Gabriela Sláviková – of new monographs and one contribution about the life and work the distinguished Slovak pedagogue professor Rudolf Štepanovič celebrating his life anniversary written by Ján Danek.*

*We have put together the new issue in such a way that all the professionals, our readers, and colleagues could find something interesting, scholarly, of high quality and inspiring in it.*

*Viola Tamášová  
Editor*

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# STUDIES

## Professional and Career Development of Vocational Subject Teachers as a Trend in the Lifelong Learning of Teachers

*Viola Tamášová\**

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**Abstract:** This research study concerns the trends in the lifelong learning of teachers including self-education as a form of teacher personal development. It explores the importance, role and objectives of lifelong learning, andragogic pedeutology, as well as the trends and further education of possibilities of teachers in Slovakia with regards to the forms of learning, qualification education and continuing education. We present the findings of a research survey on the educational needs of secondary vocational school (SVS) teachers as one of the results of the KEGA 005 DTI-4/2013 project in the study. We also present the research objectives, research questions, research sample of SVS teachers, research methods and instruments. In addition to presenting the findings of the current and updated education needs of SVS teachers in the sample and their interpretation, we formulate the research conclusions on the educational needs of SVS teachers as one of the results of the KEGA 005 DTI-4/2013 project.

**Key words:** lifelong learning of teachers, self-education, andragogic pedeutology, qualification and continuing education.

### 1 Introduction

The quality of teaching depends to a great extent on the quality of the concept of lifelong professional development, the definition of its functions, goals, content, types, forms and methods as well as its organization and the interrelation between this concept and continuing education and self-education which have already become a part of lifelong learning as an EU-wide tendency. Lifelong learning of teachers is performed on a voluntary basis, based on their own need to expand their professional development and to meet social requirements

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resulting from economic, cultural, historical and social changes (see, e.g. Zelina, 2014).

## **2 Professional Development of Teachers**

There are varying opinions on the nature and content of the frequently-used term *professional development of teachers* in many literary sources. Its legal basis is outlined in the *Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic Regulation 42/1996 Coll.* This legislation, governing the organization, content, scope and modalities of the further training of educators, defines the purpose of professional personal development of teachers as a "*Continual deepening, improving and expanding of the professional and educational competence of teachers, in accordance with the latest progressive scientific knowledge, social needs and requirements of educational and professional practice.*" The Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NR SR) 386/1997 Coll. on further education, as amended, defines further education as "*A part of lifelong learning which is, along with compulsory, secondary and higher education, the fourth pillar of lifelong learning. It is the education that allows everyone to complete, broaden and deepen acquired knowledge, to be retrained, to satisfy their interests or to prepare for the completion of a particular level of education.*"

Types of this education are:

- education focused on achieving a certain level of education;
- professional education and training to broaden and deepen knowledge and skills;
- hobby education and civic education.

*The Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic 568/2009 Coll. on lifelong learning and on amendments to certain Acts specifies further education as "education in educational institutions of further education which follows school education and provides an opportunity to obtain partial or full qualification or to supplement, renew, extend or deepen qualifications acquired in school education or to satisfy interests and gain better competence in civil society participation."*

The term **continuing professional education** is more concise and therefore also more frequently used. According to Š. Švec (2002), this term is considered characteristic and adequate for the current theory and practice of the permanent professional development of teachers. Its content captures the reality of the professional development of teachers more than the previously used ambiguous term **further education**, which is mainly used when referring to vocational training after leaving secondary school.

### **2.1. Continuing teacher education**

The term **continuing teacher education** is mentioned and understood as continuing education which, according to Pavlov, follows previous education

obtained in the formal education process and includes further career development and self-education as one of its forms (Pavlov, 2002). Gavora and Mareš in English-Slovak pedagogic dictionary (1998) define the professional growth of teachers on the basis of competence-building with the term **professional development of teachers**.

According to some experts, when dealing with the issue of continuing education in Slovakia (e.g. Kosová, 2001; Kasáčová, 2002), it is important to emphasize the need of continuous lifelong learning and to establish the objective of ensuring continuing professional development of teachers as individuals and, at the same time, development of the profession in general. The concept of professional development of teachers in the career system is inevitably linked to education as a prerequisite for professional growth. The professional development of teachers is characterized by certain particularities (e.g. quality of performance, level of self-identification with the profession, requirements imposed on teachers) which represent specific stages - phases of the career path (Průcha, 1997, cited in Kasáčová, 2006, p. 27).

Table 1 Teacher career path phases

<i>Career path phase</i>	<i>Steps and stages in life, characteristics</i>	<i>Age period</i>
1. Choice of the teaching profession	Motivation to study teaching	up to 18-19 years of age
2. Preparation phase	Pre-graduate training	up to 24 years of age
3. Career start	Start in the profession	at about 24 years of age
4. Career adaptation	Experience of the first years of practice	24 to about 30 years of age
5. Career advancement	Career development of the teacher	about 30 - individual
6. Career stabilization or migration	Remaining in the profession, career advancement - continuing education, change of the teaching profession	from 35 years of age
7. Career extinction	Tedious routine - pedagogical conservatism, leaving the profession	individually

Source: Kasáčová (2006, p. 27)

We will proceed from this source when analysing individual phases. The phase Choice of the teaching profession and the Preparation phase are not typical periods for consideration of the professional development of teachers. The first phase is characterized by contemplations on the future (career choice during secondary school studies, information on teaching perspectives, advantages and disadvantages of the teaching profession and so on). The second phase is Preparation (pre-graduate) stage which is also characterized by collecting information about the profession, but already at the level of active study of pedagogy, didactics etc., or specialization (vocational subjects). Motivation is the basis of both phases.

**Career start phase** - entry into the profession - is the first stage which, according to Kasáčová (2006, p. 28), defines the position of novice teachers as an important step in their career paths. The role of a student changes into that of a teacher who assumes the responsibilities previously held by someone else and takes over responsibility for their own lives. The following phases, **Professional adaptation and Career advancement**, are the periods when teachers gain their own first experience and develop as professionals and as people. The actual development of teachers proceeds to the stage of experienced teacher - practicing professionals in their field who establish working habits, handle work-related stress, are able to deal with challenging situations based on their own experience, attitude and working habits have the nature of positive routines and he are well-informed and knowledgeable in their fields. **The Professional stabilization phase** is the period of consolidation of teacher professional skills and their status in the community of educators or a shift from teaching practice to management positions in the educational system. The above phase cannot be clearly defined in time or delimited. The last phase - **Professional extinction phase** - is regarded as a "pre-retirement" period; however, this cannot be generalized. Not all teachers experience burnout in this period. In the present time, the onset of this phase can be accelerated by social and economic factors (loss of motivation, stagnation, burnout syndrome, low work appreciation, need to change the work environment, emotional burnout, etc.) which occur more (and more) frequently in the younger generation of teachers (Kasáčová, 2006). Pre-graduate training represents the initial stage, and an integral part, of the teacher education process, following one of the fundamental principles in education: teachers are not fully prepared for their profession only by completing their studies. As Kasáčová emphasizes, this principle, when observed, would ensure meeting the conditions and requirements for a solid career start and providing a wide scope of professional knowledge and skills. Self-education is regarded as an integral part of the career path of teachers and it is an important factor in improving the quality of teaching, maintaining and continuously improving the social status of the teaching profession, an integration of new knowledge into current practice. The escalation, expansion, renewal and specialization of professional competence is ensured by the system of continuing education characterized by the properties of continuity and lifelong learning. The

goals of the education system are to develop and strengthen the professional attitudes that lead to the stabilization of the teaching profession and promote the career growth (Kasáčová, 2002).

### **3 The importance, functions and objectives of lifelong learning**

The fourth pillar of lifelong education allows teachers to prepare for a higher level of education, to complete, extend or deepen already acquired education or to change qualifications, as well as satisfy the teachers' interests and needs, states Porubská (2005). If an adult wants to maintain a certain standard of living and certain level of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, active lifelong self-education is necessary. This principle is considered vital in the teaching profession, because teachers must constantly reflect on the changes in science, technology, art, economy, as well as on the cultural, historical and social changes. Only then, are the teachers able to constantly convey new information to students and give them the concept of objective reality, reflecting reality and the virtual world (Tamášová and Sári et al., 2012).

Currently, considerable attention needs to be given to the constantly growing tendency of various social and educational problems of students in the family or at school. These compel teachers to gather information, find specialized literature or attend seminars (outside their teaching competence or studied specialization which is their main area of expertise) in psychology and new teaching approaches to get guidance and find alternative solutions to fundamental problems in social and interpersonal relations at school (see, e.g. Zelina, 2014; Bajtoš, 2013).

On the basis of the foregoing, and in accordance with Porubská (2005), it can be stated that the continuing education of teachers affects two basic areas:

- **Private** - teachers educate themselves to satisfy their own (self-educational) needs and interests, that is, they pursue their individual life interests and needs (e.g. family life, stress resistance, etc.) by self-education.
- **Public** – teachers educate themselves to pursue professional and social interests (e.g. easier and more available ways of problem-solving in the school environment).

#### **3.1 Andragogic Pedeutology**

**Andragogic Pedeutology** is a relatively new discipline of the andragogical field which focuses on the professional competence improvement and hobby education of teachers. It is an applied discipline of andragogy which, from the methodological point of view, belongs to a major science branch of educational science, along with pedagogy. According to Porubská and Határ (2009), andragogic pedeutology puts significant emphasis mainly on: self-improvement,

self-education of educators, the role of the education of teachers, goals, methods, forms, means of education and training of teachers, lecturers, tutors, teachers of vocational training, educational advisors, etc. It approaches these issues in an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary way, thus contributing to the improvement of the reputation of teaching as a profession and its prestige in contemporary society.

Porubská (2005), in her work pays attention to continuing teacher education as the education of adults and examines the purpose, functions and objectives of education with their individual, community and social impact from the pedagogical point of view. Education and training pursue two types of objectives: autonomous and heterogeneous. Based on the above facts she states that the continuing education of adults - teachers contributes to: 1. *the personality development of an adult* (individual-personal aspect), 2. *human resources development* (socio-professional aspect). According to Porubská (2005, p. 100): "*It is not right if the interests of society are strictly preferred to the interests of the individual... Therefore, it is necessary to consider individual needs, as well as the needs of all of society and thus aim towards a certain social consensus.*"

Pavlov (2002) examines the issues of continuing education in a similar way to Porubská (2005); however, his definitions of the purpose, objectives and functions differ in the matter of the whole system of continuing education. The main requirement for the effective use of teachers' potential in the educational sector is to ensure that teachers understand the overall situation in cases where:

- performance requirements imposed by the education system change constantly;
- there are changes of an economic, political, social, historical and demographic nature;
- teachers are overwhelmed with new requirements of educational sciences imposed on the teaching profession.

He divided the functions of education into: **primary functions, including:**

- ***Compensation*** - this means maintaining adequate level of professional competence throughout career path and compensating for the usual routine and outdated (not in terms of correcting and sorting out the omissions from the pre-gradual training).
- ***Expansion*** - represents the need to proceed towards better professional and pedagogic competence (e.g. qualification subjects) or towards obtaining a specialization in selected school positions and responsibilities (the term retraining is not considered adequate in this context).
- ***Adaptation (introduction)*** - adaptation to the needs and conditions of the school and teaching in the early years of teaching practice.
- ***Innovation*** - as a condition of continual development and improvement of the professional quality of teachers and education as a system. The

Department of Education can influence the focus of teachers and their capability of taking action (for example in realizing planned changes) in a relatively short timeframe through the development of new professional competences. This represents the necessary link between the pedagogic theory and practice, between the proposed reforms and their application in school practice.

- **Motivation (for self-improvement)** - its aim is to deepen and reinforce self-educational habits and skills as well as motivation for professional and personal development in the spirit of the principle: appropriately organized and meaningful continuing education as an incentive for lifelong learning.

The **secondary functions** are described as follows:

- deeper insight into the problems of educational practice and everyday civil life
- better mutual relationships of teachers
- exchange of experience
- opportunities to visit other places, schools, which brings about:
  - the possibility of benefitting from increased susceptibility to the situation;
  - the possibility of different perspectives from which to see the problems of students or colleagues;
  - the early detection of the onset of work stereotypes, dogmatism, burnout syndrome.

The continuing education objectives, usually expressed in many reform proposals, are often mistaken for institutional objectives or for the content thereof, or are difficult to reconcile with other elements of the teachers' education system as a whole (Jankovičová, 2014). *The final aim* of continuing education, according to Zelina, is to improve the education of adults and its *practical target* is to improve the work of teachers at all levels of schools and educational institutions, in all organizational and professional areas (Zelina, 1996, cited in Pavlov, 2002). However, the intrinsic motivation of teachers is the incentive for the continuing education of teachers. Educational and incentive systems for continuous professional development constitute the basis for the concept of continuing education. This premise also suggests a new methodology and organization for the whole system of education. The Slovak Republic, as a member state of the European Union, has sufficient support for the improvement of the quality of education and for innovation in education programs.

Every educated teacher or professional educator is aware that the competences, knowledge, skills and habits acquired during school time are no longer enough. Further training is a necessity, either within the school system, after-school or informal education, education of adults (depending on the possibilities of the organization, facility, institution) or through their own efforts, teachers need to enhance their knowledge, awareness in their fields and personal competences.

#### **4 Continuing education of teachers**

There are several categories in the system of continuing education:

**\* Organized continuing education of teachers, which includes:**

1. Qualification education,
2. Continuous education

**\*\* Self-education of teachers**

Each of these types of continuing education should be seen as a branch of education comprising other related forms. The National Education Program focuses mainly on the creation of favourable conditions that can help promote self-education, which is considered the most effective way of learning (Turek, 2009).

In this context it is necessary to pay attention to the issue of the relation between *formal, non-formal and informal (non-institutional)* education of teachers, based on the characteristics of lifelong learning, which includes:

- **Formal learning** - refers to the institutions designated for education and training which ends with official certification and qualification;
- **Non-formal learning** - is parallel to the main education (outside school) and is not completed by an official certificate (e.g. civic associations, hobby centres, etc.);
- **Informal learning (non-institutional)** - is a natural part of everyday life, it may not be intentional and conscious; the "learner" may not even be aware of how it contributes to the enhancement of his knowledge and skills (Švec, 2005).

Statistics show that the population of teachers across Europe is slowly aging and the demographic situation in most countries is causing postponed retirement. As a result of this factor, the importance of pre-gradual training as a formal means of education and as a facilitating factor for progressive change and innovation in education is reduced and often overlooked. The educational policy of the EU countries focuses on lifelong learning (EU Memorandum On Lifelong Learning) which assumes greater responsibility and a support role in promoting the necessary reforms and qualitative changes (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2001).

The question that needs to be answered - in what areas should teachers be educated, what should continuing education involve - has a simple solution: education in all current issues for which the young people, as the potential new generation of teachers and educators, need to be prepared: this is the European trend, according to Tamášová (2005). It is necessary to emphasize the condition that nothing can be excluded from the content of continuing education of teachers, thus the extent of the question becomes exceptionally wide. According to Kasáčová (2006), the teacher education programs can be categorized by objective and content as follows:

1. **Adaptation** - Suitable for graduates of pedagogical colleges and novice teachers;
2. **Specialization** - Designed to prepare for specialized tasks in school;
3. **Functional** - The training of teaching staff supervisors;
4. **Innovation** - Suitable for teachers who adopt innovative strategies and alternative teaching methods;
5. **Updating** - Suitable training for teachers to maintain teaching competences for the profession;
6. **Specialized innovation (implemented innovation)** - Designed for teachers and teaching staff supervisors to restore (reaffirm) their professional competences;
7. **Qualification** - Provides an extension of previous professional and educational qualifications with new certified courses (Kasáčová, 2006).

## **5 Survey on the educational needs of SVS teachers as one of the results fo the KEGA project**

The objective of this research study, which was established as a part of the KEGA 005DTI-4/2013 research project "Socio-educational training as an innovative form of lifelong education teachers of secondary vocational schools" (project presented in detail in Hlásna, 2013 a, b), was to describe the fundamental components of the lifelong learning of teachers, the position of creative drama as one of the forms of experiential and lifelong teacher education in socio-educational training (SET). One of the outcomes produced in the project's implementation was also research carried out on a specific sample of teachers at secondary vocational schools focusing on two areas. The research is described in detail in the following chapter.

### **5.1 Research objectives and research questions**

The research has focused on two main objectives:

**Objective 1** – To develop qualitative-qualitative content analysis of the text of the self-reflection of teachers of secondary vocational schools based on the completion of educational activities - socio-educational training as part of KEGA 005DTI-4/2013, whose theoretical basis has been described in the publication Socio-educational training as an innovative form of lifelong learning of secondary vocational school teachers I. and in the publication by Geršicová and Tóthová (2010).

**Objective 2** – To conduct a survey on the further educational needs of our target group, namely secondary vocational school teachers. We have set these two main objectives:

1. Objectives concerning the socio-educational training<sup>1</sup>;
2. Objectives related to the analysis of the educational needs of these specific target groups and to the identification of the further education needs of the target groups.

### **Research questions**

Research questions were set also for the Objectives group 1<sup>2</sup>.

The research questions for Objectives 2:

- What are the current educational needs of this specific target group of SVS teachers?

### **5.2 Research sample of SVS teachers**

Socio-educational training was prepared by a team of project researchers in terms of objectives, content, selection of activities and their implementation, especially with regards to previous positive experience in teaching. Participants in this free socio-educational training were recruited by means of personal contact and through the promotion of socio-educational training on the DTI website and Regional Boards of Education. The advantage for teachers was the possibility to undergo SET (mostly) at their home school.

The research sample selection was not strictly random; it was contingent on the willingness of directors and teachers to implement the socio-educational training for school teachers. One of its outcomes was teachers' self-reflection and a questionnaire focusing on the further educational needs of this target group. Socio-educational training in 2013 and 2014 under the KEGA project involved altogether 121 secondary vocational school teachers (100 women and 21 men). We had to eliminate a group of 20 teachers from the Bratislava region, since this group did not meet the specified requirements for research. Overall, we were able to include 101 teachers (87 women and 14 men) in the survey.

Writing a (self-)reflection and filling in the questionnaire after completion of the educational activities was voluntary. The whole sample of people involved in the research can be characterized in terms of objectives 1 and 2.

In terms of research objective 1<sup>3</sup>

In terms of research objective 2:

1. *Gender of the respondents* - questionnaires were completed by 87 teachers - 76 women, accounting for 87.4% of the sample and 11 men, accounting for 12.6% of the sample;
2. *Location of school* - questionnaires were filled out by teachers of secondary vocational schools in three self-governing regions of the Slovak Republic (Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín), teachers of one school in Bratislava (Bratislava region), teachers of three secondary schools in Trnava (Trnava

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<sup>1</sup> This part of the research was described in Čepelová and Krásna (2014)

<sup>2</sup> This part of the research was described in Čepelová and Krásna (2014)

<sup>3</sup> This part of the research was described in Čepelová and Krásna (2014)

region), teachers of one secondary vocational school in Senica (Trnava region), teachers of one high school in Sered' (Trnava region), teachers of two secondary schools in Trenčín (Trenčín region), teachers of one secondary vocational school in Považská Bystrica (Trenčín region);

3. *Type of school (the teachers' workplace)* - teachers of secondary vocational schools.

### **5.3 Research methods and research tools**

#### **Research methods**

Empirical methods of education research facilitate the detection of specific, unique characteristics of the phenomenon examined which exists in objective reality. They are represented in the research by both quantitative and qualitative methods which allow the analysis and evaluation of so-called latent/hidden data and information. The methods listed below were applied in following way:

- *Descriptive method* was used to cover the description of the examined topic at theoretical and empirical level;
- *Qualitative-quantitative content analysis of the text* was used due to the wide range of possible applications in education, allowing examples to be analysed in teacher feedback etc.;
- *Analysis* dividing the whole into parts and examining the connections among them was used as a general research method for example when analysing the educational needs of the target group;
- *Synthesis*, which is one of the fundamental methods and thought processes and is based on linking the individual component parts to a whole, was used, for example, in the analysis of the (self-)reflections of teachers;
- *Analytic-synthetic methods*, combining both the previously mentioned processes, were used with regards to the established research objectives and in line with the extent and proportion necessary for a successful resolution of the research task;
- *Induction* is a fundamental cognitive process and, as a scientific method, it represents the most important form of reasoning; e.g. in the process of analysing the (self-) reflection of teachers;
- *Deduction* was used as a way of proceeding from the general to the unique and as a tool to draw conclusions from both studies and to formulate the research statements of various degrees of generality;
- *Inductive-deductive method* was used as a combination of the two previously listed methods in terms of both main research objectives;
- *Comparison* was used to determine the similarities and differences between the phenomena studied in both parts of our research survey;
- *Classification*, i.e. sorting the elements of the whole, was applied according to previously chosen classification criteria with regards to the established objective, resulting in an organized set of phenomena occurring among the elements of the emerging system in both parts of our research;

- *Generalization* was used in both parts of the research and in the research stages for transition from individual to general and from less general to more general knowledge.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the social sciences - including pedagogy - as well as other human sciences retain their empirical character necessary for scientific research and maintain the empirical character necessary in scientific research; so when dealing with existing and newly emerging specific features of pedagogy, we apply the following methods and tools.

### **Research Tools**

*The tools used for the Objective 1 were the self-reflections of the teachers*, where the teachers were encouraged to honestly express their opinion, their own point of view of their socio-educational training and self-evaluation. The form and contents of the self-reflections was up to the teachers; however, some of them requested some guidance; which is described in more detail in the publication focusing on the socio-educational training as an innovative form of lifelong learning of secondary vocational school teachers<sup>4</sup>.

*For Objective 2 the research method used was a questionnaire* serving primarily as feedback after completing the socio-educational training which included a survey of the educational needs of the participating SVS teachers as a specific target group.

The collected responses could be classified in three significant basic categories (even though any clearly defined and unambiguous categorization is prevented by their overlapping):

1. Educational needs in relation to lesson planning and teaching;
2. Educational needs in relation to self-education;
3. Educational needs in relation to tutoring and further assistance to the students.

## **5. 4 Results of the survey of current and updated education needs of SVS teachers in the sample and their interpretation**

**1. Educational needs in relation to lesson planning and teaching** - as can be seen from Table 1, the highest number of SVS teachers in our sample expressed the need for further education in the field of (didactic) games in the teaching of vocational subjects, languages etc. at secondary vocational schools - on the basis of the analysed (self-)reflection responses from the teachers in our sample we assume that they not only want to know such games, but want to try them out and apply them directly during their work with students.

The second most frequent area of educational needs expressed by the teachers was activating methods of teaching at secondary vocational schools. This area is

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<sup>4</sup> Čepelová and Krásna (2014)

closely linked with the first one, since (according to experts in general and specialized didactics) didactic games belong to activating and, at the same time, to innovative methods of teaching various subjects (not only) at SVS. That brings us to the conclusion that teachers participating in the socio-educational training are willing to work on themselves to improve the quality of their teaching, they are willing to make an effort and learn new things which can be used in their work with students. At the same time they emphasize the necessity of using new innovative methods of teaching at secondary vocational schools.

The third most frequently mentioned area of educational needs in our sample was motivating the students during their secondary education. In this regard it is important to note that in addition to the quality of their own work, teachers care about the motivation of their students to learn and achieve better learning results. The above statement is also supported by the fact that creative teaching methods and student creativity development in secondary education were the next areas of interest of our target group. Project-based learning, student team work, experiential teaching, specific methods of creative drama and their use at secondary vocational schools, as well as problem solving tasks, can be classified among activating and innovative teaching methods at secondary vocational schools. This further supports the significance of the most frequently mentioned educational needs of the SVS teachers in our sample with regard to the teaching process.

Tab. 2 Educational needs of the SVS teachers in the sample in relation to lesson planning and teaching

<b>Education need</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
(Didactic) games in teaching vocational, language and other subjects at secondary vocational schools	32	36.8
Activating teaching methods of students at secondary vocational schools	17	19.5
Innovative approaches to teaching subjects at secondary vocational schools	16	18.3
Motivating students in the secondary education process	14	16

Source - own research

Several teachers in the sample (less than 10% of teachers who completed the questionnaires) singled out the following educational needs in relation to lesson planning and teaching:

- Creative teaching, developing students creativity at SVS - 7 teachers;
- Project teaching methods at SVS - 5 teachers;
- Teamwork in a group of students at SVS - 4 teachers;
- Experiential learning at SVS - 3 teachers;
- Creative Drama and its application at SVS - 2 teachers;

- Fundamental competences of a SVS teacher - 2 teachers;
- New forms of testing SVS students - 1 teacher;
- New forms of SVS student assessment - 1 teacher;
- Problem-solving activities in the classroom at SVS - 1 teacher.

It was the area of continuing education mentioned only by one teacher, specifically the new forms of testing, verification of knowledge and assessment of students that caught our attention. We believe that this kind of well-arranged teaching activity might be interesting and beneficial for the SVS teachers in terms of fundamental student skills and competences and also with regard to new types of course-books, teaching materials or new forms of student assessment.

**2. Educational needs in relation to teacher self-education** - as can be seen from Table 2, most of the SVS teachers in our sample expressed the need for further education in the field of self-knowledge. The analysed self-reflection of the teachers in our sample also suggests that there is some uncertainty and doubt in this area. The teachers in our sample seem to assume that a lot of difficulties in the teaching process might be caused by their weaknesses and that further education would help them recognize and work with these weak spots, which could, as we believe, have a positive effect on the everyday teaching activities of teachers and their work with the students.

The second most frequently mentioned area of further education needs expressed by teachers was self-education. It would be interesting to find out what methods and procedures of self-education the teachers have been using so far, how effective the methods have been and what the teacher motivation was. Based on the teachers' reflections we assume that a series of socio-educational training would be an appropriate option and an acceptable form of personal development. The third most frequently mentioned area of additional education needs reported in our sample were communication skills. We assume that teachers do not feel the lack of communication skills during the lessons and presentation of taught material but that this area is linked to the fourth most frequently stated area of further education needs of SVS teachers in our questionnaires, which is stress-resistance, handling stress, handling mental strain and difficult situations and teachers' mental health.

All of the above areas may play a vital role in self-assessment, in various ways of dealing with everyday challenges in direct educational activities and working with students, in communicating and handling difficult situations in relation to students, colleagues, parents, superiors etc. The fact, that the fifth most frequently mentioned area of educational needs of our target group was personal growth. Personal development of SVS teachers further supports our findings, as the two areas mentioned above might form a significant part of teachers' personal development.

Tab. 3 Educational needs of SVS teachers in our sample in relation to self-education

<b>Education need</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Self-knowledge	20	22.9
Self-education	16	18.4
Communication skills	15	17.2
Resistance to stress, stress management, dealing with mental strain, handling difficult situations	12	13.8
Mental health	12	13.8
Personal growth, personal development	11	12.6

Source - own research

Some SVS teachers (less than 10% of teachers who filled out the questionnaires) identified the following educational needs in relation to lesson planning and teaching:

- Educational and psychological training for SVS teachers - 5 teachers;
- Foreign language (English) - 3 teachers;
- Addressing conflict situations with colleagues, school board and supervisors - 3 teachers;
- Solving problematic situations - 3 teachers;
- Psycho-social skills - 1 teacher;
- Digitization, ICT (Information and communications technology) skills - 1 teacher;
- Physical education and sport - 1 teacher.

We find it interesting that the statements in the questionnaires included neither educational needs in the area of revision, nor renewal of knowledge in their area of expertise, specialization or qualification, nor further career growth, e.g. functional training with a view to management positions. Even ICT skills and digitization as areas of continuing education appeared only once in the questionnaires. Therefore, we conclude that a lot of measures have been taken and a lot of opportunities created, which have resulted in the desired effect. At the same time, the teachers, recognizing the necessity of technology in the modern age, have done a lot of work in the area of self-education and progress to higher digital literacy.

**3. Training needs in relation to guidance and educational activities for students** - Table 3 shows that the highest number of SVS teachers in the sample expressed the need for further education in this field, in particular in relation to working with difficult secondary school students. On the basis of this considerably high preference (this requirement was formulated by more than 44% of participants in our study), we believe that these training activities should

be offered to teachers with their active participation in creating the training programs in order to target the majority requirements.

We also assume that the above requirement is closely related to solving conflict situations with students, which ranked as second most frequent. Obviously, problematic situations in teacher-student relationships, including conflicts, pose a challenge for teachers in their daily educational practice, probably making them try various approaches (student participants of a survey performed in Slovakia reported also physical and psychological punishment by teachers). We believe an appropriate solution would be a series of meetings with experts, each meeting focusing on one of the most visible and most problematic areas, where the teachers could confront their practice in cooperation with psychologists, special pedagogues, educators, advisors, pathopsychologists, doctors, therapists, psychiatrists etc. and look for viable strategies for educational practice with this age group.

The next educational need expressed by the teachers in our sample was training in relation to form teacher responsibilities. Teachers often assume the role of a form teacher with no specific preparation during the university studies or previous teaching practice and it is obvious that self-study is not sufficient in this case.

Another area of educational requirement mentioned by our participants was working with integrated students with special educational needs or students with learning difficulties at secondary schools. Although this is not the solitary responsibility of the secondary school teacher - there needs to be cooperation on the part of students, parents, form teachers, colleagues, school boards, special pedagogues, tutors, psychologists, paediatricians, neurologists; clearly many teachers would welcome help, guidance and support in contrast to the general expectation that teachers are the ones to guide others.

Tab. 4 Educational needs in relation to tutoring and further assistance to the students (U)

<b>Education need</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Working with difficult SVS students	39	44.8
Handling conflict situations with students	14	16
Continuing education of form teachers	11	12.6
Working with integrated students, students with learning difficulties	9	10.3

Source - own research

Some SVS teachers (less than 10% of teachers who filled out the questionnaires) identified the following educational needs in relation to teaching:

- Psychology of secondary vocational school students - 8 teachers;
- Leading a group, working with teams of students in classes - 4 teachers;

- Building relationships with students, working with students - 3 teachers;
- Working with students with poor performance - 2 teachers;
- Psychological games -1 teacher;
- Why are we so overloaded with material to be covered - 1 teacher;
- Look forward to high school - one teacher;
- Identification of problems in groups of students - 1 teacher;
- Working with students from socially disadvantaged environments - 1 teacher;
- Drug prevention - 1 teacher;
- Crime prevention - 1 teacher;
- Social relationships in the classroom - 1 teacher.

### **5.5 Research findings based on the survey of education needs of SVS teachers**

The above research was focused on the detection of additional educational needs of secondary vocational school teachers. We tried to identify further current educational needs of this specific target group of secondary school teachers. The main tool was the questionnaire, which primarily served as feedback immediately after completing socio-educational training and its important task was to inquire into the educational needs of the SVS teachers as a specific target group of teachers.

The collected responses were classified in three fundamental categories (even though any clearly defined and unambiguous categorization is prevented by their overlapping):

- a. Educational needs in relation to lesson planning and teaching;
- b. Educational needs in relation to self-education;
- c. Educational needs in relation to tutoring and further assistance to the students.

The classified findings have been described in more detail in subsection 4.4. In terms of overall results, the most preferred areas of educational needs of the target group of our research have been arranged and summarized in the following chart.

Tab. 5 Most preferred educational needs of secondary vocational school teachers based on the results in the sample

<b>Education need</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Working with difficult SVS students	39	44.8
(Didactic) games in teaching vocational, language and other subjects at secondary vocational schools	32	36.8
Self-knowledge of SVS teachers	20	22.9
Activating teaching methods at secondary vocational schools	17	19.5

Self-education of SVS teachers	16	18.4
Innovative approaches to teaching subjects at secondary vocational schools	16	18.4
Communication skills of SVS teachers	15	17.2
Motivating students in the secondary education process	14	16
Resistance to stress, stress management, dealing with mental strain, handling difficult situations	12	13.8
Mental health	12	13.8
Continuing education of form teachers	11	12.6
Working with integrated students, students with learning difficulties	9	10.3

Source - own research

The most frequently requested area of SVS teacher education was working with difficult students at secondary vocational schools (39 teachers, accounting for 44.8% of our sample), the second were (didactic) games in teaching (professional, language ...) subjects at secondary vocational schools (32 teachers, accounting for 36.8% of our sample) and the third area was self-knowledge of secondary school teachers (20 teachers, accounting for 22.9% of the sample).

We conducted a short-term applied empirical research. The research was of an interdisciplinary character and focused on partial objectives and areas. Several other interesting areas of continuing education of SVS teachers were suggested by the teachers participating in the research, however, their incidence was below 10% (mentioned under the Tables 1, 2 and 3), some of which might prove to be more preferred in a nationwide survey. All of the above areas are possible for the vital direct educative work of teachers at SVS; further training can help teachers deal with the everyday difficulties of educational work with students, as well as effectively cope with stressful situations in their relations with students, colleagues, parents of students, supervisors, etc. Our previous conclusions are supported by the fact that socio-educational training in the form the participants of the research experienced should be a series of continuous meetings, not just one single training session, which brings a new challenge for us – to formulate another project following up on this one that would, along with its continuations, form an important part of teacher personal development within lifelong learning.

## **6 Conclusion**

The requirements imposed on teachers by society are not limited to the appropriate level of education, but also cover teacher competence in the professional, pedagogical and psychological, personal and didactic areas. Therefore, lifelong learning is a necessity for their personal growth. Educational outcomes, their quality, the educational process or achieved certificate of

training and education are crucial elements. The fact that a teacher completes any training and gets a certificate does not ensure that the acquired knowledge will represent new added values for the employer, the school. The same certificate of completion of training does not represent the same quality of acquired knowledge in each individual participant of training. Personal qualities of individuals play a vital role in this regard. If a person wants to actively cope with rapid changes in society, increasing requirements in science, technology, economy and overall personal growth, it is necessary to continue learning throughout their whole life. Due to the research strategy chosen, the results presented cannot be generalized to the whole population of teachers of secondary vocational schools. However, they are a useful matter for discussion on the issue of the lifelong and continuing education of teachers in Slovakia and their educational needs and an important output of the KEGA 005DTI-4/2013 project "Socio-educational training as an innovative form of lifelong learning of secondary vocational school teachers."

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## **Education of Older People for Combating Their Loneliness**

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**Abstract:** The article discusses education of older people for combating their loneliness, the reasons for it, and its consequences. The current theoretical findings were the reason for the empirical study of the research problem by the authors. In the empirical part, some aspects of the life of older people regarding their residences were compared: among older people living with their relatives, alone, with a partner, or in a retirement home, with special regard to the reasons/causes for residence, and the feeling of loneliness and contacts with relatives. The obtained empirical results showed that older people living alone or in a retirement home are in a worse position compared to those living with relatives or with a partner. The most at risk are older people living alone.

**Key words:** education, older people, residence type, reasons/causes for residence, loneliness, contacts.

### **1 Introduction**

The meanings of age are not unchangeable. They respond to the pressures of each new cohort through the everyday interactions of cohort members, the millions of apparently unrelated individual decisions, the gradually emerging cohort definitions which then merge into new or altered norms, contracts, laws, social institutions. The meaning of age and aging is under constant social pressure, it is the subject of constant redefinition in which each individual plays an active part (Riley, 1978, p. 50).

In the past, people had a favourable attitude towards age. Older people were valued due to their experience, and only in rare cases were they unwanted because of their impaired physical functions. Older people with a high social status were especially valued since they had social power and as the owners of material assets also the power to make decisions. Older people enjoyed great respect, and aging represented a popular and fully extended symbol of the fate of human life. In the 1960s, the perception of age completely changed since both age and aging became the subject of social institutionalizing. Intensive

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demographic changes in the developed postmodern societies and the increase of the heterogeneity of the older population pushed older people to the margins of society, and defined their status of a dependent social category by implementing the institutionalization act. Based on its theory of a risk society, Beck established that the transition into the industrial society caused the formation of a productivity-oriented society which in accordance with its own interests, creates an image of older people as dependent, unproductive, and inactive members of society. The prevalent stereotypes about age in society create the general negative attitude towards age and affect the experience of age in older people which consequently results in their low self-esteem. Their expectations and demands become low as well (Beck, 2001).

Despite numerous improvements regarding the integration of older people into society, many of them still encounter gerontophobia, age segregation, marginalization, and social stigma. And as a consequence, loneliness! Those factors promote their helplessness and dependence, extensively affecting social inclusion or exclusion of the older population. Acts of institutionalizing are in their basis the product of the social construction, contributing to the legitimacy, loneliness, and social distance among older people. Although the share of the older population is growing intensively and leads into the unavoidable demographic aging, the cultural and social meaning of aging are changing very slowly in Slovene society, also due to myths about aging. White Riley (1978) states three main fallacies (re)producing the myths about aging:

- *life-course fallacy* which is evident from cross-section data in which old people have lower educational attainment than young people. The apparent decline occurs because the more recent cohorts are better educated than their predecessors;
- *fallacy of age reification* in which chronological age itself is treated as if it were a causal factor. Yet particular years of age have no meaning in themselves; they are mere indexes, useful only as they reflect socially or theoretically relevant components of personal or social change; and
- *fallacy of overgeneralizing from the experience of a single cohort* (cohort-centrism) as Robert Merton puts it, "Structure constrains individuals variously situated within it to develop cultural emphases, social behaviour patterns and psychological bents." Thus, any personal biography of a member of a cohort can only emphasize the constraints imposed by social structure and social change. Thus one generation's "common sense" about aging may no longer make sense to a later generation. The universal theory of aging should be an abstraction of experience as each new cohort confronts a different set of social and environmental events (Riley, 1978, p. 44).

### *Aging*

Even though aging is a development process of each individual and can have an individual or social character, we must distinguish between *the process of aging* and *the concept of age*. According to Kolland (1993, p. 537), aging can be defined as the process of change and development through the entire life-course while age is a state of an individual in which his identity is being newly created. According to Ramovš (2003, p. 69), the concept of age can be differentiated on the basis of chronological age indicated by the birth date; functional age which is evident into what extent a person is able to independently do his everyday chores and how healthy he is (referred to as “biological age” by doctors), and perceptual age. Perceptual age is evident in a person’s embrace and perception of his current age; it is more complex in its nature and refers to the human relation towards age.

As Williams (1957) and Finch (1990), De Magalhaes (2012) uses the term “senescence” instead of “aging” as well since he wants to emphasize aging as an active genetically controlled process. The use of the term senescence encompasses the presumption that the aging process is at the mercy of the operation of human cells. While human cells are basic structural units of our bodies, it is logical to presuppose to some extent that changes at the cellular level affect the body, the person and their aging process. However, we emphasize that such conception stresses only a specific aspect of the aging process since human cells are not the only factor affecting the aging process. The majority of experts agree that the aging process is the result of various effects on the body – environmental, genetic, cultural, nutritional, and physical. Aging is a process of biological, psychological and social changes which among other things have an important effect on shaping one’s personality.

Thus aging is a phenomenon with personal and social implications. “For an individual, it is a process of physical, mental and psychological change through the entire life-course. For society itself, however, an aging population has several social, economic, cultural, ethnic and political dimensions.” (Kersnik Bergant, 1999, p. 95)

Aging can also be understood as “a universal process which happens due to the interaction between a genome and its environment” (Cijan and Cijan, 2003, p. 22) and as “a constant process leading to the loss of the body’s ability to adapt, a decline in the intensity of life functions and a more and more gradual, however unavoidable loss of the functional ability. Age is therefore an anteroom to death, the same as childhood is an anteroom to life.” (Cijan and Cijan, 2003, p. 23)

Social theories of aging establish that the relation between a person and its social environment is especially important. Well-being in one’s old age thus depends mostly on the expectations in the environment in which he lives. It is difficult to exactly specify the limit to call someone old. The World Health Organization set the limit at 60 years since they believe old age comes after 60 years of age (Cijan and Cijan, 2003, p. 22). In the developed world, aging begins after the age

of 65. With a higher life expectancy, the third age began to divide into the fourth age. The third age lasts from retirement to 75 years of age, and the fourth from 75 years onwards (Kersnik Bergant, 1999, p. 95).

Under modern conditions, old age is becoming a problem after the age of 75 since only then many old people are not able to take care of themselves any more. They become dependent on other people. (Cijan and Cijan, 2003, p. 22).

Old age can be divided into three brackets. First, the early age bracket lasts from the age of 66 to 75. For this bracket, it is characteristic that a person is adapting to a retirement way of life. Then, the middle age bracket follows which lasts from the age of 76 to 85. Old people in this bracket deal with health problems, their physical power is declining, their peers are dying, a lot of them have already become widows or widowers. The final phase is the late age bracket after the age of 86. Old people receive the help of others since they are no longer able to take care of themselves (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 74-75). In Slovenia, the "younger" and "older" groups were identified based on their physical, psychological and material characteristics (Accetto et al., 1987; adapt. from Hojnik Zupanc, 1999, p. 104). The younger group is limited by chronological age from 60 (65) to 75 (80) years. The characteristics of the younger generations are: physical and mental vitality, decreased activity, the members are identified as pensioners, they have a better socioeconomic status in comparison to the older group, a consumer way of life, they think of retirement homes as the best solution for helpless old people, etc. (Hojnik Zupanc, pp. 104-105). The older group is limited by chronological age of 75 years or more. Characteristics of the older group are: more health problems, decreased physical activity, they often live alone, many of them are without a partner, poor socioeconomic status, limited material needs, low life demands, etc. (Hojnik Zupanc, p. 105).

With a higher life expectancy, old people encounter problems due to the fact that they are no longer able to fulfil their own needs (Svažič, 1994, p. 88).

Table 1: Older people and the accomplishment of assignments

	<b>Late Adulthood (65-75)</b>	<b>Late, Late Adulthood (75+)</b>
<b><i>Physical Changes</i></b>	Noticeable decline in physical power; longer reaction time	Faster decline in physical and health functions
<b><i>Cognitive Changes</i></b>	Slow decline in various abilities	Faster decline in cognitive abilities, mostly memory
<b><i>Family and Partnership Roles</i></b>	Grandparents; less important family roles	Family roles relatively unimportant
<b><i>Relationships</i></b>	Great satisfaction in marriage (if not widows or widowers); intimate friendship; frequent contacts with children	Most of them are widows or widowers; friends remain important
<b><i>Work Roles</i></b>	Retirement (for the majority)	Unimportant (for the majority)
<b><i>Personality and Personal Meaning</i></b>	Integrity of the ego (goal); introversion; some of them reach the level of integrity	Previous processes continue
<b><i>Key Assignments</i></b>	Facing retirement and the decline in physical and mental functions; redefining of life goals and personal meaning	Facing the end of life and the possibility of illness and worsened ability

Source: Bee (1996, pp. 388-389), Kump and Jelenc Krašovec (2009, p. 17), Bee (1996). *The journey of adulthood*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Based on age, some social gerontologists distinguish between the third and fourth age. Characteristic for this segment is the assignment in the third age to deliver one's life understandings and experience directly to fellow people and indirectly to the culture. In the third age, old people are still full of life energy and the thought of death is not yet constantly present. Most of this population still enjoys almost complete autonomy of their lives and creativity in the chosen activities they find enjoyable and are capable of doing them. In his conceptualization of age, Laslett (1989) specifically distinguishes *the fourth age* and connects it with dependency, helplessness, illness and death. Although he warns that this period often does not even happen or is very short.

Sometimes we are surprised when a person says how old he is. It is not uncommon that with their external appearance, people show fewer years than they actually have. It can be distinguished among three types of old age: chronological age which can be defined as age apparent according to the calendar, biological age which can be defined as the age of the body and psychological age which is one's perception of his age, how old he feels (Hojnik Zupanc, 1997, pp. 3-4). Trstenjak (1985) measured age with the "index of cicatrization" i.e. the speed of superficial wound healing. A five-year-old takes 6 days to heal certain wounds while a sixty-year-old takes 42 days. The essence of aging is in the aging of cells which are becoming ever slower, less adaptable and have an impaired healing ability; tissue hydration is worsened, as well as the basic metabolism which is the cause for the process of sedimentation in cells (Trstenjak, 1985, p. 403).

### *Loneliness*

For the majority of old people, it is also difficult to face the fact that they are old because of the prevailing stereotypes in society. Instead of confronting such stereotyping, they would rather live the lifestyle of the young as long as they can. When their health and physical functioning worsen, their standard of living and cognitive abilities decline, their appearance changes and they experience social loss, and "loneliness" comes into the life of older people.

Loneliness is one of the worst afflictions of old age. Old people who are lonely also start to perceive their full past life as something empty and unworthy. For an old person, loneliness is as bad as physical malnutrition. It is a hunger for the closeness of someone who is close to them (Ramovš, 2003, p. 104). Loneliness is an emotional state in which a person feels strong feelings of emptiness and isolation; it is more than just a need for the company of a fellow man. It is a feeling of being estranged and isolated from people (Hvalič Touzery, 2006, p. 55). Older people can thus experience social or emotional loneliness, or both. Social isolation is a result of the isolation by society and the inability of an old person to socially integrate. Emotional isolation, however, is the result of the loss of a partner, family, friends, lack of social contacts (Luanaigh and Lawlor, 2008, p. 1213-21). A lower socioeconomic status can increase gerontophobia due to the fear of the inability to support oneself and pay for health care (Lynch, 2000, p. 537).

If one's need for relationships is not satisfied, one is lonely (Ramovš, 2003, p. 211). However, there is no rule for this. A person living alone does not necessarily feel lonely. He can feel good and has no problems making new contacts with people. On the other hand, someone can live surrounded by a lot of people, for example in a retirement home or hospital, and experience loneliness. One is not able to make contact with people (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 211-212). Therefore, the feeling of loneliness is not directly related to the frequency of contacts with other people. One can feel lonely also when one is surrounded by a

crowd of people. At the same time, some people have little contact with others and they do not feel lonely. The causes of loneliness in old age can be various: the death of a spouse, relative, illness, children moving away, etc. A partner is supposed to be the best cure for loneliness, followed by children (Požarnik, 1981, pp. 134-135).

The feeling of loneliness also depends on one's expectations. An older person expecting his children will visit him once a day is going to feel lonely if there are no visits for a few days. Also, ill people are lonelier than those who are healthy since they cannot entertain themselves. Illness and loneliness are related. On one side, illness causes loneliness. On the other side, loneliness causes worse physical and emotional well-being (Požarnik, 1981, p. 137).

There is a common belief that we always need people in our lives. When a person is born he needs another person to perform life functions, such as feeding. The need for a personal relationship is very important in old age as well. We could say it is the main need in the third age which is, however, often unsatisfied (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 103-104). An old person needs regular personal contact with someone he trusts. In traditional society, this person would be a blood relative. Nowadays this is different since traditional societies are largely losing their meaning and relatives are being replaced by people who are in that old person's life through his choice. Yet, it is definitely not unimportant who is next to an old person. That can be a large group of people but if there is not the "right" person among them he is lonely. Loneliness can be seen in people living in retirement homes or hospitals.

Old people are nursed by a lot of experts, care assistants and serving attendants satisfying their physical needs. Sadly, this is where it ends. For them they are people which they cannot depend on in times of distress (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 103-104). A critical period in old age is widowhood because it is then when an older person is left alone. He feels lonely because there is nobody next to him. His living space becomes too much for him (Hojnik Zupanc, 1999, p. 61). Older people are many times also excluded from groups. The result is loneliness. They are excluded due to their life situation, children moving away, retirement which excludes them from the work unit. However, all this can be avoided by children maintaining contact with their parents, by older people taking up additional and voluntary work when retired, etc. (Pečjak, 2007, pp. 76-77).

With older people, loneliness can be compared to physical malnutrition since they are equally important to them. The consequences are similar. In both cases, an old person can become ill in time (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 103-104). In case the feeling of loneliness is predominant over other feelings, we can talk about a social disorder. The only solution preventing the spreading of loneliness into a worse social disorder is a personal human relationship (Ramovš, pp. 421-422).

It is well worth stressing that people all around the developed world are as lonely today as never before in the entire human history. High material standards on the one hand and low mental, spiritual and interpersonal standards on the

other lead to the low quality of life of today's older people (Ramovš, 2003, p. 327). The only solution to prevent the spread of loneliness into a worse social disorder is personal human relationships (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 421–422). A preventive asset for loneliness is also the telephone. Old people communicate with their friends and relatives over the phone and thus reduce their loneliness (Hojnik Zupanc, 1999, pp. 153-154). This is especially important if they are ill. The phone is also an asset through which older people can inform others if they need anything, if something happened to them etc. (Požarnik, 1981, p. 138). Numerous sociological factors like cohort, ethnicity, social class, level of education, sex, etc. can affect our perception and understanding of aging. All those factors affect one's accessibility to economic status, knowledge and different experiences related to aging. They enrich or increase assets with which one can confront bad health, wrinkles and other signs of aging. As a result, those factors could contribute to a decreased fear of aging and older people, and also to decreased gerontophobia as a complex phenomena.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of our study was to compare old people living with their relatives, alone, with a partner or in a retirement home. We focused on:

- reasons for their residence;
- feeling of loneliness, contacts with relatives.

We were interested in the effect of the manner of residence on loneliness in older people or which group of older people is the most at risk according to the residence type from the mentioned aspects.

#### METHODOLOGY

##### *Research sample*

The study was based on a non-random (convenience) sample of old people in the northeastern Slovenian region (Dravsko-Ptujsko polje). At the level of inferential statistics, the sample is defined as a simple random sample of a hypothetical population.

The sample included 75 males (34.1%) and 145 females (65.9%). The sample included more females than males which is not surprising since in 2012, the average female life expectancy in Slovenia was 80 years and 71.8 years for males (Statistical Office of the RS, 2013). This is an indication that on average, women live 8.2 years longer than men and as a result, outnumber them. The information about premature mortality shows that in 2012, almost every third male and every eighth female died younger than 65 years old. This is also proof that on average, men die younger than women (Statistical Office of the RS, 2013).

The majority of old people included in our sample were between 60 and 70 years old (46.4%), followed by those 80 years old (33.2%). The minority were

represented by old people under 60 and over 80 years old. As an interesting fact we can add that the age dispersion ranged from 58 to 92 years. The condition for the participation was retirement.

In Slovenia, the right to age-related retirement depends on different factors, namely on reaching a certain age and a long enough retirement-insurance period without the possibility of an additional purchase. Both conditions must be met. A female must be 58 years old and have 38 years and 4 months of years of service without an additional purchase to retire, a male 58 years and 4 months old with 40 years of service without an additional purchase. The right to the age-related retirement can in some cases be adapted. For females, the age can be lowered to 56 years, for men to 58 years (Institute for Pension and Disability Insurance of Slovenia, 2013). As a criterion for our study, we considered the minimum age of 58 years. This is the age at which it is possible to reach retirement following the normal procedure without any cuts. Therefore, the youngest older person participating in our study was 58 years old.

Most of the old people had a high-school diploma (46.8%), followed by those who finished primary school (39.1%). A small percentage of interviewees did not finish primary school (4.1%), some of them had a Bachelor's degree (2.7%) and a Master's degree or PhD (0.95).

As the main criterion for establishing whether old people are endangered, our assignment was to discuss residence types. According to them, the sample included 70 people (31.8%) living with their relatives, 40 people (18.2%) living alone, 50 people (22.7%) living in a retirement home and 60 people (27.3%) living with their partner. Among the cohorts of old people, the percentages are not the same according to residence type. This is a result of residence types which are well established in practice (for example: most of the older people live with their relatives).

#### *Data collecting procedure*

The data was collected from March until May 2013 at primary schools (city and suburban schools) and retirement homes in the Dravsko-Ptujsko polje region. At the primary schools, questionnaires were given to the headmasters, pedagogical workers, social workers and teachers who gave them to their students. They then forwarded them to the retired people and returned them to their teachers after they had been filled in. In retirement homes, inmates filled in the questionnaire alone or with our help or with the help of social workers (in the case of medical obstacles).

#### *Contents and methodological characteristics of the questionnaire*

The questionnaire was composed of 17 closed-ended questions and two sets of scales (contentment, values).

The questionnaire provided measuring characteristics, namely:

*The validity* of the questionnaire was based on the probe use. It showed that questions were well formed; corrections were unnecessary.

*Reliability* was provided with precise instructions and specific questions. The reliability of the evaluation scales was tested with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The value  $\alpha = 0.778$  indicates that the scales (contentment, values) in the questionnaire are reliable enough.

*Objectivity* was provided with closed-ended questions, data collecting which was individual, unguided and guided. Guided data collecting only included reading the questions. In the phase of reading nothing was changed which means there was no subjective influence.

#### *Data processing procedures*

The data was processed using the SPSS. A frequency distributions (f, f %) and  $\chi^2$  – the test (Che-Square Test) was used because the frequency of non-numeric variables (nominal, ordinal) was analyzed.

## RESULTS REVIEW AND INTERPRETATION

### *Analysis of reasons for residence*

Old people could choose among the suggested reasons.

Table 2: The number (f) and percentage (f %) of older people according to reasons for residence

Reasons/causes for residence	f	f %
Health conditions	55	25.0
Poor relations with relatives	7	3.2
Financial conditions	10	4.5
Loneliness	14	6.4
Dependence	7	3.2
Feeling of being a burden to relatives	6	2.7
Other	121	55.0
Total	220	100.0

It is evident from the table that the majority (55%) of older people stated “*Other*” as the reason/cause for residence. Their answers are written in the interpretation of the Table 3 since they apply to a specific cohort of older people according to residence type. The second most common answer was “*Health conditions*” (25%). Other answers (*Poor relations with relatives, Financial conditions, Loneliness, Dependence and the Feeling of being a burden to relatives*) appeared in lower percentages.

Table 3: The number (f) and percentage (f %) of older people according to reasons for residence according to certain residence type

Residence type Answer	With relatives		Alone		In a retirement home		With a partner		Total	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Health conditions	11	15.7	3	7.5	35	70.0	6	10.0	55	25.0
Poor relations with relatives	2	2.9	4	10.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	7	3.2
Financial conditions	6	8.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	6.7	10	4.5
Loneliness	5	7.1	0	0.0	6	12.0	3	5.0	14	6.4
Dependence	2	2.9	0	0.0	4	8.0	1	1.7	7	3.2
Feeling of being a burden to relatives	0	0.0	4	10.0	0	0.0	2	3.3	6	2.7
Other	44	62.9	29	72.5	4	8.0	44	73.3	121	55.0
Total	70	100.0	40	100.0	50	100.0	60	100.0	220	100.0

Result of the  $\chi^2$ -test:  $\chi^2 = 116.924$ , g = 18,  $\alpha$  (P) = 0.000

As the result of the  $\chi^2$ -test shows, there is a statistically significant difference in reasons for residence according to certain type of residence. Old people living in a retirement home stand out. They stated “*Health conditions*” (70.0%) as the main reason for their residence. In all other cohorts, health reasons were represented in much lower percentages. Old people living with their relatives, alone or with their partner most commonly chose the answer “*Other*” and also wrote down their answer. The answers were very different. As the reason for their residence, old people living with relatives wrote “family house”, “fewer responsibilities because of the distribution of chores”, “babysitting grandchildren”, “I like it this way”, “we get along very well”, “we agreed”. The most common answers of old people living alone were: “independence”, “divorce”, “one’s own master”, “it is my home, I don’t want to leave it”. Answers of old people living with their partner were: “I like it this way”, “our own house”, “it’s normal”, “I am married”, “love”. The answers tell us that the reasons/causes for an old person’s residence according to certain type of residence are very different. We could sum up that the majority of old people live in a retirement home due to their health problems and need for care. In

cohorts living with relatives, alone or with a partner it is difficult to stress one reason since the answers were so different.

*Analysis of loneliness and contacts*

Old people evaluated their loneliness and experience with human contacts.

Table 4: The number (f) and percentages (f %) of old people according to loneliness

Answer	f	f %
Never	114	51.8
Rarely	85	38.6
Often	21	9.5
Total	220	100.0

Based on the acquired empirical data, we established that most old people chose the answer “*Never*” (51.8%) for the question about their loneliness, followed by “*Rarely*” (38.6%) and “*Often*” (9.5%). According to the results, we can conclude that the feeling of loneliness is not common in old people.

Table 5: The number (f) and structural percentages (f %) of old people according to loneliness according to certain residence type

Residence type	With relatives		Alone		In a retirement home		With a partner		Total	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Never	45	64.3	10	25.0	20	40.0	39	65.0	114	51.8
Rarely	23	32.9	21	52.5	22	44.0	19	31.7	85	38.6
Often	2	2.9	9	22.5	8	16.0	2	3.3	21	9.5
Total	70	100.0	40	100.0	50	100.0	60	100.0	220	100.0

Result of the  $\chi^2$ -test:  $\chi^2 = 29.654$ , g = 6,  $\alpha$  (P) = 0.000

As the result of the  $\chi^2$ -test shows, there is a statistically significant difference in the question related to loneliness of old people according to certain residence types. The answer “*Never*” was chosen by the majority of old people living with their relatives (64.3%) and partner (65.0%). The answer “*Rarely*” was chosen mostly by old people living alone (52.5%) and in a retirement home (44.0%). The answer “*Often*” was more frequently chosen by old people living alone (22.5%) and in a retirement home (16%) than by those living with relatives (2.9%) or a partner (3.3%). The results show that old people who have no relatives next to them, those living alone or in a retirement home, are more often lonely. We could conclude that family plays an important role in overcoming loneliness.

If we sum up, the most lonely and thus the most endangered are old people living alone.

Table 6: The number (f) and percentages (f %) of old people according to the frequency of contacts with relatives

Contacts	Over the phone		Visits		During holidays	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Never	11	5.0	2	0.9	3	1.4
Rarely	59	26.8	61	27.7	34	15.5
Often	150	68.2	155	71.4	183	83.2
Total	220	100.0	220	100.0	220	100.0

The results showed that old people have the most frequent contacts with their relatives during holidays (83.2%), followed by visits (71.4%) and telephone conversations (68.2%).

Table 7: The number (f) and percentages (f %) of old people according to the frequency of contacts with relatives according to certain residence type

Contacts			Residence type				$\chi^2$	P
			With relatives	Alone	In a retirement home	With a partner		
Over the phone	Never, rarely	f	21	10	29	10	23.112	0.000
		f %	30.0	25.0	58.0	16.7		
Over the phone	Often	f	49	30	21	50	23.112	0.000
		f %	70.0	75.0	42.0	83.3		
Visits	Never, rarely	f	10	20	25	8	34.030	0.000
		f %	14.3	50.0	50.0	13.3		
Visits	Often	f	60	20	25	52	34.030	0.000
		f %	85.7	50.5	50.5	86.7		
During holidays	Never, rarely	f	9	4	22	2	36.320	0.000
		f %	12.9	10.0	44.0	3.3		
During holidays	Often	f	61	36	28	58	36.320	0.000
		f %	87.1	90.0	56.0	96.7		

Note: The answers “Never” and “Rarely” were combined due to low frequencies.

The results of the  $\chi^2$ -test showed that the difference in all three forms of old people’s contact with their relatives (over the phone, visits and during holidays) is statistically significant. In the form “Over the phone” ( $\chi^2 = 23.112$ , P = 0.000),

old people living in a retirement home stand out since they most frequently chose the answer “*Never/rarely*” (58.0%). The answer “*Often*” was most frequently given by old people living with their relatives (70.0%), alone (75.0%) and a partner (83.3%). Contacts with their relatives through *visits* ( $\chi^2 = 34.030$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) are more frequent for old people living with their relatives (85.7%) and partner (86.7%) than for those living alone or in a retirement home. Contacts *during holidays* ( $\chi^2 = 36.320$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) are the least frequent for old people living in a retirement home, much more for those living with their relatives (87.1%), alone (90%) or with a partner (96.7%).

To sum up, the most at risk old people are the ones living in a retirement home since they have the least contact with their relatives, which consequently brings a more common feeling of loneliness.

## **2 Conclusions**

In times of modernization, wisdom or experience lost its meaning. It has become more and more irrelevant factor in gaining access and control over socially important resources. As a result, this led to a diminished authority and devaluation of the meaning of an old person status and their loneliness. Simmons emphasizes that the society's modernization caused the loss of the political and social power as well as influence and control once in the hands of old people. The side effect is social, moral and intellectual generation segregation. And consequently loneliness (Hoyman and Asuman, 2009, p. 48).

The results have been presented of an empirical study conducted on a sample of pensioners living in northeastern Slovenia. They show that, compared to old people living with their relatives or partner, those living alone or in a retirement home are in a much worse position. Old people living alone are most often lonely, followed by those living in a retirement home. The role of the family and thus the related importance of relatives was stressed since old people living with their relatives or partner are less lonely. They have relatives around them, while old people living alone or in a retirement home do not. The fact that the family and not just company is important to old people was evident in retirement homes. A lot of old people live there; however, many of them are still lonely. Therefore, we could sum up that relatives are the ones who play an important role. Old people may be surrounded by a lot of people but if they are not the right ones, those they need, this does not minimize their loneliness. Relatives are thus irreplaceable.

Old people living in a retirement home have the least contact with their relatives. It is an interesting fact that old people living alone have frequent contacts with their relatives over the phone and during holidays, however, this does not minimize their loneliness. It is evident that contacts through visits are of key importance since old people living alone do not have them to such extent. Personal family contact plays a key role.

To conclude, old people living in a retirement home are the endangered cohort, however, the most endangered includes old people living alone. It is true that old people living in a retirement home have the least contact with their relatives; however, their feeling of loneliness is not as strong as with old people living alone.

Let us consider the following thought: "The world that we are creating today will be enjoyed tomorrow, so it is important to ask ourselves the question, do we want the old age we are offering today for our older?" (Vilfan, 1994, p. 123).

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# ARTICLES

## The Effects of the Media on Self-Esteem of Young Girls

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**Abstract:** There have been a number of studies investigating the media's role in body image dissatisfaction, eating disorders, self-esteem, and the internalization of the thin body ideal in young girls and women. However, much of the research focuses on girls ages 10 and older; very few examine those girls of pre-primary or primary age. This paper seeks to explore the studies that do focus on the younger age groups, and understand the relationship between the media and young girls' self-esteem.

**Key words:** body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, girls, media, self-esteem.

### 1 Introduction

Young girls are becoming increasingly aware of their body image through the image of models in advertising, and image-centered ideals portrayed in the media. A number of studies have been developed in the past several years that have determined that the media does indeed have negative influences on young girls' self-esteem, body-image, and ideas of self-worth. Further, these experiences and influences can impact girls and drive them towards behaviors that are unhealthy, including eating disorders. This paper seeks to review the literature and consolidate findings in a systematic and thorough capacity.

Weight is a sensitive issue among many girls and young women. Specifically, younger girls are showing a concern for body image and weight at alarmingly young ages, including as young as age 5. Some of these girls are at healthy weights, others are overweight. Of course, weight has an impact on a girl's self-esteem, with those even as young as 5 years reporting lower body self-esteem, and lower perceived intelligence if they were of a higher weight (Davison and

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Birch, 2000). Regardless, peer influences and the media have a profound impact on a young girl's self-esteem, and her body-image ideals, which can lead to unhealthy behaviors and emotional/mental states.

## **2 Discussion**

Even brief exposure to seeing skinny models leads to body dissatisfaction. In one study, 210 adolescent girls were randomly assigned to a 15-month fashion magazine subscription, or no-subscription condition (Stice, Spangler and Argas, 2001). The researchers followed these girls over time, and determined that, interestingly, there were no long-term negative effects of being exposed to fashion magazines. That is, there were no long-term effects related to the thin-ideal internalization, body dissatisfaction or eating disorders. However, it was found that vulnerable adolescents, who had initial perceptions of the "thin-ideal" and who did not have proper social support, were negatively impacted by exposure to the thin-model images. Therefore, exposure to thin-ideal model images had lasting negative effects on vulnerable young girls.

A study that examined 97 girls aged 5-8 determined that watching appearance-themed/focused television program was an antecedent to appearance satisfaction (Dohnt and Tiggemann, 2006a). That is, watching these television programs had a direct, and oftentimes negative, effect on these young girls' self-esteem. Alarmingly, as young as school-age children just beginning their education, girls are already vulnerable to, and live in a culture, where the media transmits body image ideals, include thinness, which negatively impacts these young girls' self-esteem, and influences the development of their body image.

Another study by these researchers recruited 128 girls, aged 5-8 (Dohnt and Tiggemann, 2006b). The researchers determined that by age 6, many of these girls wanted to be slimmer, and thought that thinness was the ideal figure to have. The media and peer influences were indicated to be the driving factors behind these girls' desires to have a thinner body, and the consequent dieting schemas that arise from such desires. Dieting awareness was predicted by the girls' viewing of music television shows (which often feature thin models), and reading appearance-themed magazines.

These two studies have determined that young girls, aged 5-8, are already aware of body image ideals, and have desires driven by a culture that showcases appearance and images.

Field, Camargo, Taylor, Berkey, Roberts and Colditz (2001) determined that young girls, aged 9-14, become highly concerned with their weight. Regardless of their age or body mass index (BMI), girls who made strong efforts to look like women in the media were more likely to be concerned about their weight. Therefore, the media does have a strong influence on the development of girls' weight worries.

Harrison and Hefner (2006) found that media exposure can lead to eating disorders among girls (and young women). The media exposure causes these young girls to internalize a thin-body ideal, which then leads to the girls desire to be thin. 257 preadolescent girls were examined. It was found that specifically, television-viewing predicted eating disorder and a thinner body-ideal. However, post-pubescence, when these girls were also examined, were not as predictable in terms of eating disorders and television exposure.

A study that examined 791 girls determined that the internalization of media body ideals led to girls being dissatisfied with their bodies (Knauss, Paxton and Alsaker, 2007). In fact, in these young girls, the strongest predictor for body dissatisfaction was the internalization of body ideals from the media.

Highly attractive models in advertising impacts female pre-adolescents and adolescents. Girls in grades four, six and eight were studied, and it was found that social comparison was a big factor that drove the girls' body image, in relation to media exposure (Martin and Gentry, 1997). However, the social comparison theory was not consistent across all grade groups, and there are therefore other factors that impact a girl's self-esteem, in relation to being exposed to highly attractive models in the advertising that they are viewing.

Appearance schemas are a cognitive component of body image. Appearance schemas are associated with pre-adolescent girls' levels of depression and their concern with their weight (Sinton and Birch, 2006). Furthermore, these appearance schemas made these young girls more aware of media messages related to female appearance. They were also related to the girls' dissatisfaction with their bodies. It seems here that being susceptible already to body dissatisfaction made the girls more aware, and more vulnerable, to the messages and effects of the media on the development of how they perceive themselves, other girls, and how much importance they place on their appearance. It may be that the media is certainly a risk factor for negative body image, but that the media may be more so a causal risk factor (Levine and Murnen, 2009).

One hundred girls aged 9-12 completed questionnaires about media exposure, which included magazines and television, internalization, and body dissatisfaction (Clark and Tiggeman, 2006). The girls' height and weight were measured; nearly half of these girls expressed a desire to be thinner. The girls' exposure to the appearance-focused media, outlets were not directly related to the girls' body dissatisfaction, but rather they were indirectly related through the conversations about appearance that they had with their peers. These appearance-themed conversations with peers had a significant relationship with the girls' internalization of thin body ideals, which, not surprisingly, led to their body dissatisfaction.

Caucasian girls are not the only ones affected by body dissatisfaction and dieting. Preadolescent British Asian girls have been found to be just as susceptible to eating disorders as their Caucasian counterparts (Hill and Bhatti, 1995). Both Asian and Caucasian girls placed an emphasis on thinness. Further,

it was found in the Asian samples an association between dieting and the cultural aspects of their family. Therefore, the desire to be thinner seems to be a combination of socio-cultural influences, and may have a strong influence on the development of eating disorders in young girls.

One study that looked at 121 girls between the ages of 3-6 (Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn, 2010). The researchers examined the effects of brief exposure to appearance-themed media on the girls' body image. What was interesting was that there was no effect found of media on body dissatisfaction. It may be, the researchers hypothesized, that younger children, as opposed to older individuals, adopt the persona of the characters deemed attractive, rather than comparing themselves to the characters. However, though nearly one-third of the girls were fine with their appearance nearly half of the girls were worried about being fat. Their exposure to the appearance-themed media did not seem to worsen their concerns.

The Barbie doll has been viewed with concern over the last number of years. In one study, Barbie dolls were examined as a possible factor in the body dissatisfaction of young girl aged 5-8 (Dittmar, Halliwell and Ive, 2006). These young girls were exposed to Barbie dolls, Emme dolls, which are a U.S. size 16, or no dolls conditions. The girls then completed body image assessments. It was found that the young girls exposed to Barbie reported a lower self-esteem, and an increased desire to be thin, compared to girls in the other conditions. However, in the older girls, this Barbie doll effect was not present. Therefore, it seems that the dolls are no longer models for older girls, but that it may be important to limit younger girls' exposure to Barbie dolls to prevent them from wanting to attain an unrealistically thinner body. Therefore, the media of playthings and the Barbie franchise may be something that should be limited to younger girls, who may be more vulnerable to the ideals presented by the dolls' unrealistic body proportions and appearance.

Barbie dolls are not the only children's character that may contribute to body dissatisfaction.

A content analysis examined body image-themed messages in children's videos and books (Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose and Thompson, 2004). It was determined that it was not so much the books that were an issue, but rather, the videos. In these videos, physical appearance was emphasized as being of importance. The analysis examined a number of videos, but the ones that most exhibited body and appearance themed messages were *The Little Mermaid* and *Cinderella*. *Cinderella* is portrayed as being thin and beautiful. The children complain about their body shape and size, and many indicate they wished they were thinner and prettier. Of the books examined, *Rapunzel* was found to have the most appearance-related themes. These do affect children's ideals and do develop a child's awareness of physical appearance as being important, which does lead to body dissatisfaction. Specifically, the children's stories catapult a desire for thinness that are unhealthy in these young children.

Pine (2001) studied 140 children, aged 5-11, and explored what these children thought was the ideal shape for an adult male and female, and whether the shapes were related to masculinity or femininity. Both girls and boys agreed on what was considered the ideal male body. However, there was disagreement on what the ideal female shape was, even as young as 5 years of age. The figure chosen by girls was significantly thinner than the figure chosen by the boys. The girls also indicated wanting a thinner body. Girls aged 9, regardless of BMI, indicated they were dieting. Stereotypically feminine traits were associated with the thinner female body shape, than a heavier one. Masculine traits were not associated with any one male body shape. Therefore, the children believed that to be feminine, one must be thin, but to be masculine, body weight and shape did not matter as much. There are implications related to the development of eating disorders in response to these patterns of thinking, where girls are more likely to develop such disorders while aspiring to be considered feminine.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, television viewing among first to third grade children resulted in fat stereotyping and the standardization of body shapes and sizes (Harrison, 2000). Among the boys in the study who were surveyed, it was determined by the researchers that fat females were stereotyped. In not just girls, but also boys, there could also be predicted the development of eating disorders. Interestingly, interpersonal attraction to thinner television characters was not predictive of thin-ideal behaviors, but interpersonal attraction to average-weight characters had a negative effect on the young female girls surveyed in the study.

### **3 Conclusions**

Many of these studies are alarming, and indicate a great need for education and awareness on the effects of the media on children, especially younger girls in terms of body imagery. It is not just peers that determine how healthy a young girl is psychologically in relation to her body; it is the ever-present media, television shows, ads, even the toys and stories that children are exposed to have negative effects on vulnerable girls. There can be strategies implemented, that include lessening the exposure of these girls to the media. However, the media is everywhere, and their presence cannot be controlled. What can be more controlled are the ways the media portrays female characters, the way females of different body shapes are stereotyped, or not, and the way the media connects physical attractiveness with worth and value. The media have the power to shift the perspectives of these young, vulnerable girls, by approaching beauty and thinness in healthier capacities.

Of course, the media cannot be blamed for everything. We must realize that the media is only one factor that influences how a girl perceives herself and her body. Parents and those in positions of authority over children, like teachers and counselors, can do much to help a girl boost her self-esteem. Parents can approach their children in healthy ways that include not fat-shaming others or

their children, and instead focusing on having the child eat healthy and stay physically active. Teaching a girl to live by her own rules and empowering her, rather than being controlled by the messages of the media, can go a long way in helping a girl grow comfortable in her own body.

All this requires empathy and a connection to the child. A loving environment that supports and teaches a girl to recognize her worth in her goals, and gives her the self-empowerment to achieve those goals can help her gain a self of self-worth, and move away from identifying herself with just the way she looks. Co-viewing, with parents watching television with their children, and encouraging their child to think critically about what is being viewed, can go a long way in helping to sustain and preserve a girl's self-esteem. Girls must have a strong foundation for being able to see past the images and build for themselves a view of their body, attractiveness, and worth away from thin ideals, fat stereotyping, and the disorders that body dissatisfaction can lead to.

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# **Father's and Mother's Roles and Their Particularities in Raising Children**

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**Abstract:** We live in the era, when a lack of understanding the elementary family's functions and ineffectiveness in creating lasting and open relations within the family backgrounds are a frequent phenomenon. The breakdown of the family is often caused by immaturity and inadequate conditions for the parental and marital role. Personal tragedies, as well as the consequences in the upbringing, are serious effects of divorce and family breakdown. In this article we are attempting to point out an importance of the family in our current society with an emphasis on the particularities of the father's and mother's role in child rearing.

**Key words:** family, upbringing, father's role, mother's role.

## **1 Introduction**

Presently, father's and mother's role in children's upbringing is an up-to-date issue. The correct understanding of various roles and the educational impact of the parents are extremely important. Both parents, who responsibly fulfil their roles and conscientiously approach, not only the physical needs of their children, but also their adequate psychological and emotional development, are required for positive development and the best complete care. Very commonly we come across the negative effects of inadequate upbringing and generic stereotypes. Generally those negatives become evident later on and their rectification is difficult, if at all possible. The family is a place where we live and feel secure, a place with a unique atmosphere. A kind home is one of the conditions for a happy harmonious childhood and a healthy development of a child's personality. A woman represents various social roles within the family. The two most important and fundamental roles are to be a mother and a wife.

## **2 Discussion**

For every human, the family is the first social environment to step into, and this significantly influences their further existence. It represents the so called 'atelier'

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where the children's personality is created in a way which is individual and inherent to the family as a whole and to all its members. It is here, where the child obtains their first picture of behaviour, an apperception, realizing the values which will most intensively attribute to their personal growth and direction. All factors which affect the child in this environment become important elements in the future and cannot be compensated for any other environment which will influence the children's personality throughout life. The child enters the family as a new entity without any skills and the family's main mission is to provide all learning experiences which will contribute to the best development.

People experience various social roles during their lives. The current hectic age often brings many situations of conflict. The family has huge and unrepeatable importance. Since birth, it shapes a person physically and intellectually and thus it is very important. It creates a foundation for the formation of a good personality. It is the very first place where humans prepare themselves for life in society. Family relationships are also very important. Lately, strong family bonds have decreased and deep emotional relationships among a parent and a child is few and far between. Often erroneous educational parental influence means negative consequences which are difficult to eliminate. Therefore it is very important to understand correctly all roles in family life. A mother, as well as a father, is unsubstitutable and a child needs both parents for his complete development. We are right to say, the importance of family consists mainly in the parents' influence of their children. They form their personalities and attitudes. Parents are an example of the behaviour, whether in a positive or negative way. A child has a tendency to accept that behaviour which they are in contact with. The way we approach the upbringing of children is therefore significantly affected by parental methods. Regardless of their positivism or negativism, in most cases we project those onto our children. It is absolutely essential for both parents to complement each other. Despite the particularities of a father's and a mother's role, they represent the complex entity which is necessary for the right upbringing and creating a healthy personality.

"A role is a socially acceptable model of behaviour; it is a set of rights and responsibilities which are related to certain positions within the group. A role is a dynamic aspect of a status. When a person executes his rights and obligations arising from his position, he or she accomplishes their role. Every role is assigned in the context of other roles, without them it is inconceivable." (Hargašová, 1991, p. 97) "A role model's behaviour is extremely important. It has its own characteristics. Within the family, the mother's role is specific, so as is the father's role and children's role. They depend on the overall structure of personalities of the mother, father, and child as well as on the quality of the outer environment." (Višňovský, 2007, pp. 8-9) The father and the mother have two different roles. A child needs, for his fulfilled development, both parents, father and mother, to an equal extent. The children's upbringing is often assigned as a

mother's task only. The father, as well as the mother, is required to participate in the same way but their roles cannot swop. The father's and mother's role varies as a family develops. With the children growing the parents roles take different forms:

- In the prenatal period, the role of a mother is the most important, she is absolutely connected with the child. Her body and psychic changes are transmitted to the child. Love and a positive approach to the child are key factors which impact the healthy child development. The main role of the father is to support and nurture the mother.
- In the new-born, baby and toddler period, the mother's role remain primary. The mother satisfies the child's needs and stands in-between child and the outside world. The child latches emotionally to the father mainly through the play.
- In the pre-school period, both parents help the child to adopt social roles within and beyond the family. During this period the roles of both parents adjust and level out.
- In the junior school period, for the girls, a mother represents a model of a woman's role. The importance of a father's role grows during this period; he gradually becomes a stronger authority, because he intervenes in solving more serious problems. He is also a model of a man's role, which is a role model for the boys.
- In the pubescent period, refusing the parent's control and striving for independence are typical for children. Roles of both parents are more influential. A mother's role towards her daughter is to acquaint her with the woman's role and be a confidant. A father shall mainly be a trustworthy partner for the children. He shall rectify and encourage his children's self-assurance and help them to change over from a child's role to an adult role.
- In the adolescence period, it is vital for children to be accepted and treated like adult family members. This period requires from parents a significant level of patience and tact in interactions. The parents' role in relation to growing children depends on the relationships formed during previous periods (Oravcová, Ďuricová and Bindasová, 2007, pp. 17-19).

One of the serious problems caused by the absence of one of the parents during the upbringing process is a missing opportunity to achieve sexual identity by identification with the parent of the same gender and differentiation from parent with the opposite gender. "Child needs both parents, especially due the differences between the genders, the mental selfhood of man and woman, who complement each other as two halves forming one whole unit. A child, who is, for any reason, brought up only by a father or mother, is literally lacking the second half. And this can originate to a miscellaneous life and personal complications." (Štrbová, 2004, p. 17). However, the determining factor shall be the responsibility and the individuality of both parents, that both of them have their important and irreplaceable position. "Looking after the children means a

new role for a man and new relations between man and woman in distribution of their duties, which do not threaten, but enrich and give the man an opportunity to experience more interactions with a child. Parents look within the child for a source of happiness, a gratification of their emotional needs and a meaning of their lives." (Chaloupková, 2000, p. 14). A good father cannot be described only by listing the characteristics and qualities he should have. It is necessary to see a close connection with social relations. Fatherhood, which is seen as a sensitive relation of a man to his children, to a certain degree reflects his relations to his parents. It is impossible to look apart from father's role especially in the pubescence and adolescence period. A child finds a friend and an adviser in the father. His authority cannot be replaced. It is as essential as a mother's love. By complementing each other, they create one entity necessary for healthy child development. A deficit of fathers or mothers influence can denote defective backgrounds with implications for the rest of their lives. A father's role is as important for boys as much as for girls. A father represents for the son a model of himself and for the daughter an example of her future husband. The father's commitment is as necessary as the mother's commitment. Extremely powerful is the way a father treats the mother because the son's behaviour towards his future wife is greatly influenced by it. Positive examples of how to act and handle day to day situations cannot be superseded by any other educational approach. Admittedly, the father's manners have a strong impact and lay the foundations of a son's individuality. He is determined by several dynamic factors, which affect the man's character. The most important one is that the father is elementary model of life roles.

According to Ľ. Višňovský (1998, p. 89), the father is characterised by:

- protection, guidance and support towards the outside world;
- discipline of the child;
- assist in the initiative, independence and freedom;
- encourage the quality of accomplishments.

There is no reason to have doubts about the importance of a father's role. When he is present in the family, his feedback seems so natural we are at times unaware of it. His presence evokes the sense of security and protection. Also the support and help which he provides to the woman - mother reassures her that she can rely on him and does not need to raise children on her own. The mother's comfort and satisfaction then positively affect the child's growth. Only when father is not present, we truly appreciate his contribution to the family and development of the child.

"A father plays key role in forming the male character of his son. He is an example and effects the son's mannishness in three main directions:

1. approach and behaviour towards a woman - for the son, it is meaningful how the father treats his wife, how he behaves towards his sister and what his relationships to other women look like. When the son himself looks for a partner, his childhood experiences will subconsciously guide him and he

will copy his father's manners and strategies. For a father, the easiest way to gain son's love and respect is to love his mother;

2. typical male activities - mainly sport, practicality, manual skills, abilities to handle equipment, cars, machines and household DIY works;
3. status and self-esteem resulting from father's common position and social standards - within their fathers, boys look for a friend and a strong man who is capable to protect, support, brace them up, encourage, cheer them up during hard times and burden them with their worries a little bit." (Potočárová, 2003, p. 85).

"A daughter who did not experience a father's love may arrive at a conviction that it is normal and can end up in the relationships which will not satisfy and fulfil her. The father's role consists in the fact that:

1. a daughter looks for the acceptance of her individuality, protection and support. She needs to find a begetter within her father, feel important and loved;
2. a daughter sets him as an example when choosing her future husband. Regrettably, in many families, the current situation on the relationship level is very sensitive and defective exactly due to the lack or failure of this role. The girl within her woman's role naturally identifies with her mother, but her familiarity with necessary man's characters is an enormous experience;
3. he presents her opportunity to test and practise behavioural patterns and attitudes towards men in various interpersonal relations, the father exposes the world to his daughter through his eyes, so her urgency to react in a certain way can be activated;
4. a girl learns to harmonise her typically female manners with male behaviour, understands them more deeply and senses diversity of the world." (Potočárová, 2003, p. 87).

"A woman's role as a mother within the family is very unique, treasured and important. Women enrich the family with a sparkle that lightens when she gets home after work to her family as a wife and as a mother. The mother is a keystone of the family and the whole household. She provides and ensures emotional background to her husband and her children, because it is essential especially for healthy child development and the emotional stability of adults." (Štrbová, 2004, p. 18). The mother's presence and care is irreplaceable during the first months of a child's life. A little child is entirely vulnerable and for his survival he needs somebody to look after him. According to L. Višňovský (1998, p. 90), mothers satisfy the need for safety and love via:

- tenderness;
- cuddling;
- attention and care - by ease and encouragement when facing frustrating situations;
- patience;
- acceptance and appreciation of her child;

- setting reasonable requirements.

The way a mother responds to her child behaviour affects their further growth and manners. A mother, who does not take care of her child responsibly, interacts inappropriately or does not accept him, can cause serious disorders during his development.

### **3 Conclusions**

Family is often described as the most important educational unit. You can deeply know somebody by understanding their family backgrounds. Almost certainly they will establish the same values and manners in their own lives and families. It is not right to say that one parent is more important than another one, while the mother certainly has the most important role in children's lives in the prenatal period, later on the fathers and the mother's roles gradually balance. The particularity of both roles consist in the fact that a father with his highest effort is not able to provide what needs to be provided by a mother and vice versa. Each one of them has their own characteristics. "The father's behaviour towards the mother is an open book of life experiences for both, a son and a daughter. He is a source of their thoughts about men. A good father is an ideal for his daughter and an example for his son." (Štrbová, 2004, p. 18). "A mother plays one of the most social roles and expressions of human towards human. This requires a lot of self abandonment, generosity and kindness. That is the reason "mother" is the most beautiful word, the symbol of love and self-sacrifice. Children shall be thankful to their mother. She is not only a creator of new life but also helps to form future generations." (Rozinajová, 1990, p. 161). Mother is a symbol of heart, love, tenderness and care.

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# **Project Inner Brick - Colorful Plastic Bricks in Psychotherapy - An Introduction to Methodology**

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**Abstract:** PIB is a research project pertaining to the psychotherapeutic potential of Lego bricks. This is based on Lego Group's own method called Lego Seriousplay and Eric Berne's transactional analysis as a theoretical background. If we see it from the Lego's aspect, our plan is a training like LSP. It is only alike because of the special application. We made a lot of modifications according to the original methodology. In this document we would like to present details of our research we have been working on for almost two years. The characteristics of our methodology will be illustrated, too.

**Key words:** Lego Seriousplay, transactional analysis, counselling, psychotherapy, emotions.

## **1 Introduction**

Project Inner Brick (PIB) is a new method for sharing psychological knowledge with others. We use Lego bricks and special playful triggers (i.e. games) based on personality theory concepts. The knowledge we share during our trainings can help participants to reach a better understanding of their lives, experiences and emotions. PIB can be used in different fields, like education, counselling and psychotherapy.

PIB is developed and tested by a research team with two psychologists. Our aim is to design an engaging material for clients and students that evokes positive associations. As far as professionals are concerned, PIB affords a lot of opportunities to them, too. Our game collection has a modular structure so one can design any theme he/she would like to. These custom designed game collections can refer to a situation, a problem, a setback or an educational need.

PIB is a very effective and versatile method... not only for professionals but also families and parents.

In this article we are going to illustrate how a counsellor or a therapist can use the PIB method in a therapy or counselling setting.

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## **2 Lego Group's method: Lego Seriousplay**

PIB is based on Lego Group's own method called Lego Seriousplay (LSP). It is mainly used in the field of organizational development and it was developed between 2001 and 2006 in the Swiss ImagiLab. The project leaders Bart Victor, Johan Roos and Robert Rasmussen designed a creativity and fantasy releasing tool which can be used to map the organizational identity and developing strategies, etc. (Gauntlett, 2007).

LSP has a really widespread theoretical background. The play is one of the main principles LSP is based on. The positive effects of playing take an effect and interlace all aspects of a human being. The positive effects of playing together are the developing of cooperative skills, and the strengthening of team cohesion. It helps us to experience and express the emotions and our life what gives us trust and the feeling of safety (Rasmussen, 2012).

Besides these, the cognitive theories and concepts like Piaget's constructivism and the constructionism of Pappert are part of the method as well as the specific thinking and the imagination (Rasmussen, 2012).

LSP is based on people's active theory which enables them to organize their knowledge. According to these the most effective learning and understanding is when we encounter things in the real world, when we design or build something real, or we build up knowledge (Rasmussen, 2012).

The storytelling and the metaphors during and after the building help this process. The tasks require fantasy which helps us understand and share the abstract concepts or theories (Rasmussen, 2012).

The facilitators who made the trainings designed games/tasks that gave the participants some kind of experience which Mihály Csíkszentmihályi called flow. With this method an optimal balance can be reached between the challenge and the skills. So it can be avoided that participants get bored, instead they have a good mood and experience effective learning (Rasmussen, 2012).

## **3 Research fields of the LSP**

As far as the LSP research is concerned, there are a lot of different results. Jacobs and Heracleuos (2004) pointed out that the metaphors in general and the special types of them using Lego Seriousplay i.e. the embodied metaphors can help to deepen knowledge and unfold totally new narratives. The mapping of the organizational identity has a very good effect to develop new strategies as Bürgi and Roos (2002) called our attention to this. Nielsen (2009) has written about LSP, that it can facilitate communication and provide a common frame and share different aspects in the early state of development in interdisciplinary teams.

Moreover it can develop coping skills that has an effect on the team members. They can be better prepared, what helps them handle unexpected situations. Statler and Roos (2002) have written a summary about this topic. And last but not least, Gauntlett (2007) used the method for a sociological identity research.

#### **4 About our method / The Project Inner Brick method**

The essence of the LSP's method is to use playful tasks that had been designed after a pre-arranged meeting. Participants' answers are their Lego constructions and the stories belonging to them. The professional who leads the training is called the facilitator. His role is to facilitate the process, share knowledge and make a common frame (Statler and Oliver, 2007).

A Project Inner Brick training looks very similar in practice. Since PIB is mainly based on LSP's methodology and its theoretical background, it has some rather important differences though. We use our own selection of Lego pieces instead of the original LSP set. We also use playful triggers which participants have to answer with their constructions and stories. However our triggers are based on personality theory concepts. Our aim is not only to build a common frame, but also to share psychological knowledge. The PIB trainer has to be a professional with field experience and theoretical knowledge. The PIB trainer is an independent expert. The topic and the theme of the particular training depend on: the situation, the group, the personal problem or obstacle, and the aims as well as the needs of the customer.

The idea of sharing professional knowledge in a therapeutic context stems from Eric Berne. He thought that the counselling process is more effective when the therapist shares his/her knowledge with the client. This kind of attitude benefits the clients' competence in organizing their own experiences and emotions. It also has a side effect, namely the 50-50% splitting of the responsibility between the parties. It helps the client to avoid a symbiotic relationship (Berne, 1967).

We have chosen transactional analysis (TA) as a theoretical background not only for the previously mentioned reasons. TA is a remarkably expressive and picturesque personality theory and therapy method, and it is also very capable and versatile. It has a very wide application ranging from education through counselling and therapies to organizational development (Járó and Juhász, 1999).

When we compare the practical challenges of the TA method against the outcomes of the LSP research, we have to realize that the work with Lego bricks and the method's capabilities can complement flaws. A method like LSP can support professional therapists' work, for example, to conclude a psychological contract, to define the problem, to diagnose and to assign the heading of the counselling process (Járó and Juhász, 1999). This is based on the outcomes of the LSP research above. This can help the therapist to share the theoretical background and also a common frame with the client (Járó, 1999). This is important in a context like this, because the clients have to use this knowledge for realizing and changing their early decisions, and the programs that guide their lives and their beliefs (Berne, 1973). Furthermore, the clients can avoid, handle and stop the games they have been playing (Járó and Oláh, 1999; Berne, 1967).

## **5 The illustration of the PIB method in psychotherapy use**

Henceforth, we are going to show some examples (from our field research) to illustrate how PIB can be used in a psychotherapy context. Our intent is to demonstrate the role of a PIB trainer, and the difference between the therapy and educational usage of PIB.

Our research is in progress in different fields and contexts simultaneously. For example, we do research in counselling and therapy, child-rearing for families, education for children, adult education and supervising professional helpers. Our workflow usually has the following steps. First we do an interview in order to assess the demands and needs, and to discuss the possibilities. After this, we select the proper game, then we design a syllabus. At the end of the training or the counselling process we ask for feedback and share our results.

As far as the field of use is concerned, our method covers two main areas. Already at the beginning, it was important for us that our games can be used not only in a therapeutic context but also for educational or other purposes. When we design a game we attend to the fact that it can be used for various purposes. So the bases of our games are common, though there are some major differences between the therapy and the educational games.

The main difference is that it is not recommended to apply any psychotherapy technique in educational use. Students have the opportunity to work with their own experiences but it is not a prerequisite. The wording of the educational games is not intrusive. These offer knowledge and self-understanding yourself, but do not enforce it. The trainer doesn't use interpretation techniques even if a student takes advantage of the above opportunity.

As you will see further on, in counselling and therapy context, we always work with the client's own experiences. The trainer always interprets the client's projections in words or even with Lego bricks. After a sitting, and according to the client's reactions, we design and edit the next theme. In contrast to the educational usage of PIB, the themes and the order of the games are relatively adhered to.

Now we would like to illustrate with some brief examples how PIB counselling usage looks like in practice. Considering the limitations and the extent of our article we won't use special diagnostic and therapy phrases. We only would like to illustrate what kind of benefits the use of playful triggers and Lego bricks have. As you will see it has a lot of potential for the therapist as well as the clients.

## **6 PIB therapy and diagnostic games**

As referred to earlier on, our first step is an interview. At the end of this first conversation we offer the client that we will approach his problem with a special method. Of course we share as many details of the PIB method as needed so that the client understands what it is all about. We tell him/her that we will give a set

of playful tasks which are designed specifically for his problem or stop. And he has to answer or solve the tasks (i.e. games) with Lego models and stories.

We share some theoretical background with the client as well: for example, that this kind of approach, to build something, to confront things in the real world helps people to express their feelings and experiences. We call the client's attention to the fact that there is no wrong answer or model. Actually, we will work with metaphors so anything can be everything and every answer is a good one. The client can use the bricks not only for solving the tasks he got, but also any time and situation he would like to do so.

After that first sitting, we make an agreement with the client and design the games and build the theme for the next occasion.

Now, let's have a look at one of our cases. For Carl who had extreme mood swings and depression, we designed special games so that he will be able to better understand why these cloudy feelings pass away so slowly. One of Carl's answers is showed in the picture below...



Figure 1 Carl's very first model

He explained to the therapist when he was in a gloomy mood, he looked like this model. When he felt uneasy, his arms dangled and his head was down. That was what he felt like when he was down. When the therapist asked him to look at the model and say something about his feelings and thoughts, which came to his mind, he listed a lot of negative emotions and thoughts.

For the trainer there was a lot more in this model than some kind of bad or uneasy feeling. It was like this figure hides its feelings. As though, there was some reason for suppressing and holding back. The head down rang the bell. I thought that there was some kind of shame there. To express these reflections the psychologist asked him "What if I modified the model a little bit?" He agreed.



Figure 2 Carl's modified model

After the therapist had raised the model's head he asked him for some reflections. "Do you see any difference?" "What do you think now?" Carl said that it looked at him straight and it was strange, but not as bad... as it had been. "It is like it has no secrets, like it does not hide its feelings." "It looks straight into our eyes" - the therapist said. "Yes, maybe it is not ashamed of its bad or gloomy mood ... It is good for him..." - Carl said.

This was the subject the therapist wanted Carl to realize. Because it was highly possible that the shame was one of the components which had a leading role why his bad feelings stood with him so long. It was known from his stories that he was not aware of his feelings exactly, in which situations which emotion would be adequate. At the end of the sitting the therapist offered him that we should deal with the emotions in detail. They agreed that they made use of themes for sorting and realizing them. The model below is Carl's answer for one of the authentic feelings which is sadness... (Ian, 2014).



Figure 3 Carl's sadness-model

Carl shared what it was about. "The one alone is the sad one. The others on the other side who together are in a good mood, they are having fun. This is how it is in my case" - he said. When he was in a bad mood, he always moved away. He was by himself rather than with others. The therapist asked him how long the gloomy feeling usually took. It took too long, he said. The therapist would like to clarify something so he asked him if he had been together with the others before the depression broke in, and if he moved away then. He verified this. The psychologist asked him for permission to modify his model, because he had something in his mind that could be helpful. Carl said, yes.



Figure 4 The modified sadness-model

The trainer inserted the sad brick into the group of happy bricks and asked him what his opinion of this modified situation was? He had never tried, he said; so he did not know. He thought a little, then added that it could help if he did not hold back but rather share his emotions with others... "Eventually I shared my bad feelings with you... and it is not that bad. It is totally different when I am alone with my thoughts and feelings."

The therapist pointed out that this was the major point. "What if, you would give it a try to share your emotions with somebody?" "You have a nice family, a lot of friends..." "Maybe, I will..." - said Carl.

## **7 Summary**

It was the purpose to illustrate how intimate the work with Lego bricks could be. It has a wide range of possible applications. The client is not only able to express his emotions but the experiences can be literally touchable. PIB helps to put one's thoughts into words.

The therapist's intervention supports the client to realize and try out new and alternative solutions in a safe and inoffensive way. This method has a great

potential with which professionals can be creative and react in a way no other methods allow.

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## **(Re)Claiming Voices: Digital Storytelling and Second Language Learners**

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**Abstract:** With almost five million English language learners in the United States, digital storytelling is increasingly being used in second language learning classrooms. As a teaching and learning strategy, digital storytelling can promote critical thinking, connect new content with prior knowledge, enhance memory, and foster confidence and motivation for learning. Digital stories possess unique narrative qualities that often center on identity negotiation and the ways culturally and linguistically diverse students make meaning out of their lives. Fostering hands-on, active learning, digital storytelling is an interactive way to include culturally and linguistically diverse students' voices in a curriculum that may not easily represent them. Practical implementation of digital storytelling is included.  
**Key words:** digital storytelling, technology, English language learners.

Digital storytelling (DST) has been implemented as an instructional strategy in second and foreign language classrooms (Vinogradova, 2014) because it is highly adaptable to content and promotes student engagement. Rance-Roney defined a digital story as “a 2- to 5- minute movie-like digital production that learners create using one of several readily available software programs” (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 29). Meadows (2003) described digital stories as short, individual, multimedia stories. As a teaching and learning strategy, DST can promote critical thinking (Yang and Wu, 2012), enable a connection between newly-presented content with prior knowledge through knowledge, wisdom, and value sharing (Malita and Martin, 2010), promote memory enhancement (Schank, 1990), and encourage a higher level of confidence and motivation for learning (Grisham, 2006). Digital stories possess unique narrative qualities that often center on identity negotiation and the ways culturally and linguistically diverse students make meaning out of their lives.

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## **1 The increasingly diverse classroom**

Classrooms in the United States have become increasingly diverse and will continue to grow in diversity. Along with numbers of growing racial diversity, linguistic diversity is also growing. One student in every five has a parent who was born in another country (Rehm and Allison, 2006), and twenty percent of all public school students are multilingual (Huerta and Jackson, 2010). According to the National Center of Education Statistics, in 2011-2012, the percentage of English language learners enrolled in public schools was 9.1 percent, or an estimated 4.4 million students (2014). In 2014, the Education Department reported 840,000 immigrant students in the United States, and 4.6 million English learners.

Myriad theories and frameworks have centered on the ways in which students create knowledge and process information, such as differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), the multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983), and communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). These approaches have guided our understanding of how culturally and linguistically diverse students learn, in ways that honor their cultural capital. This is an issue of paramount importance because (1) students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have historically not been served well by schools and continue to be labeled “at risk” in educational institutions (Garcia and Cuellar, 2006), and (2) the teaching force is largely non-diverse and homogenous, White, middle-class, and female (Hinchey, 2008; Zumwalt and Craig, 2005).

## **2 Digital storytelling, second language learners, and the classroom**

English teaching and learning has involved hegemonic discourses that largely strip individual learners of their differences and unique cultural frames of knowledge in favor of adopting an “English-speaking” identity (Shen, 1989). We recognize the value of the voices of diverse learners through considering language acquisition through a sociocultural lens. A benefit of using this lens is that a space is made for individuals who are negotiating their places as English learners, and finding – or recreating – their voices in the process. Digital storytelling as an authentic means of expression promotes learner autonomy, as students reflect on their developing identities and how they deconstruct their experiences in the world.

DST fosters hands-on, active learning in which the storyteller controls the process in every way, giving learners “another tool to find their voices and express themselves in the digital age” (Wawro, 2012, p. 50). Enabled is a type of experiential learning, a learn-by-doing approach. The storyteller must create a story that makes sense, and through this process of meaning-making, higher levels of student engagement are achieved, and opportunities for stronger student

learning (Matthews-DeNatale, 2008) are created. “Learners become entranced by the power of their own voices and their own images.” (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 29) We posit digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool for preserving the identity of the learner while also developing the learner’s English language skills. Inherent within the process is also room for reflective thought which complements the cognitive and social skills required in completing the story. And because the digital stories can be shared online, the audience can be worldwide, reaching far beyond the classroom in which it was created. “Digital storytelling is an empowering and creative way for kids to tell their stories, and when they are all done, they won’t just stick it on their refrigerator – they can share it with the world.” (Wawro, 2012, p. 51).

Tsou, Wang, and Tzeng (2006) found that integrating digital storytelling into the language curriculum as a language learning technique improved students’ levels of learning in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The integration of writing skills through DST (rather than teaching writing in isolation) provided evidence that one skill can provide for the development of another (Oxford, 2001).

As literacy/language teachers are rethinking how classroom practices “and the role that new and emerging technologies may play” (Kessler, 2013, p. 231), we recognize the ability of DST to provide more variation than traditional methods in current practice, personalizing the learning experience, and facilitating the involvement of students in the process of learning. DST supports students’ learning by encouraging them to organize and express their ideas and knowledge in an individual and meaningful way (Robin, 2005).

Digital stories are an effective strategy for most subject areas and disciplines because of its high applicability. Barrett (2006) found that digital storytelling facilitates the convergence of four student-centered learning strategies: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and the effective integration of technology into instruction. Schiro (2004) used digital stories to teach students algorithms and problem solving. He argued that digital stories, with other materials like worksheets, not only present mathematical skills that students need to learn but also situate the mathematics in a context that is interesting and relevant. Hung, Hwang, and Huang (2012) found project-based digital storytelling enhanced their students’ science learning motivation, problem-solving competence, and learning achievement.

A common thread we found in studies was the ability to personalize the learning experience in ways that are meaningful to the learner, with the ability to differentiate for the more and less technologically-competent student, or the more and less developed writer. The high “personalizability” factor induces engagement, and facilitates the concept of mirroring, in which a student can see him or herself within the curriculum. The importance of reflecting student experiences in curriculum was noted by Ibrahim, who posited “one invests where one sees oneself mirrored.” (Ibrahim, 1999, p. 365).

### **3 Supporting student success through technology**

With digital and online media use becoming ubiquitous in our everyday lives, the way we interact with these forms of communication is having an enormous impact on our literacy and learning. “Our innovation-based global age requires that we retool foundational literacy skills and link them with other competencies – such as critical thinking, collaborative problem solving, and media literacy.” (Gee and Levine, 2009, p. 50) Today’s learners, asserted Carr (2010), have been changed by the Internet. Digital natives, those who were born or brought up during the age of digital technology (Prensky, 2001, p. 1), demand immediate feedback, interactivity, and shorter reads (Carr, 2010). Technology is changing the way we think, yet while we cannot predict what tools or gadgets will exist tomorrow, we recognize that creating more personalized student experiences is now an expectation because of the participatory culture we are living in (Jenkins, 2013). Digital technologies allow us to create, share, recirculate, express ourselves, and get feedback. Making something and turning it into an artifact we have created is a mode of creative expression (e.g., blogs) that promotes intersubjectivity, or a shared understanding that helps us relate one situation to another (Jenkins, 2013).

Gillen (2014) argued the fields of Linguistics and Composition have largely ignored the study of language in digital contexts, and reading and writing language online, even while digital technologies in everyday life are pervasive – from online teenage communities to the professional use of Twitter in journalism, as well as the power of social media to facilitate social uprisings (i.e., Egypt and the Arab Spring). No matter how we plan (or do not) to incorporate it, digital literacy may no longer be optional for the 21<sup>st</sup> century student and global citizen. Digital media and technological tools allow students to practice these competencies in new and interactive, intriguing and engaging ways.

### **4 Strategies for incorporating digital storytelling**

There are numerous ways to incorporate digital storytelling into instruction. Software programs for video creation can be used such as Animoto, iMovie, and Windows Movie Maker 2.6. Narration and music can be included using programs like Audacity. Most programs have a free trial version and some have free or discounted educator versions. For schools without the resources to purchase multiple copies of software programs, teachers can do most of the editing from the storyboards written by the students.

For a two-five minute final project, a story circle can ease learners into starting the process. The steps below can be followed:

1. Story circle
  - story elements: point-of-view, dramatic question, emotional content
  - collaboration for collective input

- 150-200 words in length
- 2. Storyboard
  - script
  - collection of images/visual data
- 3. Narration and Music
- 4. Editing
- 5. Completed final project

Wawro (2012, p. 51) clarified the process in the following steps:

1. Have the students write out the stories they wish to tell.
2. Record the students telling their stories.
3. Gather their images (their own photos, scanned images, drawings).
4. Arrange the images and audio in the editing software.
5. Go Hollywood – throw in a little movie magic.
6. Export the work to a playable movie file.

Below is another way to incorporate digital storytelling, by Samantha Morra, on Edudema:



Figure 1. Digital Storytelling Process (Morra, n.d.)

## **5 Assessing and evaluating digital storytelling**

For purposes of assessing digital stories, rubrics can be created and tailored to instruction, either by the teacher's own design or with the assistance of Rubistar, or another online rubric creator. The following links may be helpful for assessment and evaluation and to identify ways to align digital stories to the Common Core State Standards:

<http://courseweb.lis.illinois.edu/~jevogel2/lis506/evaluation.html>

<http://www.schrockguide.net/digital-storytelling.html>

[http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty\\_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/documents/ex\\_digital\\_storytelling.pdf](http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/documents/ex_digital_storytelling.pdf)

## **6 Conclusion**

Teachers are encouraged to look at digital storytelling as a way to garner student engagement while also promoting student learning. Digital storytelling is one approach that allows students to share their experiences and incorporate their own voices in the curriculum. It facilitates student-centered stories that honor their cultural capital, and fosters meaningful expressions that represent what they see in the world, while exploring what feels relevant to them.

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## **Positive School Climate (A Theoretical Empirical Conspectus)**

**Jana Hanuliaková – Silvia Barnová\***

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**Abstract:** A school climate is the product of a specific social group. It influences the work of both teachers and students; it is a reflection of the objective reality in schools. It is experienced, evaluated and perceived by the actors of school life subjectively. In agreement with the current approaches to education (neuropedagogy, neuroscience), the importance of a positive school climate is accentuated. It is a part of school environment in the emotional, social and physical contexts. We put an accent on the interconnection and mutual determination of the climate and some selected determinants – inappropriate behaviour, interaction and safe educational environment. Nowadays, the notion of the school climate is joined with the adjective “optimal”. Based on the undertaken research, we make a conspectus of empirical findings which are related to school environment and school climate.

**Key words:** school climate, safe environment, aggression, interaction.

### **1 Introduction**

In the last year, the modern approach to education accentuates the need for the creation of optimal educational conditions. The conditions of education are created by a wide spectrum of external and internal factors. The educational conditions, inter alia, include the educational environment of the school and classrooms, school and classroom climate and the current atmosphere. From the point of view of duration, the school climate can be defined as a long-term phenomenon. It influences interaction in schools, manifestation of students' behaviour, motivation, achieved results etc. The process of school climate creation in the current context must focus on the provision of a safe environment and the optimisation of school climate. The character of a safe educational environment consists of emotional, social and physical components, norms and rules, their application and obeying, and the quality of mutual interaction. At present, recognising the importance of a secure educational environment plays a

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big role in relation to the occurrence of students' inappropriate behaviour (bullying, aggression), which has a significant impact on the quality of school life.

Based on studied research and professional literature we can assume that the definitions of the notion of school climate vary with different authors (Sackney, 1988; Anderson, 1982; Freiberg and Stein, 1999). It can be explained by the fact that the term climate can mean anything in a school. The common feature of the definitions lies in describing it as something interpersonal, some kind of a product, the result of personal relationships forming the phenomenon of a particular school. Čapek (2010) characterises a school climate as the result of participants' self-evaluation and evaluation of education at a particular school taking into account all the aspects of education. Their mutual communication, social relationships, perception of the environment, experiences, emotions and other social and psychological processes belong here. Several authors, e.g. Dotka (2009), Grecmanová (2008), Ježek (2005), Bessoth (2003), Littg (1986), Fraser (1984), Gregory and Smith (1982), Lewin (1982), Moss (1978), Fox (1974) et al., have brought a theoretical analysis of the notion of school climate.

## **2 Discussion**

School climate and school environment have been the subject of many research studies oriented on their individual determinants. Neuroscience and neurodidactical approaches to education appeal on the necessity of creation of such a climate and atmosphere that can be characterised by safety, emotional well-being, social acceptance, and high quality interaction.

According to Mareš (2004, p. 39), we can consider three main levels of studying the school climate: the micro, mezo and macro level. If we are interested only in one school and its climate, we are on the micro level of studying the school climate. Going under this level (and to deal only with it) would mean, that we are not dealing with the climate of the whole school but with the climate of one of its parts, e.g. only the teaching staff or only one class. It is useful as the starting point on the way to studying the climate of the whole school. If we want to learn something more general about the climate of schools of the same type based on a representative sample (research), then it is (in our country) the macro level of the climate being studied. The mezo level of studying the school climate is not strictly defined. It can be characterised as territorial (e.g. region), administrative (e.g. a school district) or by the type of school (e.g. secondary vocational schools). It can be defined by other criteria as well, i.e. the educational project, the founder, the type of community in which it functions, the composition of students attending the school etc. Thapa and Cohen (2013) bring complex empirical findings regarding school climate. They summarised research dealing with school climate and educational environment with a special focus on individual determinants (perception of safety, following norms and

rules, the quality of interaction, inappropriate behaviour – aggression). The above mentioned components form the complex of school climate quality which subsequently influences them. A positive school climate results in better outcomes of both the teachers' and students' work. Students associate positive school climate with a higher motivation to study, experiencing success; personal development; discovery learning which bring them pleasure; increasing pro-social attitudes and behaviour. For teachers, positive perception of school climate is associated with experiencing emotional harmony and feeling of companionship with other teachers; a higher degree of job satisfaction, productivity; with freedom and independence at work; consistency in the process of realisation of new initiatives; lower appearance of burn-out effect (Grecmanová, 2008, p. 86). Similar arguments are used by Cohen and Greier (2010). They indicate that a safe and careful participatory school environment provides an optimal basis for teaching. The current situation in the educational reality requires focusing on experiencing safety in schools and classrooms. The mentioned notion relates to safety in the field of emotions, social and physical relations, and physical health. Experiencing social, emotional and physical safety belongs to basic human needs. The feeling of safety and its components in school are evaluated in research especially based on students' responses as they are the active participants of the creation process. Feeling safe intensively promotes student's learning and healthy development (Devine and Cohen, 2007, cited in Thapa and Cohen, 2013). The authors state that many students do not feel physically and psychically safe because of the failure of interpersonal relationships that form the character of a school climate. A negative perception of safety in schools was proven in the context of school size – a decreased feeling of safety was declared by students of bigger schools (Lleras, 2008). Another important factor decreasing the feeling of safety in the conditions of a particular school is represented by presence of students' aggressive behaviour and consequent bullying which have an increasing tendency. The appearance of this negative phenomenon causes a decreased interest of students in school life participation. On the sample of 2000 students aged 12-16, Rivers, Noret and Ashurt (2009) found out that the witnesses of bullying experience depression, anxiety and hostility.

The diversity of student population (race, gender, sexual identity, disabilities, socio-economic differences, cultural differences etc.) represents the reason for bullying in many cases. In their study, Thapa and Cohen (2013) bring their research results confirming the role of schools' psycho-social climate in the context of aggression and bullying. Decreasing aggression and violence in schools is related to a positive school climate (Brookmeyer, Fanti and Henrich, 2006; Goldstein, Young and Boyd, 2008; Gregory et al., 2010; Karcher, 2002). A lower appearance of bullying related to a positive school climate has been proven by research (Birkett et al., 2009; Kosciw and Elizabeth, 2006,

Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez and Robertson, 2003; Meyer-Adams and Conner, 2008; Yoneyama and Rigby, 2006).

In the last years, we have observed an increased occurrence of bullying transformed into the virtual level. Nowadays, cyberbullying is a serious issue that decreases the emotional and social well-being of students. According to Campbell (2005), school bullying and harassment have moved to a virtual school represented by social media being used by groups or individuals with the purpose to harass their peers. In Slovakia, Hollá (2013) has undertaken a research in the given field. As bullying in schools is present in its emotional, social and physical forms, it is necessary to study, evaluate, eliminate it and prevent the occurrence of aggressive behaviour in the future.

The connection and the mutual conditionality of positive school climate and students' risk behaviour are documented in research by Klein, Cornell and Konold (2012, cited in Thapa and Cohen (2013)). The elimination of aggressive behaviour in schools and of the appearance of bullying can be realised only by instilling discipline. A strict application of school discipline is closely related to safety in schools. School discipline requires following rules. The rules and the obedience to those rules form a part of the educational process. The character of the environment in which the educational process takes place requires a necessary definition and the consequent interiorisation of rules on the side of students. Rules and norms in schools ensure optimal conditions for education. Research emphasise the role of school rules and the perception of justice in the context of students' behaviour. Some research evidence exists regarding the fact that in schools, where the rules are followed, the application of discipline is more effective. Following the school rules and their regular and careful appreciation are significant factors of safety in schools. A research on following and appreciation of norms, rules and discipline in school conditions has been done by Gregory et al. (2010), Gottfredson, Payne and Gottfredson (2005).

Practical recommendations for teachers on how to create an emotionally safe school and classroom are introduced by Perry (2000). Ensuring safety in the classroom requires: continuous repetition of rules; introduction and application of changes is easier when students feel comfortable; planning the interaction with students, creation of such a place that gives students an opportunity for satisfaction; providing (during the school day) calm situations in which the student processes new experiences which lead to a more effective consolidation of new experiences and to better learning; providing opportunities to experience success; emphasizing the importance of students' nutrition; working with unpleasant experiences which can be stressful for students. The author accentuates that the first experiences with school can help foster students' interest in school and love to learning. Teachers can create a climate of emotional and social safety that supports optimal education in the classroom.

The quality of the school climate is influenced by interaction. In the context of the quality of Eliot's social relations, Cornell, Gregory and Fan (2010) outline

how to work with students when reporting bullying. Teachers play an important role in this process. Reporting and drawing attention to bullying is significantly influenced by help on the side of adults (Klein et al., 2012). The research results by Saarento et al., (2013), Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt and Hymel, (2010, cited in Thapa and Cohen, 2013) document the probability of increasing bullying in cases when teachers are unconcerned about the appearance of bullying or their reactions to bullying vary.

### **3 Conclusions**

According to V. Zakrzewski (2013), in 2007, specific criteria were formulated defining positive school climate as “norms, values and expectations that promote social, emotional and physical security; respect for other people (teachers, students, parents, non-pedagogical staff), which collaborate on the shared vision of a school”. This author mentions three steps of positive school climate creation which can be applied in practice. The following steps are oriented on creation of trust between participants (teachers, students, school management, non-pedagogical employees and parents).

- a) Evaluation of the current climate – it requires knowledge on how the current school climate is perceived and what we want to achieve by creation of a positive climate
- b) To create a common vision - to start from personal visions – bring collective suggestions which can increase the probability of the realisation of research. In the given context vision is understood as the picture of the future. Creating shared images regarding the future character of the climate requires a safe environment in which the members can share their ideas and suggestions.
- c) To cooperate in the realisation of the common vision - making fun – creation of a positive school climate is a never-ending process. Positive emotions are important.

The cited author states that a positive school climate can bring back pleasure and fun into the educational process. Who would not like to be a part of a school like that?

The above mentioned research studies highlight the importance of paying attention to school climate and safe environment as they have a strong impact in the educational practice.

The paper was written as a part of the research task KEGA 036UKF-4/2014 „*Influencing Aggressive Behaviour of Students by Means of Creating a Positive School and Class climate.*“

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# REVIEWS

## **Didaktika vysokej školy** **[Didactics of University]** **(Ján Bajtoš)**

*Bratislava: Iura Edition, 2013, 398 pp.*  
*ISBN: 978-80-8078-652-6.*

*Daniel Lajčín* \*



The Slovak publication entitled *Didaktika vysokej školy* (Didactics of University) is an original work of its kind designed especially for university teachers. It has the ambition to be helpful on the difficult path of permanent pedagogical education and development of every teacher. In the publication, lecturers and teachers of lifelong learning programmes can find suggestive thoughts, for they work as well. It can serve as a source of inspiration for university teachers working in the fields of technical, economical, agricultural, forestry, wood, managerial, social, legal, medical or veterinary sciences. It can be helpful to anyone who is interested in the issues of university didactics, or who wants to sort didactic information. The author is Ján Bajtoš who is one of the recognised Slovak professionals in the field of general didactics and subject didactics. His home institution is Dubnica Institute of Technology in Dubnica

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nad Váhom, and he is a well-known author not only in Slovakia but also in the Czech Republic and Poland.

Thanks to the author's erudition, readers can hold in their hands a professionally and psychodidactically very well written and systematically organized text divided into twelve chapters. The content of the chapters is based on a common philosophical approach; while in the introduction, the content focus of the chapters are specified by means of goal dimensions (What should I know?); key words of the particular chapter (key words) follow; then, there is the text itself which is further divided into subchapters; each chapter is closed by a brief resumé (conclusions), a set of problem solving suggestions (activity) and a set of tasks focused on the assessment of the chapter's content comprehension (Do I know it?). The motivational impulse of the individual chapters are quotes by famous world personalities; the author's attempt was to find a link between their content and the text of the particular chapter. The text of the individual chapters itself consists of the so-called main (important) parts which are enhanced by curiosities or news, i.e. an additional text.

The chapters are logically organized with an analytical approach prevailing. The aim of the publication is to provide the readers basic information from the field of university didactics, and to offer a guideline on how to deal with the didactic problems of university education in teaching practice. The core of this publication's content is the application of theoretical knowledge on university teachers' teaching practice, while the author's attempt was to build on the accepted theoretical positions, concepts and paradigms which set the direction of teaching practice in university conditions.

In individual chapters of the publication, the author defines the basic terminology of university didactics and its components in the system structure. These are the goals of the educational process, subject matter, didactic principles, teaching methods, organisational forms and material resources of the educational process. Special attention is paid to the personality of the university teacher and student, to designing study materials, assessment and classification of students' performance as well as planning a teacher's work in university conditions. He does not overlook the issues of the educational impact on students especially by means of using motivation and education in the field of the development of personality cultivating competencies. In the appendix of the publication, questionnaires and practically oriented self-tests are included, but their scientometric parameters are missing; therefore their validity is limited and their results are only indicative.

Bajtoš's *Didactics of University* represents an original, in its own way a unique publication that can be used not only in the conditions of university education in Slovakia but also abroad as during the last years significant changes in the view of the didactic aspect of the educational process could be observed, especially at universities in developed European countries. In many cases, our university teachers themselves, maybe because of insufficient legislation in this field, think

that their professional qualifications are enough for becoming a well-qualified teacher. With such an approach it often happens that our students are dependent on the experiments of beginning university teachers. This is not the desired state of being and radical changes are required. A draft of the direction of changes can be found in the reviewed publication.

**Manažment rizík a zmien**  
**[Risk and Change Management]**  
**(Juraj Tej – Viktória Ali Taha – Peter Živčák)**

*Prešov: Bookman, 2014, 157 pp.*  
*ISBN: 978-80-8165-061-1.*

**Gabriela Sláviková\***



For modern managers, it is necessary to be familiar with the issues of risk, i.e. of modern risk and crisis management in order to manage the activities of institutions, by using new efficient tools in accordance with the legislation related to a country's crisis management. At the same time, they need to know the basic postulates of change management that they will often use throughout the process of risk elimination, or the subsequent crisis prevention. The more an institution is prepared for risk and crisis, the easier its transition to a balanced state is, as the authors of the publication state.

In the current globalised environment of turbulent changes, in an environment being permanently vexed not only by problems derived from the cyclic economic development and the effects of the current crisis, but also by the impact of permanently accelerating climatic changes, risk management, crisis management and change management gain a new meaning. If we are not able to identify and subsequently deal with the first signs of risk situations, they can develop into much more complicated problems related to crisis management, of course, without taking into account whether they occur in the private or the public sector. Not only enterprises have to face the issues of risk (especially

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market and financial risks), but also, self-governing regions must deal with the same problems (financial risk, flood risk, security risk etc.).

This textbook is up-to-date; it corresponds with the study plan of the field of study Management. Handling risk factors can be decisive as for succeeding in competition and averting the crisis related to entrepreneurship or providing public sector services.

The proposed study material consists of four related, clearly and logically organized parts. Their content is cohesive and each topic is presented completely. In the text, terminology from a large basis of professional and scientific resources from both Slovakia and abroad are used. The publication introduces the issues of risk management, crisis management and change management in an accessible manner.

The fourth chapter including ten case studies helps the reader to understand the topicality of the text and the necessity of a good orientation in the particular field is remarkable. Topics such as “Energy Blackout”, “Cyberattacks”, “Infectious Epidemics and Pandemics”, “Epizootics”, “Ethnic Conflicts”, “Terrorism” or “Torrential Rains and Floods” catch the attention of incidental readers, are attractive for students and persuade the professionals about the need for coping with the given issue. At the same time, this chapter is written in a didactically correct way. In every study, the authors present a large amount of authentic texts from the press, examples from the world, surrounding countries and Slovakia.

The text is academic, terminologically clear and the authors strictly adhere to professional terminology of the particular segments of management. In the text, both Slovak and foreign resources are cited; the authors compare the opinions of professionals, offer up-to-date information etc. In the publication, professional erudition, certain detachment and experiences from both theory and practice can be found. The sophisticated text, its organization, clear charts, illustrations and especially the case studies will attract every reader.

# INFORMATION

**Professor PhDr. Rudolf Štepanovič, DrSc.**

*Ján Danek\**



The history of education and mainly the history of individual pedagogical disciplines have accumulated certain important personalities that have been gradually, systematically and intently solving the issues of upbringing, education, organizing day-to-day scientific research activities as well as the related publication work, for example basic study materials for students. Professor PhDr. Rudolf Štepanovič, DrSc. is one of these modest, hardworking and above all helpful authorities of the area of pedagogy. His work represents the basic line of creating and developing university pedagogy in Slovakia, as well as in the former Czechoslovakia. He has developed a pedagogical discipline which even today requires our full attention, as there is a continuous need to increase the quality of university education as well as the need to direct students to enter scientific fields through the study of individual study subjects and the related study programs.

Rudolf Štepanovič was born on 3 July 1930 in Červeník, the district of Trnava. He began his compulsory schooling in a local grammar school from where he proceeded to a Secondary Grammar School in Hlohovec, which he finished in

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1948. His interests led him to the study of teaching and he began his studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University in Bratislava, where he studied Slovak language – philosophy.

After graduating in 1953, he worked as a high school teacher at the Secondary Technical School of Chemistry in Bratislava, and at the Eleven-year Secondary School in Pezinok. After one year at secondary school, he moved into the university environment in the area of methodology and management of education. Between 1954 and 1959, he was the assistant professor at the Slovak Technical University in the Department of Marxism and Leninism. From 1959 to 1961, he worked at the Research Institute for Pedagogy, and then at the Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University where he focused on the issues, theory and practice of university pedagogy. He worked at the philosophical faculty till 1973, from 1968 as the Head of the Department of University Education, and between 1970 and 1973 as the faculty vice-dean. From 1973 to 1976 he applied his practical knowledge at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Socialist Republic as the director of the Department of Higher Education. In 1976 he returned to the Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University as the chief of the Department of University Pedagogy and the faculty dean. He remained at this post till 1988 when he became the director of the Institute of Experimental Pedagogy at the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) and it's chief researcher. As the dean, he was recognized not only for his pedagogical, scientific and publication work, but also for creating a platform for preparation and publication of the Pedagogical Encyclopedia of Slovakia, which was published in 1984 and 1985 under the leadership of an academician Ondrej Pavlík. Professor Rudolf Štepanovič worked as a member of the administrative committee of the Chief Editorial Office and the head of the Committee for Higher and Secondary Vocational Education. Another expert role of professor Štepanovič was, from 1991 to 1995, his position at the Police Academy, where he focused on the improvement of the quality of education at this new higher education institution and on development of foreign relations. From the Police Academy he transferred to the Department of Pedagogy at the Pedagogical Faculty of Constantine the Philosopher University where he stayed until 2005.

In the theory of pedagogy, he first focused on the issues of apprentice education and gradually moved into the sphere of university pedagogy with an emphasis on higher education didactics. He also applied his own expert orientation in the process of restructuring of universities, which he led as the director of the Department of Higher Education Institutions at the Ministry of Education.

In accordance with university pedagogy, Rudolf Štepanovič worked also on his own professional growth. In 1965 he defended his dissertation work and received the title of candidate of pedagogical sciences (CSc.), and in 1968 he became the “docent” of pedagogy; in 1967 he was named by the republic's president professor of pedagogy, and in 1984 he received the title of doctor of sciences (DrSc.). Professor Štepanovič's professional and qualification growth

was connected with the results of his research in the area of higher education pedagogy, which resulted in the publication of these works (sole authorship) – University Seminars and Exercises (1966), The Basics of Pedagogy and Psychology (1970, 1977), Testing of Knowledge at Universities (1973, 1977 in Hungarian language); (shared authorship) – Education Work at Secondary Vocational and Apprentice Schools (1961), Selected Chapters from Higher Education Pedagogy (1988), The Basics of Higher Education Pedagogy (1975), Testing of Knowledge in the Environment of the Police Academy (1993), The Basics of Pedagogy for the Teachers of Secondary Police Schools (1996); and a number of studies and expert articles in domestic and foreign almanacs and journals.

Professor Štepanovič's research, publication, pedagogical and organizational work was awarded by a number of awards, like the Ľudovít Štúr's Golden Honorary Plaque of SAV, Golden Medal of the Comenius University, Pedagogical Faculty of the Constantine the Philosopher University, Pedagogical Faculty of the Matej Bel University and others. For professor Štepanovič, however, the biggest award was his cooperation with colleagues and students to whom he has offered valuable advice and assistance.

## **Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement**

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