Remarks to boys' pedagogy in the Czech Republic - Pedagogical-psychological aspects of identity development of boys and girls

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The present contribution is primarily dedicated to the pedagogical-psychological issues in the development of boys and girls. Initiatives for gender oriented differentiation in schools started in the early nineties of the 20th century, however, did not get further developed, at least not in a consequent way. A textbook analysis shows that books currently used for foreign language education both textually and visually remain linked to the traditional role concepts of men and women. Incomplete families and female educationalists, especially in primary schools, offer boys little possibility for identification with male gender roles.

This study is divided into the following sections:

1. The absence of a boys' pedagogy in the Czech Republic
2. Gender-specific measures in the Czech Republic: physical education and crafts
3. Selected aspects of gender identity development − psychological issues
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1. The absence of a boys' pedagogy in the Czech Republic

Concerning the pedagogy dealing specifically with boys, there are no records on any significant trends of dissimilar approaches to boys. The history and the approach in the Czech lands have almost been identical with that of Austria and Germany. And after World War II there were not any important differences between the former so-called Eastern Bloc countries.

2. Gender-specific measures in the Czech Republic: physical education and crafts

The „gender problem" in the Czech Republic remains locked in on itself, without being identified within a greater spectrum of problems, and without causing concern to anyone" (cf. Seebauer/Helus 2002, p. 15).

Due to − more or less − no implementation of gender-specific measures in the Czech Republic so far, no specific gender arrangement could be described. Some gender-oriented institutions present different ways to carry out some such arrangement though. They, for instance, attempt to apply gender dissimilarities within the field of education by proposing the introduction of different tasks into the school leaving examination scheme for male and female students in secondary education. Such gender institutions organize conferences, publish books with gender problems, they present their ideas for instance on web sites (e. g. http://www.osops.cz/; http://genderstudies.cz/) etc.

Moving back into the school environment with regard to the occurrence of specific school subjects and differences in boys' and girls' courses, the problem of making provision for gender diversity took place in the early 90's, namely in the two cases of different education at basic schools, particularly on lower secondary level.

From the fifth, sometimes sixth form, of basic school pupils were divided according to sex in the following subjects:

Physical Education
The diversity of the physical development in the period of puberty was the principal reason of the group division by gender. Boys focused mainly on dynamic sports while girls did gymnastics.

Crafts
For boys, the subject was oriented at technical activities, e. g. working with different materials (metal, wood) and making products of these materials. Girls attended courses of cooking within the frame of craft courses.

Such differentiation reflected diversity in the conception of both sexes. From boys, or males, a technical skills and instrumental protection of their family was expected, while from girls, or females, emotional protection and cultivating of their family environment was awaited (cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc.).

Such traditional models recently become a solitaire phenomenon and the difference in the conception of the two roles recedes. The positive side to this development is the elimination

of the discrimination in the sphere of gender role choice among men and women and space for their achievements.

On the other hand, a certain confusion in gender role conceptions and role performance problems emerge. The feeling of responsibility for the role performance evaporates. Some acts within the frame of particular roles are conducted simultaneously; some are not conducted at all. E. g. we witness increasing competence of women perform an instrumental role, which is beyond all doubt a positive sign. Nonetheless, the role of an emotional leader of the family which saturates preferably emotional and social needs of the family members as an important social group and cultivates family environment, is not fulfilled or is maintained in a dysfunctional way. Not all men are able and above all willing to accept it.

Throughout the 90's the division in the craft courses was phased out and the main reason for this was, according to head teachers, shortage of finance.

Even though the gender-specific arrangement of pupils is not clearly specified and defined in the educative practice (school practice), teacher trainees are taught the specifics of the boys' and girls' development within the frame of developmental psychology at faculties of education.

3. Selected aspects of gender identity development − psychological issues

The basic features of the development in boys and girls are similar. In some areas, however, different ways of development can be observed. Particular differences can be monitored in new-born age, specifically in motion activities. As Feldman et al. (1980, in: Langmeier, Krejčířová 1998) writes, boys´ motion activity in this age is more frequent; they spend more time awake and their muscles are stronger. Girls are smaller but healthier and developmentally more mature on average, they possess better motion coordination.

Speech development also differs in boys and girls. Girls' performance in verbal skill testing at the age of 11–13 is better in general. Visual-spatial imagination in boys of the same age usually proves to be better.

There is no difference between the two however, in the domain of cognitive skills such as memory, judgement, or problem solving. There are differences in school academic performance. The performance of girls, who reach the school maturity earlier, is usually better in initial years. Boys, on the other hand surpass the girls in some subjects (e.g. mathematics and other sciences) in higher years, especially at secondary schools, colleges, and universities.

As Langmeier and Krejčířová (1998) say, regarding social behaviour, according to experts, the difference is most significant at the level of aggression and this, as anthropological research shows, in all the monitored cultures. The hierarchy of dominance in boys, who usually play in larger groups (4–5), is more significant than in girls, who prefer playing in smaller groups (2–3). Boys play is usually busier. Boys run more, knock each other down, apply more forceful elements, and their plays are more often constructive. If the rules are broken at play, boys tend to negotiate, often quite fierce fully. Girls' play is usually quieter and involves mutual care. Their plays are more different, varied models and behaviour patterns are being imitated. If the rules are broken, girls do not tend to negotiate and they abrupt the play.

The interest in young children shows significant differences in boys and girls: girls are more interested in babies and they tend to pacify the children. Boys are likely to be aggressive to the young children.

Many diversities and different tendencies between boys and girls are undoubtedly genetically determined. It is necessary to emphasize that the development of all psychological functions is always formed by upbringing, education, and the whole social environment (Langmeier, Krejčířová 1998). The above mentioned authors and their outline of the differences between boys and girls could be accepted. We dare argue the thesis that boys show higher aggression towards girls. Concerning applying the level and frequency of aggression, the difference between the sexes is not any significant. Considerable difference lies in the form of aggression. In boys, a more visible form prevails – physical and direct aggression. On the other hand, girls prefer verbal and indirect aggression (gossip, intrigues, etc.)

Regarding an individual's identity, identity could be characterised as:

- feeling of one's own identity based on experiencing one's own continuity and individual combination of personal features and typical behaviour;
- an individual's fellowship with smaller or larger social entities, living the given values as member of a social group (Frankovský, 2003).

Personal identity, the development of the sense of uniqueness (autonomy), the enhancement of group identity (group fellowship experience), and the support of the self-discipline experience (self-regulation) belong among essential educative objectives for the process of socialisation and education. The process is nevertheless understood as the process of individual construction of one's character (Štech 2000). Identity is formed in the process of integration of an individual in a society, when an individual adopts and identifies herself/himself with social norms, values, ideas, etc.

Social expectations towards boys and towards girls nevertheless still differ. Parents, peers, teachers, as well as media and different social institutions expect different character features and behaviour from girls and boys. Due to this, girls and boys are raised to fulfil the expectation of their background. They are formed in that direction. Consequently, their lifestyles differ to a certain extent. Their interests, after-school activities or academic ambitions often show differences: Football and ice hockey are very popular with boys, gymnastics and dancing with girls.

Social pressure starts functioning at the moment of birth. Depending on sex a child is described and brought up differently. Boys, for instance, are getting more motion stimulation, and girls are offered more verbal stimulation.

Children's behaviour is also differently interpreted. E.g. a child's cry is often interpreted as an expression of anger in boys while in girls it is understood as an expression of fear. Girls' cry is more acceptable as a reaction to discomfort than boys' cry. When girls cry, parents tend to pacify them, but when the boys cry and it isn't assessed as an expression of anger, parents tend to ignore it or, esp. fathers, trivialise boys' cry by such utterance as „boys don't cry".

Children's toys are chosen differently. Toys of often aggressive character are chosen for boys (weapon models) while dolls and prams are for girls. Parents, esp. fathers, play widely with boys than with girls. As for punishment, parents, esp. fathers, punish boys more strictly and experience feelings of regret when they should discipline girls. Fathers take more authoritative stand on boys upbringing than they do on girls. Girls receive more verbal stimulation from their mothers than boys, but the difference is less significant then the difference in gender related behaviour towards the two sexes in fathers.

It is obvious that in our culture social pressure is more noticeable on boys. Parents are more likely to accept boyish behaviour in girls. They provide them sometimes with a boys' toy (e.g. car model), they respect a wider circle of activities in girls. Girlish behaviour in boys is less likely to be accepted and tolerated, especially by fathers and boys' peers. Investigating into the differences in adults' behaviour towards children, we would find more differences in men. In incomplete families where a boy grows up only with a mother we often find less boyish behaviour. If the absence of a man – father is not compensated by another male model (i.e. uncle, grandfather, etc.), in either positive or negative way, boys often resort to unreal models – film characters, PC game characters, etc.

Similarly, child care facilities and kindergartens show such tendencies. Kindergarden teachers since nursery level subconsciously approach boys and girls differently. E. g.

assertive behaviour in boys and girls at the age of one did not show any apparent difference – a child takes the toys and pulls for them, etc. Nevertheless, child minders in crèches respond to such behaviour only when they spot them in boys, assessing them more likely as aggression (cf. Fagot et al. 1975, in: Langmeier, Krejčířová 1998).

Teachers, as it shows, tend to communicate mainly with boys during classes. They ask boys more often and try to involve them in the class activities, because, according to them, they need to regulate their behaviour and eliminate discipline failures. Girls, who are considered less problematic, are kept aloof from the teachers' focus and eventually adopt a more passive attitude.

Within the frame of disciplines traditionally considered masculine, such as maths, physics, chemistry, etc. girls are perceived as more passive and less talented. Teachers expect boys' better success in these subjects and this may lead to a situation in which the teachers submit their behaviour to this expectation and the situation in class is predetermined to differentiate space for boys' and girls' skills display. The diversity shows to be less significant in arts oriented subjects (e. g. music, arts …). Nevertheless, even here the tendency to less activity in girls during classes appears to be the case, especially in the environment of co-educated groups and in the adolescent age.

Some differences show in the sphere of self-confidence. Girls succumb to fear of their failure and subsequently they cannot estimate their abilities realistically more likely than boys. Self-underestimating in girls very often leads to resignation over their tasks which demand unknown, new, unlearned proceedings.

Boys, on the contrary, perceive such tasks as challenging. It is due to the fact that girls are more often than boys praised for decent behaviour and quietness yet scolded more than boys for mistakes in the solving their tasks. Those are usually attributed to their inability to solve more complicated problems. Consequently, an attitude of so called „learned helplessness" is developed in girls (cf. Seligman 1975, 1976; in: Langmeier, Krejčířová 1998). This means that the bias to more often give in and have feeling that they do not have control over stressful situations, are strengthening in girls.

The approach to boys is opposite. They are less often scolded for mistakes in tasks and more often criticised for disturbing behaviour (i.e. running, screaming, fights …). Mistakes in tasks are attributed to their lack of interest or laziness („he could be better if only he wanted").

Eventual differences in the development of particular skills can be explained by different performances in particular roles from the point of view of expectations and appropriateness of identification with a certain sex. If the certain activity or role is labelled as appropriate for the particular sex, the performance in the concrete task prospers. On the opposite, if it is labelled as inappropriate for the particular sex, the performance decreases. In the frame of identity development children understand gender differences relatively early. Three-year-olds distinguish between boys' and girls' toys, four-year-olds between men's and women's colours, five-year-olds between male and female traits of character (cf. Langmeier, Krejčířová, 1998; http://www.cermat.cz/novamaturita/).

Throughout the effect of civilisation factors of micro-environment – e. g. parents, siblings, teachers, peers, mezzo-environment – relationships between the elements of micro-environment, exo-environment – parents' profession, influence of city or country, and macro-environment – culture, ideology (Helus 1992) children build an image of male and female characters and behaviour based on the expectations of their surroundings. To meet these expectations the children strive to fulfil them by their behaviour.

The understanding of one's own sex and conscious ambition to behave in the expected way grows together with the elaborating of one's own identity in adolescence. Adopting gender roles is in progress within the process of socialisation. In this sense gender can be understood as an open file of features, styles of behaviour, interests, appearance characteristics …, which are in a certain society, culture, and time linked with an image of a man or a woman (cf. http://www.esf-kvalita1.cz/gender.php). It gives certain variability to the conception of a man or a woman.

4. Women and men in Czech textbooks − Some findings from a textbook analysis

The following findings come from an empirical research carried out by Jana Kubrická (2006/07) in the framework of her doctoral thesis. Her research focuses on the portrayal of women and men in occupational roles in textbooks published and currently used in teaching in the Czech Republic. The main objective of the textbook analysis is to examine gender characteristics associated with occupations as we believe that there is a certain, though not precisely measurable influence of the presentation of female and male characters in textbooks on the development of children's attitudes towards themselves and towards men's and women's roles in the society.

In the first stage of the textbook research English foreign language textbooks were chosen firstly because they present a new culture along with a new language and thus attention

should be paid by the authors to the depiction of the modern society including non-traditional gender roles. Secondly, the trend towards the use of non-sexist language and non-sexist content is clear in English teaching materials and so it should be reflected in Czech textbooks of English as well.

To examine the topic we conducted content analysis of a major series of English textbooks. Textbooks of English (called *Angličtina* by Zahálková and Balcarová, 1999-2002) for 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th grades were analysed regarding the portrayal of girls/women and boys/men in occupational roles both in text and illustrations.

First of all the number of females and males in illustrations and text was approximately equal in all four textbooks. However, the occupational roles of women and men were found to be gender stereotypical. In all of the textbooks females are predominantly depicted in jobs where care, sympathy and appearance are important, such as nurses, secretaries or housewives. Males are portrayed in a variety of occupations, e.g. as policemen, I.T. experts, sportsmen, reporters, scientists, doctors or architects, i.e. mainly in jobs which require qualifications, are well paid and often quite prestigious. Also, the occupations that boys and men are depicted in are associated with the traditional masculine traits such as activity, assertiveness, independence, self-reliance, competitiveness, decisiveness. All of these occupations belong to the public sphere and in our investigation there was not a boy or man found in a caring occupation or role.

Our findings from this stage of research thus confirm the hypothesis that despite the efforts of gender experts to increase the awareness of gender issues among textbook writers and teachers in the Czech Republic certain territories are still too risky for textbook authors and so they stay away from them (cf. Kubrická, e-mail message to R. Seebauer, 6/2007).

5. Male Identity and Its Specification

We find more correspondences than dissimilarities in the development in boys and girls. Once the dissimilarities exist, they are usually insignificant and influenced by inter-individual differences. Preserving significant differences means applying divert approaches in the process of socialisation. These differences in approach are yet less and less apparent especially due to an increasing number of families where the father is absent. Boys are then obviously under the noticeable influence of women – in a family, in a child-care facility (female teachers prevail), at basic school (female teachers prevail).
For instance we can show some statistics
(in: http://www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/skolstvi/$File/08_skolstvi.pdf):

Male and female teachers at schools in Czech Republic in the school year 2003/2004

	male teachers	female teachers
junior and middle school	10.922	54.693
Secondary school	7.881	12.910
Vocational school	4.634	6.449
Gymnasium	3.994	8.181

The University study structure of male and female students is different. We can see inconspicuous ascendancy of male over female students.

Students at public Universities in the school year 2003/2004 (daily study)

Total	196.792
Female students	96.309
Male students	100.483

Students at private Universities in the school year 2003/2004

Total	13.286
Female students	7.339
Male students	5.947

It could be said, that boys are being, to a great extent, deprived of appropriate male models to imitate or to identify with. The absence of male models also complicates the description of a concrete male role pattern. And if the role pattern is not clear, the role performance is disputable.

The forming of a male identity beyond the biological frame is therefore difficult.
Despite these pessimistic words a certain sustaining tendency can be monitored. Results of a partial study at the Faculty of Education UJEP in Ústí nad Labem show that among the male teacher trainees responses emerge which reflect the following signs of male identity: I am the one who conquers (territory, home, career, family) and protects (the conquered).

6. Current trends

Recently noticeable interest in gender problematic has grown in the Czech Republic. Gender has become a frequently used social category related to labelled and expected social roles, behaviour, but also prejudice, stereotypes, assessment and self-assessment, patterns of what is and is not acceptable and right for a man or a woman (cf. http://www.demografie.info/).

We can say that the forming of the personal, social and national identity is a continual, unclosed process. Searching for the answer „who I am" or „who we are" means to consider not only our heritage, but our past, our roots, and our future − the path we tread.

It means to find not only our common traits with the others but also our specifics, what differs us from the others. The problem could be the lack of balance of this access, for instance the exorbitant determination towards others and exaggeration of differences.

As a result of the development of a multi-cultural society in the Czech Republic, we can expect not only research works in the field of demands and prescriptions of the male and female role, but also the defining of similarities and differences between varied social groups within the society, between varied groups and cultures.

Suggestions for further independent study of the topic

1. Try to discover „Identification Models" that would work in the frame of the Socialization process.
2. Regarding the „Social Role of Boys" in society: What does society expect from me as a boy and what do girls expect from boys?
3. What are boys' objectives for their future lives and what are their expectations and perspectives from their point of view? Elaborate a design for research and conduct the planned research (in the frame of a Paper, Dissertation)
4. Compare the statements made in chapter 3 to the trends described in the PISA-, TIMSS-, PIRLS-Studies. Analyse the outcome with regard to boys and girls and try to find explanations for possible discrepancies!
5. The textbook analysis described in this text concerned the traditional role models. Analyse a lexicon of minimum 3 volumes with respect to the images of men and women!

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http://www.demografie.info/?cz_gender=&PHPSESSID=dccb9f08e8cd6c53567572514dcb4 3d1

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