

REVIEW OF THE BOOK QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LIFE AND METHODOLOGY

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LUKÁŠOVÁ, H. *Kvalita života dětí a didaktika*. Praha: Portál, 2010. 208 s. ISBN 978-80-7367-784-8.

In context of the recent curricular reform of the Czech education system of all levels, the interest in new communicative and child-oriented approaches and trends increased. The new curricular document for primary and lower secondary schools, the Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education, interconnects classical school subjects in order to create thematically coherent educational areas and educational fields. Moreover, school education focuses on the key competences development temporarily. This, of course, draws more attention to a child's personality development – mostly its physical, psychological and social abilities and skills development. The new, child-oriented approach has been reflected in many scientific works meanwhile new questions and problems have emerged. The book *Quality of Children's Life and Methodology* by Hana Lukášová tries to provide wide insight into both quality of a child's life within school environment and methodology issues.

Professor Hana Lukášová from the Pedagogical faculty of the University of Ostrava is an expert in field of pedagogy; she focuses mostly on alternative educational trends and concrete quality concepts in Czech education. Her book called *Quality of Children's Life and Methodology* is divided into four chapters – they bring definitions of high-quality children's life and methodology, further they deal with the concept of primary education, with a child's life quality in lessons, and with teaching process and methodology in general. Although the writer focuses on primary education, most of the book is general and its principles can be used in lower secondary education (or other levels) as well. She reflects outcomes of many notable Czech scientists dealing predominantly with pedagogy, but also with psychology, sociology and other scientific disciplines (e. g. Helus, Krivohlavý, Gavora). In her overall view, she compares classical concepts and teaching methods with modern, newly

formed ones. Moreover, some new blind spots of contemporary education were identified within the book.

The first chapter deals with two essential questions – how to define a high-quality child's life, and what methodology is. Whereas the second question evokes no problem areas, the explanation provided for the first question seems to be more challenging. The writer offers a general view at a child's quality of life – she declares five basic principles of a child's life perception in contrast to classical, narrower perception of the topic. The author refers to health, psychological, sociological, self-oriented and spiritual areas of a child's development, which is inspiring. Many other works emphasise psychological and sociological trends; the health and self-oriented principles are sometimes mentioned in connection with primary education, and comments on spiritual area are usually very rare.

The second chapter focuses on different areas of high-quality school life of a child. It refers to the different educational approach and to the change of children's system of values. The author emphasises the importance of school and education humanisation; she reflects education as a service to a child's development. In the chapter, the writer comments on topics such as key competences, the Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education, teaching styles, interaction of a teacher and a pupil or pupils, pedagogical communication and pedagogical deciding, pupils' self-development, and a teacher's role in forming pupils' learning and life perspectives. Some of the chapter's ideas create a basis for the last chapter of the book.

The third chapter monitors the five qualities of a child's life mentioned above. The author finds reflections of health, psychological, sociological, self-oriented and spiritual development in today's school life, education and the Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education. She connects these five principles with expected aims of lessons and whole teaching and learning process. Similar to other pedagogically oriented books, the psychological principle is discussed in topics such as mental development, emotions, motivation, need for success; the sociological principle deals with school and classroom climate and pupils' interactions (between a teacher and a pupil, between a teacher and pupils, among pupils themselves). The writer also mentions the important role of the physical principle (regarding health, physical conditions in school or classroom, loading at school), the self-oriented principle (connected with a pupil's identity forming) and the

spiritual principle (referring to values and human virtues, ethics, friendship). These three areas are often marginalized, which does not correspond with the overall view to a child's life quality.

The fourth, last chapter dealing with methodology represents the largest part of the book. It emphasises the importance of a teacher's decision-making for future, his/her orientation to results and ability to bear responsibility for taken actions. The writer also comments on pupils' role in the process of lesson forming. She suggests that children should be more responsible for the content of a lesson and should take part in the lesson realisation. Furthermore, the chapter follows the process of deciding about the teaching issues which are the formulation of lesson aims, deciding about lesson content, teaching methods, organisation forms of teaching and material devices, and deciding about control and assessment. The first problem area refers to classical lesson aims being formulated according to Bloom's theory (cognitive, affective, psychomotor aims) in contrast with the writer's five defined principles leading into lesson aims as well (health, psychological, sociological, self-oriented, spiritual aims). In connection with the Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education, mostly health and spiritual aims are lacked. In the second problem area, the integrated system of education areas within the curricular document is described in relation to curricular trends in the future. The author also highlights the necessity of work with a mistake, learning tasks and respect to pupils' learning styles. The third part refers to the classification of teaching methods whereas the author accents the role of modern, active methods (brainstorming, project teaching etc.). The fourth part deals with the organisation forms of teaching and classroom climate; the fifth problem area describes possible material support in lessons, comparing role of both traditional devices and educational technologies (ICT). The final part focuses on control and assessment of results by introducing a series of inspiring examples of diagnostics (e. g. pupils' concept of subject matter, mistakes in pupils' learning process, diagnostics by role-playing and dialogue, self-regulation of learning). The writer also speaks about the importance of pupils' self-evaluation and making pupils' portfolios.

To sum up, the book *Quality of Children's Life and Methodology* by Hana Lukášová is a very valuable work and fits perfectly into the contemporary state of Czech education. It brings new and inspiring insights into traditional concepts; it specifies mainly the concept of a child's life quality in all its

aspects. It also answers some of the essential questions from methodology area. The only downside of the book is that it does not speak explicitly about primary education. The information is mentioned in different places of the text itself, but only once in the headlines; various book content descriptions do not refer to this information as well. However, the wide range of the theories presented by the author does not preclude the gained information to be implemented into other levels of education. The book features high quality and is worth its place in every pedagogical-oriented library.

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