Family Education in Children's Homes in the Context of a Framework Analysis of School Educational Programmes

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the topic of family education in children's homes in the context of a framework analysis of selected school educational programmes. Education for partnership and parenthood, also with regard to preparation for independent life, is a topic that needs to be addressed in both theoretical and practical terms. The paper defines the theoretical framework of the issue of children's homes and family education. The aim of this paper is to find out how family education is reflected in the school educational programmes of selected children's homes. A qualitative research inquiry was conducted through the technique of framework analysis. The results show that the topic of family education is addressed inconsistently and with different levels of concreteness at the level of the school educational programmes of the different institutions. The findings provide a basis for the second stage of the research, which focuses on family education in children's homes from the perspective of educators.

Keywords: family education, school curriculum, children's home, sex education, preparation for independent living, financial literacy.

Rodinná výchova v dětských domovech v kontextu rámcové analýzy školních vzdělávacích programů

Abstrakt

Příspěvek se zaměřuje na téma rodinné výchovy v dětských domovech v kontextu rámcové analýzy vybraných školních vzdělávacích programů. Výchova k partnerství a rodičovství, a to i s ohledem na přípravu na samostatný život, je tématem, které je třeba řešit jak v teoretické, tak praktické rovině. Příspěvek vymezuje teoretický rámec problematiky dětských domovů a rodinné výchovy. Cílem příspěvku je zjistit, jak se rodinná výchova odráží ve školních vzdělávacích programech vybraných dětských domovů. Kvalitativní výzkumné šetření bylo provedeno technikou rámcové analýzy. Výsledky ukazují, že téma rodinné výchovy je na úrovni školních vzdělávacích programů jednotlivých zařízení řešeno nejednotně a s různou mírou konkrétnosti. Zjištění jsou podkladem pro druhou etapu výzkumu, která se zaměřuje na rodinnou výchovu v dětských domovech z pohledu vychovatelů.

Klíčová slova: rodinná výchova, školní osnovy, dětský domov, sexuální výchova, příprava na samostatný život, finanční gramotnost.

Introduction

Family education in children's homes is a topic that lacks content in professional articles. This may be due to the fact that one of the theoretical conceptions of family education is set exclusively in the family environment. It is true that, particularly as a result of the terminology, this is not an unjustified fact. On the other hand, in pedagogical practice, it is quite common to encounter children who do not grow up in a functional family and for whom the only safe environment is a family-type children's home. Our interest is therefore to investigate whether and, if so, how the topic of family education appears in the school educational programmes of selected children's homes. On the basis of theoretical sources and pedagogical documentation, the themes that represent the issue of family education in children's homes have been defined in the context of this research investigation. The key theme is the so-called education for partnership and parenthood. Financial literacy of children and preparation for future life after leaving institutional care are related to this area. The first part of the paper defines the theoretical framework of the defined issue. Attention is paid to the legislative anchoring of

institutional education in the Czech Republic, then the basic framework of the functioning of the children's home is presented and the last area addressed is the definition of the concept of family education in children's homes. The second part of this paper presents the results of the framework analysis of family education of selected school educational programmes.

1 An insight into the issue of institutional education in the Czech Republic with an emphasis on the topic of children's homes

Residential education is a form of foster care that a child enters when his or her parents are unable or unwilling to care for him or her. In such cases, it is then necessary to look for the most optimal form of foster care. Before imposing institutional care, it is the court's duty to examine whether there is a possibility of imposing alternative family care through the custody of a natural person other than the parents, foster care and adoption (Novotná & Fejt, 2009). If there is a possibility to provide the child with other than institutional care during the execution of institutional care, the court shall immediately decide on its cancellation and entrust the child to the care of another person according to the specific circumstances.

The issue of institutional education is defined by Act No.109/2002 Coll. on the performance of institutional or protective education in school establishments and on preventive educational care in school establishments. A diagnostic institute, a children's home, a children's home with a school and an educational institute are considered to be institutions of institutional education. The mission of these establishments is to provide a minor aged between three and eighteen (or nineteen) with alternative educational care, based on a court decision, which will always be provided in accordance with the healthy development of the individual (Section 1, Act No. 109/2002 Coll.). The Ombudsman adds that a young person may remain in an institutional institution beyond this period if he or she is being systematically trained for a profession. In such cases, the director of the institution concludes a so-called voluntary stay agreement with the client. The establishment thus undertakes to provide full care until the young person reaches the age of 26. The director of the establishment is obliged to inform each client of this possibility, and the contract may be concluded within one year of the end of the institutional education (Public Defender of Rights, 2018, online). The area of preventive educational care is provided by educational care centres in accordance with this Act (§1, Act No. 109/2002 Coll.).

The issue of institutional education is also covered by the Civil Code. According to Section 971 of the Civil Code, the insufficient financial circumstances of the parents

or persons providing for the child's upbringing cannot be sufficient grounds for the court to order institutional education. However, a necessary condition is the ability of the caring persons to ensure adequate upbringing of the individual and the fulfilment of other necessary obligations arising from parental responsibility (Act No. 89/2012 Coll., Civil Code).

Institutional education may be ordered for a maximum period of three years. If there are justified reasons, this period may be extended repeatedly, but always for a maximum of three years. As long as the court reaches a decision on the extension or abolition of institutional care, the child remains in institutional care, even though the time limit previously decided by the court has already been exceeded (Act No. 89/2012 Coll., the Civil Code).

Act No. 359/1999 Coll. on Social and Legal Protection of Children can be considered a key law in relation to institutional education. According to paragraph 2, § 1 of Act No. 359/1999 Coll., social-legal protection means, in particular, "protection of the child's right to favourable development and proper upbringing, protection of the child's legitimate interests, including protection of the child's property, action aimed at restoring the disturbed family functions and ensuring a substitute family environment for a child who cannot be brought up permanently or temporarily in his or her own family" (Art. 1, para. 2, Act No. 359/1999 Coll.,).

1.1 Children's home as part of the institution of institutional care in the Czech Republic

The mission of children's homes is to provide care to clients without serious behavioural disorders. These institutionalized individuals are usually educated in schools that are not part of the children's home. The key organisational unit in the children's home is the family group. This group consists of six to eight children of different ages. Siblings tend to be placed in the same family group, and only in exceptional cases do they live separately. This is due to the individual educational, training and health reasons of one or both of them. In family groups, children receive care similar to that provided in families. This care is provided by three teaching staff. The founder ensures that the family groups have the proper spatial conditions, indoor facilities, material conditions (linen, clothing, footwear, educational supplies, etc.), lighting, heating, etc. The mission of the children's home is to care for the child according to his/her individual needs. In relation to the children, the fulfilment of educational, training and social tasks is ensured. One of the interests of the children's home is to prepare the child for independent life after leaving institutional care. For this purpose, one or more separate housing units are set up in the children's home to accommodate individual children (Křepský, 2008 In Vašt'atková & Vyhnálková, 2008).

According to the results of a study carried out in the Czech Republic (Ptáček et. al., 2011), the most common reason for placing a child in a children's home is the lack of care for the child (in 66% of cases). In 10% of cases, the family's financial situation is unsatisfactory and in 5% of cases, the family's social reasons are involved. In 12% of the cases, according to the authors, these were legitimate reasons, representing abuse, parental alcoholism and parents in prison. (Ptáček et. al., 2011 In Ptáček, Kuželová, & Čeledová, 2011).

2 The concept of family education in children's homes in the context of selected thematic areas

The family is the oldest social institution whose task is to create a harmonious environment for the upbringing and socialization of the youngest and most vulnerable members of society. When the family ceases to fulfil the functions necessary for the healthy development of the child, the question of substitute care arises. Institutional care should only be a temporary solution to a child's unfavourable situation. However, there are many cases where institutional care is not just a short period of time in an individual's life. These children will thus spend their entire childhood and adolescence outside the environment of their biological family. It should then be in the interest of children's homes to create as favourable an environment as possible, which guarantees the child a sense of security, acceptance and at least temporary life security. However, this task is undoubtedly very demanding. Teaching staff are confronted with the difficult life circumstances of their clients and are often the only support for the children. This, of course, requires their very sensitive pedagogical approach, tact, empathy and expertise. We believe that to a certain extent these character predispositions of the educator also influence the way in which they are able to deal with children on topics such as their biological family, future preparation for parenthood, marriage and generally independent life after leaving institutional education.

According to Janiš (in Svatoš, 2002), family education is defined as the totality of educational activities that take place in the space of a particular family. The institution of the family represents a unique environment where some individuals are the subject of education and others its object. It is a so-called subject-object relationship in which feedback is applied and educational procedures and tools are chosen that optimally lead to the fulfilment of the set goals. In such a conception, family education is implemented only in the family environment. It is clear that in the case of children growing up in children's homes, this is a specific situation. One of the efforts of educators is to make the life of children from children's homes similar to the full life in a family. However, the

reality is that a children's home cannot fully replace a functional family in which a child would grow up under optimal conditions. In spite of this, the educational staff – aunts and uncles – often try with great enthusiasm to guide and influence the children with their educational influence on life issues that are part of family education.

In another sense, family education can be interpreted as "one of the extremes of a broadly conceived sex education aimed at the future role of marriage and parenthood, where the actual sex education is only part of the preparation for adult life" (Janiš in Svatoš, 2002, p. 49).

Also through a framework analysis of the school educational programmes of the selected children's homes, it was found that the thematic area entitled "family and sexual education" appears explicitly in the documents. On the basis of this observation, it can be concluded that, to a certain extent, topics falling under the area of family education are addressed in the children's home at least at the level of pedagogical documentation. The fact that family education is also often conceived as a subject in school may also play a part in this. There is no separate framework curriculum for children's homes, and therefore the framework curricula of specific levels of education can provide some guidance for the development of school curricula.

The process of preparation for independent life as a natural part of family education takes place in both implicit and intentional forms. The implicit form represents a way of acquiring skills through the inherently normal functioning of the children's home. In this context, it refers to activities related to the training of practical and self-care skills of children in family groups (Štenclová, 2021). The topic of preparation for independent living is also referred to by Reuben and van Breda (2024), who focus on relationship building of individuals leaving institutional care. Based on their findings, it is necessary to build a sense of belonging in these individuals, which is one of the building blocks of a person's overall resilience.

The link between the impact of preparing and supporting individuals leaving residential care and strengthening their own resilience is also reported by Stein (2019). In this context, Baker (2017 in Stein, 2019) notes the importance of good quality relationships between committed staff and individuals, which also contribute to successful transition to life outside of residential care.

Lukšík and Hargašová (2018) focus on the topic of the life of individuals in institutional care and the process of leaving it as well, writing that the quality of life of persons leaving institutional care is influenced by, for example, satisfactory material conditions, established order and its observance, as well as sufficient space for independent action, adequate and sensitive care and support in planning the future, etc.

Children do not acquire specific skills and values of family education only through targeted education on specific topics. On the contrary, these are the behavioural patterns that children internalize when performing everyday activities in the family group, such as taking care of the household, shopping, managing personal hygiene, caring

for others (especially younger members of the family group), tolerance and respect for others, etc. It is therefore a very natural form of social learning, through which "the child acquires and consolidates patterns of behaviour and gains basic experience of the functioning of the society of which he or she becomes a part" (Běhounková, 2012, p. 100). Kratochvíl (2009 in Lukšík & Lukšíková, 2016) adds that through effective group work, group members learn new and more effective behavioural strategies that can be useful in processing the trauma they have experienced.

The educational plan defining the child's personal goals in specific areas, such as social, verbal, hygiene and health habits, is called the Child Personality Development Programme (PROD). Each child has his or her own PROD, which is evaluated twice a year (Štenclová, 2021). In this context, it should be added that the child's initial situation, and thus the subsequent acquisition of specific skills important for life, is completely individual.

In accordance with the theoretical definition of the broader concept of family education, and therefore in view of the above, specific thematic areas were defined, which were the subject of a framework analysis of school educational programmes. These areas are:

1. Education for partnership, marriage, family planning and sex education.
2. Preparing for independent living (including the topic of financial literacy).

3 Framework analysis of school educational programmes in children's homes with an emphasis on family and sex education

The framework analysis of the school education programmes of children's homes was chosen as a method because of the initial insight into the issue. Hendl (2012) describes the technique of framework analysis as a process of analysing qualitative data at a preliminary stage towards better organising it. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) define this method in order to facilitate the systematic examination of qualitative data. They divide the method into two phases, with the first phase being the organization phase, which focuses on the thorough sorting and reduction of the data, and the second phase already aiming at the actual interpretation of the collected data. The interpretation can take the form of an explanatory or descriptive report.

3.1 Data material

The research sample consisted of seven school-based educational programs in randomly selected orphanages in the Czech Republic. The specific specifications of the

selected orphanages are not reported for reasons of anonymity. These homes ranged from homes for 20 children to facilities for 100 children.

3.2 Setting objectives for the framework analysis

Main aim: To find out how family education is reflected in the school curriculum of the selected institutions.
Sub-objectives:

- To find out how the aim of education and training in the children's home is defined.
- To find out how education for partnership, marriage and family planning is anchored in the school curriculum.
- Find out how sex education is planned in the school curriculum.
- To determine how the area of preparation for independent living with an emphasis on financial literacy is addressed in the school curriculum of selected institutions.

3.3 Constructing indices

In setting up the conceptual framework of the survey, we considered four basic themes, which we further divided into sub-themes, see Table 1.

Table 1
Constructing indices

Basic theme	Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2	Subtheme 3
Focus of the children's home	General objective	Specific objective	Mission
Education for marriage and family planning, sex education	Age	Topics	Competence
Preparing for independent living	Financial literacy	Preparing to leave	

Source: own elaboration.

3.4 Data analysis

The present analysis prese5nts a brief summary of the investigation in four areas, which are the focus of the children's home, the area of parenting and family planning education, sex education and preparation for independent living in the context of financial literacy.

3.4.1 Focus of the children's home

The first theme of the framework analysis focused on the goals and mission of the selected children's homes. All of the facilities are working towards the goal of creating a space for children to acquire competencies that lead to successful integration into society. DD4 states the goal as "achieving competencies that contribute to a happy and successful life. This means equipping the child with a set of knowledge and skills so that he/she is able to live a quality personal life, a life in interpersonal relationships and is able to navigate and move in the field of human activities."

In contrast, DD2 focuses on skills such as independence, the ability to actively participate in social life, self-control, successful completion of studies, financial literacy, or establishing work habits. DD5 focuses on maximizing the creation of a family environment as part of the mission of the orphanage, as well as preparing children to lead independent lives upon reaching adulthood. DD6 states, among other things, a focus on compensating for the children's negative past experiences and creating space for the acquisition of personal and social competencies. DD1 defines one general objective, which is further complemented by a number of sub-objectives. The main goal is again linked to the acquisition of readiness for an independent and full life in society. DD3 links the acquisition of competences not only to integration but also to a possible return to society. DD7 speaks more of the mission of the children's home, which is linked to the creation of small family groups in which a climate is created that brings naturalness and authenticity.

3.4.2 Education for partnership, marriage, family planning and sex education

In the area of marriage education and family planning, we encounter different approaches in school education programmes. Children's homes have family and sex education in their programmes directly linked to the age of the children, with specific goals to be achieved at each age. These are so-called child personality development programmes. In other children's homes, we find partnership education, marriage education, family planning and sex education hidden under other competences or in other places. For example, DD1 has among its general objectives the understanding and application of the principle of gender equality in society, and among the competences are problem-solving competences (offering help, conflict resolution) or social and personal competences (ability to empathise, awareness of social roles). DD6 has a similar view, stating that the communicative competence emphasises the importance of decent communication. In the civic competence he focuses on knowledge of rights and duties. An interesting addition is the workshops aimed at acquiring practical information and skills called "Love is not just sex and relationship issues". One children's home does not

focus on specific directions in each competency, but rather on a selection of activities in environmental education, work education, etc. The most concise school curriculum is DD7, which includes information on the ethics of communication, introduces children to the need to observe moral values and decent behaviour, develops empathy and the maintenance of good relationships.

3.4.3 Preparing for independent living

The final area of focus was on leaving the orphanage in the context of preparing for independent living and financial literacy. Acquisition of financial literacy is indicated in all children's homes. Some children's homes define the acquisition of financial literacy in general objectives, while others include it as a work competence. Emphasis is placed on learning about family budgeting, managing pocket money. Additional activities and activities are of interest. DD4 implements financial literacy education within the framework of the project. DD6 organizes workshops for children on financial literacy and household management. DD5 includes financial literacy among the competencies. DD2 has a special financial literacy plan where they include, for example, contracts, the value of money, loans or excursions to banks or other services. As regards preparation for independent living, the themes are interwoven in several facilities, not only in family and sex education, but also, for example, in household management, cooking, etc. DD6 implement various support activities in preparation for the child's departure from the children's home, which can include targeted personal and social training, staying in transitional housing, training for life in employment and workshops on work or social benefits. DD3 focuses on career counselling. DD2 defines one of the main tasks of the children's home as preparing older children for leaving the children's home, where this involves talking about independent living, work and housing issues. The facility has a specially designed plan for preparing for independent living, which includes topics such as career choice, further professional development, employment, allowances and social benefits, household management, managing one's finances, independent living, authorities and doctors, sexuality and relationships.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to find out how family education is reflected in the school education programmes of selected children's homes. For this purpose, the research technique of framework analysis was used. The theoretical part of the paper defined the issue of institutional education in the Czech Republic with an emphasis on children's homes. Furthermore, the theoretical concept of family education was presented. Two key areas representing the concept of family education in the environment of

children's homes were defined in the research investigation. The thematic area of preparation for partnership, family planning, marriage and sex education emerged first, followed by preparation for independent living for children after leaving institutional care with an emphasis on financial literacy. Approaches to the development of the school curriculum vary from one establishment to another. There is no single manual for developing a school education programme for children's homes. It is possible to find interesting projects that help children in the area of leaving the orphanage or in communicating with their own biological family. One such example is the methodology developed by the Tereza Maxová Foundation (2023). Based on the presentation of the theoretical framework of the defined issues and the framework analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the objective of this paper has been met. In the next investigation, attention will be paid to educators' perspectives on the issue in the context of everyday practice.

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