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## **DISCOURSE ON FAMILY IN CONTEXT OF EDUCATION: FAMILY AS A TOPIC IN SELECTED CZECH JOURNALS OF PEDAGOGY**

*LEONA STAŠOVÁ*

### **Abstract:**

This paper presents the results of a qualitative content analysis with an aim to show how topics related to family appeared and were discussed in Czech specialist journals in the field of education. The qualitative analysis follows a prior quantitative part. Two important Czech periodicals, e-Pedagogium and Orbis Scholae, were selected for qualitative analysis as they have a greater thematic scope and their content covers a broader context of the processes of teaching and education. The period selected for analysis of the journals spanned years 2006 to 2016. The aim of the qualitative analysis was to ascertain how the issue of family was approached in specialist discourse on education, which topics it covered, and how it placed them into the context of the process of education. In total, 696 texts from both journals were analysed. The qualitative analysis of content performed according to Mayring showed six basic categories that summarised the mediated discourse on family in education – family as a source of support and a stabilising factor, family as an initiating factor, family as a variable entity, family as a problem, family as a subject in counselling and family as a subject of research. It was observed that family was perceived especially as an advantage or disadvantage of an individual in the process of education. Pedagogical discourse on family involved topics and employed the theory of both pedagogy and a number of related fields. In this respect, strong interdisciplinary aspects of the specialist discussion were apparent.

### **Keywords:**

Family Discourse, Education, Czech Journals of Pedagogy, Qualitative Analysis

**JEL Classification:** I20, I21, I29

### **Authors:**

LEONA STAŠOVÁ, University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic, Email: leona.stasova@uhk.cz

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## Introduction

A change of approach in individual fields manifests itself in examples of specific issues in a given specialist discourse. Specialist literature on education represented by journals functions as a platform for thought and discussion that allows to share topics, problems, methodological tools and procedures, ways of resolving and answering issues primarily for pedagogical specialists. Texts in journals can thus also reflect the current state of development in the field, better react to its needs and delineate it or outline its possible future course. The process of transferring knowledge about a changing reality is always somewhat delayed, depending not only on the possible speed of processing issues in empirical research, but also on the degree of interest the given issues draw in scientific fields. Even in academic literature there are, in fact, current and acute topics, which for various reasons garner more attention.<sup>1</sup>

Mediated discourse facilitated by specialist pedagogical journals can be considered one of the pinnacles of a field in a certain geographical space. This, however, does not mean neglecting the fact that academic discussion and discourse on education are also shaped by other means: they are formulated, transformed and shared in a number of different ways. In this case, therefore, the scope covers that part of specialist discussion and perception that is reflected in formal specialist texts. From the perspective of information transfer in media, academic periodicals represent a specific type of media. Their “points of entry” are editorial boards, which can call for monothematic issues, as well as authors, who can submit their texts in compliance with the requests of editors. This also includes reviewers, who primarily address expertise in submitted texts; however, to a certain extent they may play a part in an “emergence” of certain topics when they place an emphasis on issues they perceive as current in their evaluation. On the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge that a number of topics relevant for education, which have an impact in teaching practice, can remain unnoticed among specialists. This may be because they appear marginal in a given context and time or in relation to other issues, or because they are superseded by more fashionable or prominent topics. Some mechanisms of *agenda settings* or *the spiral of silence* could undoubtedly also be found in this context.

The present paper is focused on an analysis of how issues related to family, its characteristics, problems and development appeared and were discussed in Czech academic journals in the field of education. The aim of this procedure was to uncover that

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<sup>1</sup> Media research frequently employs the concepts of the spiral of silence - certain issues are not discussed and not socially appropriate, and consequently their presence in public discourse weakens - or agenda settings, ie. enforcing topics by discussing selected issues more often and more intensely (Jiráková, Köpplová, 2009).

topics that were academically discussed and analysed or, on the contrary, take note of what went unnoticed in academic discourse on education. It is obvious that no scientific field can cover the entire scope of issues and topics of its time and historical situation. There will always remain areas omitted in research or by theorists. If it were not so, there would not be sufficient space to make new discoveries in a field. Scientific knowledge is, however, in a way always inexhaustible.

## Research Methodology

The endeavour to consider the topic of family in education from the perspective of texts published in Czech journals of pedagogy was informed by a principal research question:

*Which topics and issues related to contemporary family and family environment were covered in Czech professional periodicals focused on education in 2001–2016, and in what way were they approached and explained?*

This principal researched issue was accompanied by subsequent questions:

1. *Which topics were covered in relation to contemporary family?*
2. *In which context and in which connections were family, family environment and family topics mentioned?*
3. *Which relations between the issues of family and other topics in education were considered?*

All these questions were focused on the topic of family as reflected in specialist discourse of Czech pedagogy and, if relevant, on a representation of contemporary family environment as well as on how the discussion of education theory was related to the issue of family. In order to answer these questions, content analysis, which allows for both qualitative and quantitative approach, was used in a mixed methodology. The results of the qualitative analysis are presented in this paper. The qualitative part of the content analysis was focused on thematic categories and meanings that were prevalent in relation to the issue of family in pedagogical texts and on how they were developed.

The period of 2001 (or 2006) – 2016 was selected for the analysis of periodicals. For the purposes of the entire analysis including the initial quantitative part, those journals were selected which covered a broader context of the process of education at school. In total there were five – **e-Pedagogium**, **Orbis Scholae**, **Pedagogická orientace**, **Pedagogika** and

**Studia Paedagogica.** Thus, the analysis covered the most important publications in Czech discussion on education, i.e. those that take part in developing current topics and shaping the field while having a possible impact on teaching practice. The qualitative analysis included two of them, *e-Pedagogium* and *Orbis Scholae*, in the period from 2007 (or 2006, respectively) to 2016.

The journal **e-Pedagogium** has been published by the Faculty of Education at the Palackého University in Olomouc since 2001. It is a quarterly focused on interdisciplinary research in pedagogy. Usually there are four issues per year, two in Czech/Slovak and two in English. The editorial board aims, among other things, to provide a platform for specialists that would allow to lead scientific discussion and share knowledge from education research, especially as regards interdisciplinary overlaps with both humanities and natural sciences. For this reason, it is focused on school pedagogy, social pedagogy, theory and philosophy of education, special pedagogy, pedagogical psychology, and didactics of individual fields. Each issue covers several topics and primarily includes research papers.

The journal **Orbis Scholae** has been published by the Faculty of Education at Charles University in Prague since 2007<sup>2</sup>, with the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University also taking part in the publishing process. The journal is focused on school pedagogy in a broader social and cultural context. Its aim is to contribute to the development and understanding of school pedagogy, and to the reflection of teaching practice and education policy. It includes primarily research, theoretical, and overview papers. The editorial board also emphasises an interdisciplinary approach. The journal is published three times a year, usually including one English issue.

The analysed journals of pedagogy were nevertheless considered as a whole: as a pedagogical field where diverse topics and thematic wholes appear. The frequency of a topic's occurrence in itself already reflects the importance ascribed by authors, reviewers, editors and editorial boards. These are key participants in a scientific field, who can enter its space represented by periodicals. Regardless of this, professional discourse arises out of the way the topic of family occurs in texts.

In each journal, individual texts in reviewed sections, which included theoretical inputs, empirical essays or specialist discussions, were considered basic units. These fit under the headings "*expert articles and essays, papers, studies, research reports, research papers, discussions, essays*". The selection also included student papers and postgraduate student issues, as sometimes, the new researchers can introduce unconventional approaches, topics

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<sup>2</sup> The issue zero was published in 2006.

and views into a scientific discussion. Over the course of the examined period, the analysed journals also published special issues. A special issue and the topics it covers may reflect the importance of a topic that should be discussed (whether in relation to a conference, meeting or symposium that took place, or without this connection). For these reasons, the special issues were also included in the analysis. In the end, the basic set for the quantitative part consisted of 2171 texts. The performed qualitative analysis took place on the level of text (in this case, a unit of analysis was formed by a whole text). The selection of texts for analysis was based on determined keywords in Czech and English – *rodina, rodič, rodiče, rodinné prostředí, rodinné zázemí, otec, matka, family, parent, parents, family environment, mother, father*. English issues of the journals were also analysed.

The analysed texts were divided into those in which the topic of family was **primary** (a family-related issue was included in the title) and those in which it was **secondary** (the topic of family appeared in the paper as a part of the context, but it was not the main topic). These texts fit under the headings of *studies, articles, contributions, papers, research reports, research papers, discussions*, and others, i.e. they were primarily specialist papers aiming to analyse an issue or a topic, not news or commentary on current events. The occurrence of keywords in individual papers was recorded and the texts were included in the set of data. The qualitative analysis used entire texts processed using the principles of Mayring's qualitative content analysis (Hendl, 1997, Mayring 2000). The aim of this part was to enable an examination of the aspects that were impossible to capture via quantitative content analysis and that, however, did belong to this reflection.<sup>3</sup> Qualitative analysis content makes use of the advantages stemming from quantitative approach as developed especially by communication sciences, continuing by further qualitative and interpretative processes of analysis (Mayring, 2000). It includes and implicitly contains also the very process of communication, in which the approaches to family and the way they are used by individual researchers are inserted into the process of scientific analysis and transferred to readers, other writers of specialist texts etc.

Mayringian qualitative content analysis used in this paper assumes a process consisting of the following steps:

1. Determining initial material, selecting parts for analysis (units of analysis)
2. Establishing the subject and direction of analysis
3. Defining coding units or contextual units
4. Selection of a special analytical technique

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<sup>3</sup> This means both an analysis of the text itself and an exposition of the social reality in which texts emerge. Thus, it is possible focus on the context of used textual elements, latent structures that may be present, important individual cases and aspects of meaning etc.

5. Performing analysis using the chosen technique
6. Interpretation of results and determining the degree of their validity  
(Hendl, 1997)

In this paper, the technique selected for data processing was “overview”, according to basic techniques of qualitative content analysis. Overview means reducing text in a way that preserves its fundamental meaning. Therefore, the aim of this part of the analysis was to find contexts and connections of family to other topics of pedagogy and their interrelation. Given that it is an analysis of specialist discourse, the goal was not to search for latent meanings and structures as in general discourses, but to capture the mutual connections of individual topics.

### **Family as a Part and Context of Pedagogical Discussion: A Qualitative Overview**

The research question in this part of the examination was **in which family-related contexts the pedagogical topics in the selected journals were analysed, what the role of family was and in what relation to other issues it was mentioned**. This meant not only texts dealing with the topic of family were included, but also any issues discussed in the selected journals where the topic of family also appeared. The analysed journal **e-Pedagogium** is further referred to as eP, the journal **Orbis Scholae** is further referred to as OS.<sup>4</sup> In both periodicals, all texts from 2006 to 2016 were taken into account and analysed regardless of whether their titles suggested a primary interest in family.

The aim of this part of the analysis was to uncover the connections and discourses related to family that appeared in the context of entirely different topics of pedagogy. The analysis attempted to show the context in which family was mentioned and the ways in which family-related topics were used when describing education-related issues. Given the amount of data, the analysis was performed by searching for a family-related thematic sphere in the text and specified according to the occurrence of the keywords family, parents, parent, mother, father (or their Czech equivalents); then, the part of the content containing the topics was analysed. Thus, the analysis was concentrated on searching thematic wholes, their relation to family and the context within the available information. These codes were then processed using the overview technique, establishing categories that covered thematic spheres, or codes.

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<sup>4</sup> Given the scope of the entire set of texts in all five journals (2171 texts overall), the analysis of the entire material was beyond this author's possibilities.

In total, 696 texts in the two journals were analysed. By the end of the search, it was apparent that topics and contexts were already repeating, and further search produced no new spheres, i.e. no indication of new categories. This meant that the occurrence of topics in the selected sample was saturated. Family had various roles in the analysed materials, which provided the basis for establishing categories. The resulting categories were saturated by individual codes and designated thus:

- 1) **Family as a source of support and a stabilising factor**
- 2) **Family as an initiating factor**
- 3) **Family as a variable entity**
- 4) **Family as a problem**
- 5) **Family as a subject of counselling and assistance**
- 6) **Family as a subject of research**

Furthermore, individual categories were described on the basis of codes that formed them and the context in which they appeared.

**Family as a source of support and a stabilising factor** comprised codes which presented family as an important environment that influences lives, situations and emotions of its members. This pertained to both pupils and teachers, but also to different generations within family, i.e. not only children and the youth, but also seniors. Individual performance, situation and experiencing were placed into the context of family background and situation. Family functioned as a principal referential aspect for individuals in education process (whether pupils or teachers). In this case, support can be both material and psychological/emotional. Parents can support their children in school preparation, doing homework, entrance exam preparation and career choice. At the same time, they provide emotional support as such, which is reflected in child's school success, confidence and aspirations. Material support for a child is also considerable, as it allows for a participation in various activities.

*“Individual qualities and family support provide the key to school success.” (OS 2/2008)<sup>5</sup>*

*“Differences in pupils' performance may depend on different support for learning outside school (family background, social and economic status, parents' education). (OS 3/2014)*

In the context of family as a significant variable in individual life, teachers' happiness was also mentioned in relation to their families and family background. Teachers with a good

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<sup>5</sup> In quotations, the journals are designated by the following abbreviations: Orbis Scholae – OS, ePedagogium – eP.

background were significantly more stable, successful and content in their professional role. Intergenerational relations in family were also mentioned as an important part of family environment, while “good family environment” was frequently noted as a key variable for the success of education.

The category “family as a source of support and a stabilising factor” also considered the potential of family in characteristics beyond the context of family. Family as a source of support was considered a factor in family resilience and capability to resolve its problems. This pertained especially to the birth of and care for a handicapped child. Family system was described as one able to mobilise its internal potential in response to certain external or internal circumstances in a way that would preserve its functionality and provide for the needs of individual members.

*“Cohesion, adaptability and happiness comprise variables considered as key indicators of the functionality of family system, especially in crisis or stress.”  
(eP 2/2009)*

*“Important factor influencing the effectiveness of family involvement in the rehabilitation process is family resources, i.e. structural and dynamic properties of the family system.”  
(eP 2/2011)*

This sphere was also touched upon in considerations of the ethical dimension of resilience related to family. Such an ability allows family members to participate successfully on the whole process of education. The ones whose families are able to provide the necessary environment, support and stabilisation are in an advantageous position in the process of education in comparison to those without such a family support.

*“The findings on entrance exams clearly show that the assumption is incorrect that all pupils, regardless of their family background, have the same access to the study at six-year or eight-year gymnasium schools. Because of the fact the system relies on preparation in family, the pupils from families that are unable to help them prepare or to pay for preparation have a significant disadvantage in terms of access to study.”(OS 3/2013)*

Thus, family support is a general advantageous aspect for everyone in education environment, whether children, teachers, instructors, counsellors, therapists or any other persons in professional contact with families.

Family was also noted as a source of support in topics related to disabilities in children and the need to address them. Supportive family background was also perceived as a significant factor in coping with the situation and improving the child’s options in the process of education. Support can also be provided by broader family and social background, which also has an impact.



*“Families participating in early intervention with a strong support system tend to have a better quality of life than those with a weak support system, because supported families have access to diverse resources.” (eP 2/2006)*

### **Family as an initiating factor**

In many situations described in the texts, family was perceived and interpreted as a factor with a role in initiating and stimulating an interest, the ability to communicate etc. The purpose of **family as an initiating factor** is to spark interest, develop abilities and skills or provide a basic awareness of a certain sphere. From this point of view, family was considered a significant factor in the development of new personality features, skills, abilities etc. Thus, family was expected to lay foundations of individual processes a school or another institution could develop.

*“...in the Czech Republic, the degree of predetermination of reading literacy by family background is among the highest in the OECD (mathematical literacy is average).”  
(OS 1/2014)*

*“Aspirations of children are therefore highly influenced by family environment and judgements children in this period receive from adults.” (eP 2/2006)*

It is because of the importance of family in one's life and his or her emotional attachment that family has the power to provide impulses for further development. For instance, family can stimulate interest in books, reading, nature, sports, visual expression or other important topics. Specifically, this aspect was mentioned in relation to the interest in individual school subjects as well as in more general areas. Primary impulses should be provided by the family; this interest can then be developed by schools or other institutions. The potential of family is in this very possibility of spontaneous and informal support and development of these aspects in children.

*“In case of developing certain key competencies, family and local communities, for instance, have a much higher potential in comparison to school.” (OS, 3/2010)*

Family is also a source of stimuli and interest in education as such; predominantly, learning aspirations arising from and supported by family or broader family circumstances were mentioned.

*“However, if preparation requires a significant family contribution, education becomes virtually inaccessible for pupils from a less stimulating family background.” (OS 3/2013)*

It is family that can turn children and the youth to a number of spheres. In this context, family patterns, cultural and social family background, habitus as well as social and economic status of parents. Middle-class families and families with a higher social and economic status have a more significant role in initiating educational activities in the current system, because the values embedded in the institutionalised education system of their society and their values are mutually compatible.

*“The fact that parents’ education significantly predicates aspirations even after considering pupils’ results supports the findings of foreign researchers that family background influences the process of classifying pupils into categories regardless of their study aptitude and results. Pupils’ testimonies show that their parents’ wishes play a significant role in decisions related to filing applications, and suggests that children agree with their parents’ arguments regarding the advantages of six-year or eight-year gymnasium schools.” (OS 3/2013)*

### **Family as a variable entity**

Family was also described as a variable institution, as a **variable entity**, the characteristics of which influence the process of education also in the social, cultural and value context. This includes both possible changes in family structure and spatial mobility. Pedagogical texts point out the shape of contemporary family is diverse, which impacts the teachers’ work as well.

*“Each family is a specific and unique social group with its own informal rules and standards of behaviour.” (eP 2/2009)*

*“The transformations of family are characterised by the dissolution of the so-called traditional (multi-generational) and nuclear family (father, mother and children) and the growing share of children who grow up in incomplete families. Likewise, the job market requirements, changes in lifestyle and influence of media give rise to new patterns of family life with numerous consequences for education.” (OS 1/2006)*

*“As changes in the social position of women have impacted school education, so has the role and shape of family transformed. Family remains the most important social institution; however, the forms of family life have changed... At the same time, there has been a shift in the traditional division of functions between school and family – i.e. education and upbringing, respectively.” (OS 1/2009)*

Given the failure of some families to provide upbringing, it was noted that this function had to be provided by school. Consequently, requirements for schools were established; namely, they should eliminate negative effects of other social influences on children and the youth. Thus, school becomes an institution that should equalise possible disadvantages children might have because of their family environment. As contemporary family is fundamentally

unstable, the demands on the provided upbringing, education and care as well as on the transmitted social and cultural level represent a notable challenge for schools. In some statements in the texts, this was perceived this as a *pressure on schools*.

*“At the same time, parents were highly supportive of the statement that schools were supposed to try and eliminate the disadvantages arisen due to pupils’ family background.”*  
(OS 3/2009)

*“In an open society and in the context of transforming social institution models, especially family, schools have to response to hazards for and negative influences on children and the youth coming from beyond the classroom...”* (OS 1/2006)

*“...a pressure on school to take on some of family’s functions, a pressure on expanding preschool education.”* (OS 1/2011)

The diversity of family variables was also related to individual advantages or disadvantages in the process of education. Certain attributes of family, parents or family environment may provide an individual with a more advantageous position in education (greater cultural capital, greater social capital, habitus acquired in the family, parents’ education, completeness of family etc.). On the other hand, other family attributes may prove disadvantageous for an individual throughout the process (lower cultural capital, lower social capital, habitus, parents’ education, incompleteness of family – single parent, ethnic minority status, addictions in family etc.)

*“One of the determining factors of a pupil’s social and cultural disadvantage may be his or her family environment comprising adults with a lower educational status.”* (eP 3/2006)

Family environment was considered both in relation to an individual’s status, social capital and cultural capital, and to his or her performance and problems. Social and cultural background of pupils was a prominent topic, because it influenced school results, failures, and problems as well a search for employment at the job market. The influence of family was perceived at the beginning of formal education, in its course and at its end. At every point in individual education, the impact of family and family environment was felt.

*“Analyses shows that while pupils’ abilities have the greatest impact on their admission to study, there is also a significant influence of the family both on their aspirations and the success in entrance exams.”* (OS 3/2013)

The texts repeatedly mentioned the findings of cultural reproduction theories on the emergence and reproduction of inequalities, which are intensified by schools’ actions. At the

same time, they consider the effects of family system, which shapes one's cultural capital and influences his or her personality, e.g. at the level of aspirations.

*“Research has shown that division into individual branches increased inequalities between pupils already present because of their social and economic background, and added to the differences in results and the probability of completing secondary education among pupils from families with a higher and lower social and economic status.” (OS 3/2013)*

*“In the Czech Republic, Matějů and Straková (2005) showed on the data collected in the PISA 2000 research that in a group of pupils with identical results, the pupils at six-year or eight-year gymnasium schools had an ambition to study at a university in a much greater degree than primary school students. This means that attending six-year or eight-year gymnasium schools, regardless of results, is connected to greater aspirations in terms of education. At schools of both types, aspirations were also strongly predicated by family background.” (OS 3/2013)*

In this context, it was also noted there were transformations of family and family environment as regards stability, divorce rate, functioning, gender roles, division of work in family, family upbringing etc. The role of father in society and during upbringing was mentioned in the context of the functioning of family. A reference to the changing situation of families in the Czech Republic in terms of the increased divorce rate was considered together with a pupil's disrupted background. Thus, a link between more general transformations of social reality and specific effects in education was unequivocally established.

*“The chart no. 4 shows clearly that pupils' behaviour was the most frequent problem the students encountered in their practical exercise. Social situation and disrupted family background, the functionality of which is so important during childhood and adolescence, represented the second most frequent issue. Given a high divorce rate in the Czech Republic, it is possible to assume a great number of pupils come from divorced or reconstructed families.” (eP 4/2009)*

*“The chart shows clearly that divorces and family dysfunctionality are currently a great problem with dire consequences for pupils as well.” (eP 4/2009)*

In the context of variable family environment, the discussion on trends of family upbringing was also mentioned. Family upbringing constitutes a part of the entire process of education, and family attributes consequently have an important role. The context of instilling values in upbringing and the importance family in this process was also mentioned.

There were also diverse claims regarding school's responsibilities. On one hand, there were statements claiming that a dysfunctional family meant that the possibilities of instructors and teachers were fundamentally limited. On the other hand, it was noted that some of school's

responsibilities had to be upheld. From this perspective, school's responsibility for certain aspects was somewhat reduced, since they were placed in the context of one's family and family background. It would also be interesting to discuss the topic of guilt in greater detail; while this analysis has no such ambitions, it is a remarkable link to family variability as one of the discussed categories.

*“Pupils’ results are processed by headmasters according to the old principle of “gap management”: they explain to external parties that “it’s not their fault” (but family influence etc.),...” (OS 3/2014)*

*“While pupils of gymnasium schools gain many reading skills already in family and in spare time among their peers, schools cannot disclaim responsibility for their formation.” (OS 3/2016)*

### **Family as a problem**

The perception of family in pedagogical texts also included **family as a problematic topic or as a source of problems**. If there is a problematic pupil in a pedagogical reflection, he or she is in a systemic perspective perceived as a part of a family; consequently, the search for a problem tends to include the family as well. The problems in question may be those of the pupil, in which case there occurs a search for causes in the family environment, nebo of the family which fails to provide its functions.

*“Barker (1988) argues that the problems of a child should from the beginning be approached as problems of the entire family.” (eP 2/2009)*

*“In both model cases, Slovak teachers pointed at family factors, specifically at “too strict parenting”, “conflicts in the family” and “violence in the family”, as the most important causal factors in problematic behaviour.” (eP 2/2007)*

*“As issues with controlling defecation may be perceived as a psychosomatic problem, family tends to be considered a possible source of psychosocial stress, especially if the family environment is disharmonic, emotionally unsatisfactory and lacking in adequate communication.” (eP 2/2009)*

Problem families tend to be found among families with a different cultural and ethnical background; specifically, Roma family was discussed. There, family support and initiation are not incompatible with the spheres and standards of the majority society embedded in the system of education. Thus, while support and initiation do take place in this type of family, they occur in different areas than expected at school.

### **Family as a subject of counselling and assistance**

Somewhat frequently, family was also perceived as a problem in the context of topics in which family was approach **as a subject of counselling and assistance**. To a significant extent, the topics of assistance, counselling and helped involved families taking care of a child with a disability.

*“The aim of early care is to support the child’s development, especially by cooperating with and helping families and those who take care of the child.” (eP 4/2010)*

Frequently, the topic of discussion was the extent and ways in which family is able to resolve problems and complex situations on its own and the point when it is necessary to provide a continuous comprehensive help. This involved primarily the children with disabilities. The continuum between “the right for assistance” and “the obligation to help” was approached in different ways.

*“In Slovakia, the situation is similar; the change, however, occurred several years later. The Directive MŠ SR č. 43/1996 Z. z. concerning details of educational counselling and counselling facilities states that family has a right of counselling both of the child and for the family, while the counsellor will take care of the family’s active members.” (eP 2/2006)*

*“Families have to become active participants in the process of intervention, not merely passive observers who are not aware of the “secrets” leading to their children’s successes.” (eP 2/2006)*

In this context, the system of family-oriented intervention is developed, using parents as partners to the team of experts who provide help and support to the family. This also necessitates a specific skillset on the part of the experts in order to cooperate with the family; thus, the experts need to be prepared and trained in this area as well. The need for education about family systems was also mentioned.

*“Every year, the number increase of families from socially challenged conditions, families with children with multiple disabilities or families with a different cultural and linguistic background. A functional specialist needs to be able to integrate not only the knowledge about a child’s development, language and hearing disability, but also to be capable of providing information to parents in a way adequate to adults’ learning style (Bodner-Johnson, 2001). This requires expertise in the field of family systems, but also e.g. in transformative learning.” (eP 2/2006)*

The help provided to a family can be both formal and informal. The text also reflected the fact that in this type of relationship, there necessarily emerges an unequal situation between the one who provides counselling and help, and the one who accepts it; therefore, the counsellor has a certain power over the family and the child. However, help can best be provided by a person who is in a more frequent contact with the child, i.e. the members of the family who

spend more time with him or her. The texts also made mention of how the relationship is influenced by the expectations of both the family and the counsellors on some level.

*“All too frequently, working with a family meaning focusing on its needs, and consequently, it is defined by the relation between what the family demands from others and what it has to provide.” (eP 2/2008)*

### **Family as a subject of research**

In numerous specialist texts, family was approached as **a subject of research or a separate topics of research**. It was perceived as a researched unit or topic. This situation most often included the description of how the research was performed, how the family was contacted, which members of the family participated in the research, what the characteristics of the family were etc.

*“Pupils’ families received exact information about the aims of the research, its course and the planned outputs, and they had the possibility to enrol their children in the research on the basis of a written informed content they were given by a teacher. They were also informed they can leave the research at any point. They received information about the processing of data and their protection (anonymization).” (OS 3/2015)*

The need to research family appeared naturally in relation to the occurrence of other topics. It was apparent that understanding family environment of individuals undergoing upbringing and education was a significant aspect of tasks related to the process of education, whether this concerned specific spheres in which parents influenced their children – upbringing focused on civic duty, knowledge of nature, media, ethics etc. – or understanding resources applicable while cooperating with the family during education activities or counselling.

*“A detailed mapping of family background allows analysts to inform regularly about the degree of differences between pupils and schools in individual systems and about the strength of the relation between education results and family background.” (OS 3/2009)*

The outlined categories showed the main thematic spheres in the texts in both analysed journals. These topics had a fundamental connection to the topics of education in pedagogical discussion, which frequently used them as a basis. The central relation was obviously between the issues of school and family. From the perspective of approaching the topic of family, it was possible to claim that this information had a form of stating facts, formulating questions or delineating problematic areas. Sometimes, the statements of facts and selected terms bordered on cliché, the example being the expressions like “family as a

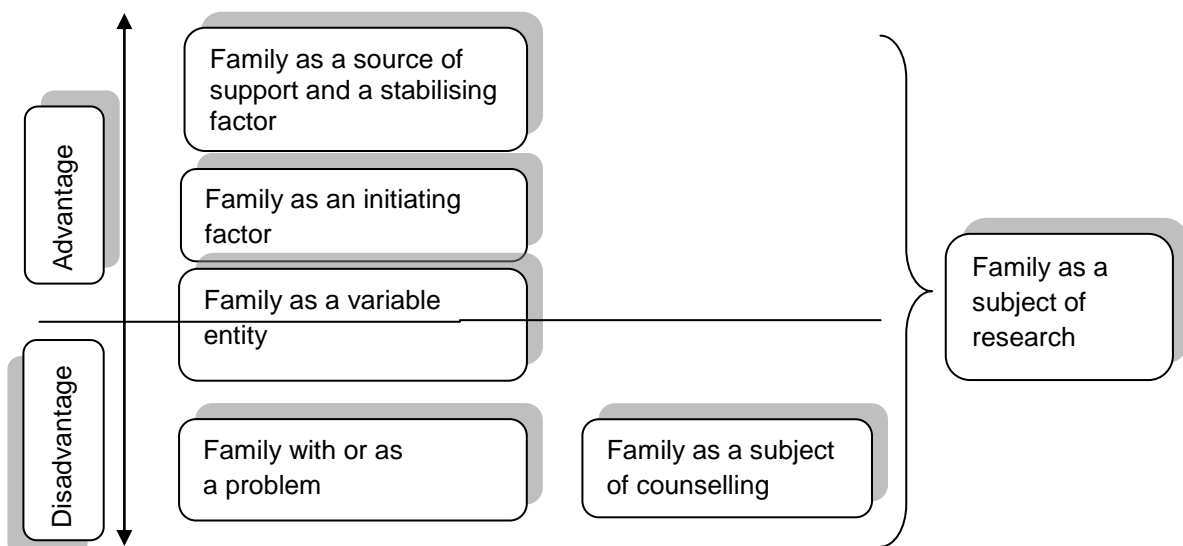
foundation of society” etc., which may be emptied out of content, as noted e.g. by Strouhal (2013) in the context of education.

## Conclusion

The following chart can provide a summary of the approaches to family in the analysed journals and of the links between the resulting categories:

**Figure**

**Chart of categories – family in specialist pedagogical discussion**



In the pedagogical perspective, family was perceived as a factor which either supports upbringing and education, or in contrast, hampers it. In this sense, family environment provides individuals with an advantage or a disadvantage: it is a plus or a minus in the equation of one’s educational development and chances. If a family functions an initiating, supporting and stabilizing factor, the individual has an advantage in the process of education. On the contrary, a child from a problematic family environment, or in other words a problematic family (the second extreme of the scale) means a disadvantage. Such a family consequently becomes the subject of counselling and help. As Lorenzová states, “in the school environment, help is oriented towards facilitating learning for students from deprived backgrounds, coordinating work between institutions dealing with personal development, collaborating with both formal and informal institutions, intervention in individual, group or



family problems“ (Lorenzová, 2018, 25). In case of a disadvantage, the situation usually requires a response from the school or other educational instructions. Thus, it was possible to perceive the notion of family in analysed pedagogical texts as a scale with extremes which mean either an advantage or a disadvantage for an individual throughout the process of education. Family environment was consequently often associated with an evaluation on the basis of its contributions to upbringing and education of children.

A number of less prominent topics related to family obviously do not enter pedagogic discussions, since they lack a direct connection to specific topics of education or are overshadowed by more significant and topical issues. Pedagogical discourse on family thus reflects primarily the principal thematic spheres, which are supported by the theory of pedagogy and related fields. In this respect, the interdisciplinary aspects are evident; the surveyed texts frequently employed psychological, sociological, demographical or economical findings. The emergence of a comprehensive approach to the topics of pedagogy was also apparent, as it was also apparent in the topic of family. Analysis made prominent use of both interdisciplinary inspirations and a combination of various perspectives.

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