

Ilona Pešatová *, Pavel Pešat **, Václava Tomická ***

* Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem

The Czech Republic

ORCID: 0000-0001-7036-5652

** University of Pardubice

The Czech Republic

ORCID: 0000-0001-8655-1935

*** Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem

The Czech Republic

ORCID: 0000-0002-2871-8730

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Education and Communication Skills of Socially Disadvantaged Pupils in Pandemic Conditions

ABSTRACT: Epidemiological restrictions significantly affected the progress in the research survey carried out within the project focused on impaired communication skills influencing the school education of children from different cultural backgrounds or different living conditions. The quarantine measures induced by Covid-19 infection caused the transition of teaching to the online environment, thereby creating space to supplement the survey with the impact of these restrictions on the education of the target pupils, to find new forms of support for these pupils in distance education and to optimize the proportion of synchronous and asynchronous education. The research survey proved the influence of different cultural background and the influence of different living conditions on the development of language and communication skills of children, as well as the influence on the further educational development of children, i.e. educational skills of children and their literacy. The survey has shown that early detection of individual impairments in speech communication of pupils from different cultural backgrounds or different living conditions and their subsequent re-education and support in a pandemic situation has a major impact on their further educational development.

KEYWORDS: special education, communication skills, different living conditions, distance education, pandemic situation.

Introduction

International pedagogical researchers use the economic, social and cultural status (hereinafter referred to as ESCS) as an index covering the background of pupils and students in relation to their educational results. Pupils participating in the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) test are asked to fill in a questionnaire, in which they provide information about themselves, the environment they live in, their views and attitudes, as well as information about their school and teaching methods applied. The evaluation implies that in the Czech Republic, as well as in Germany and Slovakia, ESCS has an enormous influence on the results (cf. Průcha, 2015; Bakošová, 2016; CSI, 2020).

Early detection of individual impairments of speech communication has a considerable influence on the further development of the child as to his/her educational career and later job opportunities. The diagnosis of impaired communication skills have also focused on the social environment which the child comes from as it may cause weakening of the communication skills of the child.

Distance education, synchronous and asynchronous teaching

In educational practice, asynchronous online teaching usually takes the form where the teacher sends the assignment of individual or group work through a dedicated communication tool. This method of teaching must necessarily take into account a greater degree of individualized support provided by the teacher to individual students. The level of support provided by parents and the home environment as such – which can vary greatly in individual pupils – is also of significant importance. Online education usually leads to pupils typically lacking social contact and shared experience with other classmates. Younger pupils need more direct communication with the teacher than older ones. It is obvious that both forms of online teaching, synchronous and asynchronous, have their pros and cons. Their use must be governed by specific conditions of the school as well as children/pupils/students. The best effect comes where both forms are suitably combined.

Socially disadvantaged pupils are at risk of school failure even in normal conditions, let alone in the time of pandemic disease, when distance education is mandatory and their situation deteriorates. In contrast to regular education, distance education is largely based on parental support. Yet, socially

disadvantaged pupils typically lack any parental support. Thus, the active role of school education needs to be strengthened. As the contact with the teacher forms the basis of distance education, online environment requires some necessary technical equipment. However, socially disadvantaged pupils often lack the equipment for distance learning, including the internet connection. Many cases within our research showed a lack of climate of quiet home environment, which is necessary for successful distance education. As inherent part of distance education, there may be an increased level of stress during the home quarantine for pupils living in unsuitable conditions, in boarding houses or in socially excluded localities. The educational function of the school in that case is also important in terms of the overall psychosocial support of pupils and it is necessary to provide supportive measures to pupils and their parents sensitively on a highly individualized basis.

In the current time of pandemic, it seems necessary to develop communication skills and meetings in virtual space within distance education in the form of synchronous teaching. Synchronous teaching can help students overcome difficulties caused by social isolation, support their motivation to learn and develop their communication skills. As mentioned above, this method of teaching imposes demands not only on the technical equipment of pupils, on the quality of the internet connection, but also on the time flexibility and possibilities of pupils and their families. With synchronous online education, it is more difficult to individualize education and to adapt its content, method and pace to specific students, especially students from different cultural backgrounds or with different living conditions.

Education of socially disadvantaged pupils or pupils from a different cultural background or with different living conditions

The complexities of the process of social inclusion aimed at a child from a different socio-cultural background in the majority society depends on the economic situation of his/her family. Children from poorer families lag behind their peers in terms of language and school readiness and require empirically relevant and culturally sensitive instructions. Concurrently, the child's personal characteristics and experience as well as its ability to handle linguistic, cognitive, social and emotional tasks related to the acquisition of new linguistic and cultural values are important factors (Navarrete, Watson, 2013).

Social (socio-cultural) disadvantages in the field of educational needs in connection with the emergence of barriers to learning that prevent pupils from developing their educational potential and abilities are dealt with in the

Catalogue of supportive measures for pupils in need of support in education due to health or social disadvantages deals with (Michalík et al., 2015), specifically its part focused on – *pupils in need of support in education due to social disadvantage* (hereinafter also referred to as the Catalogue). (Felcmanová, Habrová et al., 2015).

The Catalogue of supportive measures in defining socio-cultural disadvantage also leans on the *Methodology of monitoring indicators of the Operational Program “Education for Competitiveness”* (hereinafter referred to as the Methodology) issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic in 2011. In accordance with the Methodology and the Catalogue, a pupil with social or socio-cultural disadvantages can be defined as follows:

- 1) pupil with cultural differences and different mother tongue – a pupil of foreign origin, a different cultural tradition, religion, a pupil from a family with an alternative lifestyle, etc., especially if the disadvantage is associated with insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction compared to other pupils in the class, due to the use of a different language or a specific form of language of instruction in the pupil’s home environment;
- 2) pupil from a dysfunctional family and psychologically suffering – includes social pathology, workload of parents without interest in the child, family dissolution, etc.;
- 3) pupil from a family which does not support him/her in education – parents lack the necessary competencies to support the pupil in education or preparation for education or parents do not consider education important, busy parents not providing support to the pupil in education, etc.;
- 4) pupil living in an environment of socially excluded localities or localities at risk of social exclusion;
- 5) pupil expelled as being different from the majority – a physically different pupil, coming from a family in a difficult economic situation;
- 6) pupil placed outside the family, which is the last resort for an unfavourable family situation, to be decided on exclusively by the court and should only be used when it is necessary to protect the child’s life or health.

The summary of the above definition is provided and extended in the *Conception of Early Care in the Czech Republic (2020)*, which states that the group of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds includes children whose family does not support them (is unable or unwilling to do so) in school activities and preparation for school; the family’s attitude to

education is lukewarm or sometimes negative; the family does not sufficiently provide for the material needs of the children; lives rather on the margins of the society or is socially excluded; or parents show relative indifference to education and distrust of institutions. Such a family may follow cultural patterns that are different or in conflict with those usual in the Czech society. Family uses other than the language of instruction, uses it incorrectly (for example, the Romani ethnolect of the Czech or Slovak language) or only at the level of slang. Alternatively, the very quality of verbal communication within the family is compromised. An indirect indicator of belonging to this group is also the situation where the upbringing of children has been supervised by a law court or municipal authority.

If we are to use the concept of social disadvantage in the field of education, it can be defined as an obstacle to learning that prevents the development of potential that is not of medical nature. Aspects of social disadvantage can be defined as follows: 1) at the level of the individual (e.g. language difference, dishevelled appearance); 2) at the family level (e.g. maltreatment, abuse, neglect, dysfunctional family, different lifestyle, high workload of parents); 3) in the social environment (environment of socially excluded locality, threat of socio-pathological phenomena) and 4) in connection with economic and social status (poverty, loss of material background due to over-indebtedness, migration, unsatisfactory housing conditions, cultural and religious differences).

However, these aspects are very often combined and intertwined. They also exhibit quite frequent variability in both time and environment. Social disadvantage is not a disorder or disease that could be clearly identified on the basis of bodily dysfunction, thus it does not show any measurable symptoms. It is necessary to identify the causes and to properly set up education and rectification in relation to children with social disadvantages. (cf. Educational programs, 2020).

The availability of the necessary technology and equipment in pupils' households is not satisfactory. Researchers working on this issue have found only a small proportion of the population that does not have a computer at home. A total of 5.8% of households with children do not have a computer (Czech Statistical Office 2020). In the population of 15-year-old pupils, attending the lower secondary education, it accounts for 5.9% (PISA 2018). Although this number seems relatively small, it is far from negligible taking into account that all the education takes the form of distance learning. In addition, as might be expected, the aforementioned percentage includes a quarter of the pupils from the weakest socio-economic background, i.e. those who are most at risk in this new situation." (Federičová and Korbel, 2020) The

CSI Report itself, based on the statements of directors, provides more sceptical views. According to their estimation, more than 80% of students have digital technology at home. “A higher proportion of pupils is in secondary schools (more than 90% of pupils) and the lowest in infant schools (less than 85% of pupils)” (CSI, 2020)

Socially excluded locality

Socially excluded locality or locality at risk of social exclusion, as referred to and defined within the Research Analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic, is any site where there is a concentration of more than 20 people living in substandard conditions (indicated by the number of recipients of subsistence allowance) that inhabit factually or notionally confined space.

Social exclusion often relates to and manifests itself in: spatial exclusion; symbolic exclusion associated with stigmatization of individuals or groups; low level of education, difficult access to legal of better paid jobs; income restricted to social benefits, and the associated material poverty; poor quality of housing and poor hygienic conditions; closed economic system (usury and the so-called “quick loans”); the occurrence of risk behaviour (e.g. alcoholism, drug addiction or gambling) and crime (increased risk of becoming an offender as well as a victim of a crime); reduced socio-cultural competence (e.g. language barrier, inexperience or ignorance of one’s own rights and obligations). (cf. Bartoňová et al., 2013; Čada et al., 2015)

Decree of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports No. 27/2016 Coll., On the education of pupils with special educational needs and gifted pupils, specifies in more detail the group of socially disadvantaged pupils who qualify for the so-called supportive measures. The school takes into account the social status of the pupil’s relationship network and his social and family environment, i.e. the environment from which the pupil comes to school. The nature of a pupil’s educational needs is often influenced by the pupil’s different cultural environment and different living conditions. For this reason, individual or group pedagogical intervention is included, which serves to support the student’s learning and to compensate for insufficient home preparation for teaching, as well as to develop the student’s knowledge and skills, to develop language competences and social and adaptive skills.

Screening of communication skills of among pupils with different living conditions

The term screening for impaired communication skills means a comprehensive examination of the population or its part. The objective is to diagnose disorders in pupils' communication skills and to set effective remedies in a due and timely manner. The objective of the examination is also to detect symptoms of or speech disorders that may occur in speech at a certain age. If not detected, their presence may later have impact on the fitness for school and communications in general. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a nationwide speech disorder screening is not mandatory yet. (Masárová, 2017, p. 63)

Weakened communication skills often cause problems in the acquisition of reading skills. "Reading is a specific process that requires specific skills – perception of visual complexes (or individual letters); understanding the meaning of words and text and reproduction of sound units; these phases are interconnected." (Tübele, 2017, p. 211).

Cain (2015, pp. 204–210) suggests that reading is supported by a range of phonological skills, such as phonological awareness, quick naming as well as short-term memory, which allows information to be stored immediately after perception and recalled at short intervals. He does not disparage the influence of the child's vocabulary and knowledge of grammar, which all contribute to the comprehension of what is read. Miklošová et al. (2016) mentions several international studies in the phonological awareness. E.g. Caravolas (2005) conducted research on children coming from four typologically different language environments and founded that the most reliable pre-school-age predictor of early literacy in the first year or primary school is a triad of the following skills: phonemic awareness, letter recognition and fast automatic naming. The research conducted by Landerl et al. (2013) in eight European countries, focused on the literacy of children, aged 8–12, with dyslexia, confirmed that phonemic awareness and fast automatic naming are the main predictors of reading and writing accuracy.

Results of research in socially disadvantaged pupils

In the research part, we analyzed the differences in the communication skills of children in the first year of mainstream primary school coming from different living conditions in comparison with children coming from a usual

environment. The research was carried out at 20 regular primary schools in five regions throughout the Czech Republic.

The screening questionnaire focused on the following key items:

- 1) Introductory items characterizing the group being researched, such as: gender of the respondent, age of the respondent, official postponement of school attendance, repetition of the first year of primary school, type of school the respondent attends. The items were non-parametric, closed, with options available.
- 2) Items identifying whether a child falls into a category of disadvantaged due to different living conditions. The questionnaire included items for identifying the child's social disadvantage, i.e. the material conditions of the pupil's education, indicators related to the pupil's family and its socio-cultural status or indicators of different living conditions. It also included mapping the conditions of distance education of socially disadvantaged pupils due to the long-lasting pandemic situation.
- 3) Another group consisted of items mapping the level of communication skills focused on individual language levels, i.e.:
 - phonetic-phonological language level: auditory distinction of speech sounds and their pronunciation, ability to repeat articulatively demanding words and sentences,
 - lexical-semantic language level: the ability to name a well-known object, vocabulary, ability to understand hyper-syntactic meanings,
 - morphological-syntactic language level: ability to use individual parts of speech, formation of sentences and complex sentences, evaluation of child's speech,
 - pragmatic language level: the ability to understand speech and the use of speech in practice, this level has a direct connection especially with successful performance in school education – primarily because it concerns understanding of the communication message.

Characteristics of research sample

336 first-year pupils, of which 182 boys (54%) and 154 girls (46%) took part in the screening survey. From a total sample of 336 children, two groups were formed: 1) participants living in different living conditions and 2) participants from a usual environment. The quantities of these two groups are given in Table 1. Out of the total number of 336 participants, 69 (21%) were assigned the status of social disadvantage.

Table 1. Research sample characteristics

| Participant group | Quantity | |
|--|----------|----------|
| | abs. [n] | rel. [%] |
| Participants living in different living conditions | 69 | 21 |
| Participants living in usual environment | 267 | 79 |
| Total | 336 | 100 |

The status of social disadvantage was assigned to individual participants using indicators of social disadvantage, which may co-occur (there may be more than one indicator for one child). A large number of participants live for instance in socially excluded localities (42%) or in family which receives welfare benefits or subsistence allowances (80%).

The following table looks at the comparison of participants with impaired communication skills in both the groups at the beginning of the survey, i.e. at the commencement of the school attendance. It clearly implies that the impaired communication skills were found in 91% (63) of participants living in different living conditions.

It presents the occurrence of impaired communication skills in both the groups.

Table 2. Impaired communication skills vers. different living conditions

| Participant group | Participants with symptoms of impaired communication skills | | Participants without symptoms of impaired communication skills | | Total | |
|--|---|----------|--|----------|----------|----------|
| | Quantity | | Quantity | | Quantity | |
| | abs. [n] | rel. [%] | abs. [n] | rel. [%] | abs. [n] | rel. [%] |
| Participants living in different living conditions | 63 | 21 | 6 | 4 | 69 | 21 |
| Participants living in usual environment | 123 | 79 | 144 | 96 | 267 | 79 |
| Total | 186 | 100 | 150 | 100 | 336 | 100 |

As can be read from the table, the occurrence of symptoms of impaired communication skills in participants living in different living conditions is rather the rule. This confirms the conclusions of the theoretical part that the child's environment affects his/her speech skills. For participants from usual environment, the occurrence of impaired communication skills is only half the size of its equivalent in the group from different living condition.

In addition, 88% of participants living in different living conditions have their school attendance postponed due to impaired communication skills.

It is obvious from the aforementioned overviews, that impaired communication skills are the reason for the postponed school enrolment which reaffirms the finding that the environment in which a child grows up affects his/her speech skills and successful commencement of school attendance.

Different living conditions were proved to be related to the occurrence of communication difficulties. Pupils living in different living conditions show for example a poorer vocabulary, problems in the pronunciation of words, in sense for language, in naming common things, in determining hyper-syntactic meaning, in speech understanding and use.

The survey of the material conditions for providing distance education among socially disadvantaged pupils revealed that they often lack necessary technical equipment for online education. Schools and non-governmental organizations have tried to provide it for them. Yet, it turned out that some parents do not even want to borrow the necessary technical equipment for their children, because they do not want to be responsible for any damage. Furthermore, it was necessary to respect the privacy of the pupils and their families during online education, as many pupils signed up for online education from a boarding house or socially excluded localities, some students preferred to work without a camera connection. Pupils and families welcomed the approach of some schools, which tolerated the absence of pupils if they could not attend classes for objective reasons. The schools tried to create conditions for individual work with these pupils and meetings with the teacher, or social pedagogue, social assistant at school or in other suitable environment.

During the interviews, the teachers said that the teaching needed to focus on motivation of practical topics usable in everyday life and that they tried to pass the teaching materials to the pupils' parents at school in printed form or, if the parents failed to collect the materials, to provide them through a social pedagogue or an assistant teacher. The teachers stated that they often discussed with the children how to plan the execution of the assigned work, helped with independent work within their consultations. Subsequently, they evaluated the work with their pupils. The preferred methods of evaluation in distance education mainly include verbal assessment with formative feedback and self-assessment of students.

Pupils also needed to be tutored within the online education. That is why pedagogical interventions and special pedagogical care continued taking place online. Teachers, assistants, social pedagogues, after-school centre attendants as well as volunteers from pedagogical departments and faculties were all involved in the organization of online tutoring.

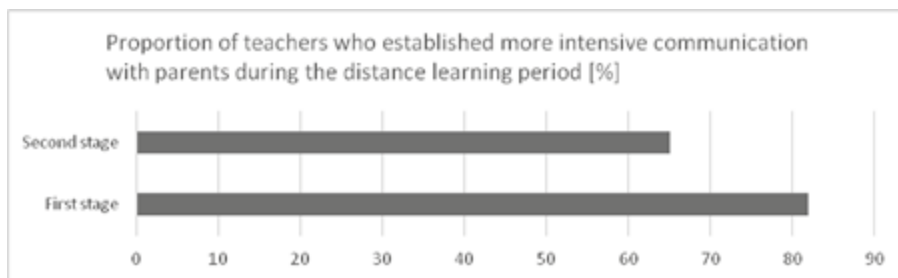


Fig. 1. Communication between teachers and parents (ČSĽ, 2020)

The more intensive communication of teachers with the parents of primary school pupils is very significant and proves the need for increased communication of pupils' parents during the pandemic period and the obligatory distance learning. Simultaneously, it was proved that the role of class teacher in distance learning is crucial.

Discussion

The results of research presented by Irwin G. and Barbara R. Sarason (2005) emphasize the fact that if one person is not seen as satisfactory in communication by other people, he/she has a weaker ability to use verbal communication or is socially incompetent in any other manner, often facing rejection, isolation, failing to find any company or social support.

If Czech is not the child's mother tongue, it does not necessarily represent disadvantage for him/her. However, if the language is used at the level of argot or if there is no proper stimulus created in the family for the child's language development, this can be very limiting for the pupil at the beginning of the compulsory school attendance. At present, we encounter the inclusion of children of other ethnic groups in the Czech education system, whether from foreign families or from Roma families.

A lower level of the command of the majority language in bilingual children may resemble the symptoms of a child with specifically impaired speech development, including poor vocabulary, lack of comprehension, conspicuous dysgramatisms in the child's speech as well as frequent impairment of sound aspects of the child's speech. Šulová and Bartanusz (2015, p. 203) mention semi-linguism as one of potential risks in the development of bilingual children, i.e. incomprehensible mix of two languages. A cultural damage, which can manifest itself as dyslexia, behavioural disorders, or cognitive problems, i.e. tardiness of learning, poorer school performance, slower problem solving.

Influence of the environment on education

The factors of the socio-cultural environment have a significant effect on the socialization of children, on their speech and communication development, on school performance, choice of educational career and future profession. These factors include in particular the socio-economic status of families, professions of parents, parents' level of education, cultural amenities of the family or household (e.g. number of books). (cf. Martin, 2009; Průcha and Veteška, 2014; Dean and Platt, 2016).

The influence of the family environment on educational processes has been studied by authors in the Czech Republic and Slovakia as part of many longitudinal researches. Průcha (2017, p. 125) presents – inter alia – the multifactor longitudinal research of Árochová, Bakičová and Ševčíková (1984), which demonstrably found a significant dependence of school education results on the level of parents' education and on the level of housing. Švancar (1986; in Průcha, 2017) demonstrated the dependence of the development of the child's personality on the educational level of parents, especially mothers, as well. However, as suggested by Průcha, these studies do not offer an adequate explanation of how social determinants work in relation to educational processes. To a certain extent, this can be explained by the so-called *Bernstein theory*. Bernstein considered language and verbal communication to be the main means of socializing a child. The main idea of Bernstein's theory is the view that the pupil's educational success depends on the socio-cultural environment of the family he/she has grown up and which language code he has mastered there. These are not just different vocabulary or expression, but above all systematic differences in the way of verbal communication, which have a major impact on success at school (Giddens, 1999).

An important milestone in the support of socially disadvantaged children was the introduction of compulsory pre-school education that is to begin one year before the start of school attendance (introduced in the 2017/2018 school year). Before the introduction of this arrangement, attendance of Roma children in pre-school facilities posed the major problems, as argued by Syslová et al. (2014, p. 133). Syslová lists up to 11% of these children who did not attend any pre-school facility at all. In the school year 2017/2018, 3% of children of the same age failed to be involved in the compulsory pre-school education. These were often children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, for whom the pre-school education would be the most beneficial as it develops their competences and increases their chances

of successful school performance at the very beginning of their educational career. Education conceived in this manner is also an essential stage for the development of cognitive and speech skills.

Regarding communication, the CSI (2020) recommends to increase the intensity of communication between the class teacher and pupils and their parents, especially if they cannot regularly attend online classes. To target the focus on communication with parents of the youngest pupils and with parents of pupils with special educational needs. It also recommends using the support of the school counseling center and effectively use the support of teaching assistants. Regular communication with the pupil's parents is necessary in order to avoid possible conflicts and unnecessary misunderstandings. It also recommends more frequent communication with pupils in groups and cooperative learning, online class meetings or other forms of communication with parents.

Conclusion and recommendations

The conducted research survey showed a statistically significant influence of different living conditions on the language development as well as on children's educational abilities and their literacy – see above. Early detection of individual impairments in speech communication has a fundamental effect on the child's further development.

Restrictions the child has to face in acquiring vocabulary at an early age pose a significant risk to his/her further development. It has become obvious that children from different cultural backgrounds or those living in different living conditions often have difficulty in understanding the message passed by a person from the majority society because they have different social experience, use different communication code and follow different rules of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Inability to understand the content of a message properly may cause an inadequate reaction of the individual concerned and provoke a negative response from the environment. Another consequence of limited vocabulary and weakened pragmatic language level is the risk of school failure, as the vast majority of information in the first years of school education is passed on verbally. Votavová and Smolík (2010) suggest that vocabulary size is an important indicator of mental development and to some extent it works as its determinant, i.e. the vocabulary deficit affects language acquisition as such and it also has an indirect impact on cognitive and social development. (Pešatová, Pešat, Tomická, 2018) In this context, it would be appropriate to establish a larger number of preparatory

classes, which would be more intensively aimed at the development of communication competencies.

As part of distance education for pupils, where socio-economic conditions did not allow for online teaching, e.g. in families with more children, the absence of contact forms of education had a negative effect. The pupils would more often need direct contact with the teacher and short face-to-face consultations. Awareness of the family environment, including an overview of their IT equipment and available connectivity should be critical for teachers. However, it was possible to give an incentive to the local government and possibly non-profit organizations that might help with the computer equipment and arranging a data connection for the families of students in financial distress. Working with parents and creating weekly plans, which were complemented by online lessons, proved successful. Regularity without overloading and assigning tasks the day before were important. Teaching in the whole class is not good for pupils with social disadvantage, when only more active children are promoted. It is more appropriate to divide students into groups to ensure a more equal chance for participation of individual students. The number of pupils in the group was about 4–5 pupils, but there were cases when it was necessary to work in pairs, or individually.

When communicating with the pupils, it is necessary to express oneself clearly and with unambiguous indications and instructions, and to agree with parents on the best ways of communication. It would be appropriate to require the presence of the parents in the communication. The individualization of tasks should adapt to the possibilities of the parents. In many cases, it is necessary to supplement the education of pupils via phone consultations with the parents involved. Pupils and parents need to learn to participate in online learning process and improve their skills in using online learning technology. Teachers agreed that distance education should rather be based on short video tutorials, which they would record themselves and pupils could play them repeatedly at home. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to introduce a short regular monitoring of feedback from pupils and parents with the help of social educators and social assistants. Meetings that took place, attended by the pupils, should be preferred for pupils with social disadvantages in shorter time intervals and more often also individually with a possible explanation of the curriculum that was misunderstood. It is also advisable to use social pedagogues, social assistants and teaching assistants.

The education might be adjusted in terms of its scope and content towards reduction of the curriculum and the number of tasks assigned.

As regards the evaluation of pupils, teachers agreed on the recommended formative evaluation, which emphasizes ongoing feedback and allows pupils to monitor their own progress. The purpose of the formative evaluation is to identify the educational needs of pupils and to adapt teaching to the findings so that everyone reaches the maximum in their development with respect to their individual abilities. In distance education, it is appropriate to prefer verbal evaluation.

Social contact with classmates is also crucial for pupils, and distance education should therefore enable social contact, at least through online tools, for example by supporting work in groups. In this context, it is necessary to compile groups of students so that the individualization of the pace of teaching is comparable. (CSI, 2019)

This concept of distance education would have greater potential for the development of key competences, digital literacy, development of innovative methods or strengthening the role of formative feedback in the learning process and in the development of communication skills of socially disadvantaged pupils.

Great emphasis is placed on early intervention and close cooperation with the families, doctors and social and legal protection authorities for children. To work with students from different social or cultural backgrounds, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of the specifics of this environment, especially the differences in family education and their impact on the mental and social development of the child.

As regards children from different cultural backgrounds or children living in different living conditions, it is desirable that their communication skills are purposefully developed in educational institutions by all appropriate methods and procedures, including preparation for online education, which can adequately complement – yet not replace – full-time forms of teaching. It would be appropriate to use the support of social pedagogues, social assistants, teaching assistants in cooperation with the interventions of speech therapy assistants and special pedagogues – speech therapists. At the same time, it is desirable to improve preparation of these educators to provide support for online education.

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