

# Forms of Schools in the 21st Century

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**Abstract** – In the second half of the 20th century, the area of education became a part of social and economic forecasts. The school can be seen as a part of the educational system of the society, or an autonomous institution, a specific culture which creates a distinctive environment. What happens at school is the result of both social and personal influences which affect the behaviour and attitudes of people inside and outside the school. Each individual carries his own picture of his school because it is part of his life. The school is associated with memories, so people create their personal opinion about it. The personal opinion and experience then influence the public opinion affecting the media image of the school which follows from the current social, political and economic issues. What will be the form of the school of the future? That is the burning question of today's rapidly changing world.

The article points to possible changes in the content and goals of schools. In the context of the learning society, it presents possible forms of schools which would create conditions for the lifelong learning, provide adequate orientation in the changing world and develop key skills necessary for life.

**Index Terms** – reforms; improvement; school effectiveness; scenarios of schools.

## 1. Introduction

The school is one of the pillars of the society whose main task has been to provide children with knowledge and skills and to familiarize them with the cultural patterns and values of the society [11]. This traditional school model, which was created during the Industrial Revolution and has developed since, was based on the transfer (transmission)<sup>1</sup> and led to the protection of culture. Today's school still keeps the essence of spiritual and material culture in their objectives and contents of educational activities. However, with help of its socialization and enculturation activities, the school cares for the development of pupils' disposition and cooperates with social partners [7].

The current school must respond to the rapid changes of life in the 21st century. The development of social skills and pupils' abilities to understand themselves seem to be crucial matters to focus on. Cognitive and emotional areas have come to the fore with more emphasis on overall personal development than on the cognitive skills, although, according to Krause and Poláčková [5], in the early 21st century, it is still true that the Czech school is more focused on educational processes compared to schools in Western Europe and in America.

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<sup>1</sup> Transmission as the transfer of knowledge, memorizing and reproduction of the memorized which is the essential feature of the Transmission School. The term Transmission School comes from the Italian author Tonnuci (1991, Teach or learn?).

## 2. Internal and External School Reforms

A school transformation is understood, in general terms, as a permanent searching process of new and more efficient forms of education. Czech and foreign schools opt mainly for internal reforms enhancing the efficiency of education. Internal school reforms can be initiated by teachers wanting change or by external pressures of market mechanisms. Some authors do not prefer change through internal reforms and criticize efforts to retain responsibility for innovation in the schools. For example, Goodson (Goodson, 2005, In Dvořák, Starý et al. 2010) states that the method of internal reform from the bottom to the top prevents a social debate about the necessary changes in education [2]. The form of school has been shaping by both internal changes and structural changes from the outside (from the top) by the state. Political programs call for the improvement of quality and effectiveness of education, appealing especially for the internal transformation of schools. It involves a complex process in the Czech environment which has been formulated in the White Paper of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) of the CR.<sup>2</sup> Walterová and Starý (2006, p. 79-80) stated that an informal report of the White Paper implementation in 2006 pointed to certain risks associated with the external factors, "lower levels of legislation and management, problematic information flows, increase in formal administration and bureaucratic measures, blocking autonomy and creativity of schools, unclear criteria for evaluation and control by the Czech School Inspectorate, insufficient preparation and methodological support of the curricular reform, lack of psychologists, special teachers and assistants" [12]. Furthermore, the authors draw attention to the problem of the media's lack of interest in the educational reform and misunderstanding of the curricular reform by some teachers. It follows from the above that an external support of schools is needed which would reflect the needs of direct participants in the education process.

Based on a generalization of the principles of successful schools, Hopkins [4] presents a general framework for overall school improvement:

1. Focus on success in learning, i.e. not only on test results.
2. Reinforcing the common aspirations and expectations in an atmosphere of mutual trust of a school community.

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<sup>2</sup> The White Paper was approved in 2001 by the government as the National Programme for Development of Education in the Czech Republic.

3. Research foundation and a theory enrichment leading to the development of knowledge (the school as a learning organization, action research).

4. Reflecting the school context and specifics (reflecting the unique characteristics of the school).

5. Building an organizational base for the permanent improvement.

6. Reflecting activities as a part of the sustainability of changes.

7. Focus on the implementation of programs and the quality of work in classrooms.

8. Intervention strategy focused on a systemic improvement of the situation in the school, medium-term planning, setting goals and priorities.

9. External support and network building of support organizations around the school.

10. Being systematic and reflecting external changes and their creative use for the internal change (Hopkins 2001, pp. 16-18).

According to Hopkins (2001) those ten points could serve to research purposes which would examine the potential and quality of changes in a real school.

Townsend [9] comes with an interesting outline of changes in thinking about schools at the turn of the millennium (table 1) while reflecting on the degree of the institutional education change which has occurred and whether schools can keep up with other areas of life.

Table 1: School characteristics of the second and third millennium

Schools of the second millennium	Schools of the third millennium
Schools provide formal education programs and must participate in them for certain time period.	People have access to learning 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through a variety of sources, one of which are schools.
Schools offer an extensive curriculum that prepares pupils for various life situations.	Schools offer a limited curriculum focused on literacy, basic arithmetic operations and general technological and professional skills.
Teachers are there to "know", pupils conform.	Teachers are there to adjust teaching to the needs of pupils.
Schools are communities of learning individuals, schools help to fulfil their potential.	Schools are learning communities where everyone (students, teachers, parents, administrators) learns but also teaches others depending on circumstances.
Information which pupils receive is graded; they learn new things in a certain order. All pupils receive a similar content; only limited differentiation by interests occurs.	Access to information is given by abilities and interests of the pupil. Once the pupil has acquired the basic skills, the information received diversifies.
Schools have not been changed much formally and functionally since its inception.	Forms and function (purpose) of schools have changed dramatically; they were replaced by new forms and functions.
Schools have limited or no interaction with those who later employ their pupils as well as with members of the community in which the school is located.	Communities are responsible for the education of pupils and adults. Companies actively engage in the development of schools.
Schools are successful if they initiate their pupils into a future form of life - from the immediate employment as unskilled workforce to studying in tertiary education.	Schools are successful only if all pupils learn the skills necessary for success in the changing labour, social and economic environment and know how to adapt to its changes.
Institutions of the formal education are protected against market influences.	Institutions of the formal education succumb to market influences.

Source: Townsend, Local and Global: New Imperatives for School Effectiveness and Improvement, 2010, p. 11.

The table clearly highlights the changes in school life which have resulted from the transformation process. On one hand, stability is desirable for the good functioning of the school; on the other hand, schools are forced to respond to social pressures and changes. Vašutová and Urbánek [10] talk about dynamic school stability which means a certain internal stability within a system but which also has a sufficient operating space for changes. It means that the stability and change should be in balance: "the change will bring enrichment, innovation, efficiency while evaluating the existing qualities of the institution" (Vašutová, Urbánek, 2010, p. 80).

### 3. Opportunities and Limits of the School of the Future

In the rapidly changing world, theories explaining the current state of the society and analysing the future course have been developed.<sup>3</sup> The concepts of the "knowledge

society" and the lifelong learning have become central to the futures studies. The main feature of the future education is the learning without time and space limitations. Kotásek (In Walterová 2004, part 2, p. 447) describes 6 main priorities of the educational policy based on the international project "Education for the Twenty-first Century".<sup>4</sup>

1. Transformation of educational structures towards the creation of three education sectors: compulsory education (primary and lower secondary education), higher secondary education (general education and professional training), sector of the tertiary education (universities, new types of specialized universities and further education);

2. Mobilization of material, financial, institutional and human resources for the development of lifelong learning

it can predict their future evolution (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1962 Kotásek, In Walterová 2004, p. 442)

<sup>4</sup> The project "Education for the 21st Century", which originated in the years 1968 – 1975, is an important contribution for the future education. The project was coordinated by the European Cultural Foundation under the Europe 2000 Plan.

<sup>3</sup> Futurology is the study of the future. This social science originated in 1950s to 60s. Futurology studies developmental trends in various areas of life so that

(involvement of non-school, public and business organizations in the future education system);

3. Regionalization of the education system and decentralization of decision making about education programs at the school level;

4. Improving social and professional status of teachers;

5. Ensuring proper relationship between education and work in a new way (training content, alternation of work and study, introduction of day release);

6. Institutionalization of innovation processes and systematic development of educational research.<sup>5</sup>

According to the authors, without the above priorities of education policy, the opportunities of the future education cannot be fulfilled. In the 21st century, the concept of lifelong learning and "learning society" is a tool for developing human resources and human capital formation. Education policy of developed countries has become a social priority.

The lifelong learning strategy is presented in strategic documents of the Czech Republic which address broader issues of economic development and labour market, or focus directly on education as a fundamental pillar of the development of lifelong learning. The necessity of lifelong learning is enshrined in the education strategy for sustainable development of the Czech Republic for the period 2008 - 2015 which is an inspiration for collaboration of educational institutions on local and regional level (MEYS, 2008-2015). The document titled: Long-term Plan for Education and the Development of the Educational System in the Czech Republic (from the years 2011 and 2015) aims to increase the quality and efficiency of education and represents an important tool for shaping the educational system.

In 2003, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, Kotásek, In Walterová et al. 2004) introduced six basic scenarios of future school models. (Table 2).

Table 2: The schooling scenarios according to the OECD

A. Attempting to maintain the status quo	1. Bureaucratic school systems continue (traditional school)
	2. Teacher exodus (crisis school model)
B. Major reform and renewal of schools (Re-schooling)	3. Schools as core social centres (community school model)
	4. Schools as focused learning organizations (learning school model)
C. Disestablishment of school systems (De-schooling)	5. Learning networks and the network society (learning network)
	6. Extending the market model into education (market school model)

Source: OECD, Kotásek, In Walterová et al.,: Úloha školy v rozvoji vzdělanosti (The role of school in the development of education), 2. part p. 462. 2004.

<sup>5</sup> The project became the basis for further international documents of the education policy, such as: Delors, 1997: Learning, The Treasure Within; OECD, 1997: Lifelong learning for all; European Commission, 1995: Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society; White Paper on Education and Training; The European Commission, 2000: Memorandum on lifelong learning; 2004: The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment.

The scenarios were designed by a team of educational experts based on the comparison of schooling situations in OECD member countries. The twenty-first century is characterized by an accelerated rate of changes and individuals and institutions are expected to show creativity, flexibility and active participation in shaping the future. It is difficult to say when, how and whether the scenarios will be implemented. Education and training will have a significant impact on the development of the creative and active processes. Rýdl [8] says about the subject: "Educational institutions must have the conditions to learn how to react to changing framework conditions and particularly to new, often unclear but anticipated requirements of the time" (2012, p. 42). The author does not mean the ever changing school, but the so-called dynamic stability characterized by internal stability, systematic work, certainty and identification with values, but with sufficient space for change. This approach is consistent with the theory of change [3] warning against too many varying requirements which can break the stability of the school completely. A clear concept, qualified and professional management and involvement of all participants are essential.

#### 4. Conclusion

Černý, Greger, Chvál, Walterová [1] determined the view of Czech general public and parents on the possible form of future Czech schools. There were 1206 respondents in their basic research group. Half of the respondents did not envision significant changes in schools in the future, which is close to the conservative OECD scenario - continuation of the status quo (traditional school model). A quarter of respondents expected the change of school focused on learning processes (learning school model) and a fifth of respondents thought that schools would become the centres of social life in the community (community school model). Therefore, half of the respondents from the Czech public believe that the form of Czech schools will not change significantly, while the second part of the public expects the strengthening of educational and social functions of school [1].

To conclude, one can say that today's school, despite its conservative base which is the result of the transmission of cultural and value potential, will be forced to transform itself in accordance with the dynamics of social development. Changing living conditions generally require the strengthening of social relationships and competencies, enhanced cooperation, self-reflection, and taking responsibility for decisions. We believe that schools will cease to be functional and effective if they will not be able to adapt to new circumstances.

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